

Electoral Reform Australia

(the NSW Branch of the Proportional Representation Society of Australia)

12 July 2012

INQUIRY INTO THE ELECTORAL AND REFERENDUM AMENDMENT

(IMPROVING ELECTORAL PROCEDURE) BILL 2012

Submission to the Joint Steering Committee on Electoral Matters

Electoral Deposits

Electoral Reform Australia supports the increase in electoral deposits for candidates to both the House of Representatives and the Senate but believes this reform does not go far enough.

The election of the Australian Parliament is an important responsibility of the Australian people. They should be allowed to take this responsibility seriously without having to consider the merits of frivolous candidates.

Only candidates with genuine support should stand for election. Electoral deposits should be increased to \$10,000 per candidate. We see no reason for a distinction between House of Representative candidates and Senate candidates.

Refunding of electoral deposits should, however, occur in increments. For every 1% of the total formal vote a House of Representatives candidate or a Senate group obtains, 25% of the electoral deposit should be refunded. The whole deposit would be returned once the candidate or group reaches 4% of the vote.

A substantial deposit would help ensure that only genuine candidates contest the election and that the results are not distorted through unnecessarily high informal and exhausted votes.

It would help prevent the deliberate confusion of voters caused by nominating multiple candidates, by nominating candidates with the same or similar name as a prominent opponent, by registering emotive party names, and by candidates nominating, not with the intention of getting elected, but to push a cause or promote a business or just to massage their ego.

It should be noted that at 4% electoral funding starts and the incremental return of electoral deposits would help distinguish between candidates with some electoral support and the completely bogus candidates.

The Australian voter deserves to be respected and should be able to look at a ballot paper knowing that every candidate listed actually wants to be elected. Bogus candidates have the potential to distort the results of the election and undermine the integrity of the process.

Nominators

Electoral Reform Australia does not support the requirement to increase the number of nominators for candidates not nominated by a political party.

Such a requirement is petty and would not achieve a reduction in the number of candidates standing for election. In NSW the NRMA tried such a tactic but candidates merely incorporated the need for elector signatures into their campaign strategy.

Grouping of Unendorsed Candidates

Electoral Reform Australia has no objection to unendorsed candidates being grouped together provided the order of candidates in that group is determined by lot. Each candidate should only have to be nominated by fifty (50) electors.

Susan Gregory

President
Electoral Reform Australia