

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

Dear Secretary,

The Progressive Labour Party, a federally registered political party since 1997, has recently added some policy provisions to its Republic and Electoral Policy. The PLP is deeply concerned about lack of democratic opportunity for smaller parties and Independents in the Australian political system as a result of which new ideas are blocked from emerging in the parliament. Two specific resolutions were passed at the Fifth Annual General conference of the Party held in June, 2001 in Newcastle. These resolutions form the basis of our submission. Included is the resolution that handing out How to Vote Material at polling booths should be abolished. This wasteful and costly practice should be replaced by affixing laminated posters to the walls of the polling booths.

The PLP favours a very substantial increase in the public funding of elections and in free time on TV and on air, so as to enhance the process and quality of democracy in election campaigns. At present small parties are at a great disadvantage to attract donations while the major parties are disproportionately favoured by both public funding arrangements as well as by corporation donations. Through this system both major parties have become subservient pawns of corporate capital. We suggest that to further strengthen the democratising effect of the introduction of Proportional Representation (which is PLP policy) public funding for political parties be significantly increased and much stricter measures as to exposure of corporate donations, and absolutely maximum levels of such donations be introduced in law. Furthermore, the current minimum vote level to attract public funding should be reduced to 2%.

How to Vote Material:

The PLP recommends that the practice of handing out 'How-to-Vote' leaflets outside polling stations be abolished completely. That, instead, explanatory laminated posters be affixed to the walls of polling booths which explain to voters which candidates are contesting the election, what 'how to vote' tickets each candidate recommends, if any, and what the task of the voters is at that moment, in an objective and neutral way, with assistance available to those with reading difficulties.

On behalf of the Progressive Labour Party,

Dr. Klaas Woldring,
Registered Officer

6th August, 2001