

Dear A-G Bleijie,

Thank you for examining these issues. Our electoral system underpins our democracy, and periodic examination of how it is functioning, and how it serves the electorate (and not vested political interests) is critical.

I have summarised my thoughts under the headings you paced in your discussion paper. They are outlines below.

Thanks again, in the expectation that you will give this non-partisan consideration.

Mark Enders

Issues for consultation – Political donations

I believe that whatever arrangements are in place for political donations, they should not work to provide an unfair advantage to one political party over the other, regardless of which side of politics is involved and regardless of the size of the political party. Equally the size of donations should be capped to ensure that individuals, corporations, or interest groups are not able to influence political parties, whether this is actual influence or influence as perceived by the voting public. This cap should apply to donations which are provided at any time, and need not be restricted to individuals on the roll provide the influence (or perceived influence) gained by the donation remains small. The requirement of member/shareholder endorsement in relation to political donations should not be mandated, but instead left to the individual organisation and their own governance arrangements. Fees for attendance at functions should reflect reasonable or accepted market value and if a higher fee is to be charged this should be treated as a donation and be subjected to limits placed on donation amounts. I don't believe additional disclosure arrangements are required, but believe administrative arrangements should maintain a level of accountability and transparency into how political parties spend the funds they have collected.

Issues for consultation – Public funding of elections

As per the arrangements for donations, public funding should be structured so that it does not artificially advantage one political party over another. It should not be dependent in any way on actual election results. But it should allow for any administrative streamlining as long as this does not impact on accountability or transparency.

Issues for consultation – Election campaign expenditure

Should be designed to ensure a level playing field. Volunteer labour should be exempted from any assessment of expenditure

Issue for consultation – Truth in political advertising

Truth in politics is good for all. Any processes which will lead to higher levels of truth telling and trust are good for the voters and good for politics. I would be in support of timely and appropriate retraction and clarifications as opposed to financial penalties. It should cover all political activities

Issues for consultation – How-to-vote cards

How to vote cards should be banned. Along with the 24 hours media free period, voters should be given as much fresh air on voting day to make decisions which are their own and are not unduly influenced by marketing strategies, or other methods of coercion

Issue for consultation – Proof of identity

Voters should be required to bring proof of their identity with them on on polling day, but should only be required to provide proof of identity if there is any doubt in the mind of electoral officers that the person is who they state they are.

Issue for consultation – Enrolment on polling day

Voters should be permitted to enrol on polling day, there should be no restriction to voting on the part of eligible voters

Issues for consultation – Electronic voting

All measures, including electronic voting, should be explored to assist voters to complete a valid ballot paper, including blind and vision impaired voters; and voters who require assistance voting because of a disability, motor impairment or insufficient literacy. This should also include those with difficulty accessing an area of polling on polling day due to lack of accessibility. I would not be in favour of electronic polling being available to all voters unless I could be convinced that a system existed which could ensure data security and had a system in place for independent third party scrutiny.

Issues for consultation – Postal voting

I am in favour of postal voting being open as option for all voters. I am not in favour of online postal voting unless the numbers are to remain small, or I could be convinced that a system existed which could ensure data security and had a system in place for independent third party scrutiny. The deadline for postal votes should be brought forward by one day, especially if online voting is implemented.

Issue for consultation – Compulsory voting

Compulsory voting should remain for Queensland State elections unless there is a simultaneous move across all levels of government. There is already a level of confusion in the community about the preferential voting system and the differences between State and Federal elections. If fines are to apply at a Federal level for not voting, making State voting non-compulsory would undermine the Federal system by opening up the confusion argument.

Issue for consultation – Voting system

The voting system used for Queensland State elections should remain the same, but should be slated for reassessment at an appropriate time period down the track to ensure it does not provide an unreasonable or unfair advantage to any party of any candidate