

## JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORIAL MATTERS

### POSTAL VOTING ELIGIBILITY SUBMISSION

Eligibility for early voting, including postal voting, and registering as a “General Postal Voter” currently varies between the Commonwealth and Victoria. To be eligible, an elector must meet one of several criteria. In Victoria, but not the Commonwealth or in any of the other States or Territories, one such criterion is to be over the age of 70. The result is that to vote by post in a Victorian State election, the mere fact that the elector is over 70 is sufficient, whereas to vote in Victoria in a Federal election, the elector has to satisfy one of the other criteria laid down for eligibility.

In a response dated 17<sup>th</sup> July 2008 to a submission on this anomaly by the then ARPA Over 50s Association (now National Seniors Australia), the Chief of Staff of the former Minister, Senator the Hon. John Faulkner, stated that the Minister agreed that “Federal and State laws on the same matters should be as consistent as possible”.

This anomaly was referred to in the “Second Electoral Reform Green Paper” in paragraphs 11.29 to 11.32 in “Chapter 11: Polling” of Part 2: Key Elements of the Electoral Process. I made a submission on this aspect to the Secretariat on 30 October 2009 which was included among those eventually published in their web site. I understand that the question of eligibility for postal voting is to be considered by the Joint Standing Commission on Electoral Matters. I strongly urge that the relevant Commonwealth legislation be amended to remove this anomaly by adding “Being aged over 70” to the list of criteria, as has been the case for Victorian elections for some time.

If electors over 70 should become eligible to vote by post in Commonwealth elections, without having to satisfy any of the remaining criteria, each such elector would have the individual choice of whether to:-

1. attend a polling place and vote in person OR
2. vote by post.

If they decide to vote by post, they would have the additional choice of whether to:-

- apply for a postal ballot, OR
- apply to become a General Postal Voter. .

John O'Reilly, ED, JP

8 February 2011