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Our Ref

11<sup>th</sup> June 2010

The Executive Officer  
Electoral Matters Committee  
Parliament House,  
Spring Street,  
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Sir

**Submission from Ken Jasper MLA Member for Murray Valley to the Electoral Matters Committee Enquiry into the functions and administration of voting centres, including joint voting centres, giving consideration to issues of location, accessibility, participation and transparency.**

I appreciate the extension of time for this submission.

Whilst I believe the Victorian Electoral Committee conducts the operation of voting centres professionally and fairly, I believe there are improvements which can be made.

A number of issues relating to voting centres, and most particularly pre-polling centres, were raised with me following the State Election in 2006.

Importantly, consideration must be given to the length of time allowed for pre-polling.

I consider the two week period allowed for pre-polling is too long and that a period of one week prior to the election should be sufficient to allow people who are genuinely unable to get to a polling booth on election day to participate in the election, recognising that postal voting is another option for people who are unable to attend, for any reason.

Statistics reveal more and more people are now taking advantage of pre-polling – almost 6400 voters used the pre-poll centre in Murray Valley compared to around 1000 postal voters -making it the most important 'booth' in the electorate. This is surely a clear indication pre-polling is being abused as a convenience for people wanting to avoid the perceived hassles of voting on Election Day, where they may face delays, rather than for people who genuinely cannot get to a polling centre on Election Day..

With research indicating that many people do not make up their mind on how they are going to vote until how they reach the polling booth, it is imperative that they have access to 'how to vote' information and under our current system this means rostering volunteers to hand-out the information at the polling venues..

I also believe consideration should be given to the number and location of pre-polling centres to ensure that there are not too many such centres.

A second issue is the location of pre-polling centres and the ease of access.

The pre-polling centre in Faithfull Street, Wangaratta, in my electorate of Murray Valley, for the 2006 election was totally unsatisfactory.



Accessibility to the pre-polling centre was a major concern, with access via a steep set of stairs, in close proximity to the entrance to an underground car park, or an extremely long ramp.

This made it very difficult for the elderly and people with disabilities to access the centre, and on a number of occasions, volunteers handing out how-to-vote material had to go into the centre and request a pre-polling official to come out to voters who could not face either the steps or the walk up a rise to access the ramp.

Many elderly people were totally exhausted by the time they got to the top of the ramp and others, who had come from the stair side of the building, actually refused to walk up the rise to the beginning of the ramp.

Parking was extremely limited in the vicinity of this polling centre and there was very little shade for those volunteers manning the pre-poll centre, during some extremely hot weather conditions, and they had to cover what was, in effect, two entrances.

Some essential guidelines should be implemented when selecting pre-polling facilities, with particular emphasis on location, ease of access, parking, and shelter.

Yours sincerely

**Ken S Jasper MLA**  
MEMBER FOR MURRAY VALLEY

ksj:jmcg