

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS**

Inquiry into the conduct of the 2004 federal election

*Chair: Tony Smith MP**Deputy Chair: Michael Danby MP***ELECTION INQUIRY SEEKS VIEWS OF MARANOVA VOTERS**

Voters in the federal Queensland electorate of Maranoa have the opportunity to be the first in the country to put forward their views on the 2004 federal election to a parliamentary committee inquiry.

Federal parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, which is conducting an inquiry into the conduct of the 2004 federal election and related matters, will hold the first of its public hearings in the Queensland towns of Dalby and Longreach at the end of April.

The committee wants those who have something to say about Australia's electoral system to make a submission to its inquiry. Interested parties then may be invited to appear at the public hearings.

Committee chairman Tony Smith said it was appropriate for the committee to go to areas where there had been problems during the election to hear first-hand about what difficulties those voters had encountered.

"It's no secret that postal voting was a problem for many voters in Maranoa and we want to hear about it. We're coming to this electorate because we want to hear about these experiences first-hand," he said.

"Australia has one of the best electoral systems in the world, but that does not mean it can't be improved or there are faults that can't be rectified. We want to hear from people about what they like about our electoral system, what they don't like, and what they think could be done better at the next election."

Mr Smith was especially keen for the committee to hear from those who live in regional Australia.

"Committees often have hearings in capital cities, but I want this committee to go straight to the people of regional Australia, where electors have experienced difficulties voting because of the great distances to polling booths and other factors," he said.

"I want the people of these regions to be able to speak directly to their elected representatives. Too often, the committees meet only voters in the big cities. That's why we're coming here and why we're coming here first."

The electoral matters committee is a joint committee of the House of Representatives and the Senate, and comprises Mr Smith (chair), Mr Michael Danby (deputy chair), Senator George Brandis, Senator Kim Carr, Senator Michael Forshaw, Senator Brett Mason, Senator Andrew Murray, Mr Steven Ciobo, Mr Daryl Melham, and Ms Sophie Panopoulos.

The closing date for submissions to the inquiry is **31 March 2005**. Details are available from the committee's website at www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/em/elect04.

Contact details:

Committee chairman, Tony Smith: electorate office (03) 9724 9222

Committee secretary: (02) 6277 4564.

Committee media adviser: Andrew Dawson (02) 6277 2063, or mobile 0401 143 724.