



Better, not bigger

Sustainable Australia Party submission: Ministerial Expert Committee on Electoral Reform, Western Australian Legislative Council

8 June 2021

Ministerial Expert Committee on Electoral Reform

C/- submissions@waelectoralreform.wa.gov.au

Dear Committee

Re: Submission - Ministerial Expert Committee on Electoral Reform

The Western Australian Government has Commissioned a Ministerial Expert Committee to review and report on the WA Electoral system for the election of the Western Australian Legislative Council, as outlined here:

<https://www.wa.gov.au/government/ministerial-expert-committee-electoral-reform>

We thank the Committee for the opportunity to lodge a submission to this review.

Sustainable Australia Party

Sustainable Australia Party is an independent community movement from the political centre, with a positive plan for an economically, environmentally and socially sustainable Australia. We support a science and evidence-based approach to policy. Further details about Sustainable Australia Party can be found at our website: www.sustainableaustralia.org.au

WA Electoral System

The Sustainable Australia Party is very concerned at electoral inequality in Western Australia due to the fact that the system greatly favours major parties.

This is particularly the case with the electoral funding system, whereby parties need to achieve four per cent of the primary vote before qualifying for any campaign expenditure refunds. Effectively, this means that the four big parties – Liberal, National, Labor and Greens – receive refunds for most or all of their campaign spend, while small parties and independents usually receive no refund at all.

This is a regressive system that penalises small parties and leads to large voting disparities and inequality between the big four and the rest.

Sustainable Australia Party is also very concerned that, unlike the Legislative Council group voting ticket (GVT) in Victoria, WA voters cannot easily choose their own preferences when voting below the line. The current below-the-line compulsory preferential system which requires every box to be numbered is unnecessary and leads to higher informal voting and resentment.

Sustainable Australia Party recommendations for the Committee and WA Government:

1. Remove the four per cent primary vote threshold for campaign expenditure refund public funding of political parties and independent candidates, so that all candidates attract the same public funding amount per vote.
2. Allow voters to easily choose their own preferences when voting below the line for the Legislative Council. The Parliament can easily implement this simple reform to the current cumbersome below-the-line voting option. An obvious method is to have voters in all regions fill out a minimum of the number of members of parliament (MPs) to be elected, in the case of WA this would be a minimum of six numbers below the line.

Should WA look to abolish the GVT system, the fairest and most representative system to ensure electoral equality is to adopt the New South Wales system of Legislative Council voting, including the abolition of regions. If all MPs are elected every four years, such a proportional representation system provides for a healthy number of minor parties, broadly in line with overall voting patterns.

3. Roll out a major education campaign to ensure WA voters are aware of both the voting system and how they can allocate their own preferences.

We hope this information is of interest to the Committee and wish the Committee well in its deliberations.

Yours sincerely

William Bourke
President
Sustainable Australia Party
www.sustainableaustralia.org.au

