# Amanda Tink Submission to the January 2023 Technology Assisted Voting Review

I write, not as an expert, or to address any specific questions. I write as a blind citizen who, like everyone else, was eligible to vote when I was eighteen. Yet unlike most people I did not have the opportunity to cast an independent, secret, and verifiable vote in a state election until I was thirty-three. That was made possible by iVote.

I am gutted that iVote has been removed as a voting option for blind people. And I feel betrayed by the NSW Electoral Commission, who knowingly made iVote available to a much larger population than it had the capacity for, thereby ensuring its collapse.

As such, I recommend that iVote be reinstated. Or if not iVote then a similar system that enables blind people to vote either on the phone or online, and where a computer (not a human) provides the ballot paper and records and submits our responses.

There is a lot in this issues paper about the costs and benefits of the actual voting system itself. It implicitly divides the citizens of NSW into two groups: those who will always be able to vote, regardless of how much it costs, and those who can only vote if the NSW Electoral Commission decides the price tag is right. Meanwhile, as far as I can find, this paper does not consider the costs to a democracy of restricting the voting rights of some citizens. Perhaps you have the privilege of taking voting for granted; perhaps so much so that you’ve joked about how nice it would be to have an excuse to get out of voting. But I can tell you that approaching each election not knowing whether I will be able to vote while most citizens take voting for granted is not a joke.

After a couple of state elections where I knew I could vote independently, secretly, and verifiably, I am now back to not knowing how or even if I can vote. Australia should be doing better.

I also note that this issues paper was not made fully accessible to blind people until a month after it was released. And it wasn’t the creators of the paper who noticed it was inaccessible, a number of blind people had to point it out. Such a basic accessibility failure raises questions regarding whether those making this extremely important access decision have the awareness necessary to make such a decision. Thus my other recommendation is that this decision should be made by people who understand accessibility.