

Proposals to increase voter engagement, participation and confidence



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The motto of the coat of arms for the state of New South Wales is "Orta recens quam pura nites". It is written in Latin and means "newly risen, how brightly you shine".

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Membership

Chair	The Hon. Peter Primrose, MLC
Deputy Chair	The Hon. Robert Borsak, MLC
Members	Mr Stephen Bali, MP Ms Cate Faehrmann, MLC Mr Sam Farraway (until 9 December 2024) Mr Nathan Hagarty, MP Mr Tim James, MP The Hon. Bob Nanva, MLC The Hon. Nichole Overall, MLC (from 19 February 2025) Mrs Sally Quinnell, MP The Hon. Chris Rath, MLC The Hon. Janelle Anne Saffin, MP (until 3 June 2025) Ms Karen Anne McKeown, MP (from 3 June 2025)
Contact details	
Telephone	02 9230 2601
E-mail	electoralmatters@parliament.nsw.gov.au
Website	https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/electoralmatters

Chair's foreword

I am pleased to present the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters' report on its inquiry into proposals to increase voter engagement, participation and confidence.

Voter confidence and participation is critical to a well-functioning democracy. With the highest enrolment rate of any jurisdiction in Australia, NSW is fortunate to have a well-established democracy. I commend the NSW Electoral Commission (NSWEC) on their great work to deliver trusted and independent electoral systems and processes. With the electoral landscape rapidly changing with societal and technological development, this inquiry gave us an opportunity to look at reforms that will ensure all voters in our diverse community can meaningfully engage in our elections.

During the inquiry, we heard from a wide range of stakeholders about voter engagement, barriers to voter participation, and the security and integrity of our electoral system and processes. The Committee's recommendations cover a variety of matters ranging from civics education, voting information, technology assisted voting, and electoral funding laws.

Inquiry participants told us that civics education is crucial for democracy as it provides essential information for people to meaningfully participate in elections. The Committee recognises the importance of electoral literacy to a strong democracy and notes the current lack of electoral education in schools and the broader society. To improve civics and electoral literacy, we recommend that the NSW Department of Education develops a civics education curriculum as a stand-alone mandatory subject. The NSW Government should also fund the NSW Electoral Commission (NSWEC) to undertake civics education activities.

We also heard extensive evidence about barriers to participation, especially for historically underrepresented groups such as people with disabilities, First Nations communities, homeless people, and culturally and linguistically diverse communities. There was support among some stakeholders to lower the voting age to 16 but also a lack of consensus on reform details. We have made a range of recommendations focused on enhancing accessibility to address these barriers. This includes more mobile polling booths in rural and remote areas, more polling visits to people in hard-to-reach areas, accessible and culturally appropriate voter information materials, and resources for culturally and linguistically diverse voters.

In particular, the Committee was concerned about the high informal votes in Toomelah, a small Aboriginal community in far north-west NSW, where 93 per cent of ballots were deemed informal in the 2023 NSW Local Government elections. We recommend that the NSWEC modifies its electoral material registration checklists to ensure approved how-to-vote cards contain voting directions that clearly indicate the minimum number of preferences required for a formal vote. This will ensure voters have clear information to cast their ballots.

Additionally, we closely examined the role of technology in voting. We recognise that internet-based technology assisted voting is important to voters who are blind or have low vision. However, we also heard concerns about the integrity, security and safety of wide deployment of technology assisted voting at elections. Having considered both the benefits and the risks, we recommend that the NSW Government funds the NSWEC to implement an internet-based technology assisted voting solution for voters who are blind or have low vision. We also

recommend that the NSW Government consults with impacted communities and adopt a privacy by design approach to maintain voter confidence.

On the security and integrity of the electoral system and processes, we heard about the need for stronger privacy protections for voters and candidates. These privacy concerns arise from the operation of current legislative frameworks including the Local Government Act 1993 and the Electoral Act 2017. To understand the complex legal landscape and ensure legislative provisions are fit for purpose, we recommend that the NSW Government reviews relevant legislation with a view to addressing these concerns. We also note that stakeholders are concerned about the integrity risks of using private electoral service providers in local government elections. We are pleased to see that the NSW Government introduced a bill in June 2025 to ensure elections are administered by the NSW Electoral Commission to safeguard election integrity.

Finally, we are aware that the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) made a range of recommendations from its report on 'Operation Aero'. These recommendations are important to strengthen political donations in NSW and warrant a closer examination by the NSW Government. Having heard a broad range of stakeholders mostly in support of these recommendations, we recommend that the NSW Government establishes a working group to consider and respond to the recommendations in the ICAC Operation Aero report.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank all of the stakeholders who made submissions to this inquiry and gave evidence at the Committee's public hearings. Your contributions were most valuable to the Committee's understanding of the issues and in formulating our final findings and recommendations.

I would also like to thank other members of this Committee for their insights and dedication throughout this inquiry, and the Committee secretariat for their support.

The Hon. Peter Primrose, MLC
Chair

Findings and recommendations

Recommendation 1	1
That the NSW Department of Education develops a civics education curriculum as a stand-alone mandatory subject.	
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Recommendation 5	9
That the NSW Government	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• makes legislative changes to implement an internet-based technology assisted voting solution for voters who are blind or have low vision.• consults with the blind and vision impaired communities in the development and implementation of the voting solution.• adopt a privacy by design approach in all stages of the implementation.• ensure that any solution has sufficient security measures to maintain voter confidence.	
Recommendation 6	13
That the NSW Government funds the NSW Electoral Commission to provide multiple voting channels and measures to meet accessibility needs including operator assisted telephone voting, enhanced COVID-19 safety measures, increased accessibility at polling stations, and designated low-sensory areas.	
Recommendation 7	14

That the NSW Electoral Commission clearly indicates the available accessibility features of each polling station on its website.

Recommendation 8 _____ 14

That the NSW Electoral Commission publishes voting locations of polling stations and their accessibility features at least three weeks before pre poll.

Recommendation 9 _____ 15

That the NSW Electoral Commission collects and publishes enrolment and participation statistics of First Nations voters in state and local government elections.

Recommendation 10 _____ 16

That the NSW Electoral Commission works with First Nations community organisations and groups to increase enrolment and participation in state and local government elections.

Recommendation 11 _____ 17

That the NSW Government funds the NSW Electoral Commission to develop accessible and culturally appropriate voter education and information materials, including in-language resources.

Recommendation 12 _____ 18

The NSW Government amends the *Electoral Act 2017* to allow the NSW Electoral Commission to deploy mobile polling booths at state elections.

Recommendation 13 _____ 18

That the NSW Government funds the Electoral Commission to provide more polling booths to improve voter participation in rural and remote areas, particularly for First Nations communities living on homelands.

Recommendation 14 _____ 19

That the NSW Electoral Commission reviews ballot paper instructions in all state and local government elections to ensure information is clear, accessible and easy to understand to reduce unintended informal voting.

Recommendation 15 _____ 19

That the NSW Electoral Commission modify its electoral material registration checklist to ensure that approved how-to-vote cards contain voting directions that clearly indicate the minimum number of preferences required for a formal vote in an easy-to-read format

Recommendation 16 _____ 21

That the NSW Government funds the NSW Electoral Commission to conduct more polling visits to people living in remote areas, crisis accommodations, shelters and aged care facilities to improve voter participation.

Recommendation 17 _____ 23

That the NSW Government amends the *Electoral Act 2017* to allow people serving a custodial sentence of less than three years to vote, in line with the federal electoral law.

Recommendation 18 _____ 25

That the NSW Government funds the NSW Electoral Commission to provide resources for culturally and linguistically diverse voters including multilingual voting materials, instructional campaigns in multicultural media, and staff with language skills and multilingual signage in polling places.

Finding 3 _____ 31

There was support among stakeholders to review the *Local Government Act 1993* to determine whether the option to engage private electoral service providers in local government elections is fit for purpose.

Recommendation 19 _____ 37

That the NSW Electoral Commission reviews the treatment of voters' personal information under the current legislative framework to determine whether it is fit for purpose.

Recommendation 20 _____ 37

That the NSW Government reviews the *Electoral Act 2017* and Local Government (General) Regulation 2021 to ensure that requirements to display or publish an address are fit for purpose and achieve the right balance of individual privacy and public accountability.

Recommendation 21 _____ 42

That the NSW Government establishes a working group to consider and respond to the recommendations in the Independent Commission Against Corruption's report on political donations facilitated by Chinese Friends of Labour in 2015 (Operation Aero).

Recommendation 22 _____ 46

That the NSW Government amends the *Electoral Act 2017* to require duty holders, such as the Registered Officer, Deputy Registered Officer, Party Secretary and other senior office holders to reside in NSW.

Chapter One – Voter engagement and confidence

Enhancing civics education

Summary

- NSW has high voter enrolment and participation rates compared to other states and territories in Australia.
- However, data shows declining civics literacy among young people in an increasingly complex political environment.
- To improve civics and electoral literacy, the NSW Department of Education should develop a stand-alone mandatory subject in this area. The NSW Electoral Commission should also be funded to undertake civics education activities.

Civics education in schools

Recommendation 1

That the NSW Department of Education develops a civics education curriculum as a stand-alone mandatory subject.

- 1.1 The Committee is concerned about the gaps in civics education in schools. To address this, we recommend that the NSW Department of Education develops a civics education curriculum as a stand-alone mandatory subject.
- 1.2 Currently, the NSW curriculums for years 7-10 and 11-12, respectively, do not include a stand-alone civics education subject although we heard students in years 11-12 can learn about civics through other subjects such as Legal Studies or Commerce.¹ The NSW Government's curriculum reform will include compulsory civics and citizenship content from 2027 in primary school but this does not extend to the high school curriculum.²
- 1.3 Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) statistics show the impact of the gaps in civics education. ACARA's data from 2024 found that only 28 per cent of Year 10 students were at or above the proficient standard in civics and citizenship in NSW. This is a drop of 20 percentage points compared to 2004.³

¹ Miss Anhaar Kareem, Volunteer, Make It 16, [Transcript of evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 8; NSW Education Standards Authority, [Human Society and its Environment \(HSIE\) syllabuses](#), viewed 23 June 2025.

² NSW Government, [Landmark new primary school curriculum to drive better education outcomes](#), 24 July 2024, viewed 9 May 2025.

³ Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, [Key Performance Measures for Schooling in Australia](#), viewed 9 May 2025.

- 1.4 Throughout the inquiry, stakeholders emphasised the need to enhance civics education. The Australian Council for Student Voice said that their engagement with teachers and students in classrooms has revealed ‘a cry out for greater opportunities for engagement’ with political systems.⁴
- 1.5 Former Member of the NSW Youth Advisory Council Mr Billy Bofinger told us that civics education ‘drops off’ towards the start of high school. Additionally, the nature of elective subjects in senior high school ‘widens the gap between those who are interested in engaging in politics’ and those who are not.⁵
- 1.6 Current Youth Advisory Council Member Ms Ellen Armfield suggested that increasing ‘political education in schools’ would help young people ‘make better informed decisions’. This is because with improved civics education, young people do not have to solely rely on social media for information.⁶
- 1.7 Other inquiry participants also supported the suggestion to improve civics education in schools. The Law Society of NSW representative Mr Graeme Johnson stated that civics and citizenship education should be prioritised ‘at all levels, not just at a junior school level but at the senior school level’. He stressed this is important as legal, political and social concepts are not simple.⁷
- 1.8 Similarly, Ms Sandy Killick, Managing Director, Democracy Matters, outlined the need for ‘a mandatory K to 12 democracy education syllabus’ that schools can decide how best to deliver to learners.⁸
- 1.9 We consider civics literacy important in school education. A compulsory civics education subject would help address the current gaps and increase civics literacy among young people in NSW.

Electoral literacy

Recommendation 2

That the NSW Government funds the NSW Electoral Commission to undertake education activities to improve civics and electoral literacy.

- 1.10 The Committee acknowledges that electoral literacy goes beyond classrooms and all voters should have adequate information to meaningfully engage with the democratic process. To improve civics and electoral literacy more broadly, we recommend that NSW Government funds the NSW Electoral Commission (NSWEC) to undertake education activities.
- 1.11 The NSWEC highlighted that NSW has the highest enrolment rate and a consistently high turnout rate compared to other Australian jurisdictions.⁹

⁴ Mr Mitch Sprague, Executive Director, Australian Council for Student Voice, [Transcript of evidence](#), 27 September 2024, pp 3-4.

⁵ Mr Billy Bofinger, Former Member, Youth Advisory Council, [Transcript of evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 12.

⁶ Ms Ellen Armfield, Member, Youth Advisory Council, [Transcript of evidence](#), 27 September 2024, pp 11-12.

⁷ Mr Graeme Johnson, Chair, Public Law Committee, The Law Society of New South Wales, [Transcript of evidence](#), 28 October 2024, pp 1-2.

⁸ Ms Sandy Killick, Managing Director, Democracy Matters, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 March 2025 p 8.

⁹ [Submission 35](#), NSW Electoral Commission, p 6.

However, stakeholders told us that there are many challenges in the electoral landscape¹⁰ and the NSW Government cannot be 'complacent' when it comes to civics education.¹¹

- 1.12 Stakeholders argued that there is a need for ongoing education. For example, Mr William Browne, Director Democracy and Accountability Program, The Australia Institute noted that:

Adults are also entitled to expect opportunities to learn about or refresh their understanding of NSW's democratic processes and to learn about how these processes have mattered in their local communities.¹²

- 1.13 The Law Society of New South Wales also told us that a more informed electorate strengthens democratic institutions and the NSWEC should be funded to deliver educational activities.¹³

- 1.14 The NSWEC has a statutory responsibility to 'promote public awareness of electoral matters ... by means of education and information programs.'¹⁴ The NSW Electoral Commissioner Rachel McCallum confirmed that voter engagement is a 'critical part' of the Commission's work.¹⁵ However, the lack of funding 'adversely impacts' its ability to carry out these statutory functions.¹⁶

- 1.15 Specifically, the NSWEC is only resourced to undertake engagement activities such as education campaigns and targeted engagement programs during election periods. This means that there is no ongoing education about 'the value of democracy', which is critical to voter confidence and combating disinformation. The NWEC noted that this is in contrast with other jurisdictions such as the Victorian Electoral Commission and the Australian Electoral Commission which adopt an 'always on' approach to voter education and engagement.¹⁷

- 1.16 We are concerned about the lack of funding for the NSWEC in voter engagement. To improve civics education, we recommend that the NSW Government provides adequate funding to the Commission so that they can undertake educational activities to improve electoral literacy.

¹⁰ [Submission 35](#), p 6.

¹¹ [Submission 11](#), The Law Society of NSW, p 2.

¹² Mr William Browne, Director Democracy and Accountability Program, The Australia Institute, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 March 2025, p 10.

¹³ [Submission 11](#), p 2.

¹⁴ *Electoral Act 2017* s 10(2)

¹⁵ Ms Rachel McCallum, NSW Electoral Commissioner, NSW Electoral Commission, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 March 2025, p 27.

¹⁶ [Submission 35](#), p 6.

¹⁷ [Submission 35](#), p 7.

Lowering the voting age

Summary

- Some stakeholders supported lowering the voting age to 16.
- This is a complex policy issue and there was a lack of consensus on reform details such as whether voting would be compulsory for younger voters.

Finding 1

There was support among some stakeholders to lower the voting age to 16 but also a lack of consensus on reform details.

Finding 2

There was support from youth stakeholders to lower the voting age to 16.

- 1.17 Currently, the voting age across federal, state and local government elections in Australia is 18. The Committee found that there was support among some stakeholders to lower the voting age to 16.¹⁸ However, there was a lack of consensus on reform details, such as whether voting should be compulsory or optional for young people.¹⁹
- 1.18 Throughout the inquiry, we heard from young people about lowering the voting age. They told us that giving 16- and 17-year-olds the right to vote would convey to young people that they are valued. This in turn would help establish lifelong political engagement.²⁰ They also argued that 'taxation without representation' is unfair. This is because 16 and 17-year-olds can work and pay taxes but cannot vote in elections to have a say over how their taxes are spent.²¹
- 1.19 Data from the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People also showed interest in voting from young people. In its 2022 annual Youth Week poll, 61 per cent of respondents aged 16-17 expressed interest in voting if someone their age was allowed to.²²
- 1.20 In addition to young people, other organisations supported lowering the voting age. Mr David Mejia-Canales, Senior Lawyer, Human Rights Law Centre, noted that the voting age 'hasn't been static' throughout history and allowing young people to vote can encourage democratic engagement.²³ The Australian Council

¹⁸ [Submission 1](#), Mr Fulin Yan, p 1; [Submission 6](#), Make it 16, p 1; [Submission 15](#), Human Rights Law Centre, p 15; [Submission 16](#), Run for It, pp 1-2; [Submission 33](#), The Greens NSW, p 2; [Answers to supplementary questions](#), The Australia Institute, 4 April 2025, p 5; [Answers to supplementary questions](#), Dr Hammond Pearce, 7 April 2025, p 5.

¹⁹ Make It 16, [Lowering the voting age](#), p 18 (Attachment to [Submission 1](#)); [Submission 33](#), p 1; [Answers to supplementary questions](#), Democracy Matters, 15 April 2025, p 2; [Submission 4](#), Ms Marelle Barum Barum, p 1.

²⁰ Miss Kareem, [Evidence](#), 27 September 2024, pp 3-8; Mr Zak O'Hara, NSW Campaigner, Run For It, [Transcript of evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 8.

²¹ Miss Anhaar Kareem, [Transcript of evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 4; Mr Zak O'Hara, [Transcript of evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 5; [Submission 6](#), p 3; [Submission 16](#), p 1.

²² [Submission 19](#), NSW Advocate for Children and Young People, p 2.

²³ Mr David Mejia-Canales, Senior Lawyer, Human Rights Law Centre, [Transcript of evidence](#), 27 September 2025, p 17.

for Student Voice said that civics education for young people must be accompanied by engagement opportunities including lowering the voting age.²⁴

- 1.21 We note that some overseas jurisdictions have lowered the voting age to below 18. For example, the UK Government is planning to introduce voting for 16- and 17-year-olds in general elections, with Scotland lowering its voting age in 2015 and Wales in 2021 for local and devolved elections.²⁵ Run For It also highlighted that the voting age in Austria has been lowered to 16 which has led to 'positive outcomes'.²⁶
- 1.22 However, Ms Mia Schlicht, Research Fellow from the Institute of Public Affairs, argued that the number of young people earning enough to pay tax is not significant. This means they are not bearing 'the brunt' of taxation responsibility and may not be mature enough to deal with complex election issues.²⁷
- 1.23 The NSWEC described lowering the voting age as a 'complex' policy issue and noted that the following matters would require further consideration:
- There are currently low levels of enrolment by 16 (0.2 per cent) and 17 (1.7 per cent) year olds although it is not known if this is connected to the current voting age restrictions.
 - Nominating as candidates would subject young voters to electoral laws and potential penalty notices and prosecutions.
 - The relationship between enrolment and inclusion on the jury roll.
 - Young voters nominating other people as candidates or being appointed as scrutineers.
 - The impact on the joint roll agreement between the Commonwealth and NSW.
 - If voting for younger people was also mandatory, they may be subject to penalty notices if they fail to vote.²⁸
- 1.24 The complexity of the issue was also highlighted by a lack of consensus on reform details. Some stakeholders argued that 16- and 17-year-olds should be treated the same as other voters.²⁹ Others argued that this age group should have a transition period and be given the option to vote until the age of 18 or 21.³⁰

²⁴ Submission 3, [Australian Council for Student Voice](#), p 2.

²⁵ [Submission 16](#), p 2; [Submission 15](#), p 15.

²⁶ [Submission 16](#), p 2; Mr O'Hara, [Evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 4.

²⁷ Ms Mia Schlicht, Research Fellow, Institute of Public Affairs, [Transcript of evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 50.

²⁸ [Answers to supplementary questions](#), NSW Electoral Commission, 8 April 2025, pp 8-9.

²⁹ Make It 16, [Lowering the voting age](#), p 18 (Attachment to [Submission 1](#)).

³⁰ [Submission 33](#), p 1; [Answers to supplementary questions](#), Democracy Matters, 15 April 2025, p 2; [Submission 4](#), p 1.

Chapter Two – Barriers to voter participation in elections

Voters with disabilities

Summary

- Many voters with disability require voting information in accessible formats, however political parties and candidates provide few accessible electoral materials.
- Failure to provide voting information in accessible formats can exclude voters with disability from fully participating in elections.
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines provide a standard for developing accessible digital voting information.
- To support people who are blind or have low vision, we recommend implementing measures to increase accessibility including the provision of accessible voting information and improved technology assisted voting which must have suitable privacy and security protections.

Accessible voting information

Recommendation 3

That the NSW Government makes legislative changes to require political parties and candidates to provide voting information in accessible formats in line with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

- 2.1 Political parties and candidates should be required to provide voting information in accessible formats. At a minimum, information in digital formats should align with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. These guidelines provide internationally adopted methods to develop accessible digital content.

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) specify ways to make digital content accessible to people with disability including visual, auditory, physical, speech, cognitive, language, learning, and neurological disabilities. Adhering to the guidelines makes web content more usable for older individuals and users in general.³¹

The guidelines are published by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), an international standards organisation for the Internet. The W3C membership includes technology firms, government entities, and not-for-profits.

³¹ World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.1](#), 6 May 2025, accessed 26 May 2025.

Under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth), Australian Government agencies are required to ensure that information and services are provided in a non-discriminatory and accessible manner. Government websites are expected to meet Level AA of the WCAG current standard.³²

- 2.2 Disability advocacy organisations highlighted the need for voting information to be available in accessible formats.³³ This includes campaign materials, information about candidates and political parties, their policies and platforms, as well as registered materials including how-to-vote cards.
- 2.3 Inquiry participants told us that political parties and candidates are failing to produce materials in formats that are accessible to people who are blind or have low vision.³⁴ Vision Australia found that no information provided by candidates contesting the 2024 local government elections was accessible.³⁵
- 2.4 We heard that failure to provide voting information in accessible formats can exclude voters with disability from fully engaging with and participating in elections.³⁶ Bruce Maguire, Lead Policy Advisor, Vision Australia, stressed the significance of not being able to access information provided by parties and candidates. He stated that 'this exclusion makes us feel humiliated and belittled and the object of discrimination.'³⁷
- 2.5 Disability advocacy organisations told us that the exclusion also meant voters with disability are not informed about candidates and their policies to the same level as other voters.³⁸ Bastien Wallace, Senior Policy Officer, People with Disability Australia said that voters with disability may not be able to cast a fully informed vote. They also noted that without information that is accessible, people with disability may be more susceptible to misinformation and disinformation.³⁹
- 2.6 To address these barriers, stakeholders suggested that voting information should be provided in multiple alternative accessible formats including:
- accessible digital formats;
 - Auslan translation;

³² Service NSW, [Accessibility](#), 12 February 2024, accessed 26 May 2025.

³³ [Submission 8](#), Vision Australia, p 5; [Submission 10](#), People with Disability Australia, p 14; [Submission 32](#), National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA), p 3; Mr Jackson Reynolds-Ryan, Senior Policy Officer, Blind Citizens Australia, [Transcript of evidence](#), 28 October 2025, p 24.

³⁴ [Submission 8](#), p 5; Mr Bruce Maguire, Lead Policy Advisor, Vision Australia, [Transcript of evidence](#), 28 October 2025, p 23; Mr Reynolds-Ryan, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2025, p 24.

³⁵ Mr Maguire, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2025, p 23.

³⁶ [Submission 10](#), p 18; Mr Maguire, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2025, p 23; Mr Reynolds-Ryan, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2025, p 24.

³⁷ Mr Maguire, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2025, p 23.

³⁸ [Submission 10](#), p 18; Ms Grace White, Policy Officer, National Ethnic Disability Alliance, [Transcript of evidence](#), 28 October 2025, p 27; Ms Bastien Wallace, Senior Policy Officer, People with Disability Australia, [Transcript of evidence](#), 28 October 2025, p 27; Mr Reynolds-Ryan, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2025, p 24.

³⁹ Ms Bastien Wallace, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2025, p 27.

- easy read resources; and
- braille.⁴⁰

- 2.7 Grace White, Policy Officer, National Ethnic Disability Alliance, spoke of the need for an intersectional approach. Under this approach candidates and political parties would consider the needs of voters with disability alongside voters with low English and numerical literacy. This might include Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) voters with disability or those with a cognitive disability such as dyscalculia.⁴¹
- 2.8 We note that whilst there is no one-size-fits-all approach to accessibility, there should be a minimum accessibility standard for voting information. The standards outlined in the WCAG would be the most appropriate to use. The Committee agrees with the numerous inquiry participants who argued for legislative changes to mandate accessibility requirements.⁴²

Recommendation 4

That the Electoral Commission supports political parties and candidates to publish digital voting information in line with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

- 2.9 As outlined in the section above, political parties and candidates should publish information in accessible formats. Regardless of legislative change, the NSWEC should be funded to provide resources to political parties and candidates to support their adoption of the WCAG. In particular, resources provided by the NSWEC should be developed through a co-design process with diverse disability populations.⁴³
- 2.10 When registering electoral materials, the NSWEC asks applicants whether the materials are accessible. To answer ‘yes’, applicants must declare that the materials meet the WCAG. The materials are then indicated on the NSWEC's website as accessible.⁴⁴ Materials may still be registered if applicants answer ‘no’, as there is no mandatory requirement for electoral materials be accessible.⁴⁵ The NSWEC publishes a quick reference guide about creating accessible documents.⁴⁶ Christopher Maltby, Deputy Registered Officer, The Greens NSW, noted that in

⁴⁰ [Submission 8](#), p 5; [Submission 10](#), p 18; [Submission 32](#), p 2; National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA), [Answers to questions on notice](#), 14 November, p 1.

⁴¹ [Submission 32](#), p 2; Ms White, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2025, p 27.

⁴² [Submission 8](#), p 5; Mr Maguire, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2025, p 27; Mr Reynolds-Ryan, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2025, p 27; Mr Seamus Lee, Registered Officer, The Greens NSW, [Transcript of evidence](#), 28 October 2025, pp 20-21; National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA), [Answers to questions on notice](#), 14 November, p 1.

⁴³ National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA), [Answers to questions on notice](#), 14 November, p 1.

⁴⁴ NSW Electoral Commission, [Application to register electoral material \(how to vote cards\) for distribution on election day](#), October 2024, accessed 26 May 2025.

⁴⁵ *Electoral Act 2017* s 200(3).

⁴⁶ NSW Electoral Commission, [Creating accessible documents: A quick reference guide](#), October 2022, accessed 26 May 2025.

reality, 'for many people who are candidates the question is probably unanswerable'.⁴⁷

- 2.11 We acknowledge that the NSWEC provides voting information in a range of accessible formats, including Auslan, easy-read guides, and resources tailored for people with intellectual disability.⁴⁸ To support political parties and candidates to do the same, the NSWEC should promote publishing digital voting information in line with the WCAG to political parties and candidates and provides resources to assist them in doing so.

Technology assisted voting

Recommendation 5

That the NSW Government:

- **makes legislative changes to implement an internet-based technology assisted voting solution for voters who are blind or have low vision.**
- **consults with the blind and vision impaired communities in the development and implementation of the voting solution.**
- **adopt a privacy by design approach in all stages of the implementation.**
- **ensure that any solution has sufficient security measures to maintain voter confidence.**

- 2.12 The Committee recommends that the NSW Government funds the NSWEC to develop and implement a secure internet-based technology-assisted voting (TAV) solution for voters who are blind or have low vision. The solution should be co-designed with blind and low-vision communities, follow a privacy-by-design approach, and include strong security measures to protect voter information and maintain public confidence. This can help blind and low vision voters cast a secret, independent and verifiable vote, supporting democratic participation.

Internet-based technology assisted voting is necessary for blind and low vision voters

- 2.13 There is strong support for an internet-based TAV system for voters who are blind or have low vision. Stakeholders also supported adequate resourcing for the NSWEC to deliver TAV.⁴⁹

- 2.14 Vision Australia and Blind Citizens Australia told us that internet voting is essential to ensure voters who are blind or have low vision can cast a secret, independent, and verifiable vote.⁵⁰ Vision Australia described internet voting as the only current method that fulfils all three of these democratic principles for

⁴⁷ Mr Christopher Maltby, Deputy Registered Officer, The Greens NSW, [Transcript of evidence](#), 28 October 2025, p 20.

⁴⁸ [Submission 35](#), NSW Electoral Commission, pp 17–18; [Submission 10](#), p 18.

⁴⁹ Mr Reynolds-Ryan, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2025, p 25; [Submission 7](#), The NSW Shooters Fishers and Farmers Party, p 2; [Submission 15](#), Human Rights Law Centre, p 5; Mr Bruce Maguire, Lead Policy Advisor, Vision Australia, [Transcript of evidence](#), 28 October 2025, p 25; [Submission 8](#), p 4; [Submission 11](#), The Law Society of New South Wales, p 3.

⁵⁰ [Submission 8](#), p 4; [Submission 23](#), Blind Citizens Australia, pp 5–8.

vision impaired voters. They noted that traditional paper-based ballots are largely inaccessible and telephone voting options require some form of assistance and are therefore not truly secret.⁵¹

- 2.15 People with Disability Australia also expressed strong support for the immediate rollout of accessible TAV options, including online voting, to ensure equality in the voting process.⁵² The National Ethnic Disability Alliance said that many people with disabilities are unable to access postal or in-person voting, making internet voting an irreplaceable tool for electoral inclusion.⁵³
- 2.16 Some stakeholders raised concerns about the integrity, accessibility and security of TAV options.⁵⁴ A number of stakeholders also highlighted the issues faced by voters using the iVote in the 2021 local government elections.⁵⁵
- 2.17 The Committee heard that the benefits for people with disability meant that these challenges should not deter investment in a secure, updated internet voting platform for the blind and vision impaired community.⁵⁶ In 2023, the NSWEC released their 'Technology Assisted Voting – Final review report'.⁵⁷ This report recommends the reintroduction of internet-based voting for electors who are blind or have low vision.⁵⁸ As part of the 2024-25 NSW State Budget process, the NSWEC sought funding related to the future use of TAV in NSW, particularly internet voting and to support recommendations made in its report. However, they stated that 'as funding was not provided, it will now not be possible to provide a solution at the 2027 state election'. The NSWEC noted that funding was required in advance of the election because developing such a platform would require market testing, extensive system configuration, and stakeholder engagement.⁵⁹

Ongoing consultation with blind and vision impaired communities is crucial

- 2.18 The Committee heard that thorough and ongoing consultation with blind and vision impaired communities is essential to developing an effective and inclusive internet-based voting solution.
- 2.19 Blind Citizens Australia noted that the NSWEC's decision to discontinue iVote ahead of the 2023 state election without prior consultation led to significant disenfranchisement for voters who were blind or had low vision. Many of these voters were forced to rely on others to cast their votes.⁶⁰

⁵¹ [Submission 8](#), pp 3-4.

⁵² [Submission 10](#), p 15.

⁵³ [Submission 32](#), p 1.

⁵⁴ [Submission 33](#), The Greens NSW, p 4; [Submission 15](#), p 20; Ms Sonia Minutillo, Acting Privacy Commissioner, Information and Privacy Commission NSW, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 March 2025, p 40; Mr David Mejia-Canales, Senior Lawyer, Human Rights Law Centre, [Transcript of evidence](#), 27 September 2025, p 21.

⁵⁵ [Submission 15](#), p 20; [Submission 22](#), Associate Professor Vanessa Teague, p 2; [Submission 23](#), p 5; [Submission 31](#), Labor NSW, p 7.

⁵⁶ [Submission 31](#), p 8; [Submission 15](#), p 20; [Submission 32](#), p 1.

⁵⁷ NSW Electoral Commission, [Technology Assisted Voting: Paper 3 Final review report](#), November 2023.

⁵⁸ [Submission 35](#), p 41.

⁵⁹ [Submission 35](#), p 35.

⁶⁰ [Submission 23](#), pp 6-7.

- 2.20 The NSWEC acknowledged that stakeholder collaboration is fundamental to the success and community acceptance of any future TAV system.⁶¹
- 2.21 Bruce Maguire, Lead Policy Advisor, Vision Australia, told us that consultation should involve organisations with extensive community reach, such as Vision Australia and Blind Citizens Australia. Such organisations are well-positioned to organise targeted outreach through virtual and in-person events, social media, and accessible media formats.⁶² Mr Maguire also argued that the blind and vision impaired communities should have input into all stages of policy and system development.⁶³
- 2.22 Vision Australia and Blind Citizens Australia both support a multi-channel, co-designed approach. They suggested that such an approach is essential to deliver a system that meets the requirements for independent, secret, and verifiable voting for their communities.⁶⁴
- 2.23 The National Ethnic Disability Alliance also supports meaningful and ongoing co-design with CALD voters with disability to ensure voting systems are inclusive, accessible, and appropriate for all users.⁶⁵

'Privacy-by-design' should be embedded in technology assisted voting

- 2.24 The Committee heard that a privacy-by-design approach should be adopted at every stage of any internet-based TAV solution.
- 2.25 Ms Sonia Minutillo, Acting Privacy Commissioner, Information and Privacy Commission NSW (IPC), highlighted the importance of integrating privacy considerations from the outset of designing a TAV system. This involves conducting privacy and security assessments throughout the development lifecycle of any TAV solution, rather than as an afterthought.
- 2.26 Ms Minutillo explained the benefits of a privacy-by-design approach. She stated that it helps map information flows, identify privacy risks, and implement mitigation strategies proactively rather than reactively. This means that solutions are less likely to have inadvertent privacy risks such as unnecessary disclosure of sensitive personal information. It also ensures that the system is customer-centric, particularly for voters with disabilities.⁶⁶
- 2.27 The IPC noted that privacy-by-design should be applied from the conception through to the full implementation of any TAV system. They also suggested that the associated costs of integrating privacy safeguards into any TAV solutions must be explicitly accounted for by the NSWEC to maintain ongoing compliance.⁶⁷

⁶¹ [Submission 35](#), p 35.

⁶² Mr Maguire, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2025, p 29.

⁶³ Mr Maguire, [Transcript of evidence](#), 28 October 2025, p 27.

⁶⁴ [Submission 35](#), p 41.

⁶⁵ [Submission 32](#), pp 2-3; Ms White, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2028, p 22.

⁶⁶ Ms Minutillo, [Evidence](#), 17 March 2025, p 40; [Submission 25](#), p 3.

⁶⁷ Ms Minutillo, [Evidence](#), 17 March 2025, p 40; [Submission 25](#), p 3.

Robust security measures are essential to maintain voter confidence

- 2.28 The Human Rights Law Centre submitted that a nationally coordinated TAV approach would ensure consistent access, security, and efficiency across all Australian jurisdictions. This would be beneficial to those voters who rely on it to participate in democracy.⁶⁸
- 2.29 However, some stakeholders expressed concerns about a large-scale TAV deployment due to security and verification risks.⁶⁹ Despite this, some inquiry participants agreed that the targeted use of secure internet voting for blind and low vision voters is both justified and essential.⁷⁰
- 2.30 Vision Australia urged the NSW Government to fund a secure internet voting system for 2027, noting that it would boost confidence among blind and low vision voters. Blind Citizens Australia echoed this, recommending that any future TAV systems be accessible while maintaining security and performance.⁷¹
- 2.31 The Committee heard that any internet-based TAV solution should have robust security measures to ensure transparency, scrutiny and voter confidence.⁷²
- 2.32 The NSW Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party expressed support for using secure, verifiable electronic voting for those unable to vote on paper. However, they do not support a 'national election technology platform' due to risks of systemic failure.⁷³
- 2.33 The Greens NSW advocated for open access to the source code for any future voting systems to allow for public scrutiny. They proposed replacing section 159(2) of the *NSW Electoral Act 2017*, which currently mandates the secrecy of the source code.⁷⁴ A/Professor Vanessa Teague also supported this view, noting that publicly available source code enhances transparency, as it allows for informed and fact-based discussions about system security.⁷⁵
- 2.34 Further, Professor Debi Ashenden and Dr Hammond Pearce noted that workshops and training on the safety, security, and use of TAV systems would improve voter confidence in the process. It could also help identify features that build trust and understanding.⁷⁶
- 2.35 In light of the evidence above, we consider it important to strike the balance between enhancing accessibility and ensuring electoral integrity. We recommend that the NSW Government funds the NSWEC to implement an internet-based TAV solution for voters who are blind or have low vision. This should be done

⁶⁸ [Submission 15](#), p 20.

⁶⁹ [Submission 13](#), Bega Valley Shire Council, pp 1-2; [Submission 15](#), p 20; [Submission 33](#), p 4; Mr Mejia-Canales, [Evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 21.

⁷⁰ [Submission 7](#), p 2-3; [Submission 13](#), pp 1-2.

⁷¹ [Submission 23](#), p 9.

⁷² Mr Reynolds-Ryan, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2025, p 24.

⁷³ [Submission 7](#), p 2.

⁷⁴ [Submission 33](#), p 4.

⁷⁵ [Answers to questions on notice](#), A/Professor Vanessa Teague, 4 April 2025, p 2.

⁷⁶ [Submission 29](#), Professor Debi Ashenden and Dr Hammond Pearce, p 3.

with meaningful community engagement, a privacy-by-design approach, and sufficient security measures to maintain voter confidence.

Other accessibility measures

Recommendation 6

That the NSW Government funds the NSW Electoral Commission to provide multiple voting channels and measures to meet accessibility needs including operator assisted telephone voting, enhanced COVID-19 safety measures, increased accessibility at polling stations, and designated low-sensory areas.

- 2.36 Accessibility is important to voter participation and confidence in elections. To address diverse accessibility needs, the Committee recommends that the NSW Government funds the NSWEC to provide multiple additional voting channels and measures. These should include operator assisted telephone voting, enhanced COVID-19 safety measures, increased accessibility at polling stations and designated low-sensory areas.
- 2.37 Stakeholders told us that there is a need for a broad definition of accessibility. People With Disability Australia highlighted the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Division for Social Policy and Development.⁷⁷ In its report on Accessibility and Development, they state that accessibility is a ‘precondition of an inclusive society for all’ and accommodating each person’s needs and preferences.⁷⁸
- 2.38 Disability groups and human rights organisations agreed that accessibility goes beyond physical accessibility. It should be viewed holistically and provide choice and options to voters.⁷⁹ Vision Australia outlined the diverse needs within the blind and low vision community and concluded that only a suite of accessible voting options would allow all people who are blind and partially sighted to have the same access and convenience as everyone else.⁸⁰
- 2.39 Similarly, People with Disabilities Australia discussed a range of voting barriers for people with disabilities, including physical inaccessibility, information inaccessibility, COVID-19 transmission risks and a lack of provision for people who need low sensory environments.⁸¹ This underlines the importance of providing a wide range of voting options that can meet voters’ needs.
- 2.40 Currently, the NSWEC provides some options to meet voters’ accessibility needs. This includes operator assisted telephone voting and accessibility measures at some polling stations.⁸²

⁷⁷ [Answers to questions on notice](#), Bastien Wallace, Senior Policy Officer, People with Disability Australia, 12 November 2024, p 1.

⁷⁸ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Division for Social Policy and Development, [Accessibility and Development: Managing disability in the post-2015 development agenda](#), December 2013, p i.

⁷⁹ Mr Mejia-Canales, [Evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 18; Ms White, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2024, p 22.

⁸⁰ [Submission 8](#), p 3.

⁸¹ [Submission 10](#), p 19.

⁸² [Submission 35](#), pp 18-41.

- 2.41 There are limits to telephone-assisted voting as it does not enable voters to cast their votes independently or in secret. This demonstrates the importance of accessible in-person polling booths in addition to a telephone voting option.⁸³
- 2.42 The NSWEC stated that for the 2024 local government elections:
- 33 per cent of venues were fully wheelchair accessible;
 - 60 per cent had assisted access; and
 - 7 per cent did not have wheelchair access.⁸⁴
- 2.43 Stakeholders also told us that the lack of low sensory voting environments presents barriers.⁸⁵ The NSWEC acknowledged that this can deter people who find the noise and busyness a barrier from participation.⁸⁶ We note that there have been trials of low-sensory voting environments in Victoria and the ACT.⁸⁷ We were pleased to hear that the NSWEC was monitoring this situation and considering if it was possible to provide low-sensory voting spaces for the 2027 state election and encourage them to continue to work in this space.
- 2.44 While we acknowledge there are barriers to increase the number of accessible venues, the NSWEC should ensure that voting venues are as accessible as possible.

Recommendation 7

That the NSW Electoral Commission clearly indicates the available accessibility features of each polling station on its website.

Recommendation 8

That the NSW Electoral Commission publishes voting locations of polling stations and their accessibility features at least three weeks before pre poll.

- 2.45 The full extent of accessibility features at polling stations are not always clear, which can cause difficulties for people who need this support. As well as providing accessibility features at polling stations, the NSWEC should clearly communicate to voters about all available accessibility features in each location. This will make it easier for people to plan ahead and cast their votes easily and efficiently. This should be provided in advance of the pre-poll so that information is timely and useful for voters, allowing those that need additional accessibility to make necessary arrangements.
- 2.46 The NSWEC currently publishes the accessibility level of every pre-poll venue and election day polling place on its website. The information outlines whether a venue is fully accessible, partially accessible or non-accessible, that is, with no

⁸³ [Submission 8](#), p 3; [Submission 23](#), p 6.

⁸⁴ [Answers to questions on notice](#), NSW Electoral Commission, 1 April 2025, p 3.

⁸⁵ [Submission 15](#), p 25; Ms Wallace, [Transcript of evidence](#), 28 October 2024, p 22.

⁸⁶ Ms Rachel McCallum, NSW Electoral Commissioner, NSW Electoral Commission, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 March 2025, p 25.

⁸⁷ Ms McCallum, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 March 2025, p 25.

wheelchair access. If a venue is only partially accessible a description is also published to provide more information.⁸⁸

- 2.47 People with Disability Australia acknowledged the existing work done by the NSWEC but called for the inclusion of more accessibility information on the website. They suggested that polling stations defined as fully accessible may not have every accessible feature and this can lead to confusion.⁸⁹ The Human Rights Law Centre also advocated for a more holistic definition of accessibility with more information for people with sensory, hearing and visual impairments.⁹⁰
- 2.48 The NSWEC told us that they will explore publishing additional explanations and a wider range of accessibility information, for example, the ability to access a venue with a pram or walking aid.⁹¹
- 2.49 To help voters make informed decisions about the best voting venues for their needs, we recommend that the NSWEC clearly indicates the available accessibility features of each polling station on its website. They should include as much information as possible about different types of accessibility features and be published at least three weeks in advance of the pre poll to allow voters time to find the information.

First Nations communities

Summary

- First Nations communities face significant barriers to participating in democratic processes.
- There are opportunities to help address the participation barriers, such as providing more mobile polling booths in rural and remote areas, developing accessible voting materials, and working with First Nations communities to increase enrolment.
- Clear and accessible ballot instructions and how-to-vote cards can reduce unintended informal votes.

Recommendation 9

That the NSW Electoral Commission collects and publishes enrolment and participation statistics of First Nations voters in state and local government elections.

- 2.50 The Committee recommends that the NSWEC collects and publishes enrolment and participation statistics of First Nations voters in state and local government elections. This data can help better understand voter engagement in First Nations

⁸⁸ [Answers to questions on notice](#), NSW Electoral Commission, 1 April 2025, p 3; New South Wales Electoral Commission, [Local Government Elections 2024](#), viewed 23 June 2025.

⁸⁹ [Submission 10](#), p 13.

⁹⁰ [Submission 15](#), p 19.

⁹¹ [Answers to questions on notice](#), NSW Electoral Commission, 1 April 2025, p 4.

communities and develop targeted solutions to address voter participation barriers.

- 2.51 We note that the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) has undertaken work to understand the enrolment of First Nations voters across Australia. Since 2017, the AEC has published yearly estimates of the number of First Nations voters on the electoral roll compared to the total number of eligible voters. As of June 2024, it estimated that 96.6 per cent of indigenous Australians in NSW were enrolled, compared to 92.9 per cent nationally.⁹²
- 2.52 While the NSWEC did not provide direct data on First Nations voters' participation in NSW, its submission included data analysis from an independent research study. The study examined NSWEC's data on the number of 'failure to vote' notices issued at the 2021 local government elections by council areas. This data found that areas with higher populations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were overrepresented compared to the state average.⁹³
- 2.53 Stakeholders called for the NSWEC to carry out more work to understand data on First Nations voters. David Mejia-Canales from the Human Rights Law Centre said the NSWEC should track statistics over time to understand participation of indigenous electors.⁹⁴
- 2.54 We acknowledge that the AEC does not currently collect demographic data on the electoral roll, including in relation to First Nations voters. Therefore, they are unable to determine participation rates of different demographic groups. Instead, the AEC uses other data sources to estimate voter participation in First Nations communities.⁹⁵ This means that the current data is based on estimates and may not provide accurate turnout rates of different demographic groups. The AEC told us that it is not its role to collect data on the social and cultural make up of Australia and as such the electoral roll does not contain identifiers such as Indigeneity or languages spoken.⁹⁶
- 2.55 The Committee considers accurate enrolment and participation data of First Nations communities important, as it can help us better understand and address voter participation barriers. While it is not currently collected as part of the enrolment process, the NSWEC should work with the AEC to consider how this data could be included in the enrolment of electors.

Recommendation 10

That the NSW Electoral Commission works with First Nations community organisations and groups to increase enrolment and participation in state and local government elections.

⁹² [Indigenous enrolment rate - Australian Electoral Commission](#)

⁹³ [Submission 35](#) (Annexure A), p 41.

⁹⁴ Mr Mejia-Canales, [Transcript of evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 19.

⁹⁵ [Answers to questions on notice](#), Australian Electoral Commission, 10 October 2024, pp 1-2; Australian Electoral Commission, [Indigenous enrolment rate](#), viewed 12 June 2025.

⁹⁶ [Answers to questions on notice](#), Australian Electoral Commission, 10 October 2024, pp 1-2.

Recommendation 11

That the NSW Government funds the NSW Electoral Commission to develop accessible and culturally appropriate voter education and information materials, including in-language resources.

- 2.56 The NSW Government should fund the NSWEC to work with First Nations community organisations and groups to increase enrolment and participation in state and local government elections. To address participation barriers, the NSWEC should also be funded to develop accessible and culturally appropriate voter education and information materials, including in-language resources.
- 2.57 Throughout the inquiry, we heard that engagement with First Nations voters is limited.⁹⁷ Bega Valley Shire Council submitted that there should be more proactive engagement with First Nations people in rural communities to increase voter engagement and confidence.⁹⁸
- 2.58 The NSWEC recognises the barriers faced by First Nations communities to participating in elections. They noted that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is one of the target groups it seeks to engage with.⁹⁹ In the 2023 state election, the NSWEC produced fact sheets targeted to aboriginal community organisations. It also sought to recruit staff from First Nations communities in its polling stations.¹⁰⁰
- 2.59 However, the NSWEC also emphasised that community engagement activities are currently limited and only occur in the run-up to elections due to resource constraints. The NSWEC expressed interests to do more engagement work outside of the election cycle. However, it noted that this is not feasible due to a lack of funding.¹⁰¹
- 2.60 The Human Rights Law Centre acknowledged NSWEC's current engagement initiatives. However, they said that the underfunding of electoral programmes meant there was not 'meaningful and deep engagement' with First Nations communities in the run up to the 2023 state election.¹⁰² For example, community awareness videos and information materials translated into non-English languages did not include Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages.¹⁰³
- 2.61 Inquiry participants told us about the importance of engaging with First Nations communities. In particular, they said that this engagement should be community-led, inclusive and an ongoing, rather than one-off.¹⁰⁴ Sandy Killick, Managing Director of Democracy Matters called for engagement to be delivered by people

⁹⁷ [Submission 35](#), p 27; [Submission 13](#), p 1; [Submission 15](#), p 12.

⁹⁸ [Submission 13](#), p 1.

⁹⁹ [Submission 35](#), p 14.

¹⁰⁰ [Submission 35](#), p 19.

¹⁰¹ [Submission 35](#), pp 24–25.

¹⁰² [Submission 15](#), p 12.

¹⁰³ [Submission 15](#), p 12.

¹⁰⁴ Mr Chalk, [Evidence](#), 17 March 2025, p 6.

from First Nations backgrounds with existing community relationships.¹⁰⁵ This can increase community trust in the information delivered by the NSWEC.

- 2.62 We note that the AEC has community-led voter engagement programs on the national level, for example, the Indigenous Electoral Participation Program. As part of this Program, the AEC held 266 education sessions with First Nations communities in the run up to the Voice Referendum and had information available in up to 25 First Nations languages.¹⁰⁶ This demonstrates the potential of well-resourced engagement program with First Nations communities. There is an opportunity for the NSWEC to learn from this work and undertake similar programs, if it is adequately funded to do so by the NSW Government.
- 2.63 Given the importance of community-led engagement programs, the NSW Government should fund the NSWEC to work with First Nations communities organisations and groups to increase enrolment and participation. The NSWEC should also be adequately resourced to provide support to First Nations voters, including developing accessible and culturally appropriate voter education and information materials.

Recommendation 12

The NSW Government amends the *Electoral Act 2017* to allow the NSW Electoral Commission to deploy mobile polling booths at state elections.

Recommendation 13

That the NSW Government funds the Electoral Commission to provide more polling booths to improve voter participation in rural and remote areas, particularly for First Nations communities living on homelands.

- 2.64 First Nations voters in remote areas face barriers to accessing in-person voting. To address the barriers, the Committee recommends that the NSW Government empowers the NSWEC to deploy mobile polling booths at state elections. The NSWEC should also be resourced to provide more polling booths in rural and remote areas, particularly for First Nations communities living on homelands.
- 2.65 On the federal level, mobile polling booths are offered to certain locations to reduce voting barriers. The Australian Electoral Commissioner Tom Rogers said remote voter services is one of AEC's most significant projects.¹⁰⁷ For the 2025 federal election, the AEC published data on voting in remote areas including the number of mobile polling stations, the number of votes cast at each station, and voter participation statistics in remote areas.¹⁰⁸
- 2.66 By contrast, the NSWEC does not provide mobile polling booths in remote areas at the state election due to legislative constraints. The NSWEC said that the

¹⁰⁵ Ms Sandy Killick, Managing Director, Democracy Matters, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 March 2025, p 11.

¹⁰⁶ Mr Tom Rogers, Australian Electoral Commissioner, Australian Electoral Commission, [Transcript of evidence](#), 27 September 2024, pp 22-23.

¹⁰⁷ Mr Tom Rogers, [Transcript of evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 24.

¹⁰⁸ Australian Electoral Commission, [Mobile voting](#), viewed 23 June 2025, Australian Electoral Commission, [Downloads and statistics: 2025 federal election](#), viewed 23 June 2025; Australian Electoral Commission, [Participation in the 2025 federal election](#), viewed 23 June 2025.

Electoral Act 2017 does not allow for the provision of mobile polling booths for remote electors in state elections. They noted, however, that legislation allows mobile polling booths to be provided for local government elections. They also noted that the repealed *Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912* provided for mobile polling booths in remote districts for pre-poll voting in state elections.¹⁰⁹

- 2.67 The NSWEC can provide remote polling centres in both state and local government elections. For example, in the 2023 state election, the NSWEC provided remote polling locations in line with community feedback.¹¹⁰ We note that the NSWEC supports amending the *Electoral Act 2017* to give it more ‘flexibility’ in providing remote voting options.¹¹¹
- 2.68 Many First Nation communities, particularly those living on homelands, rely on remote voting centres or mobile polling booths. The impact of a lack of remote polling options can be long-lasting. Andrew Chalk from The Law Society of New South Wales noted that failure to vote can lead to a fine and in some extreme cases, serious consequences from non-payment of fines. This is a particular concern for remote communities, and especially aboriginal communities.¹¹²
- 2.69 The Human Rights Law Centre noted that three remote voting centres were decommissioned in the 2023 state election due to staffing issues.¹¹³ The Committee shares the concerns that fewer remote voting places will make it difficult to vote in these areas:
- The difficulties with casting effective postal votes and the decommissioning of remote voting venues, for example, ultimately compound to exacerbate the difficulties of remote voters participating in general elections.¹¹⁴
- 2.70 Given the importance of providing remote polling options, the NSWEC should be empowered and adequately resourced to establish mobile polling booths and remote voting centres in rural and remote areas. This will help to reduce participation barriers for people in remote and regional areas, particularly First Nations communities on homelands.

Recommendation 14

That the NSW Electoral Commission reviews ballot paper instructions in all state and local government elections to ensure information is clear, accessible and easy to understand to reduce unintended informal voting.

Recommendation 15

That the NSW Electoral Commission modify its electoral material registration checklist to ensure that approved how-to-vote cards contain voting directions

¹⁰⁹ [Answers to supplementary questions](#), NSW Electoral Commission, p 1.

¹¹⁰ [Answers to supplementary questions](#), NSW Electoral Commission, p 1.

¹¹¹ [Answers to supplementary questions](#), NSW Electoral Commission, p 1.

¹¹² Mr Chalk, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 March 2025, p 7.

¹¹³ [Submission 15](#), p 10.

¹¹⁴ [Submission 15](#), p 10.

that clearly indicate the minimum number of preferences required for a formal vote in an easy-to-read format

- 2.71 To reduce unintended informal votes, we recommend that the NSWEC reviews ballot paper instructions in all state and local government elections to ensure information is clear, accessible and easy to understand. The NSWEC should modify its electoral material registration checklist to ensure that approved how-to-vote cards contain voting directions that clearly indicate the minimum number of preferences required for a formal vote in an easy-to-read format.
- 2.72 Stakeholders raised the high informal votes in certain electorates in the 2024 NSW local government elections. The Committee was concerned about the high proportion of informal votes in the Moree Plains constituency, in particular, Toomelah, a community with a high proportion of First Nations voters. Of the 43 voters who cast a ballot at the Toomelah Public School, 40 were informal votes and only three counted towards the final result.¹¹⁵
- 2.73 The NSWEC's report into the 2024 local government elections found that the high proportion of informal votes might relate to electors not placing the minimum number of preferences on the ballot paper.¹¹⁶
- 2.74 For the Moree Plains Shire Council councillor ballot paper, electors were required to mark a minimum of five preferences for their vote to be formal. The instructions on the ballot paper instructed voters to mark a 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 next to the five candidates in order of their preference for them and then further preferences if they wished. However, 39 of the 40 informal ballot papers were marked with a single '1', cross, or tick, not meeting the minimum required preferences.¹¹⁷
- 2.75 Electoral analyst Ben Raue submitted that the ballot paper in Moree Plains Shire had an 'odd shape'. He noted that most candidates were ungrouped candidates but one group nominated two candidates. This caused the ballot paper to have two columns - the single group on the left and everyone else on the right. Mr Raue also observed that no group qualified for a box above the line so all votes were below the line for individual boxes. The unusual ballot paper might have led to multiple issues for voters including not selecting choices two to five, numbering boxes in both columns and indicating unclear first preferences.¹¹⁸
- 2.76 Andrea Summerell, Executive Director, Elections, NSWEC, told us that local government elections have varying types of ballot papers. These papers contain instructions on how to cast a formal vote and are different from area to area and ward to ward.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ NSW Electoral Commission, [Moree Plains: Councillor Election results](#), viewed 23 June 2025.

¹¹⁶ NSW Electoral Commission, [Report on the administration of the 2024 NSW Local Government elections: Part 1](#), p 57.

¹¹⁷ NSW Electoral Commission, [Report on the administration of the 2024 NSW Local Government elections: Part 1](#), pp 57-58.

¹¹⁸ [Submission 36](#), Mr Ben Raue, pp 1-2.

¹¹⁹ Ms Andrea Summerell, Executive Director, Elections, NSW Electoral Commission, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 March 2025, p 26.

- 2.77 We are concerned about the high informality rate in Toomelah, particularly given the historic disenfranchisement of First Nations communities. Voters need clear and accessible information on how to cast their votes formally. The NSWEC should review ballot paper instructions to ensure the information is clear. The NSWEC should also modify its electoral material registration checklist to ensure that approved how-to-vote cards contain voting directions that clearly indicate the minimum number of preferences required for a formal vote.

Voters in hard-to-reach areas

Summary

- Voters living in remote areas, crisis accommodations, shelters, and aged care facilities face barriers to participation in elections.
- There is a need for more polling visits to voters in hard-to-reach areas and the NSW Electoral Commission needs adequate funding to deliver these outreach programs.

Recommendation 16

That the NSW Government funds the NSW Electoral Commission to conduct more polling visits to people living in remote areas, crisis accommodations, shelters and aged care facilities to improve voter participation.

- 2.78 To help voters in hard-to-reach areas participate in state and local government elections, the Committee recommends the NSW Government funds the NSWEC to conduct more polling visits to people living in remote areas, crisis accommodations, shelters and aged care facilities.
- 2.79 Apart from people living in remote regions, voters in other hard-to-reach areas also face participation barriers. These include:
- Voters in crisis accommodations and shelters including those sleeping rough.
 - Voters in aged care facilities, nursing homes, convalescent homes and similar institutions.¹²⁰

Homelessness and voting

A person experiencing homelessness has the right to vote as long as they are an Australian citizen and aged 18 years and over. This means that a person can enrol to vote even if they are in crisis accommodation, transitional accommodation or without access to safe and secure housing.¹²¹

- 2.80 The NSWEC told us that they developed a range of resources for people experiencing homelessness prior to the 2023 NSW state election. These include an animated video translated into seven languages, a fact sheet, and an easy-read guide. In addition, the NSWEC worked with Newtown Neighbourhood

¹²⁰ [Submission 15](#), p 10.

¹²¹ NSW Electoral Commission, [Homelessness and voting](#), viewed 23 July 2025.

Centre and engaged with communities in person.¹²² The NSWEC noted that although they piloted outreach programs with homelessness services for the 2023 state election, there is a lack of resourcing for ongoing outreach activities.¹²³

- 2.81 The Human Rights Law Centre suggested that more outreach programs such as visits to people without fixed homes are required.¹²⁴ The Centre stated that even if voting is not a priority for those sleeping rough, their voice matters and democracy would benefit from more voter participation.¹²⁵

Voting at declared institutions and facilities

The NSWEC staff visit some nursing homes, convalescent homes, hospitals and aged care institutions before an election so residents can vote in person without leaving these institutions.

These institutions are appointed by the NSW Electoral Commissioner as declared institutions or facilities.¹²⁶

- 2.82 David Mejia-Canales, Senior Lawyer, Human Rights Law Centre, noted that although NSWEC staff visit convalescent homes and aged care facilities before an election, they do not visit all facilities or at regular intervals.¹²⁷ He argued that this means people in those facilities may not be able to participate in elections especially when they are unable to access postal voting independently.¹²⁸
- 2.83 The Australian Electoral Commissioner noted some challenges with visiting nursing homes. For example, it is resource intensive to provide voting service bed to bed. Some nursing homes may not want electoral staff to come in as it might be disruptive to the complex aged care services they provide. In cases where nursing homes cannot accommodate visits, the AEC provides resources so that residents can access postal or telephone voting.¹²⁹
- 2.84 The Committee notes that the NSWEC needs funding to deliver its core services before implementing proposals to increase voter participation.¹³⁰ The Human Rights Law Centre also noted the resourcing and staffing issues faced by the NSWEC and suggested an increase of its resources.¹³¹ In the interests of increasing voter participation in NSW, the Committee considers this another area where additional resourcing should be provided to support the NSWEC to perform these services.

¹²² [Submission 35](#), p 19.

¹²³ [Submission 35](#), p 14.

¹²⁴ Mr Mejia-Canales, [Evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 18.

¹²⁵ Mr Mejia-Canales, [Evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 18.

¹²⁶ NSW Electoral Commission, [Declared institutions and facilities](#), viewed 23 June 2025.

¹²⁷ Mr Mejia-Canales, [Evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 18.

¹²⁸ Mr Mejia-Canales, [Evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 18.

¹²⁹ Mr Rogers, [Evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 18.

¹³⁰ [Submission 35](#), p 8.

¹³¹ Mr Mejia-Canales, [Evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 18.

People serving a custodial sentence of 12 months or more

Summary

- People in NSW serving a custodial sentence of 12 months or more are not eligible to vote in state or local government elections despite being eligible to vote in federal elections.
- Removing this voting restriction would bring NSW electoral law in line with the federal electoral law.

Recommendation 17

That the NSW Government amends the *Electoral Act 2017* to allow people serving a custodial sentence of less than three years to vote, in line with the federal electoral law.

- 2.85 To bring restrictions on prisoners' right to vote in line with the federal electoral law, the Committee recommends that the NSW Government amends the *Electoral Act 2017* to allow people serving a custodial sentence of less than three years to vote.

Voting eligibility in prison

	State elections	Federal elections
NSW	Serving a prison sentence of less than 12 months ¹³²	Serving a full-time prison sentence of less than 3 years. ¹³³
Vic	Serving a prison sentence of less than 5 years ¹³⁴	
Qld	Serving a sentence of less than 3 years ¹³⁵	
WA	Serving a sentence of less than 1 year ¹³⁶	
SA	Regardless of the length of the term of imprisonment ¹³⁷	
Tas	Serving a sentence of less than 3 years ¹³⁸	
ACT	Regardless of the length of your sentence ¹³⁹	

¹³² NSW Electoral Commission, [Special category enrolment](#), viewed 23 June 2025.

¹³³ Australian Electoral Commission, [Enrolling and voting while in prison](#), viewed 23 June 2025.

¹³⁴ NSW Electoral Commission, [Other ways to enrol](#), viewed 23 June 2025.

¹³⁵ Queensland Government, [Prisoner's rights](#), viewed 23 June 2025.

¹³⁶ Western Australian Electoral Commission, [Special Enrolment Categories](#),

¹³⁷ Legal Services Commission South Australia, [State elections](#), viewed 23 June 2025; Electoral Commission South Australia, [Special state enrolment categories](#), viewed 23 June 2025.

¹³⁸ Tasmanian Electoral Commission, [Enrolment](#), viewed 23 June 2025.

¹³⁹ Elections ACT, [Fact sheet: Prisoner enrolment and voting](#), viewed 23 June 2025.

NT	Serving a prison sentence of less than 3 years ¹⁴⁰	
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- 2.86 Currently, people in NSW serving a custodial prison sentence of 12 months or more are not eligible to vote in state elections.¹⁴¹ In federal elections, people are eligible to vote if they are serving a sentence of imprisonment of less than three years.¹⁴²
- 2.87 The Human Rights Law Centre told us that the discrepancy between the NSW and commonwealth electoral laws indicates that the 12-month threshold is 'arbitrary' and 'inconsistent'. They argued that this 'undermines the justification' for that law in NSW and 'raises questions about its fairness'. The Centre noted that the inconsistency in voting law for prisoners across Australia can lead to confusion, particularly as there is no 'unified justification for any of these differences'.¹⁴³
- 2.88 The Centre also argued that the disenfranchisement increases social separation for prisoners and hinders rehabilitation efforts to reintegrate them back into the society.¹⁴⁴ This disproportionately impacts First Nations communities given their overrepresentation in prisons. In particular, it can lead to a cycle of disempowerment where the voting restriction reduces the ability of First Nations communities to advocate for measures to address the overrepresentation in the first place.¹⁴⁵
- 2.89 Andrew Chalk from the Law Society of NSW said that fines are a 'perennial issue' in remote and Aboriginal communities and non-payment of fines is a major source of incarceration. This means that small infringements can add up and lead to people losing their eligibility to vote.¹⁴⁶

Culturally and linguistically diverse communities

Summary

- Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) voters face participation barriers such as language difficulties, leading to lower turnout and higher informal voting rates.
- The NSW Electoral Commission (NSWEC) has initiatives to engage with CALD voters, for example the Vote Talk program, but is limited to short term funding.
- Adequate funding is needed for the NSWEC to provide ongoing voter education and address gaps in civics education for new migrants.

¹⁴⁰ Northern Territory Electoral Commission, [Enrol or update your enrolment](#), viewed 23 June 2025.

¹⁴¹ *Electoral Act 2017* s 30(4).

¹⁴² *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (Cth) s 93(8AA).

¹⁴³ [Submission 15](#), p 24.

¹⁴⁴ [Submission 15](#), p 23.

¹⁴⁵ [Submission 15](#), p 23.

¹⁴⁶ Mr Chalk, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2024, p 7.

Recommendation 18

That the NSW Government funds the NSW Electoral Commission to provide resources for culturally and linguistically diverse voters including multilingual voting materials, instructional campaigns in multicultural media, and staff with language skills and multilingual signage in polling places.

2.90 NSW is a proudly multicultural state. The Committee considers that more support should be provided to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) voters to ensure that they can fully engage with the electoral process. We recommend that the NSW Government funds the NSWEC to provide resources specifically tailored for CALD voters. This can include multilingual voting materials and instructional campaigns, and polling places equipped with multilingual signage and staff.

2.91 The NSWEC does broadly conduct voter education and outreach programs, but it is only resourced to do so in the lead-up to general elections. This means that these programs are time-limited and dependent on short-term election funding.¹⁴⁷ Ongoing and adequately resourced outreach programs are essential to enhance engagement, education, and trust-building within communities.¹⁴⁸ The NSWEC said:

Maintaining ongoing conversations and education about the value of democracy are critical to maintaining confidence in our electoral system and inoculating the electorate against disinformation.¹⁴⁹

2.92 Although there is a general need for voter education and outreach programs, targeted initiatives would also particularly benefit CALD communities. The NSWEC recognises that the integrity of democracy in NSW relies on strong voter participation and that CALD communities face greater barriers to participating. It works with individuals, community organisations, and advocacy groups to reduce or remove these barriers.¹⁵⁰ The Committee considers that increased funding will help the NSWEC provide more effective, culturally appropriate support to CALD communities.

Language barriers impact voting and confidence in the electoral system

2.93 NSW is one of the most culturally diverse states in the world.¹⁵¹ More than two million of its residents were born overseas, with over 283 languages spoken across the state.¹⁵² Additionally, 29.5 per cent of households speak languages other than English.¹⁵³ Nationally, more than seven million people, or 28 per cent of Australia's population, were born overseas.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁷ [Submission 35](#), pp 7-14; [Answers to supplementary questions](#), NSW Electoral Commission, 8 April 2025, p 4.

¹⁴⁸ [Submission 35](#), p 8.

¹⁴⁹ [Submission 35](#), p 7.

¹⁵⁰ [Submission 35](#), p 16.

¹⁵¹ Multicultural NSW, [Communities](#), viewed 5 May 2025.

¹⁵² Multicultural NSW, [Communities](#), viewed 5 May 2025.

¹⁵³ [Submission 31](#), p 8.

¹⁵⁴ Australian Electoral Commission, [Submission to the inquiry into civics education, engagement and participation in Australia](#), May 2024, viewed 22 May 2025, p 12 (Attachment to [Submission 27](#)).

- 2.94 These figures highlight the strong presence of CALD communities in NSW and underscore the importance of an electoral system that supports this diversity.
- 2.95 The voting process in NSW remains heavily dependent on English literacy.¹⁵⁵ This poses a significant barrier to voter participation, especially for newly arrived migrants with limited English proficiency or voters unfamiliar with the Australian electoral system.¹⁵⁶ Language barriers are structural impediments to electoral participation, and can lead to confusion, reduced voter turnout, and unintended informal voting.
- 2.96 The NSWEC reported that people from CALD backgrounds frequently cite language barriers as a significant obstacle to their full democratic participation. CALD voters highlight the need for in-language support on voting information, including candidates, parties, early voting, and ballot papers.¹⁵⁷
- 2.97 In an in-language survey of the 2023 NSW state election, only 73 per cent of voters from Mandarin, Arabic, and Cantonese-speaking backgrounds said it was 'very or fairly easy' to vote, compared to 90 per cent of the overall voter population.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, 54 per cent of CALD respondents reported they could not find voting information in their preferred language, and 53 per cent said there was insufficient in-language information about candidates.¹⁵⁹
- 2.98 NSW Labor highlighted that during the 2023 NSW state election, the highest informal voting rates were in CALD districts including:
- 7.1 per cent in Fairfield;
 - 6.6 per cent in Bankstown and
 - 6.6 per cent in Auburn.¹⁶⁰
- 2.99 This is more than double the state average of 3.28 per cent.¹⁶¹
- 2.100 Apart from the impact on electoral participation, language barriers also hinder trust and confidence in the electoral process.¹⁶² At the 2023 state general election, the NSWEC ran an awareness campaign aimed at combatting misinformation and disinformation – the 'Stop and consider' campaign. According to an evaluation of this campaign, individuals who speak a language other than English are more likely to suspect misconduct, including ballot tampering and mishandled postal votes.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁵ [Submission 32](#), p 2.

¹⁵⁶ Australian Electoral Commission, [Submission to the inquiry into civics education, engagement and participation in Australia](#), May 2024, viewed 22 May 2025, p 12 (Attachment to [Submission 27](#)).

¹⁵⁷ [Submission 35](#) (Annexure A), p 44.

¹⁵⁸ [Submission 35](#) (Annexure A), p 44.

¹⁵⁹ [Submission 35](#) (Annexure A), p 44.

¹⁶⁰ [Submission 31](#), p 8

¹⁶¹ [Submission 31](#), p 8.

¹⁶² [Submission 35](#) (Annexure A), p 44.

¹⁶³ [Submission 35](#) (Annexure A), p 44.

- 2.101 It is important to note that these findings were not the same across all CALD communities and trust in the electoral system varies significantly across language groups. While 94 per cent of Mandarin speakers reported trust in the process, only 20 per cent of Arabic speakers did, and just 38 per cent of Arabic speakers trusted the election results. Satisfaction with the voting experience was also high among Mandarin speakers (96 per cent) but lower for Cantonese (79 per cent) and Arabic speakers (86 per cent).¹⁶⁴
- 2.102 Working with CALD communities to address participation barriers can strengthen trust in elections and improve perceptions of government at all levels.¹⁶⁵ We heard that targeted approaches and tailored engagement are essential to reach women, youth and elderly voters in CALD communities.¹⁶⁶
- 2.103 Labor NSW emphasised the need for enhanced multicultural media, multilingual signage, and more language-skilled staff to assist voters.¹⁶⁷ Similarly, Democracy Matters stressed the need for bilingual staff in polling places to educate voters and demystify electoral processes.¹⁶⁸
- 2.104 Ms Charishma Kaliyanda MP noted that there is limited formal civics education for new migrants and refugees. She argues that addressing this gap would increase voter engagement and participation.¹⁶⁹
- 2.105 Democracy Matters observed that many people migrate to Australia seeking a more stable and effective democracy. As such, there is a clear 'appetite' for non-partisan, non-adversarial voter education sessions that provide an overview of the electoral system and allow for questions. Such programs could reduce informal votes and enhance community trust in the electoral process and the organisations managing it.¹⁷⁰

Existing efforts to support CALD voters

- 2.106 CALD communities are a priority cohort for NSWEC's voter awareness campaigns. The Commission has made efforts to improve engagement with CALD voters though they are limited to election periods because of funding constraints.¹⁷¹
- 2.107 Current engagement programs include:
- multilingual communications in the top 26 languages in NSW;¹⁷²

¹⁶⁴ [Submission 35](#), p 44.

¹⁶⁵ [Submission 35](#) (Annexure A) p 44.

¹⁶⁶ Australian Electoral Commission, [Submission to the inquiry into civics education, engagement and participation in Australia](#), May 2024, viewed 22 May 2025, p 12 (Attachment to [Submission 27](#)).

¹⁶⁷ [Submission 31](#), p 8.

¹⁶⁸ [Submission 30](#), Democracy Matters, p 3.

¹⁶⁹ [Submission 20](#), Charishma Kaliyanda MP, p 3.

¹⁷⁰ [Submission 30](#), pp 2-3.

¹⁷¹ [Submission 35](#), pp 13-14.

¹⁷² [Submission 35](#), p 16.

- in-language awareness videos in Arabic, Cantonese, Greek, Italian, Korean, Mandarin, and Vietnamese;¹⁷³
- 'vote here' banners in multiple languages at select voting centres;¹⁷⁴
- translated stakeholder packs with in-language resources, key messages and available assistance in the seven most widely spoken languages;¹⁷⁵
- translating and interpreting services for voter support; and¹⁷⁶
- the Vote Talk program with the Ethnic Communities Council of NSW.¹⁷⁷

Vote Talk

The NSWEC partnered with the Ethnic Communities Council of NSW (ECCNSW) to deliver the Vote Talk program during 2023 NSW state election and the 2024 local government elections.¹⁷⁸ The ECCNSW is the peak body for CALD communities in NSW.¹⁷⁹

Vote Talk is a series of community-led initiatives focused on education, engagement, and communication about voting and elections. The program aims to make elections and voting simple and easy for everyone to understand.¹⁸⁰

Through tailored information, public podcasts, and community discussions, Vote Talk increases awareness of the electoral process and improves voting knowledge and participation among CALD Australian citizens aged 18 and over.¹⁸¹

As part of the 2023 NSW state election, the Vote Talk program featured:

- 24 in-language podcasts in the seven most spoken languages in NSW among people with low English proficiency.
- community engagement sessions, reaching 505 participants across 30 sessions in six languages.
- pre-recorded in-language messages on how to complete ballot papers, broadcast on community radio.¹⁸²

For the 2024 local government elections, the Vote Talk program was expanded to include:

¹⁷³ [Submission 35](#), p 17.

¹⁷⁴ [Submission 35](#), p 17.

¹⁷⁵ [Submission 35](#), p 17.

¹⁷⁶ [Submission 35](#), p 17.

¹⁷⁷ [Submission 35](#), p 17.

¹⁷⁸ [Submission 35](#), p 17; [Answers to supplementary questions](#), NSW Electoral Commission, 8 April 2025, p 5.

¹⁷⁹ [Answers to supplementary questions](#), NSW Electoral Commission, 8 April 2025, p 5.

¹⁸⁰ ECCNSW Vote Talk, [What is Vote Talk](#), viewed 20 April 2025.

¹⁸¹ [Submission 35](#), p 17.

¹⁸² [Submission 35](#), p 17.

- community engagement sessions, reaching out to 1,228 individuals in over 80 in-language sessions delivered in eight languages.
- 36 in-language radio interviews broadcast across community radio stations in the six weeks leading up to the elections.
- collaboration with local ethnic social media platforms and online community influencers.¹⁸³

The NSWEC reported that evaluation of the program showed positive results. Participants' confidence and knowledge of voting options and the voting process increased from 25 per cent before the program to 84.7 per cent after. Additionally, preparedness to vote rose from 33.8 per cent before the program to 81.4 per cent after.¹⁸⁴

- 2.108 For the 2024 local government elections, the NSWEC piloted a new community partnership with Metro Assist. This community organisation in southwest Sydney has over 35 years of experience providing services to CALD and migrant communities.¹⁸⁵
- 2.109 The program's objective was to improve knowledge of, and trust and confidence in electoral and democratic systems within CALD communities.¹⁸⁶ It included:
- community education sessions attended by 169 participants;
 - a targeted in-language local print campaign that reached over 124,000 readers;
 - paid social media campaign targeting CALD communities that reached 214,8000 users; and
 - campaign messaging through Metro Assist's social platforms, reaching over 58,000 readers.¹⁸⁷
- 2.110 The NSWEC actively recruits staff who speak languages other than English to assist voters in polling booths.¹⁸⁸ Of the 21,000 staff who worked at the 2023 NSW state election, 6,684 spoke a language other than English.¹⁸⁹
- 2.111 However, the NSWEC expressed concerns over resourcing for stakeholder engagement. The NSWEC told us that that there are only two full-time staff focused on engagement, particularly election-period communications. However, six to eight full-time permanent staff members would be better resourced to

¹⁸³ [Answers to supplementary questions](#), NSW Electoral Commission, 8 April 2025, p 5.

¹⁸⁴ [Answers to supplementary questions](#), NSW Electoral Commission, 8 April 2025, p 5.

¹⁸⁵ [Answers to supplementary questions](#), NSW Electoral Commission, 8 April 2025, p 5.

¹⁸⁶ [Answers to supplementary questions](#), NSW Electoral Commission, 8 April 2025, p 5.

¹⁸⁷ [Answers to supplementary questions](#), NSW Electoral Commission, 8 April 2025, p 6.

¹⁸⁸ [Answers to supplementary questions](#), NSW Electoral Commission, p 7; [Submission 35](#), p 19.

¹⁸⁹ [Submission 35](#), p 19.

reducing barriers to engagement in electoral processes, build partnerships and deliver broader educational initiatives.¹⁹⁰

- 2.112 The Committee acknowledges that ongoing, well-funded engagement programs are critical to enhancing voter participation. We commend the NSWEC for the work that they do, with the resources available to them. The evidence above shows the positive impact of such programs and a clear need to do more. Therefore, we recommend that the NSW Government adequately funds the NSWEC to provide multilingual voting materials, campaigns in multicultural media, and language-skilled staff and signage at polling stations.

¹⁹⁰ [Submission 35](#), p 44-45.

Chapter Three – Security and integrity of the electoral system and processes

Using private providers to facilitate local government elections

Summary

- Stakeholders are concerned about using private electoral service providers in NSW local government elections, citing risks to electoral integrity, transparency, accessibility, and trust.
- The NSW Electoral Commission is widely trusted to deliver fair, inclusive, and secure elections.
- Many stakeholders support a review of the *Local Government Act 1993* to assess whether the option to outsource the administration of elections remains appropriate.

Finding 3

There was support among stakeholders to review the *Local Government Act 1993* to determine whether the option to engage private electoral service providers in local government elections is fit for purpose.

3.1 Stakeholders shared concerns about the use of private electoral service providers in local government elections. Local Government NSW (LGNSW) explained that the primary motivation for using private providers was to achieve cost savings.¹⁹¹ However, other stakeholders raised concerns regarding:

- electoral integrity;¹⁹²
- accessibility and consistency;¹⁹³
- transparency;¹⁹⁴ and
- trust and confidence.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹¹ Cr Penny Pedersen, Board Director, Local Government NSW, [Transcript of evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 34.

¹⁹² Mr Anthony McMahon, Chief Executive Officer, Bega Valley Shire Council, [Transcript of evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 34; Ms Rachel McCallum, NSW Electoral Commissioner, NSW Electoral Commission, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 March 2025, p 28; [Submission 30](#), Democracy Matters, p 7.

¹⁹³ Mr Jackson Reynolds-Ryan, Senior Policy Officer, Blind Citizens Australia, [Transcript of evidence](#), 28 October 2024, p 28; [Submission 20](#), Ms Charishma Kaliyanda MP, p 3; Mr Anthony McMahon, Chief Executive Officer, Bega Valley Shire Council, [Transcript of evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 34; Ms Andrea Summerell, Executive Director, Elections, NSW Electoral Commission, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 March 2025, p 29.

¹⁹⁴ [Submission 20](#), p 2.

¹⁹⁵ [Submission 30](#), p 7; [Submission 20](#), p 2.

- 3.2 We heard that there should be a review of the *Local Government Act 1993* to ensure that the use of private electoral service providers is suitable and democratic processes are adequately protected.¹⁹⁶
- 3.3 Currently, under Sections 296A and 296AA of the *Local Government Act 1993*, councils may engage private electoral service providers instead of the NSWEC.¹⁹⁷ These amendments were made to the Act in 2011, ahead of the 2012 local government elections.¹⁹⁸

Local Government Amendment (Elections) Bill 2025

On 4 June 2025, the Minister for Local Government, the Hon Ron Hoenig MP introduced the Local Government Amendment (Elections) Bill 2025. Among other provisions, this Bill aims:

... to require an election, poll or constitutional referendum of a council to be administered by the Electoral Commissioner rather than by either the Electoral Commissioner or an electoral services provider engaged by the council.¹⁹⁹

In his second reading speech, the Minister highlighted that the bill responds to the failure of achieving cost savings through engaging private providers, fewer councils using them, and other administrative issues including delayed voting, long queues and inaccurate polling booth information on private providers. . Furthermore, the bill aims to protect public confidence by ensuring elections are run independently and transparently, avoiding conflicts of interest and safeguarding election integrity.²⁰⁰ Numerous stakeholders presented similar evidence to the Committee and we are pleased to see action being taken to address these concerns. The Committee commends the Minister for introducing this Bill and will follow its passage with interest.

- 3.4 Most stakeholders expressed concern over outsourcing local government elections to private electoral providers.²⁰¹ Many viewed it as a form of privatisation of electoral processes or a potential threat to democratic integrity.²⁰² Key concerns expressed by stakeholders are as follows.

¹⁹⁶ [Submission 30](#), p 7.

¹⁹⁷ [Submission 30](#), p 7.

¹⁹⁸ [Local Government Amendment \(Elections\) Bill 2011](#).

¹⁹⁹ [Local Government Amendment \(Elections\) Bill 2025](#).

²⁰⁰ New South Wales, Legislative Assembly, [Parliamentary Debates](#), 4 June 2025, pp 30-33 (Ron Hoenig, Minister for Local Government).

²⁰¹ Cr Pedersen, [Evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 34; Dr Andy Asquith, Research Officer, Public Service Association of NSW, [Transcript of evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 41; Mr Dominic Ofner, General Secretary, NSW Labor, [Transcript of evidence](#), 28 October 2024, p 10; Mr Seamus Lee, Registered Officer, The Greens NSW, [Transcript of evidence](#), 28 October 2024, p 21; Mr Reynolds-Ryan, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2024, p 28; [Submission 12](#), Name suppressed, p 1; [Submission 33](#), The Greens NSW, p 3; [Submission 30](#), p 7.

²⁰² Cr Pedersen, [Evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 34; Dr Asquith, [Evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 41; Mr Ofner, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2024, p 10; [Submission 20](#), Ms Kaliyanda MP, p 2.

Costs and challenges of outsourcing local government elections

- 3.5 Stakeholders noted that when local councils choose to use private providers, they generally engage the Australian Election Company.²⁰³ The use of private providers has varied over election years, with 14 councils engaging a private provider in 2012, and only two councils, Fairfield and Liverpool, in the 2024 elections.²⁰⁴
- 3.6 Representatives from LGNSW observed that conducting a local government election is expensive and costs have increased 'dramatically' over the past few years.²⁰⁵ According to Cr Penny Pedersen, Board Director, LGNSW, councils choose private providers 'to achieve a significant cost saving for their council and their ratepayers.'²⁰⁶
- 3.7 While the costs for the 2024 local government elections remain 'commercial in confidence', Local Government NSW has provided indicative cost ranges:
- \$1 million to \$2.5 million for metropolitan councils.
 - \$300 000 to \$700 000 for regional councils.
 - \$50 000 to \$100 000 for rural councils.²⁰⁷
- 3.8 We note that using private providers does not necessarily lead to cost savings. Ms Charishma Kaliyanda MP observed that Penrith City Council reported higher estimated costs with a private provider than with the NSWEC for the 2024 local government elections.²⁰⁸
- 3.9 Iliada Bolton, Director Business and Governance, Bega Valley Shire Council, told us that private electoral providers offer comparable pricing but involve greater risks.²⁰⁹
- 3.10 Dr Andy Asquith, Research Officer, Public Service Association of NSW, also noted that the risks of using private providers outweigh any perceived benefits, given the strategic importance of elections in maintaining democratic legitimacy:
- There is a price to pay for democracy, and if that price is a slightly higher monetary price in terms of having the Electoral Commission conducting elections, then I think that's important.²¹⁰
- 3.11 Councils in NSW are concerned about rising election costs and call for more funding for the NSWEC. Cr Penny Pedersen, Board Director, LGNSW, suggested

²⁰³ [Submission 33](#), p 3; Cr Pedersen, [Evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 34.

²⁰⁴ Cr Pedersen, [Evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 34.

²⁰⁵ Cr Pedersen, [Evidence](#), 27 September 2024, pp 34-35; Mr Shaun McBride, Chief Economist, Local Government NSW, [Transcript of evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 32.

²⁰⁶ Cr Pedersen, [Evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 34.

²⁰⁷ [Answers to questions on notice](#), Local Government NSW, p 2.

²⁰⁸ [Submission 20](#), p 1.

²⁰⁹ Ms Iliada Bolton, Director Business and Governance, Bega Valley Shire Council, [Transcript of evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 34.

²¹⁰ Dr Asquith, [Evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 41.

the NSWEC should ensure the election cost increases are capped at the same rate as council rate increases.²¹¹

- 3.12 Bega Valley Shire Council submitted that rising costs for the NSWEC to conduct local government elections are exceeding allowed rate increases, undermining public confidence in the process. Rising election costs, without clear justification, erodes trust in the electoral system and diverts resources from other local services. The Council recommended exploring efficiencies in resources and processes, such as automation and voting kiosks, to address the rising costs.²¹²
- 3.13 The NSWEC stated that they are not adequately funded to operate efficiently. As a result, they have to maintain a high-cost and inefficient service delivery model for elections.²¹³ Election delivery is also becoming more complex and costly due to factors such as staffing, security, cyber threats, and rising community expectations. This means the costs for running elections may continue increasing. With the NSWEC running council elections on a 'cost-recovery basis', the rising costs may become unsustainable for councils without ongoing State Government subsidies.²¹⁴

Concerns about integrity and risks

- 3.14 Stakeholders shared their concerns about the risks to electoral integrity if the administration of democratic processes is outsourced. In particular, Mr Dominic Ofner, General Secretary, NSW Labor, stated that there were instances of 'very questionable' decision-making by private electoral service providers in recent council elections.²¹⁵
- 3.15 Similarly, Sandy Killick, Managing Director, Democracy Matters, identified the use of private providers as a factor undermining public confidence in elections and urged that this provision be reconsidered.²¹⁶
- 3.16 Democracy Matters also noted that the use of private electoral providers is an integrity risk due to the lack of transparency and insufficient regulation of private providers. Its key concerns included:
- voter confusion from not knowing who is running an election;
 - damage to the NSWEC's credibility from voters attributing dissatisfaction with private providers to the NSWEC;
 - the absence of requirements for councils to explain the reasons for not using the NSWEC or consulting with communities on engaging a private provider;

²¹¹ Cr Pedersen, [Evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 34.

²¹² [Submission 13](#), Bega Valley Shire Council, p 2.

²¹³ [Submission 35](#), NSW Electoral Commission, p 26.

²¹⁴ [Submission 35](#), p 28.

²¹⁵ Mr Ofner, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2024, p 10.

²¹⁶ Ms Sandy Killick, Managing Director, Democracy Matters, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 March 2025, p 8; [Submission 30](#), p 7.

- the perceived conflict of interest from permitting council staff to act as election officials when using private providers;
- risks of incumbent councillors interfering with private providers who manage electoral processes;
- no vetting process in legislation for private providers; and
- no mandated assurance from private providers on maintaining the integrity of electoral rolls.²¹⁷

3.17 The NSW Electoral Commissioner agreed that private provider administered elections can have complications, particularly in enforcement and integrity oversight.²¹⁸

3.18 In comparison, we heard that the NSWEC is widely trusted by voters and has a strong record of running elections with transparency, accountability, and independence.²¹⁹ Having the NSWEC manage elections statewide would also benefit voters from increased efficiencies in areas such as conducting voter awareness campaigns and stakeholder engagement, as well as working towards broader policy purposes.²²⁰

Accessibility and inclusion

3.19 Stakeholders told us there are inconsistencies in service and accessibility standards between the NSWEC and private providers. Ms Charishma Kaliyanda MP noted that while the NSWEC offers online resources and multilingual information, the Australian Election Company's website does not provide similar support.²²¹

3.20 For example, the Australia Election Company provides limited information or resources on accessibility for voters with disability, their carers, and people who need information in a low-literacy format. This means that they face additional challenges when participating in the democratic processes.²²²

3.21 Andrea Summerell, Executive Director, Elections, NSWEC, told us that a key challenge with having different election service providers is the lack of public awareness about differences in service levels.²²³

3.22 This is particularly relevant for stakeholders requiring additional support, as private providers are not required to offer the same processes or resources as the NSWEC. For example, technology-assisted voting is only available through the NSWEC, not private providers, which can lead to confusion. Ms Summerell

²¹⁷ [Submission 30](#), p 7.

²¹⁸ Ms McCallum, [Evidence](#), 17 March 2025, pp 28-29.

²¹⁹ [Submission 20](#), p 2.

²²⁰ Ms McCallum, [Evidence](#), 17 March 2025, p 29.

²²¹ [Submission 20](#), p 2.

²²² [Submission 20](#), pp 2-3.

²²³ Ms Summerell, [Evidence](#), 17 March 2025, p 29.

suggested that a single provider for all council elections would increase consistency in service delivery.²²⁴

- 3.23 Jackson Reynolds-Ryan, Senior Policy Officer, Blind Citizens Australia, emphasised the need for greater consistency in the 'approach to accessibility of elections'. He told us that the NSWEC has 'technical knowledge and the institutional experience' to run elections and expressed reservations about the outsourcing of elections becoming an increasing trend.²²⁵

Administrative complexity and consistency

- 3.24 Stakeholders emphasised the administrative burden and confusion caused by having multiple election providers. For example, Seamus Lee, Registered Officer, The Greens NSW, explained that polling staff from private providers lack the authority to issue ballots for other council areas run by the NSWEC, creating accessibility challenges. He argued that administration of all elections by the NSWEC would help alleviate this issue.²²⁶ This would mean that all voters have a consistent experience across all polling places.
- 3.25 Ms Summerell elaborated on logistical and stakeholder engagement challenges in operating cross-council polling places. These include differences in staff instructions and processes between the NSWEC and private providers as well as communicating the differences between service provisions to voters. She noted that NSWEC's consistent staffing and processes offer operational advantages.²²⁷
- 3.26 Finally, we heard that using private electoral service providers creates administrative burdens for candidates, as seen in Liverpool and Fairfield. Ms Charishma Kaliyanda MP observed that candidates in the 2024 local government elections had to register twice – once with the private provider and again with the NSWEC.²²⁸

Privacy of voters and candidates information

Summary

- NSW voters' expectations of privacy protection may not align with how personal information is treated under the *Electoral Act 2017*.
- Information collected, used, or disclosed under the *Electoral Act 2017* is exempt from the requirements of the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*.
- Voters' personal information is disclosed to political participants. It can also be disclosed to others, subject to the NSW Electoral Commissioner making a public interest determination.

²²⁴ Ms Summerell, [Evidence](#), 17 March 2025, p 29.

²²⁵ Mr Reynolds-Ryan, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2024, p 28.

²²⁶ Mr Lee, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2024, p 21.

²²⁷ Ms Summerell, [Evidence](#), 17 March 2025, pp 28-29.

²²⁸ [Submission 20](#), p 2.

- An address is required to be displayed on authorised electoral materials, and party officials must provide their addresses for the Register of Parties. Political participants have privacy concerns about these requirements.

Recommendation 19

That the NSW Electoral Commission reviews the treatment of voters' personal information under the current legislative framework to determine whether it is fit for purpose.

Recommendation 20

That the NSW Government reviews the *Electoral Act 2017* and *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021* to ensure that requirements to display or publish an address are fit for purpose and achieve the right balance of individual privacy and public accountability.

Voters' information

- 3.27 The Committee recommends that the NSWEC reviews the treatment of voters' personal information under the current legislative framework to determine whether it is fit for purpose. This recommendation is in line with advice from the Information and Privacy Commission NSW (IPC).
- 3.28 Since the *Electoral Act 2017* was enacted, technology has evolved and the public are increasingly concerned about privacy risks.²²⁹ The IPC said that there is a potential disparity between voters' expectations around privacy protection of their personal information, and the legislative framework under which this is managed.²³⁰

Privacy and the Electoral Act 2017

Information collected, used, or disclosed under the *Electoral Act 2017* is exempted from the requirements of the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* (PPIPA).²³¹

The PPIPA was amended in 2022 to introduce a mandatory notification of data breach scheme.²³² The scheme requires agencies to notify the Privacy Commissioner and provide notifications to affected individuals in the event of a data breach of personal information.²³³

The *Electoral Act 2017* enables the Electoral Commissioner to collect personal information. This information includes an elector's name, date of birth, sex,

²²⁹ [Submission 25](#), Information and Privacy Commission, p 2.

²³⁰ [Submission 25](#), p 2.

²³¹ *Electoral Act 2017* s 44(3).

²³² [Privacy and Personal Information Protection Amendment Act 2022](#).

²³³ Information and Privacy Commission NSW, [Mandatory Notification of Data Breach Scheme](#), viewed 26 May 2025; Ms Sonia Minutillo, Acting Privacy Commissioner, Information and Privacy Commission NSW, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 March 2025, p 42.

address, and other particulars as the Electoral Commissioner considers necessary to carry out his or her functions under that Act.²³⁴

The Commissioner has an obligation under the *Electoral Act 2017* to disclose personal information to parties, members, and candidates.²³⁵ The Act lists the purposes for the use of the personal information.²³⁶ The IPC notes that these purposes are intended to support electoral integrity.²³⁷

Personal information can also be disclosed at the discretion of the Electoral Commissioner to others, for example to those conducting medical research.²³⁸ Before providing the information, the Electoral Commissioner must determine that the public interest in providing the information outweighs the public interest in protecting the privacy of the personal information.²³⁹

- 3.29 The IPC questioned whether the NSW Electoral Commissioner should have the sole discretion, without the obligation to seek external advice, to make the public interest determination.²⁴⁰ Ms Sonia Minutillo, Acting Privacy Commissioner NSW, highlighted that in Victoria there is a legal requirement for the Victorian Electoral Commissioner to consult with the Victorian Privacy Commissioner and consider the advice when making a public interest determination.²⁴¹ The Victorian Electoral Commission must also report the provision of enrolment information and any public interest determinations to the Parliament of Victoria.²⁴²
- 3.30 The IPC suggested that the *Electoral Act 2017* could be amended to provide an express power for the NSW Electoral Commissioner to consult stakeholders and experts when making the public interest determination. They suggested that NSW government agencies with relevant subject matter expertise as well as the IPC might be required to provide input and assistance in assessing the public interest.²⁴³
- 3.31 To align public expectations on privacy protection with relevant legislation, we recommend that the NSWEC reviews the treatment of voters' personal information under the current legislative framework to determine whether it is fit for purpose.

Political participants information

- 3.32 The Committee recommends that the NSW Government reviews the *Electoral Act 2017* and *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021* to ensure that

²³⁴ *Electoral Act 2017* [s 41](#).

²³⁵ *Electoral Act 2017* [ss 49, 222](#).

²³⁶ *Electoral Act 2017* [s 51](#).

²³⁷ See *Electoral Act 2017*, [ss 51\(2\)\(b\), 51\(3\)\(b\), 51\(4\)\(b\)](#); [Submission 25](#), Information and Privacy Commission, p 2.

²³⁸ *Electoral Act 2017* s 50.

²³⁹ *Electoral Act 2017* s 51(1).

²⁴⁰ [Submission 25](#), p 2.

²⁴¹ Ms Minutillo, [Evidence](#), 17 March 2025, p 41; *Electoral Act 2002* (Vic) [s 34\(1\)](#).

²⁴² *Electoral Act 2002* (Vic) [s 35](#).

²⁴³ [Submission 25](#), p 2.

requirements to display or publish an address are fit for purpose and achieve the right balance of individual privacy and public accountability.

The *Electoral Act 2017 (the Act)* and the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021 (the Regulation)* require political participants to display or publish an address. The requirements of *the Act* apply to state elections, and the requirements of *the Regulation* apply to local government elections. These requirements include:

Publishing address on electoral materials

Both *the Act* and *the Regulation* require electoral materials to include the name and address of the individual who authorises the materials.²⁴⁴

The address must be a place where the individual can be contacted during the day. A post office box is not a permitted address.²⁴⁵

Only *the Act* contains an express provision for the address of a registered party to be used.²⁴⁶

Display of address in Register of Parties

The NSW Electoral Commissioner is required to keep a Register of Parties²⁴⁷ which contains the names and addresses of the party's registered officer, deputy registered officer, and secretary.²⁴⁸

The Register is available for public inspection.²⁴⁹ When a party applies for registration the names and addresses of party officers are required to be included in the notice of application for registration, which is published on the NSWEC's website, the Sydney Morning Herald, and the Daily Telegraph.²⁵⁰

- 3.33 Stakeholders raised privacy concerns about the requirements to publish the addresses of political participants on authorised electoral materials, and on the NSWEC's website.²⁵¹ We heard that this may cause safety issues for political participants.²⁵²
- 3.34 Local Government NSW told us that there is a requirement for candidates in local government elections to print a contactable address on electoral materials.

²⁴⁴ *Electoral Act 2017* ss 186-188, 200; *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021* ss 356G-356GB, 356Q.

²⁴⁵ *Electoral Act 2017* s 4(3); *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021* s 356G.

²⁴⁶ *Electoral Act 2017* s 200(3)(c)(iii); *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021* s 356Q(c).

²⁴⁷ *Electoral Act 2017* s 58.

²⁴⁸ *Electoral Act 2017* s 59(2)(c)-(e).

²⁴⁹ *Electoral Act 2017* s 70(1).

²⁵⁰ *Electoral Act 2017* s 60; NSW Electoral Commission, [Party registration notices](#), 8 May 2025, viewed 30 May 2025.

²⁵¹ [Submission 18](#), Local Government NSW, p 2; [Submission 30](#), p 7; [Submission 31](#), NSW Labor, p 13; Mr Lee, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2024, p 19; Ms Minutillo, [Evidence](#), 17 March 2025, p 42.

²⁵² Mr Ofner, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2024, p 10; Mr Christopher Maltby, Deputy Registered Officer, The Greens NSW, [Transcript of evidence](#), 28 October 2024, p 19; Cr Pedersen, [Evidence](#), 27 September 2024, p 30.

Councillors are concerned that this may pose a risk to their safety, and the safety of their family or colleagues.²⁵³

- 3.35 The Australian Local Government Women's Association NSW Branch surveyed all current and former female councillors in NSW on the topic of bullying, harassment, and intimidation in the NSW local government elections. Over 60 per cent of respondents said that they did not feel comfortable during the election process to advertise their residential address. They included breach of privacy, vulnerability of self and family, and property damage as reasons for their concerns.²⁵⁴
- 3.36 At its 2023 Annual Conference, Local Government NSW resolved to call on the NSWEC:
- ...to review the requirements for candidates standing for election to include their personal address on electoral material as their only valid contact option, in an endeavour to assist with ensuring the safety of candidates and ultimately Councillors.²⁵⁵
- 3.37 Throughout the inquiry, stakeholders advocated for a reconsideration of this requirement. Councillor Penny Pedersen, Board Director, Local Government NSW suggested that other address forms such as an email address could be permitted in lieu of a street address.²⁵⁶
- 3.38 Dominic Ofner, General Secretary, NSW Labor, noted that candidates for local government elections are required to publish the residential address of the person authorising their materials, and not the address of the political party that the candidate is representing.²⁵⁷ He suggested that the person authorising electoral materials should not be required to display their residential address on the materials, and that a political party office address should be sufficient.²⁵⁸ This view was shared by The Greens NSW.²⁵⁹
- 3.39 The NSWEC noted that the ability to contact political participants is necessary for public accountability.²⁶⁰ The Commission highlighted that authorising electoral materials with a street address may assist them in undertaking compliance functions, should the materials breach any relevant legal requirements. An address also empowers the public to make their own inquiries on materials they consider as non-complying.²⁶¹
- 3.40 People with Disability Australia highlighted the importance of publishing candidate contact details. With contacts, voters with disability can seek further

²⁵³ [Submission 18](#), Local Government NSW, p 2.

²⁵⁴ Australian Local Government Women's Association New South Wales Branch, [Survey Report: Bullying, Harassment & Intimidation in NSW local government](#), January 2024, pp 6-8.

²⁵⁵ [Submission 18](#), p 3.

²⁵⁶ Cr Pedersen, [Evidence](#), 27 September 2024, pp 30-36.

²⁵⁷ Mr Ofner, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2024, p 10.

²⁵⁸ Mr Ofner, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2024, p 10.

²⁵⁹ Mr Maltby, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2024, p 19.

²⁶⁰ NSW Electoral Commission, [Answers to supplementary questions](#), 8 April 2025, p 8.

²⁶¹ NSW Electoral Commission, [Answers to supplementary questions](#), 8 April 2025, p 8.

information about candidates and their policies. This is especially important where the candidate does not provide materials in accessible formats.²⁶²

- 3.41 While acknowledging the importance of privacy, Christopher Maltby, Deputy Registered Officer, The Greens NSW, questioned the verifiability of addresses. For example, the NSWEC may not be able to enforce compliance activities if political participants use coworking spaces or campaign offices as an address on electoral materials.²⁶³
- 3.42 To ensure addresses are verifiable and contactable by the NSWEC, Mr Maltby suggested that only a registered party address or the enrolled address of the authoriser should be permitted.²⁶⁴
- 3.43 The NSWEC discussed potential amendments to address requirements for authorised electoral materials to balance individual privacy and public accountability. This included allowing election participants who pre-register as a candidate or third-party campaigner to omit their address from electoral materials should they have a privacy concern.²⁶⁵
- 3.44 Stakeholders also raised concerns about the publication of party officials' addresses on the NSWEC's website.²⁶⁶ NSW Labor suggested that party officials should be permitted to use party headquarters on all publicly available documents to protect safety and security. In the absence of a party headquarters, another address may be used.²⁶⁷
- 3.45 Seamus Lee, Registered Officer, The Greens NSW, observed that the Australian Electoral Commission allows the use party officials to use the postal addresses of their party office.²⁶⁸
- 3.46 In light of the complexity of the address requirements across varying legislations, we recommend that the NSW Government reviews the *Electoral Act 2017* and *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021*. The review should examine the legislation holistically to ensure that requirements to display or publish an address are fit for purpose and achieve the right balance of individual privacy and public accountability.

Electoral funding and political parties

Summary

- The Committee recommends the NSW Government sets up a dedicated working group to implement 'Operation Aero' recommendations on political donations and party governance.

²⁶² [Submission 10](#), People with Disability Australia, p 14.

²⁶³ Mr Maltby, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2024, p 19;

²⁶⁴ Mr Maltby, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2024, p 19; Mr Lee, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2024, p 19.

²⁶⁵ NSW Electoral Commission, [Answers to supplementary questions](#), 8 April 2025, p 8.

²⁶⁶ [Submission 31](#), p 13; Mr Lee, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2024, p 19.

²⁶⁷ [Submission 31](#), p 13.

²⁶⁸ Mr Lee, [Evidence](#), 28 October 2024, p 19.

- The NSW Electoral Commission (NSWEC) supports the implementation of Operation Aero recommendations. However, the Commission requires additional funding and expanded powers to conduct routine audits, assess compliance, and enforce standards effectively.
- Political parties support introducing residency requirements to align officials' obligations with those of NSW voters and improve the NSWEC's audit and compliance effectiveness.
- The NSWEC has raised concerns about the challenges in enforcing regulatory powers beyond NSW.

Recommendation 21

That the NSW Government establishes a working group to consider and respond to the recommendations in the Independent Commission Against Corruption's report on political donations facilitated by Chinese Friends of Labour in 2015 (Operation Aero).

- 3.47 The Committee acknowledges the complexity and breadth of the Operation Aero recommendations, particularly those concerning political party governance, electoral funding, and compliance. A dedicated and well-resourced working group would be best placed to consider and respond to these important recommendations.
- 3.48 As such, we recommend that the NSW Government establishes a dedicated working group to consider and respond to the recommendations outlined in the Independent Commission Against Corruption's (ICAC) report on political donations facilitated by Chinese Friends of Labor in 2015, also known as 'Operation Aero'.

Operation Aero

Operation Aero was set up to investigate an alleged unlawful scheme to secure for NSW Labour and Country Labour a cash donation in connection with a 2015 Chinese Friends of Labor fundraising dinner.²⁶⁹

Apart from findings of corrupt conduct and misuse of privileges, the investigation revealed critical governance failures within NSW Labor.²⁷⁰ The Operation Aero report made seven recommendations to help the NSW Government enhance laws, policies and procedures on political donation.²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption, [ICAC finds former MLC Ernest Wong corrupt, Huang Xiangmo true source of \\$100,000 cash donation to NSW Labor & Country Labor](#), media release, 28 February 2022, viewed 10 June 2025.

²⁷⁰ NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption, [Political donations: allegations concerning ALP NSW branch officials, Chinese Friends of Labor and others \(Operation Aero\)](#), February 2022, viewed 13 April 2025, pp 11-16, 273.

²⁷¹ NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption, [ICAC finds former MLC Ernest Wong corrupt, Huang Xiangmo true source of \\$100,000 cash donation to NSW Labor & Country Labor](#), media release, 28 February 2022, viewed 10 June 2025.

In particular, the report recommendations focussed on:²⁷²

- empowering the NSWEC to issue penalty notices for less severe breaches of the prohibition on cash donations.
- making payments from the Administration Fund contingent on the achievement of acceptable standards of party governance and internal control.
- empowering the NSWEC to assess, audit and enforce non-compliance with standards of party governance and internal control.
- publication of political parties' adherence to established governance and control standards.
- requiring senior office holders of political parties to report reasonably suspected breaches of the *Electoral Funding Act 2018* and increasing some penalties under the Act.
- empowering the NSWEC to publish the results of compliance audits, investigations and regulatory actions.

Specifically, the report calls for the establishment of a working group to:²⁷³

- determine the relevant governance and control standards.
- ensure the efficient administration and implementation of standards.

Party governance standards

3.49 ICAC Chief Commissioner John Hatzistergos expressed concerns about the NSW Government's lack of progress in addressing critical governance issues raised in Operation Aero:

There needs to be some cultural change. We've suggested a mechanism of doing it. It's been 10 years, and nothing's happened, so what can I say? It's been over 10 years in some instances.²⁷⁴

3.50 He emphasised that, despite some progress, key recommendations on establishing governance standards remain unaddressed.²⁷⁵

²⁷² NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption, [Political donations: allegations concerning ALP NSW branch officials, Chinese Friends of Labor and others \(Operation Aero\)](#), February 2022, viewed 13 April 2025, pp 16-17.

²⁷³ NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption, [Political donations: allegations concerning ALP NSW branch officials, Chinese Friends of Labor and others \(Operation Aero\)](#), February 2022, viewed 13 April 2025, pp 16-17.

²⁷⁴ The Hon. John Hatzistergos AM, Chief Commissioner, NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption, [Transcript of evidence](#), 17 March 2025, p 3.

²⁷⁵ The Hon. Hatzistergos AM, [Evidence](#), 17 March 2025, pp 3-5.

- 3.51 Political stakeholders have shown support for the recommendations. NSW Labor explicitly voiced support for a 'systematic and holistic' response, including the establishment of a working group.²⁷⁶
- 3.52 The Greens NSW expressed support for establishing common standards for party governance. They also cautioned that a one-size-fits-all approach may be ineffective, as political parties have diverse structures.²⁷⁷
- 3.53 The NSW Shooters Fishers and Farmers Party endorsed Operation Aero's recommendations, citing the need for ongoing oversight to maintain public trust. They advocated for transparent, real-time donation reporting, strict donation limits, and stronger oversight of party finances to prevent corruption and undue influence.²⁷⁸
- 3.54 Bega Valley Shire Council similarly advocated for advancing the Operation Aero recommendations to enhance transparency and public confidence in the electoral processes.²⁷⁹
- 3.55 ICAC acknowledged that small or new political parties may have limited resources to implement party standards. However, ICAC maintained that all registered political parties should have documented policies and procedures. These documents should cover key areas such as donation handling, fundraising event organisation, staff roles and responsibilities, whistleblower processes, and a code of conduct addressing gifts and conflicts of interest.²⁸⁰
- 3.56 The Committee considers it important to have appropriate party governance standards. We also acknowledge that differences in party structures warrant in-depth considerations of such standards to ensure feasibility.
- 3.57 The working group should be set up and resourced to determine the relevant governance standards. The group should also work with the NSWEC to ensure the efficient administration and implementation of such standards.²⁸¹

Enhancing the role and regulatory power of the NSW Electoral Commission

- 3.58 Several Operation Aero recommendations require an expansion of the NSWEC's regulatory powers including the power to issue penalty notices under certain provisions and to carry out compliance activities.²⁸²
- 3.59 The ICAC provided two examples to enable the NSWEC to conduct regular and ongoing audits of compliance by parties with party governance and internal controls:

²⁷⁶ [Submission 31](#), p 10.

²⁷⁷ [Submission 33](#), p 3.

²⁷⁸ [Submission 7](#), The NSW Shooters Fishers and Farmers Party, p 3.

²⁷⁹ [Submission 13](#), p 2; [Submission 21](#), The Australia Institute, p 1.

²⁸⁰ [Answers to supplementary questions](#), Independent Commission Against Corruption, 8 April 2025, p 2.

²⁸¹ NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption, [Political donations: allegations concerning ALP NSW branch officials, Chinese Friends of Labor and others \(Operation Aero\)](#), February 2022, viewed 13 April 2025, p 16.

²⁸² NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption, [Political donations: allegations concerning ALP NSW branch officials, Chinese Friends of Labor and others \(Operation Aero\)](#), February 2022, viewed 13 April 2025, pp 16–17

- Specific compliance auditing power similar to section 59 of the *Electoral Funding Act 2018*, which currently only applies to the audit of disclosures, and
- Broadening the scope of section 138 of the *Electoral Funding Act* to allow for regular audits even if there is no reasonable suspicion of legal breaches.²⁸³

3.60 Apart from enhancing their powers, the NSWEC said they would need sufficient funding to carry out the expanded responsibilities and functions outlined in Operation Aero recommendations. These include:

- participating in a working group to develop model governance rules for political parties.
- providing communication, education, and support to parties and stakeholders.
- assessing and approving parties' governance standards to ensure eligibility for public funding.
- monitoring compliance, investigating complaints, and enforcing standards, which may include withholding funding, publishing decisions, or initiating fines and prosecutions where relevant.²⁸⁴

3.61 To effectively perform these additional functions, the NSWEC suggested they would require one-off funding to set up new functions, including system upgrades and compliance support. They would also require ongoing funding for skilled staff in engagement, policy, audit and investigation.²⁸⁵

3.62 The ICAC also acknowledged that the NSWEC's compliance and auditing functions would be expanded under the Operation Aero recommendations. For example, the scale of risk management and internal audit programs overseen by the NSWEC would be increased to match the size of political parties and the amount of public funding they receive.²⁸⁶

3.63 In light of the complexity of the Operation Aero recommendations, including the legislative implications, the Committee recommends that the NSW Government establishes a working group to consider and respond to the recommendations in Operation Aero. The Committee notes the concerns raised by the ICAC about the length of time taken in implementing these recommendations. We encourage the Government progress work in this area as a matter of priority.

²⁸³ [Answers to supplementary questions](#), Independent Commission Against Corruption, 8 April 2025, p 3.

²⁸⁴ [Answers to supplementary questions](#), NSW Electoral Commission, 8 April 2025, p 2.

²⁸⁵ [Answers to supplementary questions](#), NSW Electoral Commission, 8 April 2025, p 2.

²⁸⁶ [Answers to supplementary questions](#), Independent Commission Against Corruption, 8 April 2025, p 3; [Answers to supplementary questions](#), Independent Commission Against Corruption, 8 April 2025, p 3.

Recommendation 22

That the NSW Government amends the *Electoral Act 2017* to require duty holders, such as the Registered Officer, Deputy Registered Officer, Party Secretary and other senior office holders to reside in NSW.

- 3.64 The Committee recommends that the NSW Government amends the *Electoral Act 2017* to mandate that duty holders reside within NSW. This would assist the NSWEC in exercising its enforcement powers and ensure that these officials are NSW voters.
- 3.65 Section 102(1)(b) of the *Electoral Funding Act 2018* disqualifies party agents who are not enrolled to vote in NSW state elections. However, under the *Electoral Act 2017*, there is no similar residency or enrolment requirements for other party officials such as Registered Officers, Deputy Registered Officers, or Party Secretaries.²⁸⁷
- 3.66 This allows for the appointment of senior political party officials who may reside interstate or overseas. The NSWEC noted that some party officials, including registered officers and party secretaries, have resided interstate or overseas. While party headquarters must be in NSW and members enrolled locally, the current legislation does not prohibit party secretaries residing outside NSW or Australia from submitting registration applications.²⁸⁸
- 3.67 The NSWEC noted that there have not been significant challenges in the day-to-day administration of electoral processes as a result of out-of-state party officials. However, there are notable limitations in the Commission's ability to enforce its regulatory powers beyond NSW borders.²⁸⁹
- 3.68 Political parties have expressed support for amending the *Electoral Act 2017* to include a residency requirement for party agents and duty holders.
- 3.69 The NSW Shooters Fishers and Farmers Party submitted that political party officials should be 'bona-fide residents of NSW' and registered on the NSW Electoral Rolls. This would ensure that their residency requirements align with those of NSW voters.²⁹⁰
- 3.70 The Greens NSW similarly indicated their support for a residency requirement, noting it would help the NSWEC carry out its audit and compliance responsibilities more effectively.²⁹¹

²⁸⁷ [Submission 35](#), p 49.

²⁸⁸ [Submission 35](#), p 49.

²⁸⁹ [Submission 35](#), p 49.

²⁹⁰ [Submission 7](#), p 4.

²⁹¹ [Answers to supplementary questions](#), The Greens NSW, 14 November 2024, p 2.

Proposals to increase voter engagement, participation and confidence
Security and integrity of the electoral system and processes

Appendix One – Terms of reference

1. That the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters inquire into and report on proposals to increase voter engagement, participation and confidence, including reforms to:
 - a. Maintain confidence in the integrity of electoral processes.
 - b. Strengthen the security and integrity of the electoral system.
 - c. Reduce barriers to participation, in particular for voters with disabilities and voters from groups with historically lower enrolment and turnout rates.
 - d. Implement options for technology assisted voting (TAV) as set out in the NSW Electoral Commission's November 2023 report on TAV.
 - e. Improve systems for political donations, electoral funding and party governance, including as recommended in the Independent Commission Against Corruption's report on political donations facilitated by Chinese Friends of Labor in 2015 (Operation Aero).
 - f. Amend electoral laws in relation to electoral funding and political parties, including in relation to:
 - i. Allowable Administrative Fund expenditure under section 84 of the Electoral Funding Act 2018;
 - ii. Residence requirements for political party officials; and
 - iii. Expenditure of the Election Campaigns Fund within New South Wales.
 - g. Any other related matters.
2. That the Committee report by 30 June 2025.

Appendix Two – Conduct of inquiry

Terms of reference

On 20 November 2023 the Special Minister of State, The Hon. John Graham MLC, referred an inquiry to the Committee into matters raised with the Minister by the Hon. Mark Latham MLC. On 6 March 2024 the Attorney General, The Hon. Michael Daley MP, referred an inquiry to the Committee into the recommendations of the Independent Commission Against Corruption's Investigation into Political Donations Facilitated by Chinese Friends of Labor in 2015.

On 7 April 2024 the Special Minister of State, The Hon. John Graham MLC, referred an inquiry to the Committee into the findings and recommendations of the final report of the NSW Electoral Commissioner's review into the feasibility of Technology Assisted Voting (TAV) in New South Wales.

On 13 May 2024 the Special Minister of State, The Hon. John Graham MLC, referred an inquiry to the Committee into proposals for reform to electoral legislation and policy to increase voter engagement, participation and confidence in NSW elections.

The Committee met on 11 June 2024 and resolved to conduct an inquiry into proposals to increase voter engagement, participation and confidence, which incorporated these four referrals.

The terms of reference for the inquiry are at Appendix One.

Submissions

The Committee called for submissions and wrote to key stakeholders inviting them to make a submission. The closing date for submissions was 16 August 2024.

The Committee received 36 submissions from political parties and members of Parliament; academics and think tanks; disability and youth advocacy groups; integrity bodies; and election analysts.

A list of submissions is at Appendix Three.

Hearings

The Committee held three public hearings on 27 September 2024, 28 October 2024, and 17 March 2025. Thirty-five witnesses appeared at the hearings. They included the NSW Electoral Commissioner, and Commission staff; the Australian Electoral Commissioner; senior officials from government and independent agencies; representatives of political parties; academics; disability advocacy groups; and young people.

A full list of the witnesses who appeared at the hearings is at Appendix Four

Appendix Three – Submissions

No.	Author
1	Mr Fulin Yan
2	Dr George Quittner
3	Australian Council for Student Voice
4	Ms Marelle Burnum Burnum
5	NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption
6	Make it 16
7	The NSW Shooters Fishers and Farmers Party
8	Vision Australia
9	The newDemocracy Foundation
10	People with Disability Australia
11	The Law Society of New South Wales
12	Name suppressed
13	Bega Valley Shire Council
14	Urban Taskforce Australia
15	Human Rights Law Centre
16	Run For It
17	Anti-Discrimination New South Wales
18	Local Government NSW
19	NSW Advocate for Children and Young People
20	Ms Charishma Kaliyanda MP
21	The Australia Institute
22	A/Prof Vanessa Teague
23	Blind Citizens Australia
24	Institute of Public Affairs
25	Information and Privacy Commission
26	Confidential
27	Australian Electoral Commission
28	City of Newcastle
29	Professor Debi Ashenden and Dr Hammond Pearce
30	Democracy Matters
31	NSW Labor
32	National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA)

No.	Author
33	The Greens NSW
34	Public Service Association of NSW
35	NSW Electoral Commission
36	Mr Ben Raue

Appendix Four – Witnesses

27 September 2024

Parliament House, Macquarie Room, Sydney, NSW

Witness	Position and Organisation
Miss Anhaar Kareem	Volunteer, Make it 16
Mr Zak O'Hara	NSW Campaigner, Run For It
Mr Mitch Sprague	Executive Director, Australian Council for Student Voice
Ms Zoë Robinson	NSW Advocate for Children and Young People, NSW Advocate for Children and Young People
Ms Ellen Armfield	Member, Youth Advisory Council
Mr Billy Bofinger	Former member, Youth Advisory Council
Mr David Mejia-Canales	Senior Lawyer, Human Rights Law Centre
Mr Tom Rogers	Australian Electoral Commissioner, Australian Electoral Commission
Cr Penny Pedersen	Board Director, Local Government NSW
Mr Shaun McBride	Chief Economist, Local Government NSW
Mr Anthony McMahon	Chief Executive Officer, Bega Valley Shire Council
Ms Iliada Bolton	Director Business and Governance, Bega Valley Shire Council
Dr Andy Asquith	Research Officer, Public Service Association of NSW
Mr Morgan Begg	Director of Research, Institute of Public Affairs
Ms Mia Schlicht	Research Fellow, Institute of Public Affairs

28 October 2024

Parliament House, Jubilee Room, Sydney, NSW

Witness	Position and Organisation
Mr Graeme Johnson	Chair, Public Law Committee, The Law Society of New South Wales
Mr Andrew Chalk	Member, Public Law Committee, The Law Society of New South Wales
Mr Dominic Ofner	General Secretary, NSW Labor

Mr Seamus Lee	Registered Officer, The Greens NSW
Mr Christopher Maltby	Deputy Registered Officer, The Greens NSW
Mr Bruce Maguire	Lead Policy Advisor, Vision Australia
Mr Jackson Reynolds-Ryan	Senior Policy Officer, Blind Citizens Australia
Ms Bastien Wallace	Senior Policy Officer, People with Disability Australia
Ms Grace White	Policy Officer, National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA)

17 March 2025**Parliament House, Macquarie Room, Sydney, NSW**

Witness	Position and Organisation
Ms Sandy Killick	Managing Director, Democracy Matters
Mr William Browne	Director Democracy and Accountability Program, The Australia Institute
Dr Joshua Black	Postdoctoral Research Fellow, The Australia Institute
The Hon. John Hatzistergos AM	Chief Commissioner, NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption
Ms Rachel McCallum	NSW Electoral Commissioner, NSW Electoral Commission
Ms Andrea Summerell	Executive Director, Elections, NSW Electoral Commission
Mr Hugo Bergeron	Acting Executive Director, Funding Disclosure and Compliance, NSW Electoral Commission
Ms Philippa Brandon	Director, Communications, NSW Electoral Commission
Ms Sonia Minutillo	Acting Privacy Commissioner, Information and Privacy Commission NSW
Dr Hammond Pearce	
A/Prof Vanessa Teague	

Appendix Five – Extracts from minutes

MINUTES OF MEETING NO 6

1.08pm, 11 June 2024

Room 814

Members present

Mr Primrose (Chair), Mr Rath and Ms Saffin (via teleconference)

Via videoconference: Mr Borsak (Deputy Chair), Mr Bali, Ms Faehrmann, Mr Farraway, Mr Hagarty, Mr James, Mr Nanva and Mrs Quinnell

Officers present

Rohan Tyler, Dora Oravecz, Janelle Taouk, Isabella Ciampa and Carolyn McNamara

1. ***

2. ***

3. Adoption of inquiry into proposals to increase voter engagement participation and confidence

The Committee discussed draft terms of reference for an inquiry into proposals to increase voter engagement, participation and confidence.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Saffin:

1. That the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters inquire into and report on proposals to increase voter engagement, participation and confidence, including reforms to:
 - a. Maintain confidence in the integrity of electoral processes.
 - b. Strengthen the security and integrity of the electoral system.
 - c. Reduce barriers to participation, in particular for voters with disabilities and voters from groups with historically lower enrolment and turnout rates.
 - d. Implement options for technology assisted voting (TAV) as set out in the NSW Electoral Commission's November 2023 report on TAV.
 - e. Improve systems for political donations, electoral funding and party governance, including as recommended in the Independent Commission Against Corruption's report on political donations facilitated by Chinese Friends of Labor in 2015 (Operation Aero).
 - f. Amend electoral laws in relation to electoral funding and political parties, including in relation to:
 - i. Allowable Administrative Fund expenditure under section 84 of the *Electoral Funding Act 2018*;
 - ii. Residence requirements for political party officials; and
 - iii. Expenditure of the Election Campaigns Fund within New South Wales.

- g. Any other related matters.
- 2. That the Committee report by 30 June 2025.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Nanva:

- That the Committee Chair writes to the Special Minister of State, advising of the Committee's decision on how it will conduct the inquiries referred by the Minister on 20 November 2023, 7 April 2024, and 13 May 2024, and the expected timeframe for the Committee's report.
- That the Committee Chair writes to the Attorney General, advising of the Committee's decision on how it will conduct the inquiry referred by the Attorney General on 6 March 2024, and the expected timeframe for the Committee's report.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Borsak:

- That the Committee writes to the agreed stakeholders, and other stakeholders nominated by members, inviting them to make a submission to the inquiry.
- That the closing date for submissions be 16 August 2024.

The Committee noted the indicative inquiry timeline.

4. General business

The Committee discussed arrangements for witnesses appearing at future hearings and asked committee staff to arrange meeting and hearing dates for the remainder of the year.

The Chair noted the Federal Committee on Electoral Matters is conducting an inquiry into civics education, engagement, and participation in Australia.

5. Next meeting

The meeting adjourned at 1.22pm until a date to be determined.

MINUTES OF MEETING NO 7

10.01am, 2 September 2024

Room 1254

Members present

Mr Primrose (Chair), Mr Borsak (Deputy Chair), Mr Bali (via telephone), Ms Faehrmann and Mr Rath

Via videoconference: Mr Farraway, Mr Hagarty, Mr James, Mr Nanva and Mrs Quinnell

Apologies

Ms Saffin

Officers present

Monica Loftus (via videoconference), Leon Last, Dora Oravec, Isabella Ciampa and Lloyd Connolly

1. Confirmation of minutes

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Faehrmann, seconded by Mrs Quinnell: That the minutes of the meeting of 11 June 2024 be confirmed.

2. ***

3. ***

4. Inquiry into proposals to increase voter engagement, participation and confidence

4.1 Correspondence

The Committee noted correspondence received from Mr Fulin Yan, 24 July 2024, expressing interest in appearing as a witness at a hearing for the inquiry.

4.2 Publishing submissions

The Committee considered publication of submissions 1 to 35.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Faehrmann: That the Committee accepts and publishes submissions 1 to 11, 13 to 25, 27 to 35 in full.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Borsak: That the Committee accepts and publishes submission 12 with the author's name suppressed.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Borsak: That submission 26 be accepted and remain confidential to the Committee and not published.

4.3 Public hearing dates and witness list

The Committee discussed witnesses to appear at public hearings to be held on 27 September and 28 October.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Borsak, seconded by Mr Bali: That the Committee holds public hearings on 27 September 2024 and 28 October 2024 and invites the listed witnesses to give evidence at the hearings.

5. ***

6. Next meeting

The meeting adjourned at 10.20am until 27 September 2024.

MINUTES OF MEETING NO 8

9.22am, 27 September 2024

Macquarie Room

Members present

Mr Primrose (Chair), Mr Borsak (Deputy Chair), Mr Bali, Mr Farraway (from 10.55am, via videoconference), Mr Hagarty (via videoconference), Mr James, Mr Nanva (via videoconference), and Mr Rath

Apologies

Ms Saffin, Ms Faehrmann, Mrs Quinnell

Officers present

Leon Last, Dora Oravecz, Janelle Taouk, and Lloyd Connolly

1. Deliberative meeting

1.1 Confirmation of minutes

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Bali, seconded Mr Rath: That the minutes of the meeting of 2 September 2024 be confirmed.

1.2 Media orders

Resolved, on the motion of Mr James, seconded Mr Rath: That the Committee authorises the audio-visual recording, photography and broadcasting of the public hearing on 27 September 2024, in accordance with the Legislative Assembly's resolution of 9 May 2023; and the Assembly's guidelines for coverage of proceedings for parliamentary committees administered by the Legislative Assembly.

1.3 Supplementary questions

Resolved, motion of Mr Bali, seconded by Mr Hagarty: That the Committee adopts the following process in relation to supplementary questions:

- Members to email any proposed supplementary questions for witnesses to committee staff by 4pm on the second business day after the uncorrected transcript is circulated to members.
- Committee staff to circulate all proposed supplementary questions to the Committee, with members to lodge any objections to the questions by 4pm of the business day after the date on which the questions are sent to members.

1.4 Answers to questions taken on notice and supplementary questions

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Hagarty, seconded Mr Ball: That witnesses be requested to return answers to questions taken on notice and supplementary questions within 1 week of the date on which the questions are forwarded.

1.5 ***

2. Public hearing - Inquiry into proposals to increase voter engagement, participation and confidence

The Chair opened the public hearing at 9.30am and made a short opening statement.

Miss Anhaar Kareem, Volunteer, Make it 16, was sworn and examined.

Mr Zak O'Hara, NSW Campaigner, Run For It, was sworn and examined.

Mr Mitch Sprague, Executive Director, Australian Council for Student Voice, was affirmed and examined via videoconference.

The Committee questioned the witnesses. Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

Ms Zoe Robinson, NSW Advocate for Children and Young People, was affirmed and examined.

Mr Billy Bofinger was affirmed and examined.

Ms Ellen Armfield was affirmed and examined.

The Committee questioned the witnesses. Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

Mr David Mejia-Canales, Senior Lawyer, Human Rights Law Centre, was affirmed and examined.

The Committee questioned the witness. Evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

Mr Tom Rogers, Australian Electoral Commissioner, Australian Electoral Commission, was sworn and examined.

The Committee questioned the witness. Evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

The hearing adjourned at 1.00pm and resumed at 2.02pm.

Cr Penny Pedersen, Board Director, Local Government NSW, was affirmed and examined.

Mr Shaun McBride, Chief Economist, Local Government NSW, was affirmed and examined.

Mr Anthony McMahon, Chief Executive Officer, Bega Valley Shire Council, was affirmed and examined via videoconference.

Ms Iliada Bolton, Director, Business and Governance, Bega Valley Shire Council, was affirmed and examined via videoconference.

The Committee questioned the witness. Evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

Mr Morgan Begg, Director of Research, Institute of Public Affairs, was sworn and examined.

The Committee questioned the witnesses. Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The hearing adjourned at 4.35pm.

3. Deliberative meeting

The Committee commenced a deliberative meeting at 4.36pm.

3.1 Publishing transcript of evidence

Resolved on the motion of Mr James: That the corrected transcript of public evidence given today be authorised for publication and uploaded on the Committee's webpage.

3.2 General business

The Committee discussed arrangements for a future hearing to be held as part of the inquiry.

4. Next meeting

The meeting adjourned at 4.40pm until 28 October 2024.

MINUTES OF MEETING NO 9

9.32am, 28 October 2024

Jubilee Room

Members present

Mr Primrose (Chair), Mr Borsak (Deputy Chair), Mr Bali, Mr Farraway (via videoconference), Mr Hagarty, Mr James, Mr Nanva (via videoconference), Mrs Quinnell (via videoconference, until 10.04am), Ms Saffin (via videoconference) and Mr Rath

Apologies

Ms Faehrmann

Officers present

Leon Last, Dora Oravecz, Janelle Taouk, Isabella Ciampa and Lloyd Connolly

1. Deliberative meeting

1.1 Confirmation of minutes

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Hagarty, seconded by Mr Borsak: That the minutes of the meeting of 27 September be confirmed.

1.2 Media orders

Resolved on the motion of Mr Bali: That the Committee authorises the audio-visual recording, photography and broadcasting of the public hearing on 28 October 2024, in accordance with the Legislative Assembly's guidelines for the coverage of proceedings for parliamentary committees administered by the Legislative Assembly.

1.3 Supplementary questions on notice

Resolved on the motion of Mr Rath: That the Committee adopts the following process in relation to supplementary questions:

- Members to email any proposed supplementary questions for witnesses to committee staff by 4pm on the second business day after the uncorrected transcript is circulated to members.
- Committee staff to circulate all proposed supplementary questions to the Committee, with members to lodge any objections to the questions by 4pm of the business day after the date on which the questions are sent to members.

1.4 Answers to questions taken on notice and supplementary questions

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Rath: That witnesses be requested to return answers to questions taken on notice and supplementary questions within 1 week of the date on which the questions are forwarded.

1.5 ***

1.6 ***

1.7 ***

2. Public hearing: Inquiry into proposals to increase voter engagement, participation and confidence

The Chair opened the public hearing at 12.02pm and made a short opening statement.

Mr Graeme Johnson, Chair, Public Law Committee, The Law Society of New South Wales, was sworn and examined.

Mr Andrew Chalk, Member, Public Law Committee, The Law Society of New South Wales, was sworn and examined.

The Committee questioned the witnesses. Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The hearing adjourned at 12.46pm and resumed at 1.47pm.

Mr Dominic Ofner, General Secretary, NSW Labor, was sworn and examined.

The Committee questioned the witness. Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

Mr Seamus Lee, Registered Officer, The Greens NSW, was affirmed and examined.

Mr Christopher Maltby, Deputy Registered Officer, The Greens NSW, was affirmed and examined.

The Committee questioned the witnesses. Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The hearing adjourned at 3.13pm and resumed at 3.30pm.

Mr Bruce Maguire, Lead Policy Advisor, Vision Australia, was affirmed and examined via videoconference.

Mr Jackson Reynolds-Ryan, Senior Policy Officer, Blind Citizens Australia, was affirmed and examined via videoconference.

Ms Bastien Wallace, Senior Policy Officer, People with Disability Australia, was affirmed and examined.

Ms Grace White, Policy Officer, National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA), was affirmed and examined via videoconference.

The Committee questioned the witnesses. Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The public hearing concluded at 4.28pm.

3. Post hearing deliberative meeting

The Committee commenced a deliberative meeting at 4.31 pm.

3.1 Publishing answers to questions on notice

Resolved on the motion of Mr Rath: That answers to questions on notice received from the following stakeholders be authorised for publication and uploaded on the Committee's webpage:

- Australian Electoral Commission
- Public Service Association
- Local Government NSW
- Human Rights Law Centre.

3.2. Publishing transcript of evidence

Resolved on the motion of Mr Bali: That the corrected transcript of public evidence given today be authorised for publication and uploaded on the Committee's website.

3.3. Correspondence to Secretary of Department of Education

Resolved on the motion of Mr Borsak, seconded Mr Bali: That the Chair writes to the Secretary of the Department of Education to seek information on the current primary and secondary curriculum content on civics and democracy, and the details of any reforms to this part of the curriculum.

4. Next meeting

The meeting adjourned at 4.34pm until a date and time to be determined.

MINUTES OF MEETING NO 10

12.32pm, 28 November 2024

Room 1254

Members present

Mr Primrose (Chair), Mr Borsak (Deputy Chair), Mr Hagarty (via videoconference), Mr James (via videoconference), Mr Nanva (via videoconference), Ms Saffin (via videoconference), Ms Faehrmann (via videoconference), Mr Bali (via videoconference) and Mr Rath

Apologies

Mr Faraway, Mrs Quinnell

Officers present

Leon Last, Dora Oravecz, Janelle Taouk and Lloyd Connolly

1. Confirmation of minutes

Resolved, on motion of Mr Borsak, seconded by Mr Hagarty: That the minutes of the meeting of 28 October 2024 be confirmed.

2. Inquiry into proposals to increase voter engagement, participation and confidence

2.1 Correspondence

The Committee considered correspondence received on 11 November 2024 from the office of the Special Minister of State, requesting the Committee to consider the reportedly

high rate of informal voting in Toomelah at the most recent local government elections as part of the Committee's current inquiry.

Discussion ensued.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Borsak: That the Committee writes to the NSW Electoral Commission, the Office of Local Government and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs to seek further information on the reportedly high rate of informal voting in Toomelah at the 2024 local government elections.

2.2 Publishing answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Saffin: That the following documents be published on the Committee's webpage:

- Additional information from the Law Society of NSW
- Answers to questions on notice from:
 - Vision Australia
 - People with Disability Australia, and
 - the National Ethnic Disability Alliance.
- Answers to supplementary questions from the Greens NSW.

2.3 Publishing late submission

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Saffin, seconded Mr Rath: That the Committee accepts and publishes submission 36 in full on the Committee's webpage.

3. Next meeting

The meeting adjourned at 12.42 until a date to be determined.

MINUTES OF MEETING NO 11

8.52am, 17 March 2025

Macquarie Room

Members present

Mr Primrose (Chair), Mr Borsak (Deputy Chair), Mr Hagarty, Mr James, Ms Faehrmann, Mr Bali, Mr Nanva (via videoconference), Mr Rath and Ms Overall

Apologies

Mrs Quinnell, Mrs Saffin

Officers present

Leon Last, Shanshan Guo, Janelle Taouk and Lloyd Connolly

1. Deliberative meeting

1.1 Confirmation of minutes

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Borsak: That the minutes of the meeting of 28 November 2024 be confirmed.

1.2 Media orders

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Faehrmann: That the Committee authorises the audio-visual recording, photography and broadcasting of the public hearing on 17 March 2025, in accordance with the Legislative Assembly's resolution of 9 May 2023; and the Assembly's guidelines for coverage of proceedings for parliamentary committees administered by the Legislative Assembly.

1.3 Supplementary questions on notice

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Bali: That the Committee adopts the following process in relation to supplementary questions:

- Members to email proposed supplementary questions for witnesses to Committee staff within 2 business days of the uncorrected transcript being circulated to members.
- Committee staff to circulate all proposed supplementary questions to the Committee, with members to lodge any objections to the questions within 1 business day of the questions being sent to members.

1.4 Answers to questions taken on notice and supplementary questions

Resolved on the motion of Mr Borsak: That witnesses be requested to return answers to questions taken on notice and supplementary questions within 1 week of the date on which the questions are forwarded.

2. Public hearing: inquiry into proposals to increase voter engagement, participation and confidence

The Chair opened the public hearing at 9.05am and made a short opening statement.

The Hon. John Hatzistergos AM, Chief Commissioner, NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption, was affirmed and examined.

The Committee questioned the witness. Evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

Ms Sandy Killick, Managing Director, Democracy Matters, was affirmed and examined.

Mr William Browne, Director Democracy and Accountability Program, The Australian Institute, was affirmed and examined.

Dr Joshua Black, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, The Australia Institute, was affirmed and examined.

The Committee questioned the witnesses. Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The Committee adjourned at 10.47am and resumed at 11.01am.

Ms Rachel McCallum, NSW Electoral Commissioner, NSW Electoral Commission, was affirmed and examined.

Ms Andrea Summerell, Executive Director, Elections, NSW Electoral Commission, was affirmed and examined.

Mr Hugo Bergeron, Acting Executive Director, Funding Disclosure and Compliance, NSW

Electoral Commission, was affirmed and examined.

Ms Philippa Brandon, Director, Communications, NSW Electoral Commission, was affirmed and examined.

The Committee questioned the witnesses. Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The Committee adjourned at 12.26pm and resumed at 1.30pm

Dr Hammond Pearce was affirmed and examined.

A/Prof Vanessa Teague, was affirmed and examined.

The Committee questioned the witnesses. Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The Committee adjourned at 2.27pm and resumed at 2.59pm.

Ms Sonia Minutillo, Acting Privacy Commissioner, Information and Privacy Commission NSW, was affirmed and examined.

The Committee questioned the witness. Evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

The public hearing concluded at 3.24pm.

3. Post-hearing deliberative meeting

The Committee commences a deliberative meeting at 3.24pm.

3.1 Correspondence

The Committee considered the following correspondence:

Sent

- Committee Chair to Aboriginal Affairs NSW, 28 November 2024, seeking information on the high rate of informal voting in Toomelah.
- Committee Chair to Office of Local Government, 28 November 2024, seeking information on the high rate of informal voting in Toomelah.
- Committee Chair to NSW Electoral Commission, 2 December 2024, seeking information on the high rate of informal voting in Toomelah.

Received

- NSW Education Standards Authority, dated 21 November 2024, providing information about civics content in the primary and secondary school curriculum.
- Office of Local Government, dated 19 December 2024, responding to letter from Committee seeking information on the high rate of informal voting in Toomelah.
- Aboriginal Affairs NSW, dated 20 January 2025, responding to letter from Committee seeking information on the high rate of informal voting in Toomelah.
- NSW Electoral Commission, dated 31 January 2025, responding to letter from Committee seeking information on the high rate of informal voting in Toomelah.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Overall: That the correspondence received from the NSW Education Standards Authority, the Office of Local Government, Aboriginal Affairs NSW and

the NSW Electoral Commission be authorised for publication and uploaded on the Committee's webpage.

3.2. Briefing note

The Committee considered a briefing note on civics education programs delivered by the NSW Parliament.

3.3. Publishing transcript of evidence

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Bali: That the corrected transcript of public evidence given today be authorised for publication and uploaded on the Committee's webpage.

4. Next meeting

The meeting adjourned at 3.26pm until a date and time to be determined.

MINUTES OF MEETING NO 12

1.33pm, 29 May 2025

Room 1136

Members present

Mr Primrose (Chair), Mr Borsak (Deputy Chair), Mr James, Mr Nanva, Mr Bali, Ms Faehrmann, Mr Rath and Ms Overall.

Apologies

Mrs Quinnell, Ms Saffin

Officers present

Leon Last, Shanshan Guo, Janelle Taouk, Charis Fisher and Lloyd Connolly

1. Deliberative meeting

1.1 Confirmation of minutes

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Nanva: That the minutes of the meeting of 17 March 2025 be confirmed.

2. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following correspondence received:

- ***
- ***
- Correspondence from the Chief Commissioner of the Independent Commission Against Corruption on 19 March 2025.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Faehrmann: That the correspondence from the Chief Commissioner of the Independent Commission Against Corruption on 19 March 2025 be published with internal reference, signature and contact details redacted.

3. Inquiry into proposals to increase voter engagement, participation and confidence

3.1 Publishing answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions

The Committee considered the publication of answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions:

Resolved on the motion of Mr Rath: That the following answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions be published on the Committee's webpage with contact details redacted.

- Answers to supplementary questions from Democracy Matters.
- Answers to supplementary questions from NSW Electoral Commission.
- Answers to supplementary questions from the Independent Commission Against Corruption.
- Answers to supplementary questions from Hammond Pearce.
- Answers to supplementary questions from The Australia Institute.
- Answers to questions on notice from A/Prof Vanessa Teague.
- Answers to questions on notice from the NSW Electoral Commission.

3.2 Future planning

The Committee noted that the next meeting will be a report deliberative to consider the report on proposals to increase voter engagement, participation and confidence.

4. General business

The Committee discussed the reported high rates of informal votes in aged care facilities and hospitals at the 2025 federal election.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Rath: That the Committee write to the NSW Electoral Commissioner seeking information about any matters the Commissioner may wish to raise on voter participation in declared institutions in NSW.

5. General business

The meeting adjourned at 1.38pm until 19 June 2025.

UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF MEETING NO 13

2.01pm, 19 June 2025

1136

Members present

Mr Primrose (Chair), Mr Borsak (Deputy Chair), Ms Overall and Mr Rath

Via videoconference: Mr Bali, Ms Faehrmann, Mr Hagarty, Mr James, Ms McKeown, Mr Nanva and Mrs Quinnell.

Apologies

None.

Officers present

Leon Last, Shanshan Guo, Janelle Taouk, Charis Fisher and Lloyd Connolly

1. Confirmation of minutes

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Hagarty: That the minutes of the meeting of 28 November 2024 be confirmed.

2. Correspondence

The Committee considered the following correspondence:

- Letter received from Chief Commissioner of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, dated 21 January 2025, addressed to the Special Minister of State, regarding the regulation of lobbying in NSW.
- Letter sent to the NSW Electoral Commissioner, dated 2 June 2025, seeking information about voter participation in declared institutions in NSW.

3. Committee membership

The Committee noted that Ms Karen Anne McKeown has been appointed to serve on the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters in place of Ms Janelle Saffin, discharged.

4. Inquiry into proposals to increase voter engagement, participation and confidence

4.1 Consideration of Chair's draft report

The Committee noted that the Chair's draft report had been circulated prior to the meeting and agreed to consider any proposed amendments to the report.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Borsak: That the Committee considers the Chair's draft report chapter by chapter.

Chapter 1

Ms Faehrmann moved that Finding 1 be omitted and replaced with a new Finding 1 to read:

- 'The given the people can drive, work, pay taxes, enlist in the army and consent to sex from the age of 16, there is no justification for denying them the right to vote.'

Discussion ensued.

Question put.

The Committee divided.

Ayes 1 [Ms Faehrmann]

Noes 10 [Mr Bali, Mr Borsak, Mr Hagarty, Mr James, Ms McKeown, Mr Nava, Ms Overall, Mr Primrose, Mrs Quinnell, Mr Rath]

Question passed in the negative.

Ms Faehrmann moved that a new recommendation be inserted after the new Finding 2 to read:

- 'That the NSW Government amend the *Electoral Act 2017* to give people 16 years over the right to vote.'

Debate ensued.

Question put.

The Committee divided.

Ayes 1 [Ms Faehrmann]

Noes 10 [Mr Bali, Mr Borsak, Mr Hagarty, Mr James, Ms McKeown, Mr Nava, Ms Overall, Mr Primrose, Mrs Quinnell, Mr Rath]

Question passed in the negative.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Quinnell: That chapter 1 as amended stand as part of the report.

Chapter 2

Discussion ensued.

Resolved on the motion of Mrs Quinnell that a new recommendation be inserted following recommendation 7 to read:

- Recommendation 8: That the NSW Electoral Commission publishes voting locations of polling stations and their accessibility features at least three weeks before pre poll.

Resolved on the motion of Mrs Quinnell that; Paragraph 2.45, be amended by inserting the words 'This should be provided in advance of the prepoll so that information is timely and useful for voters, allowing those that need additional accessibility to make necessary arrangements.', after the words: '... the NSWEC should clearly communicate to voters about all available accessibility features in each location.'

Resolved on the motion of Mrs Quinnell that: Paragraph 2.49 be amended by inserting the words '... and be published at least three weeks in advance for the pre poll to allow voters time to find the information.', after the words 'They should include as much information as possible about different types of accessibility features.'

Resolved on the motion of Mrs Quinnell: That chapter 2 as amended stand as part of the report.

Chapter 3

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Nanva: That chapter 3 stand as part of the report.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Bali: That the attached proposed cover be the of the Committee's report.

5. ***

6. ***

7. ***