

14 January 2014

Submission to Inquiry into A Claim of Public Interest Immunity Raised over Documents.

“A claim of public interest immunity raised over documents tabled by the Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection (Senator Cash), on 4 December 2013, in response to an order for production of documents and other documents tabled by the same Minister in relation to other orders for production of documents concerning immigration policy, with particular reference to:

- a. the specific matters of public interest immunity being claimed by the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection; and
- b. the authority of the Senate to determine the application of claims of public interest immunity.”

Public interest immunity is in my opinion a gross departure from Australia’s constitution, and represents a direct threat to the accountability and transparency of any government. I believe that it would set a dangerous precedent that would further destroy the faith of the Australian voting public in elected governments, and is effectively promoting a “cover-up” of information that will effectively inform the voting intentions of Australians.

Asking Australian citizens to elect a government without full and complete disclosure of information and records that display the reliability, trustworthiness and suitability of government (or otherwise) will erode the efficacy of the democratic process in Australia. I wouldn’t buy a car if I knew it was faulty or unsafe, just as I wouldn’t vote for a government if I felt they were not able to govern in a way I aligned with.

To maintain a robust democratic process, and ensure that Australian voters are engaged and do actually vote, there should be no reason (apart perhaps from ‘real’ national security issues where there is a direct threat for example) that governments should not be obliged to disclose all information regarded as being in the public interest, or requested by the voting public.

Regards,

Matt Dickson