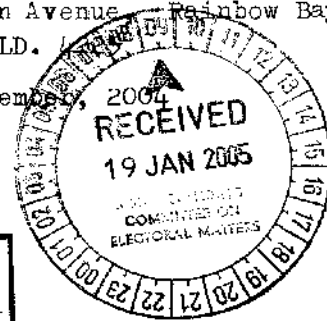


4/45 Eden Avenue Rainbow Bay,  
QLD.

**SUBMISSION NO. 8**

23rd December, 2004

Joint Standing Committee on  
Electoral Matters,  
Department of House of Representatives,  
CANBERRA ACT 2600



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| Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters |
| Submission No. <u>8</u>                       |
| Date Received <u>19-1-05</u>                  |
| Secretary <u>[Signature]</u>                  |

Dear Sirs,

Re. Preparatory Study of ~~MANUAL~~ by Ordinary Polling Officials  
prior to Federal Election held on 9th October, 2004

You will note that no specific payment was made for this, and that the Manual was so thorough and comprehensive that such study in any case obviated the need to attend training sessions. I would, however, invite you to engage several people of average intelligence with a capacity for study (and who have had no prior experience of Polling Station work) to study the 2004 Manual (and do all the "homework exercises" in it) to report back to you on the number of hours it took them to absorb all the material to their satisfaction -- as if they were actually preparing for the job on Election Day.

Myself, this study took me between 16 and 20 hours, all told. I was appalled to receive a reply from the Electoral Commissioner -- on the question of adequate compensation for such study -- to the effect that, in his opinion, an allowance of one hour was incorporated into the pay, to cover the study involved. I believe he gave me this totally unrealistic estimate simply to avoid the Commission having to pay what would amount to additional millions of dollars to all those who were expected to study the Manual. It has been something of a Merry-go-Round to obtain the name of your Committee. In the process, the abovementioned reply may have been sent to my local MP (Margaret May) at her offices (P.O.Box 291, Palm Beach, Qld.4221, Tel.07-5525 0688, Fax: 07 5525 0477). I suggest you contact her to enquire. My copy of the Manual -- heavily highlighted and underlined -- was erroneously sent by me to the Public Sector Union and never returned.

The fact is that casual Officials like myself were instructed to study the entire Manual and to test ourselves on it, and that that task takes vastly more time than the Commissioner says, and that we are therefore owed proper payment for this aspect of our employment, no matter whether it suits the Commissioner's interests, or not.

Yours sincerely,

*Peter W. Hickey*  
Peter William Hickey

P.S. I enclose a copy of a covering letter I received from Mr. Tim Evans, Director of the Elections Systems & Policy Section (A.E.C. Canberra) which requests that an evaluation form be completed by those who served as Polling Staff using the TOPS training package. His letter says the evaluations "will be used to improve the way the AEC trains its polling officials for future elections and referendums."

I returned my evaluation to Mr Evans, and added remarks containing the gist of this present letter to yourselves. I would, however, add that this piece of bureaucratic nicety does not address itself to the question or, more correctly, the grievance raised in this letter.

I did not make use of the CD Rom, so did not comment on it in my evaluation. For what it's worth, if the CD Rom was as thorough and professionally done as the Manual, there would be little criticism of its contents. The Manual itself contained many improvements and refinements compared to previous manuals. In studying it, I noted that full and complete study of it was unavoidable if one was to thoroughly understand the full range of tasks, behaviours and procedures required on the day.



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Dear Polling Official

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) is evaluating its Training of Polling Staff (TOPS) package. The TOPS training package for Ordinary Vote Issuing Officers, Ballot Box Guards and Queue Controllers consists of a Polling Place Procedures Manual and CD Rom.

The evaluation, of which this survey is a part, aims to assess the effectiveness of the training package in preparing you for the work you undertook for the AEC on polling day (9 October 2004). The results of the evaluation will be used to improve the way the AEC trains its polling officials for future elections and referendums.

It would be appreciated if you could complete the survey and return it in the enclosed reply-paid envelope by 24 December 2004. Your contribution to the evaluation is greatly appreciated. None of the information gathered will be used to identify you and any information you provide during the evaluation will be treated with strict confidentiality.

Thank you for your assistance.

Tim Evans  
Director  
Elections Systems & Policy Section, Canberra

12 November 2004

Electoral Matters  
Parliament House,  
Canberra, ACT 2600

Attention BEVERLEY FORBES, Committee Secretary

Dear Sirs,

Further to my letter of 23rd December, 2004, which is now being treated as a formal submission, I have obtained a copy of Electoral Commissioner Mr Becker's letter to me (dated 4 November 2004) which gave rise to my submission, and enclose a copy in case you don't have one :-

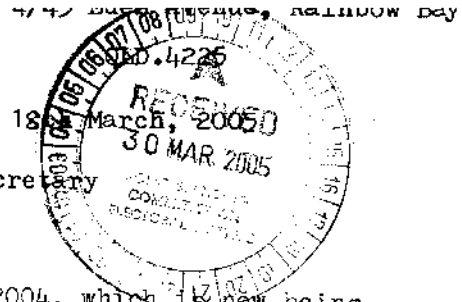
In Par.4, he states:

"Polling officials issuing ordinary votes would also be expected to spend an hour reading the manual and completing the homework exercises."

In regard to getting an impartial ruling on the realism & sincerity of his estimate, I hope you managed to implement the recommendation in Par.1 of my submission (in which I said that this took me between 16 and 20 hours, all told).

Mr Becker's Par 5 talks over the question of "new material" and of "no significant changes to the information contained in the manual ". True, such changes and new material were minimal, but to talk about this misses the point entirely, which is that whether there were new material or changes, or not, it is only by studying the manual in its entirety that the official fulfills his obligation to be fully prepared for the full range of tasks and duties on Election Day. I would further argue -- especially with the revised layout and presentation of the 2004 Manual -- that officials with prior Federal Election experience such as myself were not asked to assume they "knew it all", and so were obliged to study it as thoroughly as any newcomer to the procedures, and to check their understanding by doing the homework exercises.

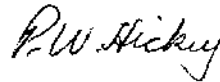
The only way to establish what might be the average number of hours needed to achieve this, is set out in my recommendation in Par.1 of my submission; otherwise arriving at a mean average would be pure guesswork. My estimate of my own "time expended" should therefore only be taken as a guideline.




May I further suggest that Mr Becker's stated and glaringly absurd endorsement of only an hour has, as its basis, a cynical, thinly disguised attempt to discount the idea of fairly and justly recompensing all those who took the study of the manual seriously.

In my opinion, when someone in his position presents himself as someone who is <sup>both</sup> openly ignorant about "study time" and nonchalantly dismisses genuine claims thereto, his suitability to hold that position should be questioned.

Yours sincerely,



Peter William Hickey





Electoral Commissioner

**FILE COPY**

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Mr Peter Hickey  
4/45 Eden Ave  
COOLANGATTA QLD 4225

Dear Mr Hickey,

I refer to your letter to Margaret May MP, in which you commented on the pay rate and training manual provided for ordinary vote issuing officers at the 2004 federal election. Ms May forwarded your letter to my office, where it was received on 11 October 2004.

I do not accept your view that the package rate for payment of a polling official at the 2004 federal election was unfair. The package rate for a polling official issuing ordinary votes or working as a ballot box guard or a queue controller was \$279. This represented a 5% increase on the package rate for similar polling officials at the 2001 federal election.

The package rate is based on 14 hours and includes a component for home study. I acknowledge that staff in some polling places are occasionally required to work longer hours. This can occur when there has been an unusually high number of votes issued at the polling place. In most instances staff would complete their work at the polling place by 10:00 PM. I understand that at the 2004 federal election staff at the Bilambi polling place, where you worked, were sent home at approximately 9:15 PM.

There is no expectation that polling place staff spend 16 to 20 hours on preparatory study, as you suggest. Officers in charge of polling places receive payment for three hours of home study and three hours to attend a training session, while polling officials issuing declaration votes receive payment for one hour of home study and one hour to attend a training session. Polling officials issuing ordinary votes would also be expected to spend an hour reading the manual and completing the homework exercises.

The manual did not introduce a great deal of new material, as you stated. There were no significant changes to the information contained in the manual, although there were changes to the presentation and layout.

It is very important that polling officials familiarise themselves with the contents of the manual. I would expect all persons applying for polling official positions to understand that this is part of their responsibilities.

Yours sincerely,

Andy Becker  
Electoral Commissioner

4 November 2004