



# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE 2016 ACT ELECTION AND ELECTORAL ACT

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## Submission 13

Name – Tim Wilson-Brown

	A.C.T. LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE OFFICE
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**From:** [Snedden, Andrew](#)  
**To:** [Brown, Josephine](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Inquiry into 2016 ACT Election and the Electoral Act  
**Date:** Tuesday, 18 July 2017 9:13:45 AM

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-----Original Message-----

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, 29 June 2017 8:44 PM  
**To:** Snedden, Andrew  
**Cc:** LE COUTEUR  
**Subject:** Inquiry into 2016 ACT Election and the Electoral Act

Cover Page:

Select Committee on 2016 ACT Election and Electoral Act Inquiry into 2016 ACT Election and the Electoral Act

Tim Wilson-Brown

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Submission:

Thank you for reviewing the conduct of the 2016 ACT Government election, and the ACT Electoral Act. Here are my responses to the terms of reference:

Lowering the Voting Age

I would like to see optional voting for young people between the ages of 16 and 18.

I think it would help young people to become politically engaged, without placing pressure on people who do not want to vote yet.

Keeping voting optional until the age of 18 is in line with similar legal responsibilities, such as contract law and jury service.

Starting enrolment at or before 16 also lets young people enrol early if they want.

Optional enrolment could be offered during civics classes at school.

But I am not sure if it is a good idea to add even more things to teachers' workloads:

\* perhaps Elections ACT could provide staff to help out?

\* maybe another location outside school would be better?

Improving Donation Rules and Donation Reporting Timeframes

Donation Reporting Timeframes

The sources of political donations may affect voters' choices at the ballot box.

So it is in the public interest to:

- \* decrease donation reporting thresholds,
- \* decrease donation reporting timeframes (so records are available before elections), and
- \* provide records in a standard format, so that they can be analysed more easily.

I don't think it is a burden for political parties to report donations every month (or even every week), particularly during the election period.

#### Donation Rules

Given the ACT Government's existing reliance on property sales for revenue, and the history of corruption associated with developers, it seems wise to exclude property developers from donating to political parties.

#### Increasing Voter Participation in Elections and Encouraging Political Activity

##### How-To-Vote Cards

It is in the public interest that voters have access to how-to-vote cards if they want them (including mobility impaired voters).

It is also in the public interest that all voters (including mobility impaired voters) have a clear path to polling stations.

The existing 100m rule fails these objectives:

- \* it makes how-to-vote cards hard to find, particularly for smaller parties with fewer volunteers,
- \* it makes some polling stations hard to access through some gates, and
- \* it is also hard to for Elections ACT to enforce: I have seen many volunteers much closer to polling stations during ACT elections.

Instead, I suggest that the restriction is focused on:

- \* providing a specific location where how-to-vote cards are available, that is close enough for mobility impaired voters to access, or
- \* providing a clear path to each polling station from each entrance that is wide enough for a mobility impaired person, a mobility aid, and a carer.

#### Election Signage

Election signage is important for parties to communicate with voters.

But the sheer quantity of single-use election signage is costly, both to parties and the environment.

This is a particular issue given the level of vandalism of election signage.

Those placing, replacing, or removing signs on main roads are also in danger of collisions with vehicles.

I suggest the ACT explore alternative placement locations, such as on private property, or in designated spaces.

#### Any Other Relevant Matter

##### Election Security

It is in the public interest to increase confidence in election results.

Recently, there has been a large amount of media reporting about election hacking.

Example Article: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2016/07/27/by-november-russian-hackers-could-target-voting-machines/>

Some concrete actions that Elections ACT could take are:

1. Allowing for greater access to electronic voting by scrutineers and security experts

In particular, this can be achieved by:

- \* making public more information about the ACT's electronic voting, scanning, counting and reporting infrastructure,
- \* inviting security experts to analyse the ACT's electronic voting systems, whether or not they are invited by particular political parties,
- \* providing additional ways for scrutineers to inspect electronic voting, so they can be assured it is at least as reliable as paper voting.

Any claims by vendors that the technical details of these processes need to be secret to ensure security should be met with extreme skepticism.

Security that relies on secret processes is easily abused by those who know or accidentally discover the processes.

Reference: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Security\\_through\\_obscurity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Security_through_obscurity)

## 2. Using systematic, efficient checks to make sure that the overall result is accurate (a risk-limiting audit)

Before the election, officials choose a desired level of confidence in the result of an election.

The risk-limiting audit process tells officials how many votes they need to count to be that sure of the result.

For elections with large margins, this can be a fraction of the total number of votes.

For close elections, this may mean a re-count.

Summary Article: [https://www.schneier.com/blog/archives/2016/12/auditing\\_electi.html](https://www.schneier.com/blog/archives/2016/12/auditing_electi.html)

Academic Paper: <https://www.stat.berkeley.edu/~stark/Preprints/gentle12.pdf>

## 3. Using voter-verified paper ballots

Vote-verified paper ballots (for example, the Mercuri Method) can make sure:

- \* electronic votes match voter intent, and
- \* electronic vote totals can be audited, and
- \* there is a paper backup if electronic votes are lost or corrupted  
(this could avoid a repeat election in cases where electronic votes are lost or corrupted).

The Mercuri Method allows voters to:

1. vote electronically,
2. see and approve a paper copy of their ballot paper, and
3. not have access to the printed ballot paper (it is typically kept behind glass or plastic).

Summary: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mercuri\\_method](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mercuri_method)

Source: <http://www.notablessoftware.com/evote.html>

In the absence of voter-verified paper ballots, it is unclear what the Court of Disputed Returns would consider an appropriate level of proof of voter intent. As far as I am aware, there are few Australian precedents for court review of electronic voting.

Thank you for accepting my submission,

Tim Wilson-Brown  
ACT