

Electoral Reform Submission

A government should be an organization in which people are selected because of their abilities, not because of their money, (or other people's money to promote them), or social standing. Each candidate should have an equal opportunity and an equal platform to compete for a place in representing the best interests of the people. This would allow citizens to learn about and equally assess the best candidate to represent them. The political arena should be a "level playing field," of individuals, not alliances or parties.

It is imperative that no one group dominates policy making as the provisions in the Electoral Act 1907 appear to have allowed for, in addition to allowing a candidate to win a seat by preference voting. This could now potentially bring the Electoral Act 1907 into conflict with the Australian Constitution which has supremacy and is the basis for our democracy. The Electoral Act 1907 also appears to support the current party system where two major parties have monopolised power in Western Australia for many years. The less competitive a government selection process becomes the more monopolistic the result, like reducing the number of competitors in a race to two or three.

The current party system over time has established a stronghold on our political system with vast amounts of money received from political "donations" from third parties, both local and foreign, to promote themselves and influence people. A potential candidate would only have to join one of the big parties and work their way up through the ranks to gain power. For a government to function independently it should be a neutral body made up of independent representatives of the people. This would also allow for more scrutiny over policy making and there would not be a requirement for the Legislative Council, freeing up funds to appoint qualified Ministers for Health, Finance, Education, Transport etc, independently based on merit rather than from party ranks, allowing for a more independent, educated and specialised team. Similar in many ways to how micro-communities like retirement village committees operate, but expanding the treasury role to include other roles and also appoint a President/Premier.

The engineering of our governmental systems and structure requires an impartial approach which should be independent of possible influence and neutral to exploitation by third parties. The engineering code of ethics is there to protect the public and was put in place due to the role of engineers in the atrocities committed during WWII to prevent this happening again. During the war it has been claimed that the Communist underground had planted their men in strategic positions in the labour movement to create stoppages, slowdown, strikes and unrest. Emergency powers were also instrumental in the rise of Adolf Hitler. It is imperative that the current state of our government system is addressed as a matter of urgency now more than ever to protect the public interest and prevent this happening again. There must be equitable participation in decision making, no conflict of interest, and zero tolerance for bribery, fraud, and corruption. The current system does not appear to allow for the checks and balances to prevent this.

Champerty is a form of maintenance, where a third party pays some or all of the litigation costs in return for a share of the proceeds. Historically champerty, the prohibition of third-party funding, was based on the public policy of protecting the purity of justice. There was a fear that a third party could manipulate the litigation process. When applied more broadly champerty, as third-party interference for profit, (or power), could possibly extend to the benefits a third party could gain by providing political donations, applying undue and biased media influence, foreign business incentives, or even corporate and legal muscle for access to political or economic power. It follows that any attempt to manipulate the political process and destroy the purity and neutrality of politics should not be tolerated and not allowed for as it appears to have been in the Electoral Act 1907.

The early voting implemented in the last State election also brought the goal post forward meaning that those with money to promote themselves could do so in a concentrated effort in less time. Those without access to this money were disadvantaged with less time to promote themselves, especially those who had to work while doing so, thus not allowing them an equal opportunity to compete. The preference voting system allows for alliances to team up and is also very complex for many to understand. Both of these could be considered anti-competitive.

A government made up of independents selected on merit on an equal platform would allow for electoral equality and provide Australians with a fairer, more balanced policy and decision-making body with greater capacity to scrutinize and protect the people, the economy and the country.