

National Mental Health Consumer Alliance



Mr Tom Rogers
Australian Electoral Commissioner
Australian Electoral Commission
Via email: media@aec.gov.au

10 October 2023

Dear Mr Rogers,

Re: The Voice Referendum

The National Mental Health Consumer Alliance ("the Alliance") is disappointed at the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) decision that would exclude thousands of mental health consumers and mental health workers from voting in the Voice referendum.

People who find themselves in a hospital ward this Saturday, as well as many staff on a Saturday shift, will be unable to vote according to a Guardian article released on Sunday 8 October. We understand that the decision to suspend mobile voting was made during the COVID pandemic.

Without providing mobile voting teams, or alternatively initiating a proactive in-reach program to facilitate postal voting, the AEC is depriving many people of a fundamental democratic right of Australian citizens to vote in elections and referendums. It is disturbing for us to discover that the AEC is not committed to ensuring every Australian who has the right to vote is able to do so in this referendum.

Together, the Alliance represents over 7,000 mental health consumers across the country. Our members are deeply concerned at this decision and would like to see it reversed before the next election, whether that be a council, state or federal election in any jurisdiction.

Given that the worst of the COVID pandemic appears to be over, we demand that the AEC reverses its decision and reinstates temporary voting facilities at all public and private hospitals.

Over 135 years' experience of leadership, representation and advocacy by, for and with consumers who have a lived experience of mental health issues

Due to the time critical nature of this Saturday's referendum we call for a public response from the AEC addressing the immediate concern on this important issue.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of the letters 'PB' followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Priscilla Brice

On behalf of the National Mental Health Consumer Alliance