

## **Submission**

### **Electoral Reform Green Paper: Donations, Funding and Expenditure.**

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1. Funding of the democratic process of elections needs to be based on the principle of fairness and equality and as such the present unfairnesses and inequalities need to be eliminated.
2. There needs to be a recognition that sitting members facing re-election begin with the financial advantages of incumbency such as an electoral office and its accoutrements such as staff, telephone, central location for media access, postage allowance, paid travel and accommodation around the electorate to electioneer, other office accessories such as photocopier, and the intangible gravitas and auctoritas that goes with a taxpayer funded office.
3. There needs to be a recognition that sitting members facing re-election have the financial advantage of being paid their salary to do the business of electioneering\*.
4. There needs to be a recognition that candidates outside of the established members and senators have to forsake occupations and salary\* in order to contest their democratic right of being a candidate.
5. There needs to be a recognition of the moral nature of democracy and as such, there needs to be recognition that rorts such as the government's proroguing parliament but not issuing writs immediately as happened in the 2007 election in order to gain financial advantage<sup>1</sup> is not in the spirit of democracy.
6. The timetable and protocol for elections needs to be reformed to reflect the following principles: an election is to be held within three weeks of the date of prorogation of parliament; prorogation must happen at the end of a scheduled sitting; from the date of prorogation election costs including travel and accommodation, save for travel to and fro Canberra for the purpose of caretaker parliamentary and government business\*\*, be borne by candidates and /or political parties.
7. The understanding of the nature and role of the member/senator seeking re-endorsement by the electorate needs to be reformed to reflect the following principle: the member's/senator's salary ceases<sup>2</sup> from the date of prorogation of parliament save for the purpose of attending a caretaker session of parliament or government.
8. The constituency needs to accept that for the purposes of democracy, political representation by an elected member ceases during the election campaign.
9. The member/senator needs to vacate the electorate office during the period of the election. Advertising of the sitting member's/senator's name on this taxpayer funded public service office is to be blocked out during the election period.
10. The Governor General in Council becomes the government during the caretaker period, thus allowing politicians to contest the election exclusive of the business of parliament or government\*\*<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Financial advantage was gained in the form of publicity when party leaders flew around the country at taxpayers' expense to promote their candidates in the rural and interstate electorates and all this before the "official" election campaign began. Such activities are blatantly political and not parliamentary or governmental and as such should be paid for by the parties. Point 6 addresses how this can be corrected.

<sup>2</sup> \*If it is good enough for prospective candidates to forsake salary then it is good enough for sitting members to forsake salary. The parliamentary term of elected representatives should be from the date of election to the prorogation of parliament.

<sup>3</sup> \*\*Alternatives have been proposed on account of constitutional issues.