



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY
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Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into 2020 ACT Election and the Electoral Act

Submission Number: 025

Date Authorised for Publication: 5 May 2021

Submission on
Inquiry into the 2020 ACT Election
April 2021

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I am pleased to be given the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry not only as a member of the public but as a former Independent Candidate. I am willing to appear at a public hearing.

My comments are based on my own observations and feedback from friends, colleagues and members of the public either during or after the election period.

Measures undertaken by the ACT Electoral Commission to make the 2020 ACT Election COVID safe were appreciated. Electronic voting was perceived as easy. The change to legislation to allow early voting was a positive step and well received. If this is continued in future elections I would expect the number and location of ordinary polling places be reduced significantly.

The pre-poll time of three weeks included all weekends and the public holiday. The general consensus among my fellow candidates and volunteers considered this period too long.

Recommendation: Pre-poll time be three weeks with weekends and public holiday (if applicable) off **OR** two weeks including the weekend and public holiday (if applicable).

The efficacy of the six-week campaign period, including restrictions on roadside signage.

The six week campaign period is an incredibly tight timeframe in which to operate effectively. Not being able to obtain the candidate nomination form well before the official campaign period was stressful. It would have been a smoother process if I had it to hand as I canvassed supporters.

During community discussions I was aware of the increase in the uptake of postal votes but it is worth investigating if the decrease in postal services by Australia Post had any adverse effect in either distribution or receipt of completed ballot papers by Elections ACT.

Roadside signage. I consider roadside signage a menace. Not only can they be flimsy and unstable creating a hazard to traffic if dislodged, they are also a major distraction to drivers. The number of corflutes that appeared in the six weeks of the pre-election period was ridiculous. I opted not to create any more clutter.

Recommendation: The six week campaign be extended. The Nomination form for candidates should be made available and submitted before the official campaign period. Signage along roadsides be limited.

Improving donation rules and donation reporting timeframes. Donations from major organisations could be perceived as having an influence on government policies and it may be prudent to cap such donations.

Increasing voter turnout and participation in elections and encouraging political activity. If MLAs visit local shopping precincts periodically (AKA mobile office) during their term of office would be beneficial and I believe appreciated. Not all people want to contribute to formal inquiries so face to face contact informally may provide good feedback on local issues and increase public engagement.

Although a legal practice, voters are put off by the automated telephone messages and numerous flyers stuffed in letterboxes in the lead up to an election. I question the need for automated telephone messages and the amount of 'flyers' generated.

Campaigning activities outside polling places. The pre-poll area is an important part of the election process. Candidates have the right to be present for the public to meet them and ask questions however I found there were, at times, too many volunteers representing the major political party candidates. Signage was also excessive. Voters were overwhelmed not only by the number of people but by how many 'how to vote cards' were presented which caused confusion among electors.

Picture a flock of seagulls fighting over a chip and that was what is looked like. I witnessed voters simply walking away.

Campaigning outside local shopping centres was well received.

Recommendation: Limit signage; two per candidate. Limit the amount of volunteers and how to vote cards.

Lowering the voting age. The reasons for not lowering the voting age as put forward by Elections ACT following the 2016 election are still valid and therefore need not be addressed again.

Other relevant matter.

Changes to legislation: All proposed changes to electoral legislation should be finalised at least three months prior to an election to enable all candidates to be cognisant of those changes.



The amount of money injected into the economy during an election period is considerable. It may be beneficial if election funding disbursement is extended to independents and minor parties - not based on the 4% first preference vote - but rather a percentage of their expenditure, as their effort is just as important as major party candidates. Hopefully it would encourage a greater number of people to actively involve themselves in the election process and governance of the ACT.