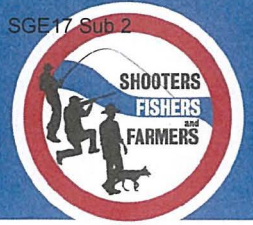


# SHOOTERS FISHERS and FARMERS



Mr P Katsambanis MLA  
 Chairman  
 Community Development and Justice Standing Committee  
 c/- The Principal Research Officer  
 Legislative Assembly Committee Office  
 Level 1/11 Harvest Terrace  
 WEST PERTH WA 6005



Dear Mr Katsambanis

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on certain aspects of the Western Australia Electoral Commission's (WAEC) administration and management of the 2017 State General Election.

In particular, the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party (WA) Inc (SFFP) would like to address dot points one and four of the Inquiry Terms of Reference as they are matters that were raised with the WAEC shortly after the State General Election.

With your indulgence, I will first address dot point four as our comments regarding dot point one directly relate to our concerns with early voting centres.

- The SFFP hold that they and other minor parties are severely disadvantaged by the lengthy period during which early voting centres operated during this election. It is extremely difficult for any but the major parties to adequately resource either the metropolitan or regional voting centres in terms of personnel to provide how to vote information or answer inquiries from the voting public.

Materials left unattended were later found to have been removed or obscured by that of other parties. Voters arriving at metropolitan early voting centres were overwhelmed by supporters of the major parties and many would hasten into the voting centre to avoid these people rather than take the time to look for the information that they required. The vastness of Western Australia and the tyranny of distance are a huge disadvantage for minor parties when seeking to staff early voting centres in regional centres for the extended period of the March 2017 election.

The SFFP received a large number of telephone enquiries from voters in attendance at early voting centres seeking information on how to support the party.

- SFFP query the lack of transparency in the long term security of ballots cast in early voting centres, particularly those in regional centres. A question was put to WAEC staff at the early voting centre in Northam on the day of the election regarding the security of ballots during the early voting phase elicited the response that they had been kept in a locked room following each day's voting. In this particular case, the Memorial Hall.

We would contend that any ballots left unattended each and every night of an extended early voting period, in any space that did not have a significant level of security, were not adequately secured.

It may be that the information relating to the security of ballot papers lodged at early voting centres is not correct in which case SFFP would welcome clarification.

Despite the matters raised above, the SFFP was extremely appreciative of the courteous and professional assistance and guidance provided by the WAEC. Briefings, information and responses were provided in a timely and bipartisan matter.

Yours sincerely

Anne Fergusson-Stewart  
State Secretary

25 July 2017