
From:
Sent: Sunday, 20 January 2013 9:09 PM
To: Electoral Reform
Subject: my submission on electoral reform
From:

I consider sections B7, B8 and B9 to be the most important.

Part A:

A1) Political donations:

I support option C - we should copy NSW's ban on donations by corporations and organisations (ie donations from individual people on the state electoral roll only).

I support option G - the law should focus more on continuous disclosure rather than limiting or capping donations.

Reporting requirements should be extended to cover all donations, not just those intended for use during campaign periods.

It is not too onerous to expect parties to maintain state campaign accounts.

I do not support the UK model that allows donations from unions under certain circumstance (eg provided there are internal voting systems), unless voting is a compulsory part of membership. That is, I support allowing donations from unions if and only if voting on the proposal to donate is compulsory for union members. Likewise donations from publicly listed companies would be acceptable provided that all shareholders are required to vote on the proposal to donate. Donations from unlisted companies should be made privately by the owner instead of in the company's name.

A2) Public funding of political parties:

I support option A.

All additional funding introduced in 2011 should be scrapped. An amount of approximately \$1.70 per first preference vote is reasonable. The minimum support requirement to receive this funding should be lowered from 4% to 1%. The expenses included should be broadened beyond campaign funding. Proof of expenditure requirements should be scrapped if these are unlikely to make any difference to the amount spent or the amount claimed (ie, if profiteering is unlikely). If profiteering is likely, this is evidence that the per vote funding amount is too high.

The method of calculating reimbursements (fractions of percents) is absurd. As far as I can tell it is equivalent to a fixed percentage of total expenditure.

The party or parties that gain office should have their reimbursement reduced by 20%, to account for the additional exposure they obtain with office.

A3) Election Expenditure:

I support options A and E, and may support options C and D with the qualifications below. I oppose option F.

I am in favour of caps on expenditure as a means of levelling the playing field for parties that do not get as many private donations. Given the lower population and lower advertising costs, these limits should be lower than those in NSW (as they currently are).

I am concerned that attempts to aggregate affiliated entities may create bias. Defining an affiliated entity by the formality of the links with the party is too arbitrary. I would oppose a definition of affiliated entities that included unions, but excluded industry lobby groups, for example the groups that campaigned against the carbon and mining taxes.

I would also support aggregation of expenditure by other affiliated entities based on the purpose of the advertising, rather than the nature of the organisation or the formality of links to the parties involved.

I support the proposed amendments regarding the exclusion of 'non-partisan' polling as expenditure.

I oppose the suggested change to the definition of volunteer labor. The cap on expenditure should focus on advertising reach rather than 'behind the scenes' effort.

Part B:

B1) Truth in Advertising:

I oppose the introduction of truth in political advertising legislation, for the reasons outlined in the discussion paper. The public should be the judge of this at the polling booth, rather than lawyers and judges.

B2) How to vote cards:

I support option A. I oppose options B, C and D.

I support the measures introduced in Victoria for greater transparency in how to vote cards (ie they should be published on the ECQ website). I think the requirement for lodgement 7 days prior to election day is excessive. I think it should be allowable to submit on the day prior to polling, pending administrative issues.

I oppose any penalty for misleading statements on how to vote cards or any requirement for review of how to vote cards. I think that transparency alone is sufficient. As with truth in political advertising, I think the public should be the judge rather than the ECQ.

I oppose bans on how to vote cards, except based on distance from the polling booth. Six meters is an appropriate distance. One exception to this is under Optional Preferential Voting. Under this scheme how to vote cards should be banned if they encourage voters to disenfranchise themselves. That is, they should only be permitted if they rank all candidates.

I do not see a need to regulate the behaviour of people who hand out how to vote cards.

B3) Proof of identity

I oppose requirements for proof of identity to be provided.

B4) Enrolment on polling day:

I support enrolment on polling day, provided appropriate measures such as quarantining are taken.

B5) Electronic Voting:

I support electronic voting for all voters, including over the internet, provided security issues can be resolved.

B6) Postal voting.

I support all options proposed. Postal voting should be open to all voters and made as convenient as possible, with the exception that deadlines should be brought forward so that postal votes are received by the ECQ prior to the close of polls (to prevent people from only bothering to submit votes after election day in the case of a close outcome). A separate class of postal votes could be introduced for this purpose, to allow people who need a postal vote by the current restricted criteria to submit later.

B7) Compulsory voting:

I support compulsory voting for the reasons given, plus more, as outlined below:

Democracy refers to the will of the majority. Allowing a minority to dictate the election outcome is undemocratic. The discussion paper is highly misleading in suggesting that it is undemocratic to force people to vote. This does not make sense and indicates lack of awareness of the meaning of democracy. Also, the relevance of the reference to other countries is questionable and certainly does not support the claim that compulsory voting is undemocratic or immature.

An increase in the number of informal votes is not a valid argument against compulsory voting. The discussion paper made the opposite argument in claiming that secret ballot provisions mean people are not forced to vote for anyone.

An increase in the number of safe electorates is also not a valid argument against compulsory voting. If those electorates are safe because the majority support one party, it is entirely appropriate and democratic for them to be safe. It is undemocratic to make them unsafe by introducing a provision that would allow a minority to potentially dictate the outcome.

The joint standing committee on electoral matters was correct to remove the reference to the maturity of a democracy in its reports after 1996. It is absurd to claim that one position is more mature than the other, and points to a lack of a rational argument in favour of optional voting.

B8) Voting System

I oppose Optional Preferential Voting (OPV) and support full preferential voting, for the reasons outlined here:

<http://www.ozpolitic.com/electoral-reform/optional-preferential-voting.html>

That is, it should be compulsory to rank all candidates. Opposition to this is usually based on

obtaining a partisan advantage or on a misunderstanding of how preferential voting works. This is in part attributable to how the method is explained in our education system. The American term 'instant runoff voting' is a much more appropriate concept in that it is easier to understand and better reflects what really happens.

QLD should abolish Optional Preferential Voting (OPV) and return to full preferential voting.

The discussion paper suggests that Optional Preferential Voting allows people to express their 'true' intentions. This is meaningless spin, unless the 'true intentions' are self-disenfranchisement.

The discussion paper claims that Optional Preferential Voting captures only those preferences that people actually hold, but fails to mention that preferences not actually held are unlikely to be expressed because the preferences will not be distributed beyond the major parties. Not ranking candidates under Optional Preferential Voting is still an expression of preference, as unranked candidates are assumed by the system to be below ranked candidates.

Saving voters' time, easier scrutineering etc are hardly strong arguments in favour of Optional Preferential Voting.

I support the 'savings provisions' recommended by the joint standing committee, which allow ballots with numbering errors to be counted up to where the error began.

B9) Other matters:

QLD should introduce a 20 member senate based on voting by delegable proxy, for the reasons outlined here:

<http://www.ozpolitic.com/electoral-reform/voting-by-delegable-proxy.html>

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