

Submission 31

From: John Meeves

Sent: Wednesday, 9 April 2008 1:45 PM

To: Committee, EM (REPS)

Subject: Submission on the 2007 Federal Election/Focus on Privacy Laws and Possible Breaches of Privacy Laws/ Postal Voting/ /Interaction of Government departments

Dear Sirs,

I would like to submit to the Commission that the AEC has repeatedly for at least 11 years in my view flouted Privacy Laws. This became evident to me when, as a result of old age I arranged for my parents to vote by postal vote.

The exterior of the envelope for postal voting contained full names, addresses, phone nos and details in my view unnecessarily disclosed on an external envelope. I raised this with the AEC at the time to be told that

- (a) the postal envelope could be put in another envelope, then mailed, thus protecting privacy and
- (b) they did not think it was a breach of privacy.

In relation to all information received from the AEC with the postal voting paperwork, there was NO reference to the fact (a) above was possible. Nor was this possibility mentioned on their website. In short, a voter would not be aware they could vote this way. To be honest I would have thought that it is a requirement of AEC to disclose all legal ways of voting. It is reasonably clear to me that the envelope was designed to assist AEC workers in counting votes at the expense of a voter's right to privacy on personal details.

I have been a victim of identity theft and I am shocked that the envelope as provided was even considered as appropriate, let alone used as a standard.

I am requesting the Committee

- (a) Consider if the AEC is breaching privacy laws (or sailing too close to the wind on those)
- (b) If so, instruct the AEC that they must correct the position and abide by Privacy Laws before the next Federal Election and
- (c) If there is a further breach of privacy laws in the next election that the Privacy Commissioner commence action against the AEC on behalf of the voters so affected.
- (d) That the AEC be instructed to include information on "rights to privacy" in postal voting paperwork and that the mailed postal voting paperwork clearly identifies all legal methods of voting and getting the postal vote back to them, and that this information also be included on their website.
- (e) Provide an appropriate envelope that protects privacy with the paperwork for the next federal election

I would like to take the opportunity of thanking the Commission in considering this in advance.

Kind Regards

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