

[REDACTED]

---

**From:** Angela Watson [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 29 January 2013 7:45 PM  
**To:** Electoral Reform  
**Subject:** Electoral Reform  
**Attachments:** Electoral Reform Feedback.docx

Hi,

Please find attached my feedback in regards to Electoral Reform.

[REDACTED]

Kind regards,  
Angela

# **ELECTORAL REFORM FEEDBACK**

## **Political Donations**

1. Existing laws as they stand do not prevent undue influence nor prevent corruption especially in the case when existing MP's run for re-election and only the "donations" they have received for the "campaign" are considered.
2. Laws can be made more relevant through:
  - Continual capping of donations in particular to major parties
  - This capping needs to apply to *all* donations and *not* just for those used for campaign purposes as ultimately every dollar spent relates to the next campaign
  - As an individual you should only be able to donate if your on the electoral role.
  - As an organisation supporting a campaign there most definitely should be further requirements for these donors. Eg) Unions and the labor party. Note: there should also be a review process of the way unions function and are governed.
  - The treatment of membership fees technically should not be considered a donation as you expect a level of "service/product" for your fee. However, potentially a portion of the membership fee should be attributed to "donation" as in practice there is very little benefit for your actual membership and it is more used to run the parties that ultimately benefit from being elected.
  - Likewise for fundraising – the core cost to run the function is not a donation however, the "clip" to make the function worthwhile most certainly should be treated as a donation.
  - The additional disclosure would be useful to be in line with the other state with the responsibility on both the donor and recipient. A threshold of \$100,000 also seems too high. To come up with the right threshold that is not onerous on reporting would involve having major political parties identify the number of transaction to see if there are a large portion between \$10,000 and \$1000,000 and select the range from an informed position.
  - From an audit trail perspective it is the cleanest way to track both donations and expense payments. If having separate accounts is too much of an administrative burden then it is concerning how inflows and outflows would be tracked in one big pool of funds. Definitely keeping campaign accounts and audit trails is essential.

## **Public Funding for Elections**

- Funding in QLD is not completely fair for some parties involved.
- In regards to whether political funding should be per vote – Independent candidates specifically should not be based per vote. The new system based on what is spent in relation to the campaign and electoral rules (within the specified cap) allows for a *more* level playing field especially when independents do not have the same economies of scale that political parties have access to.

Practical example; In an electorate of 25,000 people to gain 10% is a good result. Based on the formula  $2,500 \text{ votes} \times \$1.70342 = \$4,258.55$  in total. That refund barely covers how to Vote Cards and Corflutes not to mention, all of the other expenses involved in a campaign. It is crucial to keep our political system democratic to allow candidates a *chance*.

- There should also definitely be a limit on public funding and political parties should not be reimbursed more than individual candidates i.e.)  $\frac{1}{2}$  the 80% when political parties receive  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the 80% and  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the remaining 10% and political parties receive  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the remaining 10%
- I feel the current limits are within the right range and allow for a spend limit that gets messages out there but doesn't infringe on buying votes (this comment relates specifically to candidate thresholds not the extra funding that Political parties receive).
- Again I do not think limits should specifically relate to numbers of votes for the QLD state house of representatives elections for independents or political parties. The current electoral rulings mean you only get reimbursed for expenses relating to the campaign and not all of it therefore, highlighting this process creates a *more* level playing field without "making money" by running in the election.
- If there were actually "training" sessions for those taking part in the election so they are clear on the rules well in advance of any election. That would no doubt make the administration process at the end much smoother (less unnecessary questions) whilst offer those who choose to run information in a timely manner.

### Election Campaign Expenditure

- In theory the electoral expenditure attempts to create a level playing field however, it doesn't take into account the "standard" advertising major parties and associated bodies can do on behalf of major players whilst independent candidates are limited to the "capped reimbursement" levels. This therefore negates the electoral expenditure rules if there is no money to expend.
- Electoral expenditure could be made holistic in terms of standard materials and minimum agreed costs for those items and included in a candidate's registration to run. i.e.) Set number of corflutes, how to votes, flyer drops, merchandise, administration support and an average cost weighted on this assuming you gain 4% of the votes. Then any other campaign related spends over and above this can go through the reimbursement process. This would also assist in the workload for both candidate and electoral employees.
- Expenditure of associated parties should be treated as it is in NSW not with an extra \$500,000 limit.
- Expenditure of other organisation should also be aggregated. Without this there is no level playing field for democracy it's just a battle of the biggest.
- The definition should be clarified and broadened specifically for Independent candidates and also minor parties. Administration does not need to be reimbursed for a major party as this is currently covered by "funds" that are not considered donations. In regards to non-major parties including independents this often means

weeks out of paid work to participate competitively and “administration” costs being included into the definition of electoral expenditure is certainly warranted.

- Volunteer labour is not an avenue I see as being able to be controlled and reported effectively. It comes as part of the territory of campaigning and politics. However, you should be able to claim “wages” on Election Day should you require to gain extra support other than volunteers.

### Truth in Political Advertising

- Yes, everything printed should be truthful and no misleading statements should be allowed as it currently is.

### How-to-vote Cards

- Should how to vote cards be compulsory by the electoral commission, they should not contain misleading information however, and they certainly do not need any further regulation than is already imposed.
- Behaviours of people handing the how to votes should it stay very controlled and the 6 meters rule allows voters to have breathing space.
- A first for Australia however, would be to ban “how-to-vote” cards. Banning these cards would result in many benefits including; an actual level playing field as voters would take more responsibility on understanding their candidates before polling day, it would mean that those candidates who do not have endless volunteers to hand out for them are not disadvantaged at the polling booth. It would be a revival for democracy and empowered thinking in regards to who is actually best to represent you as the constituent, it would of course benefit the environment and not to mention also save costs of the campaign.

### Proof of Identity

- Yes simply presenting your drivers licences, over 18 identification or passport should be shown at the time of voting. Currently there is room for in appropriate polling behaviour to occur.

### Enrolment on Polling Day

- No voters should enrol prior to the day. There are many reason for this the main one being individuals need to take ownership of their enrolment. Also administering enrolments and voting at the polling booth is not the most efficient way to run a polling day.

### Electronic Voting

- Initially I think it should be introduced for those that have disability or impairment if this process will make it easier.
- I do think this is the way we are headed however, the audit process would need to be state of the art to make sure votes could not be electronically tampered with.

- Lastly, with electronic voting probably coming into play in the near future this is another reason why hoe-to-vote cards are out-dated.
- Personally I do think having people get out and about on polling day reignites how lucky we are to have an independent system and to be able to ask questions and make sure the correct vote is cast for the constituent. The longer we can hold off on electronic voting the better.

#### Postal Voting

- Postal voting currently serves its purpose well and online application to receive postal vote should be introduced.
- I think candidate information should be included in postal voting material to help the constituent who will be absent on the day make an informed decision.

#### Compulsory Voting

- Absolutely it should remain compulsory. I believe a large majority of those that would “choose” not to vote should it become voluntary are the people who need their voices heard the most even if they think it’s a drag on the day.
- Also we have fought so hard to get the right to vote especially for women, again it should stay compulsory.

#### Voting System

- Should definitely be amended to be compulsory preferential. There are many benefits stated in the Discussion Paper and showing your 1<sup>st</sup> preference to your last means on every level your vote counts.

#### Any other Matters

- Political Education – there is a lack of political understanding throughout our state even within well-educated circles. This should be raised as something that needs to be tackled into the future.
- Security – When running as a candidate death threats and your personal safety can put into jeopardy. This most certainly needs to be addressed through the reform.