

**Submission to the Queensland Government's
Electoral Reform Discussion Paper
January 2013**

Part A

1 Political Donations

Political donations should be limited to individuals recorded on the Electoral Role. Corporations, associations, unions or other entities of any kind should not be allowed to make political donations – they do not vote! Allowing corporate entities to make donations simply makes political parties beholden to the interests of major donors thereby inhibiting good government – i.e. government **of** the people, **by** the people, **for** the people.

The existing annual caps on donations should be retained but should be applied to all donations not just campaign donations and should be confined to registered electors. Continuous disclosure of donations (e.g. like the Stock Exchange disclosure provisions) on at least a monthly basis (if businesses are expected to submit BAS returns within this time there is no reason why political parties cannot do the same) should be enforced to ensure the timely disclosure of donations and to prevent the withholding of information on large donations.

The \$1,000 threshold for reporting particulars of individual donations should be retained.

2 Public Funding for Elections

Public funding for elections should revert to a per vote basis using the pre-2011 formula. There is simply no justification for a system of that requires the public purse to contribute on a graduated scale to the total electoral expenses of a political party or candidate.

Such a system benefits the better resourced parties and candidates at the expense of those who had less to spend. Moreover, there is simply no justification for giving in excess of \$10 million of taxpayers' funds to political parties every election. With the developments in social media the cost of reaching electors should be diminishing rather than increasing as there is less need for costly snail-mail-outs and repetitive TV advertising.

The previous per vote system is fairer to party and independent candidates and, based on the current formula, amounts to less than \$1.00 per capita of the State population which, given donation caps, most people would probably find acceptable.

3 Election Campaign Expenditure

If donations are capped then, of course, caps to campaign expenditure should remain, and at current levels, and should include expenditure by affiliated organisations as in NSW. The current definition of '*electoral expenditure*' should be retained. For example, governments expect recipients of government grants to meet the cost of preparing an audit of how the grant funds were spent so there is no reason why political parties should not be expected to meet audit costs.

People who volunteer their time to election campaigns do so either because they support the ideals/beliefs/policies of the party or candidate or they are of the belief that the election of the party/candidate will benefit them. Therefore, the input of a person's time should not count as an *in-kind* donation. However, other '*in-kind support*' such as the free printing, use of motor vehicles and office equipment should be included as campaign expenditure.

Part B

1 Truth in political advertising

Realistically, the difficulty in effecting timely enforcement and the opportunity it presents for 'running interference' on an opponent's campaign (for example, the referral of Anna Bligh's accusations against the Newman family to the CJC in the last State election) make '*truth in political advertising*' legislation open to abuse and difficult to enforce. Therefore it should not be introduced. However, what should be enforced is that the source of any statements in political advertising purporting to be factual should be cited and, similarly, any quotes used to support a candidate or undermine an opponent should be sourced so that their veracity and context can be checked.

2 How-to-vote cards

As someone who has exercised his vote in two countries before coming to Australia I think the practise of party supporters trying to hand out how-to-vote cards to electors trying to enter a polling station is one of the silliest things going. Therefore, this annoying practise should be banned. Political parties seem to have no difficulty stuffing my mail box with all sorts of repetitive literature so there is no reason why how-to-vote cards cannot be distributed this way and so stop those irritating pests from trying to stuff them into my hand when entering a polling station.

Given Australia's preferential voting system political parties clearly need to be able to communicate how they wish voters who support them to distribute their preferences. This can be done in a number of ways without causing a nuisance at polling booths such as letterbox drops mentioned above, publishing how-to-vote cards on the ECQ website, or placing them in corflutes at the entry to polling stations.

Certainly, all how-to-vote cards should be registered with, and authorised by, the ECQ, and the name and address of the authoriser clearly displayed. Any card should do no more and no less than advise voters how to exercise their preferences in support of the authoriser's preferred candidate. Any attempt to mislead or

deceive voters should be severely punished and such cards rejected by the ECQ.

3 Proof of identity

The proportion of voters who turn up at polling stations not carrying some form of identity must be miniscule. Therefore, given the 100 point identity check system required to enter into any other legal transaction, the requirement to show at least some form of proof of identity is not unreasonable and should be a requirement to cast a vote. It need not require the same level of proof as the 100 point requirement, nor necessarily require photo ID, merely some form of identity that bears the voter's name and address, such as a Commonwealth Seniors Health Card.

Far from creating a need for additional polling staff a requirement to show proof of identity may, in fact, speed up the polling process by making it easier to check off the names of voters with unusual names, strong accents or limited English.

4 Enrolment on polling day

Allowing eligible voters to enrol up until the day before polling day gives eligible voters ample time to enrol and this system should be continued. Enrolment on polling day should not be allowed. Polling day is about voting, not enrolling. If allowed, enrolling on polling day would require more polling staff and cause more delays than, say, a proof of identity requirement, and would make additional, unnecessary work for the ECQ verifying polling day enrolments after the election, which is presumably the ECQ's busiest time anyway.

5 Electronic voting

The benefits of adopting the NSW 'iVote' system for the vision impaired or otherwise incapacitated, voter's living over 20 km from a polling place, and voters who will not be in the state during polling hours would appear to outweigh any disadvantages and, if a Queensland government can bring itself to adopt anything used in NSW, should be adopted.

6 Postal voting

Other than bringing forward the deadline for lodging a postal vote application and permitting online applications no changes should be made.

7 Compulsory voting

So-called compulsory voting should be retained. Although legally one is required to cast a vote realistically, one is only required to turn up and register at a polling place. After that a voter is free to do whatever he or she wants with the voting papers. Also voluntary voting disadvantages those parties whose natural supporters would be more disinclined to vote, either through ignorance or apathy, if given the choice.

8 Voting system

Voting in Queensland should revert to Full Preferential Voting. Not only would this reduce confusion by being consistent with the Commonwealth voting system but it prevents political parties from trying to manipulate election outcomes by recommending their supporters to 'Just vote 1' and thereby withholding preferences that would have flowed to another party or candidate and possibly change the outcome of the election.

9 Any other matter

The discussion paper ignores the elephant in the room namely the matter of electoral terms. I would hate to think that the government might try to change this without having first raised it as an issue in the Electoral Reform Discussion Paper. On this matter while ever Queensland has a unicameral parliament electoral terms should not exceed three years, and possibly three year fixed terms unless the government of the day loses the confidence of the house.

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