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Electoral Reform
Strategic Policy
Department of Justice and Attorney General
G.P.O. Box 149
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Submission for Discussion Paper on Electoral Reform

Part A

Political Donations

I believe political donations should be capped and these caps should be implemented to ensure that an entity cannot circumvent them by giving multiple donations from the same organisation using different names. Significant donations from companies or organisations should be approved by the shareholders or members. Fees for attendance at functions should be considered as political donations.

Public Funding

I consider funding per vote to be a fairer system than subsidising unlimited election expenditure. Administrative funding could be distributed using the same formula, or based on the winning party's entitlement, whichever is the greater.

Election Campaign Expenditure

My preference is to retain the current caps, as this would seem the fairer option. Affiliated organisations should be treated separately, unless "arms" of the same body. Volunteer labour should be classed as just that.

Part B

Truth in Political Advertising

Truth in political advertising is a nice "theoretical" concept, but I consider that, in practice, such laws would be impossible to apply.

How To Vote Cards

How to vote cards would best, in my view, be handled under option (a), so that they are subject to scrutiny well before polling day.

Proof of Identity

I think it would be impractical to ask voters to provide proof of identity on polling day as many would forget, with the consequent need for declaration voting.

Enrolment on Polling Day

Enrolment on polling day would, in my view, add an unnecessary complication to the administration of the day. I would support maintaining the current situation.

Electronic Voting

With regard to electronic voting option (a) is my preference. People who cannot get to a polling booth or are out of the State can use absentee or postal votes.

Postal Voting

I consider the current arrangements should remain, with the exception that the deadline should be brought forward (option c).

Compulsory Voting

I was quite shocked when the previous government changed the voting system to optional preferential. I do not think any government should be able to change the voting system without approval from a referendum of all voters.

Regarding the question of optional voting, I do not think this is desirable, for a number of reasons:-

Firstly, much of the candidates' effort is directed away from policy matters to that of getting people out to vote.

Secondly, it leaves the way open for all sorts of inducements to vote to be offered such as transport, hospitality etc..

Thirdly, unless there is a fiercely independent and powerful electoral commission, it leaves the way open for an unscrupulous future government to manipulate the system by restricting access to polling booths in areas known to vote against the government, resulting in long waiting times at these polling booths, with the result that people walk away without voting.

I think it is also important that State and Commonwealth voting systems be aligned, to avoid voter confusion.

I consider that compulsory preferential voting should be the system followed.

If any change is to be considered, it is my opinion that the value of votes other than the first preference should be discounted, and not counted as a full vote. For example, where a second preference is counted, it should only have 1/2 the value of a first preference. Where a third preference is counted, it should have 1/4 of the value of a first preference etc.. In my view this system would more closely reflect the voter's choices. In these days of computerisation the system could easily be incorporated into the counting process.

Signed:-



P.G. Atherton OAM