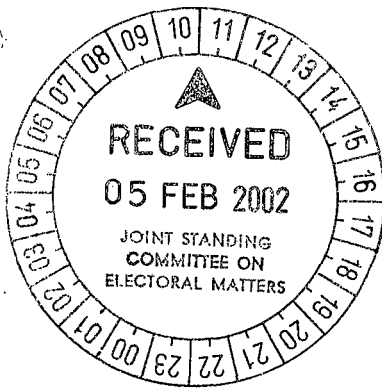




"Heathmore"
61 Arthur Street
West Hobart 7000
Tasmania

29 January 2002

The Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

I attach a copy of my letter to the Governor-General dated 15 November 2001 with a request for innovative amendments to the electoral legislation nationwide. Please take this as a submission to your Committee.

In pursuing these amendments, you may be interested in the train of resultant correspondence (a copy of which I also attach) as follows:

- Letter from Senator the Hon Eric Abetz dated 22 January 2002
- Letter from the Ministerial Correspondence Unit dated 7 January 2002
- Letter to the Prime Minister dated 27 November 2001
- Letter from the Senior Adviser to the Governor-General dated 22 November 2001

Yours faithfully

Heather Small

Encl

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters	
Submission No.	130
Date Received	5/7/02
Secretary	<i>[Signature]</i>

"Heathmore"
61 Arthur Street
West Hobart 7000
Tasmania

15 November 2001

His Excellency the Right Reverend Dr Peter Hollingworth, AC, OBE
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia
Government House
Dunrossil Drive
YARRALUMLA 2600
Australian Capital Territory

Dear Dr Hollingworth

I have given this matter fleeting consideration for a long period of time, but was finally provoked into doing something about it last Saturday, 10 November, at the polling booth.

I did endeavour to think of another avenue other than your goodself, but it escapes me as the recipient of my plea must be politics-neutral. I shall make it as brief as possible.

I really do like to take full advantage of my rights as a citizen of this country when I vote and I choose to use the *under-the-line* system. This would be made much easier for us all if we knew who 80% or more of these were for goodness sake.

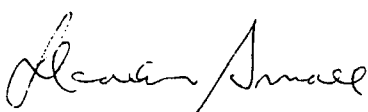
At the Hobart City Council election, at least everyone is provided with a broadsheet giving a great deal of information about each candidate several weeks ahead of the election. I think it is the right of people in Australia to receive the same information in all state and federal elections – that is:

- Name
- Photo
- Profession
- Biographical details
- Party, affiliation or independent information
- Their policies
- To whom will their preferences be given

The above would at least give us something to go on. For myself, I always get stuck in the middle. I am sure I am not the only one. Probably some even vote for this section on a gender basis! What other measure could possibly be used for the remainder of the 29 from whom I had to choose.

I would greatly appreciate your assistance in perhaps implementing the above system into this country.

Yours sincerely



Heather Small



SENATOR THE HON ERIC ABETZ
Special Minister of State
Liberal Senator for Tasmania

22 JAN 2002

Ms Heather Small
"Heathmore"
61 Arthur Street
WEST HOBART 7000 TAS

Dear Ms Small

Thank you for your letter to the Prime Minister of 27 November 2001 enclosing a copy of a letter that you sent to the Governor-General on 15 November 2001. You request that candidate information be provided to all electors in a consistent format, for state and federal elections. Your letter has been referred to me as I have portfolio responsibility for federal electoral matters.

By way of background, the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) administers federal elections under provisions of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (the Electoral Act). I am unable to comment on State and Territory electoral procedures, which are provided for under separate (State and Territory) legislation for which the AEC is not responsible. I enclose a pamphlet produced by the Electoral Council of Australia, which contains contact details for the various State and Territory electoral bodies.

As an independent statutory authority, the AEC plays no role in distributing candidate or party advertising. There is no provision under the Electoral Act for the AEC to distribute information on candidates to electors as you recommend. Consequently, in order for your suggestion to be implemented, amendments to the Electoral Act would be required.

For your information, successive recent Parliaments have appointed a Parliamentary Committee as a forum for consideration of recommendations to change the legislation governing federal elections. This Committee, known as the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters (JSCEM), facilitates consideration of proposed electoral changes and their negotiation, prior to the introduction of amending legislation, for debate in the federal Parliament.

Should you wish to pursue any amendments in line with your suggestion, you could lodge a submission with the JSCEM at:

The Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Thank you for your interest in electoral matters.

Yours sincerely



ERIC ABETZ