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From: Brian Woods
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To: Committee, EM (REPS)
Subject: TRIM: Sub069 Brian Woods



COMPLAINT IN REGARDS TO AEC PROBLEMS IN THE 2013 ELECTION and FUTURE ELECTIONS

As an active candidate in the 2013 election as the Palmer United Party candidate for Chisholm, I witnessed and had evidenced to me, many AEC errors, too many errors and most only involved errors against my party.

Firstly, I would like to canvass an innovative idea to free up parties having to have people at booths for pre-polling, and thereby suggest, in each booth, an internal space be provided with a row of holders for all candidates to place their how to vote cards in them, and voters rather than be bailed up or coerced, can simply walk inside, browse the parties cards and select whichever one they wish.

Any candidate can if they wish, still have someone outside to explain any questions voters may have, however will not really be needed and makes it easier on everyone and resources, and saves volunteer usage, supplying meals and rotations of volunteers, and is a fairplay for all parties.

Initially in the 2013 election, several of our candidates evidenced the party name was omitted from their ballot papers, such an unfair disadvantage although corrected once head office complained. Therefore, all ballot papers must be checked with more scrutiny prior to being distributed, as these could have led to a new vote had we challenged it.

Ballot papers were known to leave several booths and found in other booths, this must be stopped, in fact would have prevented the WA issue, and no papers should leave the booths until the AEC is satisfied there is no disputes from any parties or a likelihood of any recount.

Some ballot papers found at other booths were found to be hundreds of votes for one party only. This is not possible unless had already been counted then moved, and to count them twice as two votes is a serious breach, as there is no way those votes all happened to be uncounted ones all coincidentally for the one party.

Staff at booths and official AEC scrutineers should have no political associations whatsoever other than their right to vote.

If serious issues like those in WA are in dispute, the AEC should create a panel to decide any decisions rather than just one person, this therefore shall avoid a few issues that occurred and give more weight to and court appeals.

When an issue is raised such as in FAIRFAX that the number of votes in lower and upper house differ and seem to be made separately at different booths, it must be investigated immediately and consideration given to a restart of that vote / electorate.

Computers can easily solve many problems and are quite simplistic to do the following

- a computer in every polling booth with names of every Australian voter on it and their relevant electorate to ensure people do not vote in the wrong electorate/booth
- upon voter collecting a ballot paper, it is ticked off under their name on the computer so as they can not vote twice, and if an error is made, they have to supply the damaged paper to be inspected and kept by AEC people and a new one issued and noted
- upon completion of filling in ballot papers, they are handed to an AEC staff to check all the right areas are filled in to avoid invalid votes and missing votes, and the AEC staff themselves place the checked form in the right box
- all boxes must be secure, and never moved off site and strict penalties if they are, or chain up the boxes
- only the head staff member at all booths have a key to the boxes
- any voter whom makes a error on filling in a ballot paper but for odd reason can not return the damaged one to staff for verification must be ticked off the computer as a null vote, loss of the right to vote

I think consideration should be given for reform of the Act whereby new parties with less than 50 candidate be rejected from contending elections and therefore unduly making ballot papers over 1 metre long, and maybe instead, they consider aligning with another likeminded party.

Lastly and most importantly: Governments should not be permitted to change nomination fees or signature requirements as it can be seen as a corrupt method to shut out competition and therefore breach the Act. These powers and decisions should be only made by the election commission whom is impartial and can consider any changes on merit, moreso as a new unjustified theme by federal and state main parties was to more than treble nomination fees with no justification to do so as administration costs had not risen, and was clearly an abuse to make nominations unaffordable thereby lessen competition.

I expect this department to make changes to address these issues in light of the AEC being found to have factually made many errors causing a resignation resulting from it, and think the commission needs a panel of 3 for any decisions during an election so as to avoid this one man error theme.

I feel what I have submitted is worthy and of benefit to all sides including the AEC itself, and secures the whole process

Sincerely

Brian Woods

Active Palmer United participant / member