

[REDACTED]

From: paul dawkins [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 21 January 2013 9:40 PM
To: Electoral Reform
Subject: Submission - Electoral reform

To Honourable Jarrod Bleijie MP Attorney-General and Minister for Justice

Submission

People continue to this day to strive for democracy in their very own countries. They continue to be denied the right to vote. In some instances the 'democratic' processes are hijacked by dictators, tyrants, and armed militias. People are scared off from voting and opposition leaders jailed. We currently have a system where none of this occurs. A good system in my opinion.

I feel there are two things that we the people of this great state(Queensland) need to commit too though. 1) Encourage participation in the electoral process by voters and potential candidates and 2) ensure that our political processes and institutions are not brought into disrepute with claims of improper influence. This should result in public confidence and voters will know that their vote actually counts.

1. Political donations - Make all donations over \$500 to be declared - creates more transparency. Plus introduce that only individuals on the electoral roll can donate.

It is individuals that vote in the MP's not organisations with deep pockets and their vested interests. I am reminded off Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg address where he states, "government of the people, by the people, for the people." Today the current French constitution states that the principle of the Republic is "*gouvernement du peuple, par le peuple et pour le peuple*" ("government of the people, by the people, and for the people,") a literal translation of Lincoln's words.

Political donation rules are needed to keep the political process from being dragged into disrepute. The risk of improper influence is to great otherwise and the faith that people put in their elected officials will fade. The last thing you want is a disenfranchised society.

2. Public Funding - Needs to continue as it keeps candidates from relying on private donations. The public needs to have confidence in the political process, therefore any potential for undue influence needs to be limited.

I wouldn't like funding to be based on votes received as it may limit smaller parties and new independents from standing and lessen political debate. Plus candidates could make a profit from the public. It's from ideas and different perspectives that we can learn from and this should lead to better Government. The Government might win a seat or lose it to the opposition, but an idea brought up by another candidate might be very good and picked up by the Government as policy.

With current public funding being - (a) all of the first 10% of their electoral expenditure; $\frac{3}{4}$ of the next 80% of their electoral expenditure; and $\frac{1}{2}$ of the remaining 10% of their electoral expenditure. I would like to see this continue with a slight amendment. It would see a candidate get back 100% of up to the first \$5000 spent and 80% of the rest of their electoral funding that is in excess of \$5000 if they get 4% of the vote. This may increase the number of candidates contesting elections. It would promote the exchange of ideas and policies, therefore building a better democracy.

3. Election Campaign Expenditure - Expenditure caps need to stay in place to protect the public purse. Some candidates knowing that they would easily get the 4% might just go on a spending spree. What the cap level should be needs to be worked out so that candidates can get continue to

get their messages out, in particular the positive ones.

Volunteer Labour - I see it as people being engaged in the political process and as such should be encouraged. If people were told "no, they can't volunteer as it would put a candidate or party over their expenditure limit would be disappointing and may even disenfranchise those people wanting to engage in the political process.

4 Truth in Advertising - Legislation would be ideal as the public deserve our politicians to be honest. The public have no faith in liars. Campbell Newman and his family were trashed during the last state election by the ALP, while in the electorate of Nicklin false statements were made about the Independent Peter Wellington. .

To make the legislation workable it should be kept to paper press ads, leaflets and commercials. If people want to make a statement of fact it should be, if it is an opinion it should be stated as such. Defamation can cover other situations. The penalty for an indiscretion as '*a vote for an Independent was a vote for the Labor Party*' could be a full page ads in the Courier-Mail and regional newspapers that are daily and television ads apologizing and stating that you in fact lied. That expenditure would be considered as part of your campaign expenditure cap and can not be reimbursed by public funds.

5 How to vote cards

How to vote cards should not be banned. I do like option (a), publicise the cards on the ECQ website. I think the behaviour of workers who hand out the cards does not require any regulation. If they misbehave they just reflect badly on the candidate they are supporting. Plus how to vote cards can only be produced by the candidates or parties that advocate the 1 vote for themselves and their preferences. If individuals or entities want to aid a candidate they can volunteer and hand the how to vote cards for the candidate they wish to support.

6 Proof of Identity - is there any evidence of voter impersonation at polling booths? In the United States they justified the need of Proof of Identity measure with the same reasoning. Yet, "The purported justification for the changes was to limit in-person voter fraud, but that claim was fraudulent itself, since voter fraud is essentially nonexistent"

Read more: http://www.newyorker.com/talk/comment/2013/01/14/130114taco_talk_toobin#ixzz2IGzJqRCS Plus some people don't have drivers licence, 18+ cards or a passport. You would then in fact be denying an otherwise eligible voter to participate in the democratic process.

7. Allow voter enrollment on Polling Day. This should go ahead as participation in the political process should be encouraged. People voting for the first time can register and vote on the same day and this would lessen an individuals effort to enrol and vote. They wouldn't have to make 2 trips. Better yet introduce automatic enrollment like it is in Victoria.

8. Electronic Voting

I feel there are some negative issues relating to electronic voting that would need to be addressed before I felt comfortable with it. Firstly, the ability of an individual, a corporation or foreign government to hack into the system and effect the result. We all know that a hacking attack could occur, especially from a source that doesn't agree in democracy or agree with the two major political parties.

Another scenario that is of concern is that people or an entity could ask for peoples registration details and vote for them. Therefore they get to have a greater say in who gets elected.

Public confidence is paramount in the electoral process. Until there can be guarantees that the above won't occur I will have to oppose such a measure. I have no objection though if it came into effect on

a limited basis for the vision impaired persons at polling booths in order for their ballot to remain secret.

9. Postal Votes

Expand the grounds for a postal voting as it is likely to encourage greater public participation and make voting as easy as possible. And as the discussion paper says that it will bring it into line with pre-polling requirements.

I do believe that a postal vote application should be brought forward by a day. For the reasons outlined in the discussion paper.

10. Compulsory Voting

I would like to see compulsory voting continue. This measure encourages all eligible voters to be engaged in the electoral process. Those who don't wish to vote are not denied their rights under the current system. They can simply not fill in the boxes on the ballot paper. If people are concerned they have to waste a Saturday by turning up to the polls there are the postal votes and pre-polling booths. It does not take a lot of time at all to do your civic duty. If you want to stop informal votes you could put on voting cards at the very bottom an option to abstain.

An important note is that this measure stops the potential of the electoral process being hijacked by political parties, candidates or entities providing incentives to get voters to the polls. I do not like a situation where votes could be potentially purchased. I provide a scenario for your consideration. Voter turn out is likely to be lower on rainy days. So to counter act this, a political party organises transport and offers breakfast to the voters that come out. Other incentives may be offered, like donations to particular charity groups on the day. Though you don't know which way the person in fact voted it is the perception that something is going on. The electoral system needs to be beyond reproach. Integrity in the system is paramount for the public to continue to trust in our political institutions. I do not want a situation like the US where people are organising people to get them to the polls. Keep compulsory voting or compulsory attendance as others call it.

11. Voting System

I like full preferential voting as it provides for more people being happier with the candidate that wins. If my 1st choice fails to win I would like to see my vote go to someone that I prefer over the person I don't prefer. I do concede though that Optional Preference Voting has its advantages in that if people loathe or can't abide by the candidates standing they should not have to preference them. I would not like their votes to be counted as an informal vote if they did in fact leave the boxes blank.

If political deals are done on preferences, it should be stated on the How to vote cards and voters should be informed that they do not have to follow the 'How to Vote' card as it stands if it is not their personal preference. At the very least a declaration needs to be made of some sort on how to vote cards if deals are done. The peoples voice need to be heard and this would stop the process being overly influenced by such deals.

Now to say that preferential voting wastes time as you have to sort out where the preferences need to go is a mute point. The idea of preferential voting is to have the will of the people to be heard on who is best to represent their electorate. If you do away with preferential voting how would you achieve this. The only option I see is that you would have to have a run off between the candidates that did well. This costs more money, wastes more time and voters would have to go to the polls again.

I recommend no change.

12 Other matters

12.1 An Upper house needs to be restored to Queensland to bring balance back to our system. If a party has a one seat majority or 30 seat majority the government of the day has unfettered power. Too much power can allow parties to stick to ideologies rather than governing in the best interest of the public. A potential house could consist of 6 or 7 regions of Queensland with 6 MPs from each - it would work out similar to that of how the Federal Senate is set up with 8 regions (6 states and 2 territories). I know people might not want to pay for extra politicians but in the interest of democracy I think it should occur. The ECQ could draw up the boundaries. I suggest the boundaries be based on areas rather than population as this would favour the South-East predominantly.

12.2 People want to be able to vote for the Premier. The current system sees the leader being chosen by the party that wins. The people have no choice of who will lead the government. Perhaps a move to a 'Governorship' is warranted.

From my submission I hope you take away that participation by everyone is important and that the electoral processes need to retain a high level of integrity. Integrity in the system is paramount if the public are to in fact trust in our Government institutions. Thanks for letting me have my say.

Paul Dawkins

