

Outrage as AEC seeks video TAKEDOWN after supervisor SHUTS DOWN free speech

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An AEC supervisor has been caught on camera shutting down free speech. X/ProfJoannaHowe

A viral video posted by law professor Joanna Howe on X sparked outrage, showing an Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) employee, wearing a supervisor vest, instructing a political candidate not to discuss late-term abortion with voters at a polling booth.

Howe stated she received the exclusive footage of the controversial exchange, captioned: “Anti-abortion speech BANNED. Authoritarian crackdown at an Australian polling booth.”

I've just received exclusive footage of an AEC officer instructing a political candidate NOT TO TALK ABOUT LATE TERM ABORTION to voters. I thought we lived in Australia, not China 🇺🇸 pic.twitter.com/zygnOkvEGT

— Dr Joanna Howe (@ProfJoannaHowe) [April 30, 2025](#)

Independent journalist Rukshan Fernando shared the video, calling out the AEC.

AEC is out of control as per usual. They need to be reigned in. You can talk about everything else but abortion apparently 😂. Is this true [@AusElectoralCom](#)? Video: [@ProfJoannaHowe](#) pic.twitter.com/3PJXaIKGTF

— Rukshan Fernando (@therealrukshan) [April 30, 2025](#)

The AEC responded on X, defending their employee: “Our staff members are not equipped for conflict resolution between candidates. Despite this, we get a lot of complaints about the behaviour occurring outside of our venues. He said, she said and looking to us to be the police. We’re not the police. As the staff member said she was simply escalating the complaint she received to her supervisor and, in the meantime, doing her best in a temporary role to have a calm environment for all concerned in the vicinity of the venue. We fully understand that there is freedom of speech and are passionate about issues during an election. Feel free to express an opinion about the interaction all you’d like but we’re respectfully asking you to take the video down for this person’s privacy. They’re a hardworking temporary officer doing her best to fulfil her role in a complicated environment. We’ll follow up the issue.”

The [@AusElectoralCom](#) has respectfully requested this video to be taken down to protect the individual temporary staff member. Should it be taken down or does the public have a right to see issues with the training provided by the AEC?

— Rukshan Fernando (@therealrukshan) [April 30, 2025](#)

Fernando pushed back, arguing for better staff training: “Shouldn’t you be training staff to seek the advice first, or know the rules prior to approaching people to intimidate or silence them? After receiving the complaints that seems like the obvious thing to do, and then whenever someone else may complain, they can be informed that those individuals are entitled to share their policies however they choose. People participate in the political process in good faith, and the least government organisations could do is respect their rights. I did not upload the video, so therefore can not remove it. Thank you.”

The AEC shot back: “Talk about it all you want Rukshan. Just asking for consideration of the individual as well as the issue in doing so. Think that’s reasonable.”

Public reaction was swift, with users condemning the AEC for seeking to have the video removed instead of taking swift action against the supervisor in the video.

The incident has reignited debates about free speech at polling stations, with critics calling out the AEC’s request to remove the video instead of addressing potential overreach and censorship concerns.

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