



The Royal
Society for
the Blind

16 February 2011

The Secretary of the Committee
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re: Inquiry into the conduct of the 2010 Federal
Election and matters related thereto**

The Royal Society for the Blind of South Australia Inc (RSB), a quality endorsed organisation, is the primary provider of services to over 11,500 people who are blind or vision impaired in South Australia.

Firstly the RSB would like to commend the Australian Electoral Commission for providing a secret voting option, for the 2010 election, whilst not independent or as accessible as the electronic voting method used in the 2007 election, it was better than options offered prior to 2007.

As the RSB has not been provided with participation numbers in South Australia we can only make comments according to our local feedback. Those who used the Call Centre found the experience quite friendly and useable. This method of voting actually provided less independence than the electronic option from 2007 and as a result the blind community were not as motivated to use it. The RSB would be keen to receive the report from the evaluation of the process.

In making the above comments the RSB believe that the blind community is not ungrateful and do wish to vote independently and would like to see a greater acceleration of the proposed timetable for the Accessible Voting Plan for People who are blind or vision Impaired occur. May we suggest that the second stage is skipped and the third stage implemented prior to the 2013 scheduled election.

The Committee may recall that in the RSB 2004 Federal Election submission it strongly advocated that a non specialized solution of accessible voting be provided for people who are blind or vision impaired.

Our Services

Adaptive Technology
Community Education
Counselling
Employment Services
Guide Dog Service
Industrial Services
Library Services
Low Vision Centre
Mobility Services
Outreach Services
Peer Support
Print Alternatives
Recreation & Leisure
Systemic Advocacy

Adelaide

Knapman House
230 Pirie Street
Adelaide SA 5000
GPO Box 1855
Adelaide SA 5001
Office 8232 4777
Donate 1800 644 577
Email mail@rsb.org.au

Corporate Office

254 Angas Street
Adelaide SA 5000
8223 6222

Industrial & RSB Guide Dog Services

11 Blacks Road
Gilles Plains SA 5086
8261 4121

Regional Offices

Mount Gambier
Noarlunga
Port Augusta
Smithfield
Victor Harbor

www.rsb.org.au

The Royal Society for the
Blind of SA Inc.

Currently three states are offering technological solutions in excess of the Federal options to vote. NSW at their 2011 election have offered in home voting to people other than blind including remote and regional.

This solution has the advantage:

- That the cost is not separated and is amortized over a greater number of electors (the federal cost was isolated in the 2007 electronic option and used as the reason to discontinue).
- People who are blind or vision impaired are not isolated from the rest of the community and treated differently.

Technology is available today for an Accessible Voting System for All. Australia should make the decision to be a leader in this area and acknowledge its responsibilities under the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and allow all Australians to vote with dignity and independence.

I would be happy to meet with the Standing Committee at their public consultations to discuss the above further.

Yours sincerely

TONY STARKEY
Government Relations
& Accessibility