

Electoral Reform Discussion Paper

1. Donations

Donations of a substantial amount from an individual or a company to a candidate, party or an organ of a party should be made public as soon as practicable. However, there should be no cap on donations. Capping merely results in donors and parties finding loop holes, as the recent example of the so-called super-pacs in the USA shows.

Queensland should require recipients of donations to use the New York C-Smart software to register donations.

2. Public Funding

The argument for public funding of political parties is not logically strong. Public funding should be restricted. The amount to be disbursed should be set before an election and disbursement made solely on the basis of votes received. There is no need for any lower limit on disbursements. Parties have a good indication of voting trends from opinion polling and therefore would be able to plan their campaign expenditures within broad limits.

3. Campaign Expenditure

Expenditure should not be capped. Queensland electorates vary in size and density of population. Putting a general cap on expenditure advantages campaigns in relatively compact urban areas and disadvantages those who have to travel great distances between centres of population to campaign in their electorate.

If there were no capping, there would be a huge saving in oversight costs by government and political parties.

4. Truth in Advertising

This is too complex to manage for the reasons stated.

5. How to Vote cards

These should be of a standard size and design, clearly indicating which party issued them. They should be posted in the voting booths in the polling station. Some will be vandalised (less than you might expect) and these should be replaced as necessary by electoral office staff acting on the advice of voters or party representatives.

Parties could still have representatives at the polling stations to cheer on the voters, run sausage sizzles etc. but not to press 'how to vote cards' on voters.

6. Proof of identity

Too complex to operate and open to abuse to keep people away from the polls.

7. Compulsory Voting

This should only be done away with if there is a requirement that a winning candidate must be selected from a vote of not less than 60% of the electorate population of voting age. To be sure of success, candidates would need to encourage people to register and get out to vote.

8. Voting System

First past the post is preferred by Queensland voters.

9. Other Matters

Electoral re-distributions. There is general confidence in the way these are handled in Queensland. The important thing is to ensure as far as possible that they cannot be gerrymandered by ruling parties.

Term limits. There are cost advantages in having set terms and dates for elections. Parties do not like them because they reduce the opportunity to pick the best time to call an election. (See also below).

Postal voting. Improved access to pre-polling is much to be preferred. Postal voting is expensive to administer and can result in delays in getting results. If election days were held on set dates it would be easier for the Electoral Commission to set up pre-polling at convenient locations for voters such as major shopping centres. Venues and staffing could be arranged well in advance. Pre-poll votes can be counted on Election Day.

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