



Dissenting Report—Senator Bob Brown

The Electoral Matters Committee has yet again failed to tackle the problem of truth in advertising during election campaigns, as I outlined in my dissenting comments in the committee's June 2009 report.

The crux of the problem with the distribution of a bogus flyer in the Lindsay electorate was not that it was unauthorised, but that it was false and deceptive and designed to mislead voters just days before the election.

The lack of contemporaneous regulation and penalties for parties, groups or individuals who knowingly lie or distort the truth in advertisements and publications about candidates and their policies during election campaigns creates an unfair playing ground for all political parties.

The Greens have also borne the brunt of attempts by political parties and third parties to unfairly smear their policies and candidates but there is little recourse for action against the parties before or after the election.

As the Australian Greens point out in its submission to the government's green paper on electoral reform:

Legislation to impose controls on political advertising and penalties for breaches would enforce higher standards, improve accountability and promote fairness in political campaigning and the political system generally.

The Greens advocate amendment to the Commonwealth Electoral Act to make it an offence to authorise or publish an advertisement purporting to be a statement of fact when the statement is inaccurate and misleading to a material extent.

Senator Bob Brown