

EMC Submission No 266th June 2016emc@parliament.vic.gov.au

Mr Mark Roberts
Executive Officer
Electoral Matter Committee
Parliament of Victoria
Parliament House, Spring Street,
East Melbourne, Victoria 3002

Dear Honourable Louise Asher MP and Parliamentary Committee Members,

I write in relation to your kind invitation to make a submission on behalf of the Victorian ALP concerning electronic voting.

In principal, the Party remains in favour of any measure that enhances the franchise of those voting within Victoria. This is further the case when considering a mode of voting that appears to yield demonstrable benefits for those who might be suffering from an impairment. As such, the Party generally supports the concept of electronic voting, but with certain qualifications.

It should firstly be stressed that we are in support provided it is a complimentary voting format rather than something used for the purposes of narrowing Victoria's voting options. It should be added to the existing suite of options rather something utilised for the purposes of reducing any of the existing formats for casting a ballot.

Secondly, as it pertains to the question of which model should be implemented, the Party generally supports both proposed models; namely the remote online and the attendance electronic model. We firmly believe that there remains a place for both in parallel. The remote online model is necessitated by the increasing lack of reliability and the rising cost of postal votes. The attendance electronic model is desirable due to the enhanced ease of use for those with particular impairments in the booth.

In terms of implementation and operational considerations, our view is that any proposed electronic voting system must be rigorously trialled before being rolled out for a State election. Local Council elections provide an ideal opportunity for this in terms of simulating the scale of the rollout, the performance of the system under pressure and finally the human operational assistance required from Electoral Commission staff and voters. Considering also that we are already in an "election period" setting rather than one that could be termed "election day" due to early voting, this should also be accounted for in any planned trial.

We would finally like to emphasise the importance of initiating serious structural safety measures that offset the potential lack of compartmentalisation at the back end of the relevant coding system (where several people would presumably require access in order to fix issues and potentially enhance performance). The potential for someone to possess comprehensive authority and viewing rights after the granting of final firewall access (or otherwise known as administrative rights) to most electronic systems is in contrast with the siloed nature of the physical ballot system. We must clearly address the issue of how we traverse this challenge inherent in electronic voting to ensure that the systems integrity can be demonstrated and preserved in order for the voting public to have trust in it.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions or require any further clarification concerning the above.

With regards



NOAH CARROLL
VICTORIAN BRANCH SECRETARY