

From: Meredith Prain <Meredith.Prain@ableaustralia.org.au>
To: "emc@parliament.vic.gov.au" <emc@parliament.vic.gov.au>
Cc: "Michelle Stevens (m1stevens@wideband.net.au)" <m1stevens@wideband.net.au>, Carla Anderson <Carla.Anderson@ableaustralia.org.au>
Date: 30/01/2013 09:31 AM
Subject: VEC Electoral Inquiry

Hello,

Please see below email from Michelle Stevens, a woman who is deafblind.

In addition to her comments and suggestions I would add:

For many people with deafblindness the best way to access information is through face to face interaction with another. It is recommended that regular workshops are held , (annually would probably be best) to provide information about all aspects of enrolling to vote and voting. Workshops would require 2 to 3 months lead time to prepare and 10 – 12 interpreters booked as some people with deafblindness require two tactile interpreters. Plenty of time should be allowed for participants to ask questions to clarify information being presented – up to one hour for questions during the session.

Orientation and mobility is a major issues for many people with deafblindness and results in them not being able to travel or negotiate new surroundings independently. This combined with their significant issues with communication make it impossible for them to attend a voting booth, even with electronic voting facilities, independently.

For a small number of people with deafblindness, the ideal situation would be a mobile voting service in which voting facilities, including an Auslan interpreter where necessary would attend their own home.

I would be happy to be contacted for further information about providing services and information to people with deafblindness.

Regards,

Meredith

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From: Michelle's Home Emails [mailto:m1stevens@wideband.net.au]
Sent: Monday, 14 January 2013 3:58 PM
To: Meredith Prain
Subject: VEC Electoral hearing

I think they can make voting more accessible for people who are Deafblind, or have a combined vision and hearing loss. I have had people mention to me that for people who are vision and hearing impaired the Electronic voting was ideal because they could vote completely independently .

If the State Government planning to introduce electronic voting they need to make it Deafblind friendly.

Electronic Voting with a refreshable Braille displays.

A tactile Auslan interpreter to facilitate communication at nominated voting booths.

All online information including council elections and candidate information must be made in a format that a Deafblind person can access, Braille, Large Print and easy English.

Prior to elections being held I think it would be a great idea to have an opportunity to give Returning Offices/Voting officials an opportunity to have awareness on Deafblindness, and a dual combined vision hearing impairments.

Access to clear information for signage so a person with low vision can find the voting booth. Though, some people will come with a support worker.

Accessible information how to vote materials preferably in clear large print for those people who still can use their residual vision. I know it may not be available in Braille.

Michelle Stevens