

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA  
Electoral Matters Committee



23 February 2009

Electoral Reform Secretariat  
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
PO Box 6500  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

I refer to the Commonwealth Government's Electoral Reform process and the request for submissions.

The Victorian Parliament's Electoral Matters Committee welcomes this opportunity to make submissions to the Commonwealth Government's Green Paper process. The Committee comprises seven members of parliament, four from the Labor Party and three from the Liberal Party. The Committee currently has before it two inquiries, one dealing with issues relating to Political Donations and Disclosure, the other Voter Participation and Informal Voting. The report on the first reference is due to be tabled in the Victorian Parliament by early May 2009, the second by July 2009. I have enclosed for your interest information about the members of the Committee and the two terms of reference before it.

As part of its investigations into the two inquiries, the Committee advertised widely, seeking submissions from interested individuals and organisations. Following the receipt of the submissions, the Committee held public hearings in July 2008, providing those witnesses with the opportunity to expand further on their views. The submissions and evidence received by the Committee can be viewed on the Committee's website at [www.parliament.vic.gov.au/emc](http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/emc).

The terms of reference for the inquiry into political donations and disclosure required the Committee to investigate legislative reforms in Canada, the United Kingdom and other relevant jurisdictions. The Committee travelled to Ottawa, New York and London where the Committee met with a range of experts on the relevant issues. Following the Committee's return to Australia, the Committee tabled a report on its international investigations in December 2008. This report can also be found on the Committee's website.

In early February 2009, the Committee travelled to New Zealand to investigate its two inquiries. Evidence from the New Zealand study tour is currently being examined. The Committee met with a number of key individuals and organisations, all of whom provided the Committee with valuable insight and relevant practical experience on matters relating to the two inquiries.

It should be noted that whilst the evidence received on both international investigations was recorded with the agreement of the witnesses, it was done so on the basis that it would not be made public, rather to assist the Committee and secretariat to develop findings and recommendations for the reports. As such, the evidence is not on the Committee's website.

As you will appreciate, the Committee's first priority is to report to the Victorian Parliament on the findings and recommendations in relation to the two inquiries. Whilst the Committee supports harmonising electoral laws throughout Australia and Senator Faulkner's concerns about an escalating arms race in election expenditure across Australia, it is too early to determine whether the Committee's recommendations will coincide with that of the Commonwealth.

To assist the Commonwealth Government's Green Paper process, the Committee has attached a summary of the Committee's international investigations to Canada, USA and the United Kingdom. The Committee has separated the information into two documents. The first document deals with political donations and disclosure and the second document, voter participation and informal voting.

The Committee wishes the Green Paper process every success and looks forward to receiving a copy of reports published. I will ensure you receive a copy of the Committee's reports on political donations and disclosure and voter participation and informal voting when tabled in the Victorian Parliament in May and July 2009 respectively.

Should you wish to contact the Committee further to discuss these submissions, please do so through the Committee's executive officer, Mark Roberts who will gladly assist you. Alternatively, you may wish to contact me directly, or the Committee's Deputy Chair, Michael O'Brien MP.

Further information about the Committee, including background about the Committee's current inquiries, recent activities and Member's profiles, can be found at <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/emc/>.

Yours sincerely,

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