

2 April 2026

Chair  
NSW Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters

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Dear Committee,

Thank you for the invitation to make a submission to the inquiry into the display of electoral posters and other electoral signage at voting centres.



The Australia Institute has not specifically researched the question of electoral posters and signage in NSW. However, we are generally supportive of political engagement, including through posters and signs.

Australian elections are accompanied by a flurry of pamphlets, posters, forums, advertisements and signage. This comes to a head on election day with school fetes, sausage sizzles and other community events. This “festival of democracy” enriches the civic experience and makes compulsory voting a pleasure and a custom as well as a duty.

Nor should political parties and candidates have a monopoly on election participation. Community organisations, civil society groups and activists are properly involved as well. Posters and signage are within reach of small grassroots organisations who cannot afford mass media advertising campaigns.

In our submission to the inquiry into the ACT election, we considered the territory’s restrictions on roadside signs. The ban falls much more heavily on community groups and other organisations (limited to 250 signs) than it does political parties (allowed up to 6,500 signs depending on how many candidates they run), and a wider ban on corflutes in South Australia “significantly impacted” (reduced) voter awareness that a by-election was happening.<sup>1</sup>

That said, in the last decade or two some campaigns have blanketed polling places with cheap plastic wrapping in order to block other campaigns from having room for their materials. This is perverse and wasteful, and just encourages an arms race. Where space is limited, it makes sense to stop campaigns from taking up more than their fair share.

The Institute would welcome the opportunity to discuss research findings in further detail at any committee hearing, should there be one.

Regards,

Bill Browne  
Director – Democracy and Accountability  
The Australia Institute

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<sup>1</sup> Browne (2025) *Submission to 2025 ACT election inquiry*,  
<https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/submission-to-2024-act-election-inquiry/>