

SUBMISSION NO. 12

Joint State	Electoral Matters
Submission	12
Date Received	7-10-04
Secretary	<i>[Signature]</i>

7th October 2004

The Chairperson
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Committee Members

Re: MISSING/NON-DELIVERY OF POSTAL VOTE FORMS.

I am writing to complain that I, and thousands of other Australian voters have not yet received our postal vote forms, and request that you investigate this matter urgently.

I have been a postal voter for many years, and have always received my postal vote election forms at least two weeks prior to polling day.

I first informed the Australian Electoral Office some 10 days ago that I had not yet received my postal vote forms. They assured me that they would manually send them out to me. At this point in time and some three telephone calls later **THEY HAVE STILL NOT ARRIVED**, and I have now been informed that AEC **will do their best to see that they will be delivered by Friday, 8th October 2004**, on the understanding that if the papers do not arrive then I will be disenfranchised!!!

Officers of the Australian Electoral Commission (one of whom was an American who did not inspire much hope in me, as she explained the Australian electoral system to me, and suggested that if I posted my vote on Saturday 9th October, it would be still valid, and then changed her mind when I pointed out to her that there was no postage collection in Australia on Saturdays) have informed me that:

1. The Australian Electoral Office has done everything correctly in this matter.
2. The AEC delivered all the registered postal vote forms to a mail sorting house on 20th September 2004.
3. The mail sorting house should have issued all the said forms by 29th September 2004 at the latest but failed to do so, and did not notify the AEC of any problems.
4. The said mail sorting house appears to have been too overwhelmed by the numbers Of postal vote forms/ appears to have lost the forms/ appears to have mislaid the Forms/is unable to produce the missing forms
5. The AEC freely admit's the numbers of missing/lost/mislaid/ undelivered forms Totals thousands, but has yet to ascertain the exact number.
6. The officers of the AEC freely admit that many voters will be disenfranchised by These events, and that such inability to vote may have serious ramifications in such A tight election, especially in marginal seats.

Questions that I would like answered are:


1. Why is there so little publicity about these events--publicity would permit voters to Make alternative arrangements to have their votes recorded.

2. Why was the AEC so unprepared re postal voting, given that it had at least 6 weeks Notice of the election date.
3. Why isn't there a proper record of where the missing /mislaid/ undelivered postal Votes were to go.
4. Why has the AEC been so slow to act even when informed that no postal vote has Been received.
5. Why was no alternative advice given re casting one's vote in the advent of no Receipt of a Postal vote.
6. Why did not the AEC have alternative arrangements in place in the advent of What has happened.
7. What is the Joint Committee on Electoral Matters going to do about:
 - (a) the disenfranchised voters affected by all the above events.
 - (b) results of investigations lodged into these events© Prevention of these events ever happening again.

In my opinion the matters I have stated cast a very serious shadow over any election result. This coming election is tipped to be tight, and every vote counts. It is not good enough to have thousands of voters disenfranchised because of problems in the distribution of postal vote forms, nor for every one to keep quiet about it, and try and hush it all up.

I await your findings

Yours faithfully


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