

# 'Dead' voted: Austin



THE Deputy Opposition Leader, Mr Austin, has claimed the Supreme Court overturned the Nunawading election result because of irregularities, including "dead people" voting.

In a fund-raising letter he also claims people voted more than once on March 2 and others were prevented from voting "because strangely the names were not on the role (sic)."

The allegations are made in a letter to country people appealing for funds to help the Liberal Party fight the Nunawading rerun election on August 17.

The Labor Party yesterday accused Mr Austin of misrepresenting the court judgment which sparked the rerun poll.

In his decision, Mr Justice Starke, sitting as the Court of Disputed Returns, said at least 36 votes had been excluded by polling clerk errors from the count and recount, and reasonable grounds existed to believe a majority of electors had been prevented from electing the candidate of their choice.

When the Liberal Party announced it would be contesting the result, claims were made that voters were told their names were not on the rolls, some names had been marked off and some had received only Lower House voting papers.

During the court case, however, the Liberal Party did not pursue these claims.

The ALP state secretary, Mr Peter Batchelor, said the Liberal Party had decided not

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the claims mentioned in Mr Austin's letter.

"The letter is dated July 12, and the court decision was announced on July 8," he said.

"They have written this letter knowing the result and alluded to a number of things that they knew hadn't taken place.

"They acknowledged that fact by not proceeding with them in their action before the Court of Disputed Returns."

Mr Batchelor said the letter misrepresented the court judgment.

"This has to bring into question the veracity of all their (the Liberals') campaign literature," he said.

Mr Austin says in the letter that with one vote the Government was given a blank cheque to do as it pleases.

"And Cain's Labor Party was desperate to win control over both Houses of Parliament," he says.

"However, because of irregularities in the March 2 vote ... like for example, people voting more than once, 'dead people' voting, others prevented from voting because strangely, their names weren't on the role ... the Supreme Court of Victoria has overturned the ballot and ordered a new election in Nunawading."

Mr Austin could not be contacted last night.

The Opposition Leader, Mr Kennett, said the letter had been sent to people in rural Victoria.

However, he said he had not seen the letter and could not comment.

● Weary trudge to the polls —