

News releases - John Rau

Improved access for voters with disability

John Rau

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Reforms are proposed to the way votes can be cast in an election to make the process easier for people with a disability.

Sight-impaired voters will be able to use an electronically-assisted method of voting.

Several other amendments proposed in the *Electoral (Miscellaneous) Amendment Bill 2016* also will make it easier for people with a disability to cast a vote.

People whose disability makes them unable to sign their name will be given exemption from this requirement when they cast a declaration vote. The Electoral Act provides for a voter who requires assistance to be accompanied by an assistant while in the polling booth. The Bill makes an amendment allowing the assistant to sign the declaration on their behalf.

Another amendment extends a provision where a person can vote near a polling booth in certain circumstances. These might include where, because of physical disability or illness, the voter is not able to go inside a polling booth. The Bill proposes an amendment to cater for the scenario where a person voting near a polling booth is doing so by way of declaration vote.

These and other changes are in the Bill which has been introduced in the House of Assembly.

Background

The *Electoral (Miscellaneous) Amendment Bill 2016* is one of two bills introduced to Parliament which aim to improve the voting system.

Further reforms to make the system better reflect the views of the electorate are being considered and will be announced in due course.

Quotes attributable to Attorney-General John Rau

The Government wants voters with a disability to have an opportunity to cast a ballot and to do so in a way that respects their anonymity and their dignity.

We remain open to discussions on possible future reforms which might assist voters, especially because technological advances are giving a voice to people with a disability in ways that has never been possible in the past.