



Voting at the Federal Election

In late 2004 or early 2005 there will be a Federal Election. This is your opportunity to have a say about who represents you in the Federal Parliament. The Federal Parliament is responsible for policies and programs in areas including homelessness, housing, health care, human rights, anti-discrimination, social security and income support.

Why is it important to enrol and to vote?

1. Voting is empowering.
2. If you don't vote, you let other people decide what is best for you.
3. Your vote could determine the election result. Many seats are won by a handful of votes.
4. Voting is one of the simplest and most effective ways of having your voice heard.
5. Politicians and political parties collect statistics and track information about whether members of various community groups are enrolled to vote and exercise their right to vote. In 2001, it is estimated that up to 80 000 homeless people were not enrolled or did not vote. Politicians and political parties are more likely to act in the interests of homeless people if they know that homeless people have the power to vote them in or out of a job!
6. Voting is a legal obligation.
7. Voting is one of the most effective ways of holding politicians accountable and keeping the bastards honest!

The more homeless people that enrol and vote, the more power and influence that homeless people and advocates will have.

Who is eligible to vote?

- You have the right to vote if:
 1. you are 18 years of age or more; and
 2. you are an Australian citizen; and
 3. you are enrolled to vote.
- You do not need to have a home, a fixed residential address or even a postal address to enrol and vote.

How do you enrol to vote?

- You can enrol to vote by completing and submitting an enrolment application form.
- You can enrol to vote at any time, but if you want to vote at the next Federal Election you must complete and submit your form within 7 days after the government calls the election.
- If you think you may already be enrolled but you're not sure, enrol to vote anyway because your application form will be used to update your enrolment details.
- You can get enrolment application forms from any post office, by visiting www.aec.gov.au or by calling 13 23 26.
- Some of the most important forms are attached to this information sheet.

Enrolment options for homeless people

- **If you do not have a fixed residential address (for example, you are homeless and sleeping rough, staying in crisis accommodation, couch surfing with friends or relatives, or staying in boarding houses or rooming houses for short periods of time) you may be eligible to enrol as an Itinerant Elector.** An Itinerant Elector Enrolment Application Form is attached to this information sheet.
- If you have a fixed residential address and you have stayed at that address for at least the last month, you can enrol as an Ordinary Elector. An Ordinary Elector Enrolment Application Form is attached to this information sheet.
- If you enrol to vote as an Ordinary Elector, your name and any address details will be included on a publicly available electoral roll. If you don't want your address shown on the roll because those details could put you or your family at risk of violence or harm, you can apply to be a Silent Elector. A Silent Elector Application Form is attached to this information sheet.
- If you enrol to vote as an Itinerant Elector, your address will not appear on the electoral roll.

How do you vote?

- Call 13 23 26 or visit www.aec.gov.au to find out where your closest polling place is.
- If you need assistance to vote, you are entitled to ask a friend, relative, worker or polling official to help you.
- If you can't get to a polling place, call 13 23 26 before election day and the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) can help you to cast a pre-paid postal vote.

What happens if you don't vote?

- If you are enrolled as an Ordinary Elector and you don't vote, the AEC will write to your last known address to ask why. If you provide a reasonable excuse, such as illness or disability, you may not be fined. If you can't provide a reasonable excuse you may be fined \$20.
- **If you are enrolled to vote as an Itinerant Elector, you cannot be fined for failing to vote.**

Some important facts about voting

- The AEC has no power to fine you for failing to enrol and vote in past elections. They can only fine you if you enrol but fail to vote in forthcoming elections. It's not important that you haven't voted at past elections, but it is important that you enrol and vote now!
- If you enrol to vote, you are no more or less likely to receive a visit from the police or sheriff about things like old fines or warrants. The police and sheriff have their own databases and very rarely check the electoral rolls.
- Your vote and the votes of your friends count! If 80 000 homeless people enrol and exercise their right to vote, the government will be forced to do more about homelessness.

