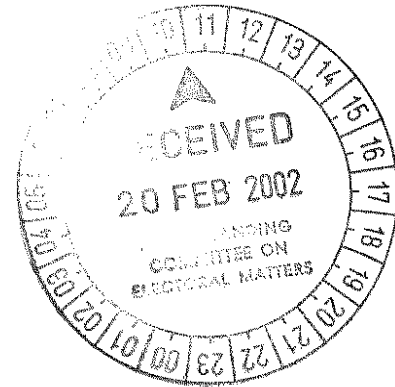


18-02-2002.



The Secretary,
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters,
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600.

Dear Sir/Madam,

Following on to the Senate Election of 10th November 2001, there were certain actions taken by me to voice concern about the procedures leading up to and including the election in the seat of Capricornia.

The concern is limited to the Senate Election and not the election for the House of Representatives, which was conducted at the same time.

The main concern is, that the voters of Capricornia had limited opportunities before the election to ascertain who the candidates were and which party they represented, or who were running as independents. We were not helped by the fact that batches of Senate Ballot forms had vital information lacking.

I have enclosed correspondence sent by me to The Hon Senator Eric Abetz as well as his reply.

In the lead up to the election we received a booklet "Your Official Guide to the 2001 Federal Election" explaining the procedures to be followed. There was no problem with this publication, but it was of little value. It would have been helpful to have received the sample copy of a ballot form which included the names of the parties and the candidates. Such a sample form did exist as it was shown to me at the Rockhampton Electoral Office on the Monday after the elections.

The vital information lacking on the ballot forms were the names of the parties. There were a number of boxes with letters of the alphabet next to them. The how to vote cards handed out by the various parties then became essential in trying to decode which was which.

A informed vote for the separate candidates became almost impossible if one was not familiar with the names or who they represented. I believe this caused a lot of confusion with the voters which in turn caused the long waiting ques.

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Submission No. 38
Date Received 17/6/02
Secretary <i>[Signature]</i>

It seems that the Courier Mail was used by the Electoral Office as the basis for information at the exclusion of the regional newspapers. The large majority of voters who do not normally buy the Courier Mail were left completely in the dark.


The penetration of the Courier Mail in the area of Rockhampton is minimal compared to that of the Rockhampton Morning Bulletin. A similar situation exists in Mackay with the Daily Mercury and Gladstone with the Gladstone Observer. The situation may be different in areas of Queensland's South East corner.

Similarly, the Internet which had the information, is not a tool with which most voters are familiar. The percentage of people who would use this medium would be extremely small. I am a regular Internet user and the thought did not cross my mind to check this medium for election material purposes.

I have always believed that the Senate vote is most important and have never seen any problems in previous elections with the material handed out, but this time the process was inadequate and unfair to the voters as well as many of the candidates.

As it is impossible for me, or people I have spoken to- who confirmed my observations- to provide proof, I have asked Senator Abetz to make sure that the Senate ballot forms of 10th November 2001 for Capricornia are not destroyed, so that your committee can check the veracity of my claim and take steps for a similar situation not to be repeated in future elections.

Yours faithfully



Robert Bom
113 Canoona Road,
Rockhampton 4700

Phone Business 0749-213458

Enclosed: Initial letter by me to Senator Abetz
His reply.

Copy: The Hon Senator Abetz

7th January 2002

Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz,
Special Minister for State,
Parliament House,
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Senator Abetz,

Senate Elections 10-11-2001

There are some concerns I wish to record regarding the senate elections in the seat of Capricornia, the lack of information available to us and the handing out of incorrect ballot forms at the polling booths.

Confusion

More so than any other election, the 10th November one was marred by confusion and long queues all day, which seemed to stem from incorrect preparation. From unofficial sources I hear that the invalid vote count was as high as 22% in some booths.

Lack of Information

Prior to the elections we received a booklet Election 2001 which explained the voting procedures. At no stage did we receive a list of parties and candidates that were up for election. There were no advertisements in the local newspaper giving that information.

Common Problem

I hear from acquaintances, that this lack of information was raised at the Qld Railway workshops in Rockhampton prior to the election. Someone asked if anyone knew who the senate candidates were? A workmate was able to come up with the Courier Mail, a newspaper from Brisbane 650 kilometres away. It had a list of candidates advertised.

Own Problems

My wife and I had three attempts at voting. For the first time ever we decided to return to the booth at a later time, hoping for the queues to disappear. At the booth we were handed senate ballot forms which had half the information missing. I cannot recall seeing the names of candidates and there certainly were no headings with the names of the parties on them.

How to Vote?

The lack of information on the form made it impossible to use the bottom portion and select the candidates, which I wanted to do. There was the top part alternative in voting for the party. That was impossible also, as there were only empty boxes with the letters of the alphabet next to them. There was a way out by using the hand out material from the parties at the booths. At least the hand out material had the code of which letter belonged to which party, but each party only had its own code and none for the others. By that time I was irritated to the point of changing my vote to a protest vote.

Investigation

On Monday 12th November I went to the Commonwealth Electoral Office at Rockhampton and asked if I could see a list of candidates and parties relating to the previous election. After some hesitation they came up with a sample Group Voting Ticket. This ticket finally gave me the complete information which I had been seeking. At this stage I was ready to make a choice, but the election was over.

Batches of Affected Ballot Papers

By asking people what their experiences were, many of them had similar problems to mine. Others did not. It appears, that there were batches of incompletely printed ballot papers as well as correctly printed ones.

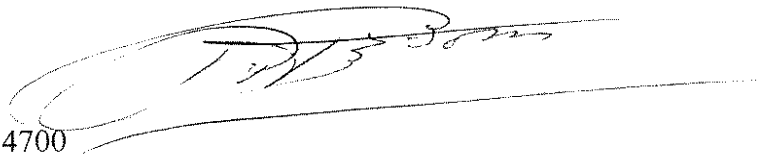
Contact with Electoral Office

A friend of mine, who appeared to have had the same problems rang the Electoral Office in the third week of November to note the complaint. He left his phone number and mine as a backup. To date, at the time of writing there has been no contact.

International Best Practice

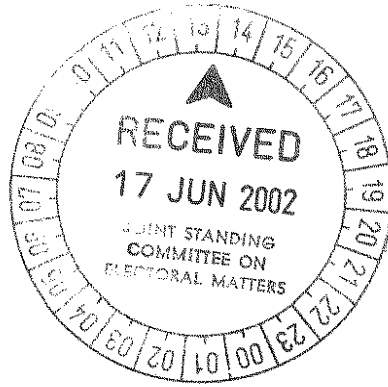
I believe, that in the seat of Capricornia our senate voting procedures would not have met International Best Practice standards. Serious attention should be given to this matter to prevent a recurrence.

Robert Bom
113 Canoona Road,
Rockhampton QLD 4700



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Fax 0749-213609

Email: robbom1@ozemail.com.au



12-6-2002

The Secretary,
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters,
Parliament House,
Canberra ACT 2600.

Dear Mr Rowe,

Thank you for your letter of 4th June 2002.

Further to your requirements I confirm, that my previous correspondence to you may be used as a submission to the Inquiry.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Bom', written over a horizontal line.

Robert Bom,
113 Canoona Road,
Rockhampton Qld 4700.

-find submission!

Read, Shane (REPS)

From: Rob Bom [robbom1@ozemail.com.au]
Sent: Monday, 8 July 2002 11:34 AM
To: JSCEM.Reps@aph.gov.au
Subject: Robert Bom

Further to your communications of 4th June regarding the Inquiry into the conduct of the 2001 Federal Election, I forwarded a letter to you confirming that my previous correspondence to you could be used as a submission to the Inquiry. The letter was sent on 12-6-2002.

Robert Bom

