



COMBINED PENSIONERS AND SUPERANNUANTS ASSOCIATION OF NEW SOUTH WALES INC.

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MEDIA RELEASE

Embargoed to 25 July 2006 noon

25 July 2006

Pensioners not moving to Antarctica to vote

“Pensioners are critical of a review of the NSW *Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912* for failing to take into account the circumstances of pensioners without access to transport, while the *Act* makes very elaborate provisions for postal and absentee voting”, said CPSA Policy Coordinator Paul Versteeg in evidence today before the Electoral Matters Committee of the NSW Parliament.

“The *Act* even provides for detailed arrangements for voting at Antarctic stations.

“The *Act* provides for the appointment of not just an Antarctic Returning Officer, but also of an Assistant Antarctic Returning Officer, for every single Antarctic station there is.

“But the *Act* ignores the fact that all over Sydney Age Pensioners won’t be able to get to the polling booth on NSW election day 25 March 2007.

“A case in point is Mrs Kate Johnson’s situation.

“Mrs Johnson has no transport of her own and the area where she lives is not serviced by public transport or community transport at all.

“Mrs Kate Johnson doesn’t live more than 5,000 kilometres away from civilisation on Mawson, one of four Antarctic stations, but in the Western Sydney suburb of Canley Vale.”

“Mrs Johnson has to catch a taxi to go anywhere on her Age Pension of less than \$13,000 a year”, said Mr Versteeg.

“I just can’t afford to get out of the house”, said Mrs Johnson. “Once a week, I do my grocery shopping in Cabramatta, just four kilometres away. The rest of the week I can’t go anywhere.

“Not long ago I came back from my grocery shopping and found an Australia Post notice to go pick up a parcel from the post office. It had to wait a whole week until my next shopping day, because I couldn’t afford another taxi.

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“There’s no way that I could afford a taxi on election days, which is always a Saturday. I can’t shop and vote. I don’t shop on Saturdays, when it’s so crowded I get run off my feet”, said Mrs Johnson.

“And if suburban Sydney is not serviced by any form of public or community transport, the country is even worse. CPSA has specific reports from the South Coast, Dubbo and Parkes and expects to unearth many more transport policy failures in the lead-up to the March 2007 state election.

“Pensioners call on the Government to provide, on election days, through the Electoral Commissioner, transport to those voters who have no access to transport.

“But what Pensioners really call for is for the NSW Government to do what it has failed to do in the last eleven-and-a-half years, and that is invest in community and public transport to the extent where people like Mrs Johnson can fully participate in the community. Canley Vale might be a good place to start.”

ENDS

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