

## Electoral Commissioner

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Dear Professor Bruter

### Letter of Support | Electoral Psychology Observatory

I write to you regarding the work of the Electoral Psychology Observatory (EPO) to emphasise my support for its ongoing work and highlight the valuable insights the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) continues to derive from its research.

At the outset, the nature of the work undertaken by the EPO is incredibly unique. As you are well aware, there hasn't, previously, been a significant global focus on the psychology of the voter, nor a detailed, empirical examination of the voter's emotions and thoughts about voting. In the current global environment when there is a decline in trust in many societal institutions, understanding the mindset of the voter and their emotions toward voting with a view to optimising the voting experience is critically important.

Optimising the experience for voters in general, and especially those voters who may have particular needs such as first-time voters or voters with hidden mental or learning disabilities, can have impacts beyond electoral participation. For example, our own observations from recent electoral events indicate that if a person has a bad voting experience, they are more likely to propagate negative commentary about an electoral event and are more likely to believe broader conspiracy theories about the integrity of that election. In the modern era, when anyone can be a commentator on elections through social media, that commentary can spread rapidly.

My term as Australia's Electoral Commissioner has spanned over a decade; that period has been electorally tumultuous, with sharply rising voter expectations in democracies globally. Given the dynamic voting environment, I have very much appreciated your ongoing interest in, commitment to, and advice on 'the voter'. Our ongoing involvement with you and Dr Sarah Harrison including: attending policy workshops on first time voters, voters with disabilities, and polling station and queues in Canberra (co-organised with the ANU); your interactions with the AEC's leadership team in Canberra and some of our state executives; your observation of the Australian electoral system through involvement in several elections and referenda (including visiting polling stations – some specialising in voters with disabilities and vulnerable voters); and ongoing high level meetings and

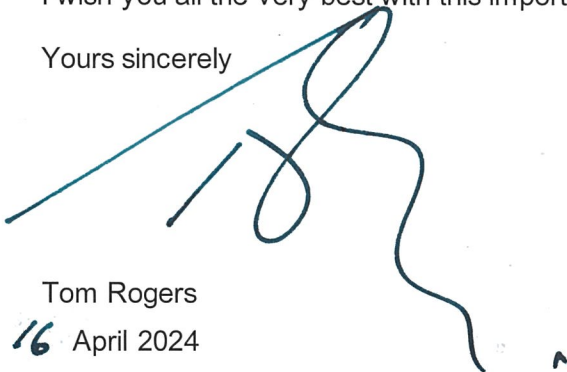
discussions with our key staff have provided the opportunity for important discussions and focus on voter behaviour.

It's for the reasons I've listed above that I believe the focus EPO has captured the electoral zeitgeist and provides unique and valuable insights and guidance for practitioners and theorists alike. Your efforts to optimise the voters experience very much aligns with an AEC initiative we call 'Voter 2030', which focusses on what elections will look like in the future and, more importantly, what users will expect from the voting experience. This initiative was the precursor to the AEC's current transformation strategy, which outlines how we will continue to maintain citizens trust in electoral outcomes against a backdrop of rapidly changing community expectation and an incredibly complex operating environment.

Democratic legitimacy is critical for the success of governments and the well-being of citizens. That legitimacy, to a very great extent, rests on professionally conducted electoral events with trusted outcomes. In an increasingly fraught global electoral environment, the work of the EPO, which puts citizens at the heart of the of the democratic process, assist agencies like the AEC to continue to meet citizen's democratic expectations.

I wish you all the very best with this important work.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tom Rogers', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left and then curves back under the name.

Tom Rogers

16 April 2024