



Liberal Party election shenanigans at aged care home

Description



Under Australia's voting laws, it has been found to be perfectly legal for candidate workers to assist elderly people with their voting. Image: ConnectionPix

Carol Altmann – The Terrier

An enthusiastic volunteer for Wannon Liberal Party candidate Dan Tehan caused a few ructions last week after she assisted elderly people to fill out their voting cards at a mobile polling booth in a local aged care home.

The volunteer entered the polling area several times to help the voters, showing them how to complete their ballot papers to, no doubt, put Dan at the top of the tree.

How-to-vote Liberal cards had also been distributed to the residents' rooms, just to make their decision making that little bit easier.

Apparently once the Australian Electoral Commission became aware of what was happening, voting was temporarily suspended at the mobile booth and Mr Tehan's office was contacted, with the volunteer told to cease and desist, or words to that effect. (I contacted Mr Tehan's office today, but am yet to hear back.)

Unbelievably, all of the above has since been found to be perfectly legal under our election laws, despite the voters in question being among the most open to manipulation.

In fact another Liberal Party volunteer was also reported to the AEC last week after he helped at least a dozen residents fill out their Senate voting papers at a mobile polling booth in a Melbourne nursing home.

Normally, no party campaign workers are allowed within six metres of a polling booth.

The AEC investigated the Melbourne case and found that this rule did not apply to mobile polling booths, so the volunteer had done nothing illegal.

A spokeswoman for the AEC also told me today that if any voter wanted help with filling out their voting paper, they could ask for it from either an AEC worker or a party campaign worker, it was their choice.

Woah!

I can see a giant hole in the rules here with the words “POTENTIAL RORT” flashing in psychedelic red, blue and green.

There is nothing like having a party candidate schmoozing up to the elderly with some helpful how-to-vote tips when, potentially, that elderly person is not entirely sure who is running for which party, or what party they wish to vote for. (I speak from experience here, as my old Mum swung from Julia Gillard to Pauline Hanson, and back again, because she liked red hair.)

Surely such “help” should only be provided by an AEC worker?

This potential rort might not matter as much in a seat like Wannon, where Mr Tehan sits on a 9% margin and is unlikely to ever lose, ever, ever, ever, but in a tight marginal seat, a few “let me help you dear” votes could make all the difference.

The same applies to the Senate, where a few votes can determine the balance of power.

Watch this space, I reckon, for a change in the rules before too long, now that campaign workers are showing up right inside nursing home polling booths and only too eager to “help”.

(By the way, it is compulsory for everyone over the age of 18 to vote in federal and state elections in Australia, unless you have specifically applied for an exemption because of medical issues, dementia, mental health etc.)

If you would like to see The Terrier keep digging up, sniffing out and chewing on local issues, please consider throwing something in the tip jar.

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