

# SUBMISSION 180



08/07/2008

Committee Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters  
Department of House of representatives  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

As a permanent postal voter I am writing to you to express some concerns with regard to the returns of postal votes at the last Federal election in November 2007.

At this election on the 24<sup>th</sup> November it was my understanding that the last date for the postal votes to be received by the returning officer was 10 days later on the Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> December, my only other requirement being that I voted before the end of poll on the Saturday. What I was not made aware of was that there was also a requirement regarding the postal date displayed on the envelope. This was not made clear and raises a number of scenarios that possibly meant many rural people had their vote declared invalid through no fault of their own.

1. The case of county mail boxes located at property road entrances where there may only be 2 or 3 mail services a week. In this case it would be possible for those postal voters to actually post their votes into their post box on the Friday before the election but if they have missed the mail truck it may not actually get post marked at the local post office until after the next mail run on the following Monday or Tuesday. This vote would still make the returning officers deadline but would be discounted because of its post date. What of the postal voter who only receives his voting papers in his mail on the Friday before the poll and the next mail run to collect the vote is not till the following week?
2. The same situation exists with post boxes scattered around towns and cities. If the vote is posted Friday after collection time (or even before collection time but the postman actually did it early which does happen) then the post mark on that letter will not show that it was actually posted on Friday. It would show Mondays date.

This is grey area that needs clarification and some much clearer guidelines so that postal voters know what they have to do and are not deprived of having their vote counted.

Thank you for the opportunity to raise my concerns with your committee

Regards

Lenore Johnstone.