

Submission re Electoral Reform Strategic Policy
Department of Justice & Attorney General
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PART A - 1. Political Donations

The March 2012 State election was held under the Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Act 2011 (Qld) (2011 Act) and it is to be hoped this will never be repeated. For those who wish to circumvent laws, a way will always be found, but the previous governance regime was reasonably adequate, I believe.

Capping of political donations is an infringement of our individual rights and should be abolished. In terms of disclosure, the sum of at least \$5000 would be more realistic.

2. Public Funding of Elections

Option (a) – public funding of political parties based on votes received **should apply**.

Option (d) though laudable in intent – (streamlining existing administrative arrangements in relation to public funding), as illustrated in the example given would achieve the exact opposite, be counter-productive to the democratic process, impractical, and open to abuse and waste.

3. Election Campaign Expenditure

To a,b,c,d,f – NO.

Is there such a thing as a level playing field?

Clarify the definition of electoral expenditure in the Act.

Part B – 1. Truth in Political Advertising

Why waste time and effort on rules which can only be ineffective, difficult and costly to implement.

2. How-to-Vote cards

Options (a) and (b) – YES. It would help to educate the voter in advance – and be a means of identifying false HTV's

2 (Continued) How-to-Vote cards

Option (c): Guidelines for behaviour need to be practical, allow reasonable freedom and flexibility for workers, and be to no greater degree than currently – which largely flows from how reasonable and practical is the Returning Officer's interpretation and implementation of existing rules.

Option (d). NO. HTV's serve a very useful purpose. An increasing number of voters each election do refuse a HTV, but this is a small percentage of the total vote – and many having refused, then come back out of the booth to get one before voting.

Part B - 3. Proof of Identity

If electronic voting is introduced – Yes.

4. Enrolment on Polling day

If voters understood the need to value our democratic rights, enrolment would be a priority – not left to polling day. A new voter could enroll on polling day, but with no right to vote at that election – and must have proof of identity and address requirements. If previously enrolled elsewhere, a provisional vote only, to be confirmed later.

I support the arguments against enrolment on polling day set out in 4.1 * points, page.30.

5. Electronic voting

The systems available to the Electoral Commission would need vast improvement before electronic voting could even be considered, and I do not support options a, b or c.

6. Postal voting

(a) It would be simpler and more efficient to relax the restrictions on postal and pre-poll voting eligibility, so that more voters have the option to cast their vote from Monday to Saturday for the 2 weeks prior to polling day. People age, but retain their independence by having a longer period to choose when to vote. We are also a very mobile society, and this requires greater flexibility in providing service for voter participation.

There is a need to ensure ECQ staff are themselves adequately informed re which pre-poll booth is relevant to the voter's address and electorate.

(b) Yes - provided adequate safeguards are in place.

(c) Yes.

7. Compulsory Voting

Yes, we should retain compulsory voting, for all of the arguments advanced in *points page 35. Those who do not wish to vote do not do so now. They register, receive their ballot paper, and place it unused into the ballot box, - or the rubbish bin!! (from where it is retrieved for counting). Alternatively they wear the fine, but they choose to do that.

8. Voting system

I believe we should return to full preferential voting, even though it is certainly very convenient to just vote 1. The savings provision could be re-introduced where a clear intent is registered, even though the numbering is not fully completed. Examples of acceptable ballot papers given by ECQ for the last State election seemed to me to be 'anything goes' anyway.

Different voting systems for State and Federal elections cause confusion for the voter, so should be uniform.

Local Government elections should be run by local Councils, not ECQ. This has worked much more effectively and economically over many elections for many years, and should not have been changed. The result has been confusion and greatly added cost to ratepayers.

9. Any other matter

When a Party wins Government, there is always a temptation to see how much better it would be to have a fixed term – and naturally for a longer period. Therefore I feel sure there will be expressions of a desire to do this, and argument in favour will be advanced. No doubt a fixed term gives certainty for planning and funding a campaign, and many people believe that 3 years is not long enough to implement policy change. History generally, some quite recent, tends to indicate that a 4 year term simply gives tenure to weak and/or corrupt Government. I oppose any change to our current (not fixed) 3 year term of Government, and certainly any extension to 4 years. I base this opinion on my belief that one spends the first year of any new position learning, the second year improving the system, the third year consolidating change – and if one keeps faith and good communication with one's constituency, the reward is to retain support and Government. We have the example of that here in Queensland from the late 50's to 1989. It takes much longer than 3 or 4 years to really achieve meaningful improvement to people's lives.

I would appreciate acknowledgment of receipt of this submission.

Mrs) B. M. McCullagh, 