

Miskin, Sarah (REPS)

From: Pigurra Grazing co. [jpsldoyle@bigpond.com]
Sent: Wednesday, 23 March 2005 8:45 PM
To: Committee, EM (REPS)
Subject: Submission

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters	
Submission No.	46
Date Received	23-3-05
Secretary	<i>[Signature]</i>

Submission
To
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Parliament House
Canberra

From: Sonja Doyle
Forest Hill
Blackall Q. 4472.
Ph 07 46575973
Email: jpsldoyle@bigpond.com

Background: My husband and I live on a property 85kms south of Blackall, in western Queensland. Access to the town of Blackall is via a mostly unscaled black soil road (10kms of bitumen), which is impassable in wet weather.

The mail service is twice a week, Monday and Friday, when the weather is fine. When it rains, the mail service is infrequent. It may be delivered once a week or if the road is wet, mail may not be delivered for a couple of weeks.

This year, my husband and I decided to apply for postal votes. The reason - we thought it might rain, which would make the road impassable, and then we would not be able to get into Blackall to vote.

The two applications for postal votes were sent off in one envelope.

My husband's ballot papers arrived on Wednesday 22nd September 2004.

After waiting for two more mail deliveries - the following Monday and Wednesday, I contacted the AEC call centre, to be told by the AEC to wait for the next mails as the ballot could be posted right up until the Friday before the election.

This was not good enough- the reason for applying for a postal vote, was the distance from a polling booth and the possibility of wet weather, and the AEC tells me that I could post my ballot papers, if they happened to arrive in either of the remaining mails, on the Friday before the election.

Next I contacted Bruce Scott's office in Dalby, then rang the Dalby AEC to request the Dalby AEC to issue me with ballot papers, as there were a very limited number (two) mails before election day. I re-applied, by fax, to Dalby AEC and subsequently the ballot papers, issued by Dalby AEC, arrived in the next mail. (Monday)

I was one of the fortunate ones - my ballot papers finally arrived. Some people didn't get their ballot papers, so had a special trip to a polling booth to claim a section vote!

What a shambles. In the only truly democratic country in the world where voting is compulsory. (In New Zealand, the U.K., the U.S.A. or Canada, there wouldn't be this trouble - voting is voluntary!)

The Following are Suggested Solutions

Distribution of Postal Votes

An AEC centre in each state or territory to be responsible for the distribution postal ballots in that state or territory.

e.g. A letter takes longer to reach Blackall from Sydney or Melbourne than it does from Brisbane!

Pre-poll Voting

In State elections in Queensland, pre-poll voting is available, for those eligible for a postal vote, after the ballots become available, in the weeks prior to the election, in all towns where there is a Court House.

My husband and I use this option in Queensland elections.

Pre-poll voting is so limited in Federal elections, it is practically non-existent.

e.g. In Maranoa one could vote in Dalby, Emerald and Warwick in the couple of weeks prior to the elections and in maybe two other centres a day or so before the election - not a great lot of help to those living in the remote outback of Maranoa.

Pre-poll Voting should be an easy alternative to Postal Voting. If Pre-poll Voting was easily accessible there would be a decrease in the number of applications for Postal Votes in remote areas. People would vote when in town, in the weeks prior to election day.

Long overdue is;

The introduction of Pre-poll Voting, for those eligible for a postal vote, immediately the ballots become available, in the weeks prior to the federal election.

Pre-poll Voting to be available in all towns where there is a Court House, in all divisions, in all Australian States and Territories.

The AEC sets up Remote Polling Booths for aboriginal communities in the two weeks prior to an election.

This service should be extended to include all remote communities.

Absentee Voting

Voters should be able to cast an absentee vote in a Federal Election at any polling booth, in any State or Territory, in Australia.

It is scandalous in this age of Information Technology that voters can only vote absentee in their home state. Australians deserve better.

Often those who try to claim an absentee vote interstate are travelling for urgent family reasons.

We do have compulsory voting, and so it is the duty of the AEC to investigate the introduction of an electronic system of voting with a digital password that can be used by a voter once - and once only.

The ATO has an electronic system of lodging tax returns and for payments.

Surely, the AEC could have an electronic voting system up and running before the next election.

Every Australian elector, whether they live in urban or in remote areas, deserves to be able to exercise their democratic right to vote, easily and with a minimum of stress, this was certainly not so for postal voters in Maranoa in the last Federal Election.

Sonja Doyle (Mrs)

24/03/2005

Submission

Page 3 of 3

Forest Hill
Blackall Q. 4472.

Ph 07 46575973 Fax 07 46575045
Email jpsldoyle@bigpond.com

24/03/2005

Miskin, Sarah (REPS)

From: Pigurra Grazing co. [jpsldoyle@bigpond.com]
Sent: Monday, 4 April 2005 10:30 AM
To: Committee, EM (REPS)
Subject: Correction in Submission from Sonja Doyle, sent 23-03-05

To: Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters

Please accept the following correction in my submission sent by email on 23-03-05.
The mail service from Blackall to Forest Hill is twice a week on
Monday and Wednesday
Not as I put in my submission Monday and Friday.

Thank-you

Sonja Doyle
Forest Hill
Blackall Q. 4472.
Ph 07 46575973
Email jpsldoyle@bigpond.com

4/04/2005