

australian motoring enthusiast party



29 February, 2016

Committee Secretary,  
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters,  
PO Box 6021,  
Parliament House,  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

### **Submission to the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment Bill 2016**

We would like to take this opportunity to respond to the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment Bill 2016.

The Australian Motoring Enthusiast Party (AMEP) was formed in May 2013 after our community exercised our democratic right to form a political party, and contested the 2013 Federal Senate Election.

The AMEP formed because we felt we were not represented by the Major Parties, and as a community we were being persecuted and treated unfairly, and without representation we feared being legislated out of existence.

It is disappointing, but not unexpected, that this persecution and unfair treatment has continued along our journey into politics.

The Australian Motoring Enthusiast Party and Senator Ricky Muir have been singled out as the reason for this electoral reform. We have been accused of “gaming the system”, doing devious backroom deals, yet all we did was follow the rules that were imposed upon us. The campaign to discredit us began the moment we won a Senate Seat in Victoria, and has escalated during the campaign for electoral reform.

Australian Motoring Enthusiast Party Senator Ricky Muir, who was elected with only 0.5 per cent of the vote, was singled out by Mr Turnbull when explaining the need for the changes. SMH

Whilst we are not against the need for change to our political system, we believe the proposed changes will benefit the Major Parties and the Greens at the cost of Minor Parties, and that will be a sad day for Australia.

There is widespread evidence of negative attitudes towards politics and politicians, and in times of great change, when true political reform is needed, we see reform focused on stopping, not increasing the opportunity for representatives of the diverse demographics of our society to win a Senate Seat.

Australia’s political system would be better off with more ordinary people and fewer career party politicians in the Senate, not less. The Senate is a House of Review to keep the Government of the day honest \*, and should not be rubber stamp for the Government or filled with Party Politicians told how to vote.

## **AMEP Senator Ricky Muir**

Whilst many say with a primary vote of less than 1% we have no right to be in politics, it needs to be remembered that life (and therefore politics) is far more than numbers and how much money you have.

### **Votes = Dollars**

The truth is that votes equal dollars, and the amount of money that a Political Party spend on their election campaign will directly reflect in their primary vote.

The Major Parties receive hundreds of millions of dollars in political donations, and whilst it is argued about the integrity of receiving political donations from Corporations and Unions, it cannot be argued that money influences a Parties ability to achieve a higher percentage of the primary vote.

There is no doubt that if the AMEP had a million dollars to campaign we would have received a higher primary vote. We would like to make it very clear that our low primary vote at the 2013 Election is not indicative of our support but a direct reflection of how much money we had to campaign.

### **Representative Diversity**

Something we are proud of as a Party is we have managed to re-engage a community of people who were previously disconnected from politics. People who felt that the Major Parties did not represent them and they felt disempowered to change anything.

The value of re-engaging and empowering people to be involved in politics in a democratic society should never be discounted when considering the importance of encouraging diversity of representation in the Senate. However, this does not appear to be have been considered or even debated with the proposed electoral changes.

### **Real Reason for Change**

The current preferential system was introduced in 1984 and has worked effectively for the Major Parties until now. So why the need for change now?

Everyday Australian's are sick and tired of the broken promises of the major parties, and this was reflected at the last election with one in four people (nearly 25% of the voters) choosing to vote for a Minor Party in the Senate.

However, instead of the Major Parties hearing the message of the people, they are arrogantly choosing to change the rules instead to protect their power base.

### **Results in the 2013 Victorian Senate**

We stand strong in our belief that the results reflected the will of the people.

On primary vote only (no preferences) in Victoria - 72% of people voted for a Major Party in the Senate, 10% voted for the Greens and 18% voted for a Minor Party. With a quota of 14.3% to secure a seat, it is only fitting that a minor party won a seat.

Senate Result – 2 Seats Liberals, 2 Seats Labor, 1 Seat Green, 1 Seat AMEP

## **Minor Parties**

Minor Parties must work together to give them any chance of having a level playing field against the millions of dollars spent on election campaigns by the major parties.

Minor Parties are representative of the diversity of the people of Australia; representing a broad range of views and ideologies. We believe the challenge to Minor Parties is to ensure that they put their ideologies aside for good government, and on this note, we believe the AMEP and Senator Ricky Muir are showing the way.

## **Role & Responsibility of the Senate**

As a Political Party, the AMEP, do not dictate to our Senator how he must vote on a Bill, instead we ask that he makes balanced and informed decisions based on party values. This is what we, and many others believe, is the role and responsibility of the Senate.

The Senate is a House of Review to keep the Government of the day honest \*. Senators should not be party puppets... and we are gravely concerned these changes will bring more Major Party Senators who are told how to vote, instead of making balanced and informed decisions.

We urgently call for an Independent Inquiry into the value of diversity in the Senate, rather than allowing those in power to dictate and ensure their power base.

Yours sincerely

*Sharyn Littler*  
Founder and Chairman  
**Australian Motoring Enthusiast Party**

\* [About the Senate – Parliament of Australia](#)

[www.aph.gov.au/about\\_parliament/senate/about\\_the\\_senate](http://www.aph.gov.au/about_parliament/senate/about_the_senate)

The **Senate** is a house of review and a powerful check on the government of the day. The proportional representation system of voting used to elect **senators** makes it easier for independents and the candidates of the smaller parties to be elected.