

Parliamentary Inquiry into Voting Accessibility

Submission from Nick, age 23

1. What are the good things about voting?

- We get to have a say about the people.
- We get to vote for different people who have different policies.
- It is always good to have our voices heard.
- Sometimes you get support from the volunteers who are there.

2. What are the hard things about voting?

- If it is your first time voting, it can be a little confusing, especially if you do not have support.
- There are lots of instructions given in a short space of time, and if you have not watched any videos or seen any of the advertising, there is no guidance at the polling booth that is easy to understand.
- There is not a clear explanation of what happens if you do not vote.
- After voting, I wish the ministers would actually keep their promises and act on them in local people's interests.

3. Do you need support to vote? Who gives you support? What do they do that helps you vote?

- I do need support the first time, but after the second time, I began to feel more confident.
- My family gives me support, sometimes the volunteers, and on one occasion, a support worker.
- They help me get into the venue and repeat some of the instructions that the volunteers sitting at the desks have told me, but they do not come into the booth with me.

4. When you voted at past elections, did anything make you feel unhappy, stressed or uncomfortable?

At a polling centre:

- I felt really uncomfortable with all the volunteers rushing at me and trying to shove how-to-vote cards into my hand. I had to tell them quite loudly that I did not want them.
- When you are bumping into people, it makes me feel bad and could make the other person feel upset too.

At a pre-polling centre in a large shopping centre:

- Although it was accessible because it had a lift, the queues were out the door, along a very skinny corridor, down the staircase and out into the street.
- It was very narrow and very noisy, and we could not move freely.

- Throughout the corridor, there were no visible signs to say that if you had accessibility needs, you could go a different way.

5. What could make voting easier for you next time?

At the polling booth:

- Screens on repeat showing the steps on how to vote, so that if you miss it the first time, you know you will be able to see it again.
- The two voting papers given separately. For example, you could be given instructions for the lower house first, and then get the instructions for the upper house from a different table. Getting both sets of instructions at once is quite overwhelming.
- An escort person out the front at bigger polling centres, wearing a bright vest marked for accessibility, to escort you past the campaign workers and help people get to an accessible entry point.
- All volunteers to complete an awareness course about the hidden disability lanyard (the sunflower lanyard), so they know that a person may need extra space, extra time, or to ask questions in a polite way, and that they should not rush at them.

Accessible information:

- Accessible information about the different parties and their policies. There is not a lot that is really accessible and easy to understand, and that does not always mean putting it in Easy Read.
- As a family, my mum used the ABC Compass questions and broke those down, but it was still really hard to understand. She also had to be careful not to put her own bias into the questions when she reworded them so we could understand them.
- Training for supporters or family members on how to become a democracy champion, so they can support young people to understand politics and understand the voting process
- Another idea is for candidates to make short videos explaining who they are and what they want to achieve if they are elected. The videos should include an Auslan interpreter, captions, and be in plain language with no jargon. They should be kept short, around two to three minutes.
- These videos could be made available to anyone who needs them by putting a QR code on advertisements, posters, and in newspapers. Voters could then watch in their own time, pause and rewatch, and share with family members who are helping them.
- This would not cost a lot of money or require complicated technology. A phone, an Auslan interpreter, and a QR code is really all you need. Making information accessible is not that hard to do. The most important thing is that candidates are willing to do it.

Other:

- Let people know that there are lots of reasons you can vote out of area. We found the queues when voting out of area were much shorter and the whole process was much quicker.