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From: Jackie Rose [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 2 July 2015 4:03 PM
To: Electoral Matters Committee
Subject: Submission – Inquiry into the 2014 Victorian State Election by Morwell candidate J Rose

Submission – Inquiry into the 2014 Victorian State Election

[by Jacqueline Rose - an independent candidate for the seat of Morwell in the Lower House in 2014].

What definitely is needed for the next state election, and indeed, for all future elections both state and federal, and local, if applicable, is the following:

The VEC (and AEC) needs to provide the two following opportunities for candidates to express themselves:

1. Candidates' written submissions:

- a) An independent **forum** whereby each candidate can set out their platforms / policies, and allow for written responses and questions from the constituents.
- b) This should be provided in a weekly (news)paper form, which could be provided as a separate supplement to the local newspaper.
- c) Each candidate to have their own page, with a photo, and where they can include their policy / platform, and respond to any questions that are put to them via the public, who can submit vtheir questions via email to the VEC paper.
- d) The same items should also be provided on the internet, through the VEC website.
- e) The internet page would be the same as the (news)paper. It could be extended further by allowing each candidate to respond to certain questions posed by the public directly on to the internet.
- f) Each candidate would have a cut-off point of a certain amount of words, which can be spread out over a number of questions or concentrated on answering just one or two questions.
- g) As well, each candidate could provide supplementary material on a separate page (of their own page).

h) The paper should not be lengthy – some candidates may need more space than others, in which to express themselves, but there should be no more than one page allotted to each candidate.

2. Candidates’ verbal submissions – ‘Information Sessions’:

a) A weekly **venue** (outdoor if weather and season permits, or otherwise inside, in a community hall or arts centre) in the form of information sessions, where candidates can deliver their policies / platforms verbally, and respond to any questions.

b) The VEC would advertise these information sessions well in advance in the local paper, with attendees from the public being given a program stating the order of candidates, upon entry (or published in advance in the local paper).

c) Each candidate to be given, say, twenty minutes to speak and respond to questions.

d) Security to be provided by way of police presence at the entrance – necessary especially where there are contentious issues, such as any policy addressing religions.

e) Tea, coffee, cordial and biscuits can be provided at the conclusion, where candidates can mingle with the attendees and partake in further informal discussion.

f) Serving refreshments will act as an incentive for people to attend.

g) Such meetings could be held in the early evening, eg. 6pm.

h) Another incentive to attend would be for local councils to enable a charity to sell hotdogs and sausage sandwiches.

i) In the final week before the election, the meetings should be held every weekday at 6pm.

My experience

I decided to be a candidate as I felt compelled to inform the electorate of my view, that we are a Constitutional Monarchy, based on the Ten Commandments, and that the first commandment states “You shall have no other gods before me”, which meant that we were not to allow or encourage other religions to grow and flourish, and that therefore we should not allow buildings such as mosques and buddhist temples to be constructed.

I set out my thoughts clearly, in ten or so points, and sent it to the local newspaper. The following morning I was contacted (by phone) by a reporter from the local newspaper. She asked me various questions about moslems. I had been careful, in my ten points, to not differentiate between the various religions, as the last thing I wanted was to be ‘branded’ as a racist, or some of the other labels that are bandied around.

To my shock, the following afternoon, when I collected the local newspaper (it comes out twice a week), the front page screamed out the sensational headline “Threat to Australia”, and in red “Morwell candidate claims non-Christian immigrants threat to the nation”. The wording of the item was harsh in places, and the addition of a comment by a multi-cultural organisation spokesperson, Ms Sinha, who called my views ‘extreme’, saying that they did not reflect the broader community, and that ‘most of the churches would be appalled’ was judgmental and inaccurate. The item overall was designed to get the ‘broader community’ to agree.

The reporter had not asked me to go into detail of what I advocated – she merely wanted to sensationalise me. This type of control by local newspapers is dangerous, and the only way that candidates can have a fair and unbiased say is for the VEC to provide a forum.

Three letters were published in the following week from people who had read the item, and expressed their negative views about me based on that. The newspaper printed my responses to them, but not many people read the whole newspaper, or even the ‘Letters’ page. However, they do all see the front page.

Apart from the local paper providing a weekly column where candidates were asked by the local paper to submit responses to a specific question about general policies, (education, health, etc), in a paragraph or two, there were no other means provided for me to make known my views. The local paper did publish my website address, at the end of my letter of response, (Australian Restoration Party), but I noted that possibly only two or three people viewed it (in general it is viewed by about two new people a day).

If the VEC had provided a forum, the unfairness would not have occurred, and the public would have had the opportunity to read the item I had originally sent to the local paper. Likewise, the local paper, I daresay, would not have created any sensationalist items about me or my views, and I would like to think that instead, they would have been more sensible about it.

I also provide another idea below:

Involvement of children

To make the (VEC) paper more attractive, and to add some minor diversion, a few drawings can be dotted around on an occasional page, done by school children – each week there could be different drawings – about no topic in particular, or perhaps an occasional certain topic, such as “Mum and dad going to vote”, or “My house”, or “A pretty street”. Such drawings would be appropriate as they would serve as a reminder to the adults that they must look after their children, and responsible voting is an obvious necessary part of this. It would also serve to make the children interested in what is going on, and get them ‘tuned in’ to the importance of political decisions and the role of parliament at an early age. There could also be an easy crossword puzzle for the kids to do, and on another page, a small joke, and a puzzle (but no asking them to contribute political ideas etc).

I hope the above is helpful. Should you like to discuss my ideas further, I would be happy to do this.

Yours faithfully,

Jacqueline Rose