

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS  
AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

**Question No. 68**

**Senator Fifield asked the following question at the hearing on 18 October 2010:**

In relation to the Telephone Voting System implemented by the AEC to assist blind and vision impaired people to vote in the 2010 Federal Election:

- a. Were you satisfied with the operation of the system?
- b. Has your office received any complaints about the operation of the telephone voting system?  
Please provide details of any complaints

- c. Will you be advocating to the AEC to review its services for blind and vision impaired voters with a view to improving and expanding them at the next federal election?

**The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:**

a. Yes. As indicated by the Special Minister of State and the Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities this system was implemented as an interim measure with a view to review and further improvement. Commissioner Innes personally used the system successfully. The Commission issued a public statement on 17 June 2010 in which Commissioner Innes thanked the Government and Opposition for working together to secure passage of the enabling legislation for the Telephone Voting System.

b. It is the Commission's practice not to disclose information about formal complaints whereby the identity of either a complainant or respondent is apparent or can reasonably be ascertained.

However, we note that Commissioner Innes has received some informal communications of concern regarding privacy of a system requiring communication of a person's vote to another person by phone. People expressing these concerns appear to have been reassured when advised of applicable security measures and of the AEC's commitment to review of arrangements with a view to further improvements.

c. Yes. The Special Minister of State and the Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities stated, in announcing on 9 March 2010 the measures for secret and independent voting arrangements for blind and vision impaired voters at the 2010 Federal election, that these measures would be reviewed following the election and that the Australian Government would work to improve the system for voters with impaired vision in future elections. The Commission looks forward to continuing to contribute to improved realisation of the right of all people with disability in Australia to a secret and independent ballot. A welcome feature of the amendments to the Electoral Act approved by the Parliament for 2010 and subsequent elections was the expansion of capacity for the AEC to implement further measures to achieve accessible polling processes. The Commission is included in the AEC's Disability Advisory Committee and anticipates being included in the review through this forum.