



Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on the Integrity
Commission and Statutory Office
Holders

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into the operation of the 2024 ACT Election and Electoral Act 1992

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Submission to Inquiry into the operation of the 2024 ACT Election and Electoral Act 1992

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Submitted by: Ravi Krishnamurthy

Position: President, Australian Multicultural Action Network (AMAN)

Introduction

The Australian Multicultural Action Network (AMAN) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the inquiry into the operation of the 2024 ACT Election and the Electoral Act 1992.

AMAN represents culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, seniors, and people with disability in the ACT. We are committed to ensuring electoral laws reflect fairness, accessibility, transparency, and integrity for all members of our diverse community.

We acknowledge the ACT Electoral Commission's detailed report on the 2024 ACT Election and commend the Commission for initiatives such as the Low Sensory Voting Centre, multilingual communications, and strengthened transparency rules. Building on these achievements, AMAN submits the following recommendations for reform.

1. Electoral Participation and Access

Improving participation must remain central to electoral reform. While the ACT maintains relatively high turnout, gaps remain among young people, CALD communities, seniors, and people with disability.

- **Expand franchise:** Consider extending voting rights to permanent residents who contribute socially and economically to the ACT. This reform would recognise their stake in Territory decisions and align with inclusive democratic values.
 - **Accessibility:** Expand assisted and electronic voting options, building on telephone and low-sensory voting pilots. Provide additional multilingual and Easy Read materials to improve participation.
 - **Civic education:** Partner with schools, universities, and community organisations to deliver ongoing civics programs, particularly for first-time voters and new migrants.
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2. Fairness and Representation

A healthy democracy requires confidence that electoral boundaries and representation are fair and inclusive.

- **Redistribution process:** Ensure redistributions are timely, transparent, and allow community consultation (Recommendation 3 of the Commission’s report).
 - **Representation of under-represented groups:** Promote greater diversity in candidate selection, including women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and migrants. Incentives or voluntary party targets could support this goal.
 - **Electoral systems:** Review the operation of multi-member electorates to ensure proportional outcomes remain fair and comprehensible to voters.
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3. Campaigning and Transparency

Trust in elections depends on transparency and accountability in campaigning.

- **Political donations and funding:** Support measures to cap donations and limit public funding to actual expenditure incurred (Recommendations 10–11 of the Commission’s report).
 - **Misinformation and deepfakes:** Introduce strong rules addressing truth in political advertising and AI-generated content (Recommendation 8).
 - **Third-party campaigners:** Ensure robust disclosure requirements and consistency with federal frameworks.
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4. Electoral Technology and Integrity

Technology is vital for efficiency but must be safeguarded against risks.

- **Cybersecurity:** Adopt minimum security standards for agencies accessing the electoral roll (Recommendations 1–2).
 - **ICT investment:** Guarantee ongoing funding for system upgrades (Recommendation 18).
 - **Hybrid models:** Explore wider in-person/online voting trials, with strict integrity checks and equity safeguards, particularly for voters with disability or overseas residents.
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5. Accountability and Complaints

Effective complaints processes enhance community confidence.

- **Complaints handling:** Streamline processes for investigating electoral offences, ensuring transparency and timeliness.
 - **Non-voter penalties:** While enforcing compulsory voting (Recommendations 16–17), consider proportional responses that avoid over-penalising disadvantaged groups such as young voters or migrants unfamiliar with the system.
 - **Polling place conduct:** Support measures to prevent harassment of election officials, including restrictions on unauthorised filming (Recommendation 28).
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Conclusion

The 2024 ACT Election was delivered effectively and securely, reflecting the professionalism of Elections ACT. However, future reforms should ensure that all Canberrans - including CALD communities, people with disability, seniors, and permanent residents - can participate fully, fairly, and confidently.

AMAN strongly encourages the Committee to give due consideration to:

- Expanding the voter franchise;
- Strengthening accessibility and civic education;
- Ensuring fairness in representation;
- Enhancing transparency in campaigning;
- Safeguarding electoral technology; and
- Improving accountability and complaints processes.

We thank the Committee for the opportunity to contribute and stand ready to provide further evidence or community perspectives.

Sincerely,

Ravi Krishnamurthy

President, Australian Multicultural Action Network (AMAN)