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ELECTORAL MATTERS

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters  
Submission No. 101  
Date Received 21-3-05  
Secretary [Signature]

**SUBMISSION TO THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ELECTORAL MATTERS (JSCEM)  
INTO THE CONDUCT OF THE 2004 FEDERAL ELECTION AND  
MATTERS RELATED THERETO**

SUBMISSION NO. 101

The Royal Society for the Blind of SA Inc. (RSB) is the primary provider of services to South Australians who are blind or vision impaired, providing a full range of rehabilitation services to over 9,800 people.

Of these 80% are aged over 65 years. This number of people will increase significantly due to the ageing population. Therefore any changes to the electoral voting system must be mindful of access by the entire community.

The goal of all RSB services is to enable people who are blind or vision impaired to live independently and participate in the life of the community.

Through the Future Solutions project, the RSB actively promotes and advocates for an inclusive society to ensure services and facilities are accessible to people who are blind or vision impaired.

The RSB's clients fall into 2 categories, namely:

1. People who have no useable vision; and
2. People who have some residual vision.

The required access for these members of the community are vision substitution and vision enhancement, respectively.

For many years people who have no useable vision have wanted to independently vote, which is of course every persons right to do so. However, the system that is currently in place forces them to disclose their choice to a second party, rendering the secret ballot as a non-event. For this group of people, modern technology should be made available to allow them to vote either electronically, in braille or some other form of accessible procedure.

For the group who have some residual vision, they can be assisted under the current system by applying concepts such as larger fonts, contrasting print to background coloured paper, eg black and white (avoid yellow and red) and making magnification equipment available for people to independently cast their own vote at the polling venue.

In the 2002 SA State Election, the RSB assisted the SA Electoral Commission by supplying a number of Closed Circuit TV magnifiers (CCTV's) which were strategically placed in areas where the majority of our clients resided.

Other relevant comments are as follows:

**Access to Information**

It would naturally be assumed that all pre-electoral information would be made available in the format of an individual's choice eg: braille, large print, audio-cassette and electronic text (e-text).

**The Physical Environment**

It is important that the venue chosen for polling booths is an accessible one eg: wheelchair access, clear path of travel to reception and the polling area, good lighting and equipped with hearing loop equipment.

In conclusion, there is a need to ensure that all members of the community who are eligible to vote, are able to do so in a confidential manner ie: secret ballot.

Should you wish to discuss the matter at all, I can be contacted on (08) 8223 7170.

Yours sincerely



**ANDREW DALY**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Ph: 8223 7170

ADaly@csb.org.au