



Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters

Opening statement - 27 April 2023

Maeve

Thank you very much for having us today. We are from Inclusion Australia, the national representative organisation for people with an intellectual disability.

Brooke

My name is Brooke Canham. I am a Policy Officer at Inclusion Australia.

I have been a Policy Officer for six months and before that I worked on a project called Make Decisions Real. This was about supported decision-making.

In our project we talked about how to get good supports and made resources for people with an intellectual disability about how to make decisions.

Maeve

Today we are going to talk about voting for people with an intellectual disability. This is a human right under UN conventions, but people with an intellectual disability in Australia have told us there are different issues for them when they are voting.

Brooke is going to talk a little bit about the right to vote and about her experiences with voting.

Brooke

Human rights are basic rights and freedoms that belong to every person in the world. Rights are something that all people have regardless of background, where we live, what we look like, what we think or what we believe.

The UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities says what countries should do to protect the rights of people with disabilities. Australia signed the CRPD in 2008.

Article 29 of the CRPD says that people with disability have political rights and should be able to participate in political life on an equal basis to others.

At the moment, lots of people with an intellectual disability in Australia don't have their rights in reality.

This is my story about voting.

I think voting is very hard they give you too many papers when you go to the person when you sign in.

There is nothing in easy read to follow how to vote.

I know the people tell you some instructions but it is still confusing for me.

when I go voting I am always with a family member and they help me sign in and makes sure I am ok.

but when my family have voted and I am taking up some time my mum comes up and gives me some help.

at the start when you walk though car park and there are people waving paper saying vote for these people that's when I start getting very confused.

They need to make voting easier for me and other people with disabilities giving me some more time at the stand to vote.

Maeve

In 2022, Inclusion Australia signed an open letter along with more than 65 organisations which was led by Australian Lawyers for Human Rights.

The letter called for action to protect the right of people with disability to vote in line with Australia's international human rights law obligations and recommendations for reform made by the Australian Law Reform Commission in 2014.

Along with these recommendations, Brooke is going to share some other ideas we have.

Brooke

We have some ideas about what needs to change to make things more accessible for people with disability.

- There should be more Easy Read information. There is some online, but it is hard to find, and it should be available in person on the day.
- There shouldn't be people putting 'how to vote' cards in people's faces if they already know who they want to vote for.
- People with an intellectual disability should be able to have more time at the stand. People might feel rushed or be told to hurry as there are queues.
- We should think about if it's ok to have someone support you when you're voting, to explain the process in a better format. This could be like supported decision-making.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to share our ideas with you today.