

SUBMISSION

To the Electoral Reform Secretariat,
Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Second Electoral Reform Green Paper – Strengthening Australia’s Democracy Eligibility for General Postal Voting

The purpose of this submission is to support, with some modifications, the matters referred to in paras. 11.29 to 11.32 in “Chapter 11: Polling” of “Part 2: Key Elements of the Electoral Process” contained in the above Green Paper.

In my view, the question should not be restricted to “General” postal voting. Rather, it should be extended to the whole question of postal voting eligibility, which currently varies between the Commonwealth and the various States and Territories.

As indicated, to be eligible to apply for a postal ballot, an elector must meet one of several criteria. In Victoria, but not in any of the other jurisdictions, one such criterion is to be over the age of 70. The result is that to vote by post in a Victorian State election, the mere fact that the elector is over 70 is sufficient, whereas to vote in Victoria in a Federal election, the elector has to satisfy one of the other criteria laid down for eligibility.

In a response dated 17th July 2008 to a submission on this anomaly by the then ARPA Over 50s Association, the Chief of Staff of the former Minister, Senator the Hon. John Faulkner, stated that the Minister agreed that Federal and State laws on the same matters should be as consistent as possible. I would hope that, when this matter is discussed between representatives of the Federal, State and Territory governments, the other jurisdictions should see fit to adopt the Victorian situation, rather than attempt to persuade Victoria to forgo its existing (and far more advanced) approach merely for the sake of uniformity.

If electors over 70 should become eligible to vote by post without having to satisfy any of the remaining criteria, each such elector would have the individual choice of whether to:-

1. attend a polling place and vote in person OR
2. vote by post.

If they decide to vote by post, they would have the additional choice of whether to:-

- apply for a postal ballot (either by using the application form available from Post Offices OR by using one of the forms provided for that purpose by political candidates) OR
- apply to become a General Postal Voter (should the other jurisdictions so permit).

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Dated, 30th October 2009.