

# SUBMISSION 3

28 April 2007

The Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600



Dear Sir,

## Summary

1. Habitation Reviews should be reinstated in a way that minimises the opportunities for personation and makes use of existing services that minimise the cost and increase the accuracy of the habitation review.

2. Colocation has removed some of the previous advantages available to the officers responsible for the accuracy, honesty and integrity of elections.

## I. Habitation Reviews.

### 1.1 Why have a habitation review.

The electoral roll will continue to carry names and addresses of people who do not live at those addresses unless Habitation Reviews are carried out regularly and systematically because either :-

- the earlier residents have moved but have not registered their change of address with the AEC.
- the persons of those names have never lived there but the names have been registered at that address by persons intending to vote in those persons' names.
- the ease of registering false names in the period since 1984 has meant that there are many spurious names on the roll which could take years to expunge.

In submissions 35,162, 186 (BK/PB/VB) and 52 (PB) to the JSCEM following the 9 October 2004 Federal election, lists of such names in the Parramatta subdivision of the Parramatta electorate and in the Wentworth electorate were reported.

Approaches were made to the NSW Federal Electoral Office to seek answers to the questions:

- "Were letters sent to the people listed at these addresses?" which should have been sent if they had NOT voted; a few of the residents who were at home when visited and were asked, denied having received letters addressed to those residents of dubious residential status at the same address ;
- if their names were crossed off as having voted, what inadequacy in the electoral system allowed them to vote while apparently being ineligible because they had not, according to the actual residents at those addresses, been living there for at least one month prior to the election?

We were advised that some letters had been sent and some names on our lists had voted, but it appears from our approaches to the residents visited later, that some were not sent such letters. We received no written response confirming which of

the residents on whom we had called had voted and which had been sent letters, so that the responses we had received from the residents could not be confirmed authoritatively by the Electoral Commission.

### 1.2 Purpose of Habitation Review

It has been said that the purpose of a habitation review is to check that the the names and addresses of eligible voters on the roll are accurate and up to date, so that when an election is called those who go to vote may be accurately identified at the Polling Booths.

### 1.3. Inadequacy of the Habitation Review.

The habitation review is only doing half of the job of ensuring that personation does not occur, as no proper identification with e.g. a drivers licence with photo, takes place. Unless there is proper identification of voters at the Polling Booths, those claiming to be living at the enrolled addresses for at least one month prior to the election can include ineligible voters. e.g. voters registered at an address where the resident owner has never heard of them or has been persuaded by other parties to say those non residents DO live there, even if they do not.

### 1,4. Minimising the difficulty in obtaining a quick and accurate picture of changes in address.

It is recognised that Habitation Reviews will miss some residents who will not be available when the Habitation Review Officer calls.

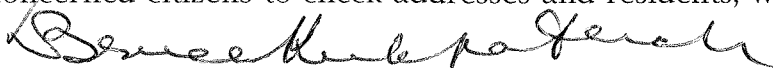
When people change their address they often omit to notify the Registrar General's Office or the Electoral Commission. However, they are almost universally motivated to notify the providers of such services as electricity, gas and telephone of their changes of address in order to avoid being charged for the use of those services by the incoming resident to the premises they have just vacated.

Habitation reviews could be facilitated by reference to these service centres three and six monthly, so minimising the amount of time otherwise spent physically calling on addresses. It is important however that realistic checks be carried out by calling on significant areas of each electorate.

## II. Co locations have some disadvantages for the communities affected.

Co locations have contributed to removing the community's awareness of the presence and importance of the local Divisional Returning Officer and his/her role. By increasing the extent of the roll in colocations, the DRO's previous valuable knowledge of the the electorate which was and is an aid to better control of the detail in preparation for elections, has been dissipated.

The previous ability for interested parties to check the rolls for apparent anomalies has been lost due to hard copies no longer being available except at election time to candidates and members of Parliament. Community faith in the officials of the AEC and particularly the DROs is now more tenuous and doubly difficult where the local DROs have been removed and the roll is only available via the computer with no hard copy from which a street walk could be used by concerned citizens to check addresses and residents, which used to be possible.



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Member and past President H.S. Chapman Society