

**From:** Richard Yaxley [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, 4 January 2013 9:25 AM  
**To:** Electoral Reform  
**Subject:** Submission re Green Paper

To whom it may concern,

I would like to comment on the following questions contained within the Green Paper on the proposed review of Queensland's Electoral Act.

### **TRUTH IN POLITICAL ADVERTISING**

**1 Should truth in political advertising legislation be introduced in Queensland?**

**2 If so, should it extend beyond advertisements to other inaccurate and misleading statements?**

I strongly believe that truth in political advertising legislation should be introduced in Queensland. It is paramount that the electoral process be governed by integrity. This process includes the lead-up to the election, not just the more publicly discernible actions of voting and counting.

This kind of legislation should also encourage a more positive, outcomes-based approach to advertising, rather than the cheap-shot dirty-smear campaigns that have become the norm. As a potential voter, I do not want to hear why a particular group CAN'T govern; I want to hear why your group CAN. The current standard of political advertising in this State (and nationally, more so) is driven by an insouciant editing process that values the adolescent denigration of individuals and groups through the apparently clever juxtaposition of sound-bites and visual grabs. It's the sort of thing that young people do very well on Facebook - with a similar level of forethought and integrity.

In line with the above, I am very supportive of the 'truth legislation' being extended to include inaccurate or misleading statements. In an electoral situation, such statements are made because:

- a) the perpetrator is too lazy / inefficient / morally and/or intellectually challenged to check the accuracy of the statement;
- b) the perpetrator is deliberately misleading the public and, as such, is raising a bureaucratic middle finger at the integrity of the electoral process.

In either case, legislation should be enacted.

### **HOW-TO-VOTE CARDS**

**Should how-to-vote cards be subject to increased regulation? If so, how?**

**Comment is invited, in particular on:**

- **whether how-to-vote cards should be published on the ECQ's website (option a);**
- **whether the ECQ should have the power to refuse to register a how-to-vote card that is likely to mislead or deceive a voter in casting their vote (option b);**
- **whether the behaviour of workers who hand out how-to-vote cards should be regulated (option c); and**
- **whether how-to-vote cards should be banned (option d).**

How-to-vote cards should be banned altogether.

At the heart of this issue lies the following question: why do how-to-vote cards exist in the first place? Here are two possible answers:

1. So that parties may 'remind' voters of their (the party's) preferred allocation of numbers. This is the more common, utterly dubious claim. Even if true, such a practice

places undue influence on voter intention. If the voter is so completely aligned to the intentions of their preferred party, then said voter should have made the effort to understand how their party vote would be allocated and the consequences of that allocation. Ergo, they shouldn't need 'reminding'.

2. The more likely case; so that parties may directly influence those voters who are either undecided when they approach the polling booth, or have no idea, or don't particularly care. In other words, how-to-vote cards exist in order to directly sway the uncommitted centre. They provide a default position for voters and as such directly and inappropriately influence the actual integrity of the voting process.

Is there anything more dispiriting for the electoral process than seeing voters clutching five, six or seven coloured cards as they approach the booth? This is how we elect our governments - by a coloured-coded process of multiple-choice? Pick a card, any card?

Ban how-to-vote cards altogether and thus make aspiring politicians work more directly and lucidly with the public whom they wish to serve.

### **COMPULSORY VOTING**

#### **Should compulsory voting remain for Queensland State elections?**

Voting should be voluntary.

There are many reasons for this, most of which are outlined in the Green Paper. Most salient of these is the right of the citizen NOT to vote as a clear indicator of mature democratic process and understanding. The claims from commentators that voluntary voting denigrates marginalised sectors of society is ridiculous. People are marginalised because of weak policy-making and ineffective government - not because of the attachment of some sort of over-blown egalitarianism to the voting process.

I would like to underline the farcical nature of compulsory voting with an anecdote from my own experience. I do so in good faith, and in the hope that further recriminations shall not arise. At the beginning of 2012 I moved from the Wide Bay district to Brisbane. Shortly after we moved, there was a Council election. I did not vote because I had no idea about any of the candidates and their claims for election, nor was I able to discover such information. My vote would have one made in ignorance, which is in my view an undemocratic act.

In March, the State Elections were held. On this occasion, I decided to withhold my vote because of my belief that I should not be forced to vote if I consider that none of the available options are worthy of that vote.

I was duly asked to show cause by the Queensland Electoral Commission, initially in relation to the State Election. I wrote a clear appraisal of my position, citing the Electoral Act as well as prior cases of voters abstaining on similar grounds. I was fined regardless, and paid that fine.

Sometime later, I was again asked to show cause, this time in relation to the Council Elections. Having been stung by my previous experience, and realising that - ludicrously - people who claim certain religious beliefs are given exemption from the voting process, I wrote to the Commission as follows:

*I am a Novice Incumbent of the Worldwide Church of God and as such did not vote in the Local Government Elections of 28<sup>th</sup> April 2012.*

*Our faith takes heed of Revelation 18:4 which states: "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." In accordance with the word of God, we regard voting as partaking in a secular sin of which we wish to have no part.*

*Our Church strives to uphold the teachings of Jesus Christ, including His statements on how to be a disciple, how to apply the Laws of God, and the customs and practices He promoted to His disciples.*

For this creative response, much of which I owe to the agency of Google, I was not fined. This is clearly ridiculous. Why is a set of religious beliefs privileged over other sets of beliefs? And why should I be fined for exercising my democratic right to not vote in ignorance? Wasn't that the right thing to do by my electorate - or are we more interested in voter turn-out than electoral integrity?

I would like to thank the government for the opportunity to comment on these important matters.

Yours sincerely,

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