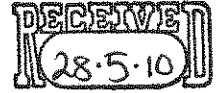


▲

The Liberal Party of Australia
Victorian Division

Submission 19



Robert Menzies Centre
Level 3
104 Exhibition Street
Melbourne
Victoria 3000

Telephone: **(03) 9654 2255**
Facsimile: **(03) 9652 3143**
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28 May 2010

Mr Robin Scott MP
Chair
Electoral Matters Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Mr Scott

Thank you for your letter of 7 May 2010 inviting the Liberal Party of Australia (Victorian Division) to provide a submission into the *Functions and Administration of Voting Centres (including Joint Voting Centres) giving consideration to issues of Location, Accessibility, Participation and Transparency.*

You will already have received submissions from individual Liberal Parliamentarians, including the Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Member for Brighton, The Hon Louise Asher MP.

I note her submission to the Electoral Commissioner, Mr Steve Tully, of 1 February 2007 and the earlier representations made by my predecessor, Mr Julian Sheeziel of 20 October 2006 to the VEC and the Commissioners response of 23 October 2006, together with Mr Tully's response of 12 February 2007 to Louise Asher.

I agree with the representations made to the VEC at the time of the 2006 State Election and in the subsequent exchanges of correspondence listed above.

I note that at a recent meeting with the Commissioner and his senior staff information was provided to me outlining the arrangements being made by the VEC in this area for the 2010 State Election.

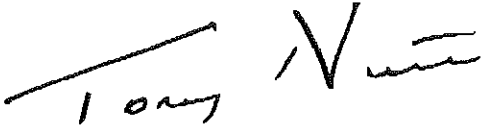
The Liberal Party is keen to ensure that adequate provision is made for electors to exercise their rights and that the difficulties identified at the time of the 2006 State Election are properly dealt with, notwithstanding some additional costs if these are required to ensure fair and equitable access for electors.



I enclose copies of the correspondence referred to above.

In addition, I ask that the Committee give consideration to ensuring that all arrangements for Voting Centres make adequate provision for electors, Party workers and scrutineers, as well as VEC officials, consistent with their lawful responsibilities and rights.

Yours sincerely

Handwritten signature of Tony Nutt, consisting of a stylized 'T' and 'N' followed by the name 'Nutt'.

Tony Nutt
State Director



228-230 Bay Street
BRIGHTON Vic 3186

12 May 2010

Mr Robin Scott MP
Chair
Electoral Matters Committee
Parliament of Victoria
Parliament House
Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE Vic 3002

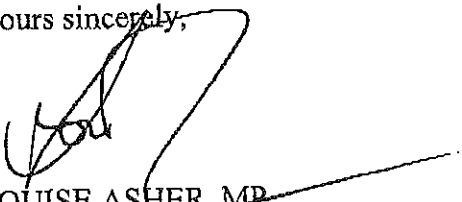
Dear Mr Scott,

Please treat the attached submission from the Brighton Electorate Council (now called Brighton Electorate Conference) of the Liberal Party of Australia, Victorian Division, and the Member for Brighton on the conduct of the 2006 State election, which was sent to the Victorian Electoral Commissioner on 1 February 2007, as a submission to the Electoral Matters Committee, Parliamentary Inquiry into the Functions and Administration of Voting Centres.

I also attach two relevant supporting documents:

1. A letter from the Victorian Electoral Commissioner to the former State director of the Liberal Party of Australia, Victorian Division, dated 23 October 2006, in relation to early voting centres.
2. A letter from the Victorian Electoral Commissioner dated 12 February 2007, responding to the issues raised in the submission from the Brighton Electorate Council's submission to him.

Yours sincerely,



LOUISE ASHER MP
Member for Brighton

Enc.

150 Church Street
Brighton Vic. 3186

1 February 2007

Mr Steve Tully
Electoral Commissioner
Victorian Electoral Commission
8/505 Little Collins Street
Melbourne Vic. 3000

Dear Mr Tully,

Submission from the Brighton Electorate Council of the Liberal Party of Australia, Victorian Division, and the Member for Brighton, on the conduct of the 2006 State Election.

We write to convey our experience of the Victorian Electoral Commission's operation of the 2006 State Election in the Electorate of Brighton.

Please treat this letter as a submission on future conduct of elections in this electorate.

At the outset we wish to convey that the election manager, Patricia Buchanan, and the staff at the Sandringham State election office conducted themselves in a highly professional and ethical manner and we were grateful for their assistance and liaison throughout the duration of the campaign and in its aftermath. However, we would like to suggest the following improvements to the conduct of elections for 2010:

1. Early voting centre

There should be an early voting centre in every State electorate and, in particular, the Brighton Electorate where 2,598 early votes were cast. In the 2002 State Election, 2,553 early votes were cast showing that there is a high level of demand for early voting in this electorate. In 2006 Brighton voters, who called the Member of Parliament's office seeking assistance for early voting, were directed the Sandringham Election Office located in Highett, the Caulfield Election Office located in Elsternwick and the Bentleigh Early Voting Centre located in East Bentleigh.

As 77 electorates had early voting centres located within their boundaries it would seem illogical for an electorate with a high demand for early voting not to have a locally-based election office or early voting centre. Each of the three early voting centres involved a car trip whereas in the 2002 election, with an early voting centre located just off Church Street,



Brighton, voting was central and easy to access including by public transport, with the Middle Brighton railway station nearby. We refer to your letter to the State Director of the Liberal Party, Mr Julian Sheezel, dated 23 October 2006 which maintains that Brighton residents had 'reasonable access' to the Elsternwick Early Voting Centre. Whilst this is true for residents located in the northern part of the electorate, it is not the case for the bulk of the electorate. Whilst we are aware that the property vacancy rate in Brighton is low, there were a number of vacant shops and other suitable premises at the time of the 2006 election.

You may be interested to note that in 2002 there were 1,500 postal votes cast in the electorate and in 2006 this figure nearly doubled to 2,899. We maintain that the large increase in postal votes, which occupy significant resources, is a direct result of not having an early voting centre located in the Brighton Electorate.

2. 'How to Vote' material at mobile polling booths

Current rules allow for every candidate to supply one 'How to Vote' card which is placed in a folder and available for perusal at every mobile booth. The MP's office, and indeed the MP herself, received a number of complaints from residents where there were mobile booths expressing dissatisfaction that there were no individual 'How to Vote' cards available. We are not seeking to have campaign workers present to hand out 'How to Vote' cards but are seeking an amendment to the rules to allow a sufficient number of 'How to Vote' cards to be available for residents who, in most cases, are elderly and like to receive their own individual card.

3. Small polling booths

There are two tiny polling booths in the Brighton Electorate - Brighton South (Brighton Uniting Church Hall, 8 Hemming Street, Brighton East), where 290 votes were polled, and Hampton East (Sandringham Youth Club, 219 Thomas Street, Hampton) where 261 votes were polled.

This follows a similar pattern to the 2002 State Election where the Brighton South booth had 310 votes cast at it and the Hampton East booth had 211 votes cast at it. We submit that these two booths are unnecessary given that there is a good spread of polling booths across the electorate. Indeed, the staffing costs saved by closing these two booths could be diverted to an Early Voting Centre which would cater far more for the geographical preference of where people vote.

4. Preliminary counting error

Throughout the course of the count approximately 1,500 postal votes from the Bentleigh Electorate were tallied in the Brighton Electorate count. The official explanation for the error was that there were five candidates in both electorates and the postal votes were apportioned according to



candidate order. The initial impact of this was a distortion of the sitting Member's primary vote where it was reduced by 3%. The count was corrected as soon as it was pointed out by the sitting Member but the 1,500 preferences which naturally flowed on to the two party preferred vote was not corrected at this stage. Again, this was corrected subsequently but it does reveal a deficiency in the cross checking mechanism of the VEC. Again we make the point that had we had a dedicated Brighton Early Voting Centre/Election Office, this would not have occurred.

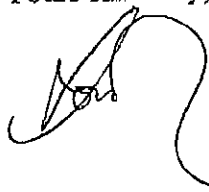
5. Advertising of addresses of polling booths by the VEC

The VEC advertising of polling booths which appeared on polling day needs to be earlier.

The MP's office fielded hundreds of calls asking for polling both addresses which would have been lessened if the addresses had appeared earlier.

We would be grateful for your consideration of these issues in your review of the 2006 State Election and in your planning for the 2010 Election.

Yours sincerely,



LOUISE ASHER, MP
Member for Brighton

Yours sincerely,



MARGARET FITZHERBERT
Chair - Brighton Electorate Council





Victorian Electoral Commission VEC

Our ref: 9253P13

23 October 2006

Mr Julian Shoozel
 State Director
 The Liberal Party of Australia – Victorian Division
 Robert Menzies Centre
 Level 3
 104 Exhibition Street
 Melbourne Vic 3000

Fax: 9652 3143

Dear *Julian* Mr Shoozel

Early voting centres for the 2006 Victorian State election

I refer to your letter of 20 October 2006 expressing your disappointment that a number of electoral Districts have not been allocated early voting centres for the 2006 Victorian State election.

As you are aware, there will be 77 early voting centres operating prior to election day, 43 of these being at Election Managers' offices, as well as 34 additional centres chosen at locations to ensure best access to voters throughout the State. I am pleased with this number and their coverage, as providing early voting access to the major population centres across the State. While it was never intended to ensure an early voting centre in each electoral District, we have made every effort to ensure that voters in each District have an early voting centre at a location reasonably accessible to them.

In relation to the specific Districts you identify as not having an early voting centre, Prahran has nearby centres at Elsternwick (at the Caulfield Election Office) and Albert Park (Albert Park Early Voting Centre). Brighton also has reasonable access to the Elsternwick centre (at the Caulfield Election Office). Similarly, South Barwon is accessible to early voting centres at Newcomb (Bellarine Election Office), Geelong (Geelong Election Office) and Ocean Grove (Bellarine Early Voting Centre). Box Hill is accessible to early voting centres at Kooyong (Kooyong Early Voting Centre) and Blackburn (Mitcham Election Office).

In relation to voters in the District of Doncaster, I am aware that there was an early voting centre at Doncaster East at the 2002 State election. The VEC has conducted an exhaustive search for suitable premises available on a short term lease in a comparable location for the 2006 State election, but none could be found. However, there will be early voting centres at Bulleen (Bulleen Early Voting Centre) and Blackburn (Mitcham Election Office) which provide reasonable access to these voters.



13 Oct 2006 5:16PM

13-10-2006 16:22

FROM-Victorian Electoral Commission

+61 3 9629 9330

T-579 P.008/009 F-420

I would like to assure you that every effort has been made to provide a comprehensive range of early voting centre locations for the forthcoming State election, and I am very satisfied with the outcome the VEC has been able to achieve.

I trust that this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely



Steve Tully
Electoral Commissioner





Our ref: 9253 Pt2

12 February 2007

Ms Louise Asher, MP & Ms Margaret Fitzherbert
Brighton Electorate Council
Liberal Party of Australia(Vic)
150 Church St
Brighton VIC 3186

CR. MF

Dear Ms Asher and Ms Fitzherbert

I refer to your submission dated 1 February, 2007, which provided feedback on a number of aspects of the 2006 Victorian State election. I shall take each matter in turn.

1. The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) hasn't provided early voting facilities in every electorate since 1992, when election offices were established in every district. In our search for efficiencies, we reduced the number of election offices from 53 in 2002 to 43 this election. Additional early voting centres were appointed to areas where access to election offices was considered to be more difficult and where demand was high.

We will certainly consider Brighton in future planning initiatives. However it is worth noting that often we are unable to source a suitable venue exactly where we wish – due to it being too far from public transport, not accessible for those with mobility issues (stairs), not subject to short-term leases, failing to pass OH&S requirements etc.

2. An amendment to the *Electoral Act 2002* is required to enable users of mobile voting centres to have their own individual How to Vote cards and I will draw attention to it in my election report to the Parliament.
3. You suggest that we discard two voting centres located in Brighton, which took relatively few votes. The VEC reviews its voting centre data after each election and will align its data with that resulting from the upcoming Federal election in terms of the relevance of particular voting centres. Having said that, we do try to avoid voter confusion by endeavouring to appoint consistent locations where possible. We will consider this suggestion in our planning for the 2010 State election.
4. The VEC has thorough recheck procedures in place to identify the type of inaccuracy you describe and the recheck conducted in Bentleigh would have highlighted this particular issue. We do note your feedback and will review our procedures for future elections.



5. The location and accessibility rating of all early voting and voting centres was available on our election website and through our call centre from 31 October, 2006 and was constantly promoted in all forms of media – press, radio and television. Research and advice has indicated that many people leave this information gathering until the last minute (a day or two before the election – which was when our website and call centre figures peaked). This is why we have usually published the locations of the election day voting centres until election day (the location of early voting centre locations is published earlier in both major daily papers).

This year we implemented a new voting centre look-up facility, which could automatically nominate and provide a map for the five closest voting centres to a voter's home or location. This facility was enormously successful, with the vast majority of hits occurring on election day itself.

I thank you for your submission and will certainly keep your suggestions under active consideration with the planning of the 2010 State election.

Yours sincerely



Steve Tully
Electoral Commissioner



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The Liberal Party of Australia
Victorian Division



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20 October 2006

Mr Steve Tully
Electoral Commissioner
Victorian Electoral Commission
Fax: 9629 8624

Dear Steve

Early Voting Centres

As discussed yesterday, the Liberal Party is disappointed that a number of electorates have not been allocated dedicated Early Voting Centres. On the basis of the information provided to us by the VEC on 17 October, it appears that there are more than 20 electorates without dedicated Early Voting Centres.

I appreciate that in many of these electorates suitable offices may not have been available for short-term lease, however I would request that the VEC review the situation in these electorates to determine if any accommodation can be found.

We are particularly concerned that a number of very marginal electorates have not been allocated Early Voting Centres, specifically Prahran, South Barwon, Box Hill and Doncaster. The Member for Brighton has also requested that further efforts be made to establish an early Voting Centre in the District of Brighton.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter and for the professional services provided by you and VEC staff.

Please call me if you wish to discuss.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julian Sheezel', written over a horizontal line.

Julian Sheezel
State Director



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THE LIBERAL PARTY OF AUSTRALIA
Victorian Division



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FACSIMILE

DATE:	28 May 2010
FAX NO.:	8682.2858
ATTENTION:	CHAIR, ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE
FROM:	STATE DIRECTOR, Liberal Party of Australia (Victorian Division)
SUBJECT:	PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO THE FUNCTIONS AND ADMINISTRATION OF VOTING CENTRES
NO. PAGES: (incl. Cover Page)	TWELVE (12)

MESSAGE:

If this facsimile is not legible, please ring (03) 9654 2255