

20 December 2010

The Secretary,  
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters,  
Inquiry into the Conduct of the 2010 Federal Election  
[jscem@aph.gov.au](mailto:jscem@aph.gov.au)

Dear Committee Secretary,

This submission is to suggest to the Committee that polling booth hours for future federal elections be extended from ten to eleven hours.

At the last federal election in August 2010, I was the Labor Party booth captain at Terrigal Public School polling booth in the Robertson electorate. When I arrived outside the school gates at 7.30am to set up tables and chairs in preparation for the booth opening at 8am, I was astonished to see a line of about 40 people, expecting to vote. They assumed that the booth opened at 7am. They told me that they worked from 8am to 6pm on Saturdays. They included police officers, SES volunteers, small business owners, retail sales people, health and hospitality workers and cleaners.

I pointed out that they could have voted beforehand at a pre-polling booth in Gosford or applied for a postal vote. But they assumed that these facilities were only available for voters who would be absent from their electorate on polling day or would be unable through ill-health to attend a polling booth. Some of them told me that as shift workers and voluntary workers, they often did not know which shift they would be working until a day or so before. Thus they had virtually no time to make other arrangements for voting. Under the circumstances I was impressed that they took compulsory voting seriously and were anxious to cast their vote.

I raised this matter with canvassers for the Liberal Party and the Greens at the Terrigal booth and they also agreed that the limited voting hours had disadvantaged many voters. It seems to me that if compulsory voting is to work to the advantage of every voter, and with so many voters working ten hour shifts on Saturdays, often from 8 am to 6pm, that the AEC should seriously consider extending polling hours from ten to eleven hours, that is from 7am to 6pm.

Yours sincerely,

Lyndall Ryan