

Mr Bill Tait (Jnr.) Esq.



Saturday, the 17th of August, 2019 CE.

The Chair / Senator the Hon James McGrath,
The Joint Standing Committee on Elec-
toral Matters.

C/- The Committee Secretary,
PO Box 6021,
Parliament House,
CANBERRA, ACT, 2600.

re the Inquiry into and report on
all aspects of the conduct of the
2019 Federal Election and matters
related thereto

Dear sir,

Well, it was a solid win, hey, and,
not much room, for any great con-
troversy, there, or, is there?

Uh-oh, and well, seemingly only more
minor skirmishes aside, like e.g. the
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old would-be northern stalwart, Mr Ian McDonald's, sort of twilight, bit of a, personal campaign, to solicit only, voters "below the line"... and, what was, that, sort of thing, all about, maybe, some kind of clandestine so-called "social action research" - project - or the like, or some, even more sinister, Party-political "fishing expedition", perhaps?

Be that as it may, it seems to have been, of no great consequence, one way or another, at the end of the day, or as regards the overall election tally results, anyhow, and what is more - to the point, while we're, kind of already, talking about, the very freedom of communication - about matters political, well, the whole crux,

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of the matter, in a truly, free, fair, and democratic, context, would seem to be that, electors, are to end up, more fully informed, so as to properly exercise, their very own vote, in light of, the very real issues - or live ones (openly so) before the electorate*, whereas, it seems to be, notorious fact that, while the truth, i.e. given that one commentator came out - reminding us that there's really not going to be all that much in it - explaining the comparison (between the one thousand or so personnel - to be employed by the Carmichael Mine proposal - and the then current level of about one hundred thousand unemployed in Queensland alone), only got, some air, which, yes, of course, means, inter alia or by the way, that I would fully support, the sorts of matters, already outlined in Prof. Williams' submission (p. 3), as regards pre-poll voting. Page - No. 3.

on the national broadcaster (or RN), in the wake of it all, well, as I'm sure, the Hon. Senators and Members of the Committee, would be well aware, the media generally - or very popularists' press etc. anyhow, largely painted, the entire election up, as being one, maybe only, primarily fought, in northern Queensland, over the green lighting of, the said Adani-company backed would-be coal mining venture, i.e. as if it might be, practically a kind of nation saving possibility - or something or another like that, you see, sir?

Oh, and, ah, moreover, or maybe, I should, likewise only say, perhaps somewhat more though, by the bye, that sort of, apparently only so hollowly hyped up, conservative Party-political campaign, was seemingly being (in some part anyhow)

kind of propped up by, the very policy platform, being run out then anyhow, by the very federal arm, of the shadowy-like, would-be wannabe Palmer United Australia Party, whereas... well, I seem to recall, my days-out in the hot (even then) northern Queensland sun - on the hustings, during the campaign, of the infamous, Mundingburra Queensland by-election^{*}, wherein, I might have occasionally, fended off comments, apparently designed to 'break one's stride (so to say)', with something like, "Well, even if I don't win, at least we'll be putting... (this or that) issue (or issues then) on the record!"[†], and yet, but,

[†] Although, of course, I was always careful to first clearly point out - or reveal my very own intentions, that is - with words to the effect of, that "I'm running to win, of course, and I'll certainly take office if I do - (etc.)".

* never really settled, due to the interference, of the so-called Connolly/Ryan Inquiry (wound up by the Supreme Court - subsequently), in Mr Carruthers' initial efforts, notwithstanding the '(like) patch up' of the later Shepherdson Inquiry. ...

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well, maybe, that sort of, very memory, is what saw, something, kind of crystallise, in my mind, when, in the wake of the said recent federal elections, I mean, when it was all seemingly so done and dusted, with the result practically declared and/or the very writs even largely returned formally, as, Mr Clive Palmer, himself, came out in the media, acknowledging that his Party hadn't won a single seat, and, in no uncertain terms, as I seem to recall it now anyway, claimed that - he and - his Party "never expected to win (or words to that effect)" - in respect of these northern seats (or electorates) anyhow (at least), and, well, you know, when a set of candidates - on some sort of "block-ticket", nominate - or are nominated - in an election (or a set thereof), wherein they have no real intention of being successful in get-

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ting actually elected, with the kind of (in part there anyhow) only undisclosed ulterior motive, of drawing off preferences, and the like, in order to (so they say now anyhow) having only some other candidates entrenched - or just put into office then, well... you know, I mean, sure, Mr Palmer has a bit of a reputation, for being controversial, dare I say it, even, making mischief, at the upper political levels anyhow, and, I guess that, to be more astute, one might, well be, better advised, not to put it past him - and/or his said Party movement - to have only belatedly put this sort of thing out, as no more than, a bit of a Furphy - designed to upset the apple cart a bit (so to say), but nevertheless, on the other hand, it is at least conceivable, that, he might have been only - more "naively" - like (let's say) - ^{admitting} ~~admitted~~ to have

been kind of covertly interfering with, the very integrity of the electoral process, with little or no real intention, of fielding genuine candidates (with bona fide intentions towards aspiring to elected offices), uh, you see, or, would the Committee, at risk (I suppose) of only playing into the hands of a mere mischief making bunch, care to, maybe just, have a bit of a closer look, at that, I, for one, might wonder, sir?

Now, please, allow me, just before signing off, herein, if I may, to put, a few sort of caveats, on what I said, in the bit of an aside, in the footnote, at page-No. 3 above, I mean, naturally, I would only continue, to fully acknowledge, the observations, of the good Professor - and Dean of the UNSW Faculty of Law, in respect of, the very sorts of impacts, such that, an overly permissive regime, of pre -

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poll voting, may be seen to have, upon the electoral process, on second thoughts, and having-only just very recently-done some further reading-around the edges (so to say)*, I'm not convinced, myself, that the very integrity, of the electoral process, traditionally pioneered - as Judith Brett reminds us - in Australia, would be well preserved by, Professor Williams's particular proposed solutions - or proposed options for legislative change that is, for while, even in this day and age, sort of rushing into, anything like "online or telephone voting"[†], would seem, to only invite, if nothing else, besides, the sorts of mischief - or very abuses,

[†] i.e. apart from being necessarily very costly, for, at least for some time - or a good long (practically generational) while, two systems - of the new and the old (existing methods) would have to run then.

* and although I'm not necessarily to be taken to agree with all the - like - nuances - of legal opinion and Party - political opinions and suchlike - therein, see e.g. the first ten or so chapters on the historical developments - not to mention chapter - No. 16 - of Judith Brett's book (Published this year by The Text Publishing Co. at Melbourne) entitled "From Secret Ballot to Democracy Sausage...".

once dispelled already, when, the Australian way, so pioneered, the more effective processes of the secret ballot - in moving away from the old methods of so-called "open voting" etc., I, for one, and that is to say, even when "sleeping rough (as they say)", have long - and proudly - held to the habit, of only turning out in person, to cast my vote (whether that be a State, Federal, or Local Government, poll), on the very day - of the election concerned, at the designated polling booth (of schools and whatnot mostly - for I seem to see a conflict - of roles - in polling booths set up at certain places - like courthouses - still in use as such anyhow), and not the least of all because, there would seem to be, a sense of natural justice, to be best preserved, for the benefit of the entire community - or whole body politic (of the matter - or election - con-

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cerned), if only, that sort of practice, were to remain, predominantly the way of things, across-the-board, now and into the future, i.e. without even-for mere "convenience" - splitting things (or the very election day) up - into even say some kind of shorter period of three or four days or what-have-you - or whatever - like that. Notwithstanding all of that - though, however, I would support, of course, the suggestion, to the effect of that, the very opportunities for pre-poll voting could be shortened⁺, although they're (like) a bit of a "necessary evil (so to speak)" - in some respects, but, I don't see why, at least occasionally, I mean, in cases of more obvious persistent abuse - or flouting of the existing rules (or very generous extensions of formal exemptions and excuses etc.)* there couldn't at least be, the odd bit of closer scrutiny - or even a subsequent

* i.e. not to be confused, I hasten to add - or just qualify, with the chronically homeless and suchlike
... P a g e - No. 11 / 10 "business days" ...

formal investigation (and written notice of cautioning - if that sort of thing be found to be warranted) - by the AEC itself, moreover, well, I seem to be reminded, now, of the very contents, at about the last line (in the body of the text) of page-No. 5 - through to the top two thirds or so of page-No. 7, of my submissions (of the 10th of May 2019)* to the Queensland Parliament's Economics and Governance Committee's recent inquiry, into the Electoral and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019, which, all vanity-and the like-aside, I assure you, I'll just - more astutely (if you like) - add, the other said committee, seems to have at least felt, ~~worth~~ was worth mentioning, particularly, in its subsequent report (No. 27, 56th Parliament... June 2019) - under the very heading of "Stakeholder views" at page-No. 20 thereof*, so, well, in this very context, even then, that sort of material, would seem to (remain to) kind of speak for itself, or I dare say, so please, take

* and please see the said other committee's web page - on the Queensland Parliamentary website - for the full text of such material.
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it as read, like, mutatis mu-
tandis, herein.

And, well, as a bit of a Parthian
shot, of course, I would ~~note~~^{sound} a
note of caution then, as regards
taking away - or fettering too much -
the very electoral officer's exer-
cise of discretion, by placing overly
stringent legislative requirements upon
same, such that e.g. might seem to be
to onerous of an imposition on this
or that traditionally somewhat disen-
franchised group, for we - or I (for one) -
don't want to risk seeing, evidential re-
quirements, introduced for pre-poll voting
procedures, ending up ("opening the flood-
gates" - as they say - and then) as if kind
of extended across-the-board so as to
maybe see electors turned away
from the polling booth (even on voting
day) altogether, and by the way, moreover,
while I certainly don't think, the tra-
ditional election media 48 hour-blackout
(not really so redundant - even in the era

of so-called "social media"*)

should be abandoned - or even just needs necessarily to be "re-examined" - in this very context anyhow, I do seem to recall that (at least in the newspaper up around there - here - parts⁺) at least the said Palmer-crew might seem to have been inviting some sort of litigious controversy, in such regards, but, well, I'm sure, they won't do, that sort of thing, again, if ~~they~~ they truly value our said iconic democratic values and practices etc., that is to say.

So, well, then, whilst I can't afford to travel, of course, and, through no real fault of my own, I have absolutely no phone contact, of my very own, to offer you, so, you know, the Committee,

* Yet, and you'll all know, the one, without me having to mention it, I dare say.

* but that's, a matter for another day - or best left (I dare say) to a stand alone more extensive inquiry of its own - at a later date? ...

like everyone else, would only have, the one type of option, of contacting me, i.e. in writing - by Post (or in person - if you like), I would be, only too happy, to answer any queries, that the Committee might have, as regards these matters, in the course of the conducting of said inquiry, and finally then, I would implore, the members thereof, to promptly resolve, notwithstanding any kind of formal defects, to accept, this very contact, as a properly made submission, therein and please then, have the Committee Secretary contact me, as soon as would be practicable, in order to just confirm - your very receipt of this letter and, to advise me of, the Committee's considerations, in such regards.

Yours sincerely

Bill Tait (Mr William "Bill (Billy)" Peter Tait (An
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