



Stand Tall. Fight Hard.

Bernard Gaynor – Queensland Senate

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Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters

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COMMONWEALTH ELECTORAL AMENDMENT BILL 2016

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the inquiry into the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment Bill 2016.

The first point to note about this bill is that it is being driven by political expediency. The timing of this bill is clear proof of that. This is disappointing as it does propose some measures that are beneficial. Unfortunately, Australians are likely to take a dim or suspicious view of these changes simply as a result of the political motives and timing behind the proposed changes.

That being said, there are some changes that I support.

Logo

I support the implementation of the party logo on the ballot paper. This will help alleviate voter confusion.

In practical terms, however, this may present some challenges simply due to the different size and layout of logos. Some are taller and some are wider. As a result, the text in some logos may be difficult to read if there is not adequate space for them to be printed if they do not conform to allotted spacing and are reduced in size to do so. This may require registered parties to adjust their logos.

Registered Officers

I support the changes to prevent a person being the registered officer of more than one party. This will improve voter confidence in the integrity of registered political parties.

Voting and preferences

There is no doubt that the current Senate voting system has led to surprising results: surprising allocation of preferences between parties and surprising election of candidates with very little primary voter support.

A system that rewards adequately and fairly candidates who can attract votes (including preferences) is required.

It should be noted at this point that much of the criticism of the current system has come about as a result of dubious preference deals between political parties that hold very little in common.

My personal view is that these 'deals' did not actually help parties in any pragmatic sense. For instance, my analysis is that if a grouping of conservative, family-based parties with very similar views had



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preferred tightly in Tasmania at the last election, the Senate result would have been different and one of these parties would have had a Senator elected. However, due to a wide distribution of preferences, a party with diametrically opposed views remained in the count and very nearly enjoyed success. In the end, a third party's candidate eventually emerged victorious in Tasmania.

My analysis also shows that this grouping of conservative, family-based minor parties would have enjoyed improved results in every other state if they had tightly exchanged their preferences. However, they did not and much smaller parties rose to prominence with the resultant public discussion about the Senate voting system.

I support measures that place the power of preferences back into the hands of the people.

I do criticise the decision to require voters to only mark six preferences. This is likely to lead to a high exhaustion rate and does not fully empower the voter's own preferences. Essentially, this will be of benefit to whichever candidate is coming first at that point in the count, even though the voter did not vote for that candidate.

It is also a system that will be of enormous and unfair benefit to the two major parties because it is likely that voters who support minor parties will preference one of the major parties as their 'sixth' preference, even though they may prefer other minor parties. They will do this as 'insurance' to ensure that their vote does eventually count to the major party of their choice in the event that their first preferences do not elect a candidate. In other words, this system will short-circuit full preference allocation to the benefit of the Liberal and Labor parties.

The decision to provide voters with the power to allocate preferences by party is a good one. It would be improved if voters filled in every box above the line, ensuring that their preferences were fully accounted for.

Political party registration

Although this bill does not address the issue of political party registration, I still make a submission on this point. Australia's population has grown, but the number of members required to register a political party has not.

As a result, there are now a plethora of registered political parties with very little public support.

I would support a change that required parties to have 2,000 members in order to register. I would also support a measure that required registered parties to have 500 members in a particular state in order to run candidates in that state with the party's name on the ballot.

This will require parties to demonstrate a more realistic level of public support before they can register or run candidates.



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Electoral roll

I once again point out that the electoral roll has been abused in order to cause harassment.

I have had to move my family's residential address because my residential details were sent by a homosexual activist to Islamic organisations. This has caused great distress. I submit that the details on the electoral roll should only be used for electoral purposes and that there should be severe penalties imposed on those who obtain personal information on the electoral roll and then abuse it for their own private purposes.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kind regards,

Bernard Gaynor
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