

7<sup>th</sup> July 2015

Clare Le Serve

Mr Mark Roberts  
Executive Officer  
Electoral Matters Committee  
Parliament of Victoria, Parliament House, Spring Street  
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002  
[emc@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:emc@parliament.vic.gov.au)



Dear Mr Roberts,

**Re: Inquiry into the 2014 Victorian State Election - Submission**

Thank you for your invitation to present my feedback, I won't be able to attend in person. Please find below my feedback regarding the election, from an Independent's point of view and I look forward to hearing the outcome.

The State Election in the Bass Electorate was contested by 6 candidates. 4 of us (the 3 major parties (Liberal, Labour and Greens) and myself (as an independent) were very active and fought good positive campaigns. One other was a late arrival and one was not sighted in the local campaign, seeking only to badger other candidates via email regarding attitudes in respect to a very narrow set of interests.

One party was clearly heavily resourced from the outset with big billboards appearing some many months ahead of the election date. This was also the case with advertising in local media and the fully decorated car. The race was clearly not even and raises the perennial issue of money buys elections if a candidate has substantial financial backing other than from the public funding source.

We did not receive a fair go from some of the local media, in some cases just not running our correspondence or running it and declaring name and address withheld, changing our press release and doing their own story instead. Having said that two outlets, one an online and one a print media, were very fair.

We used the campaign to expose local issues being ignored by the major parties. We got good traction on this and gained strong commitments from the then Governing party. Alas the Government changed hands electing a party that showed little interest in our area, as it was considered a safe Liberal seat. We now find ourselves back at square one with a Government, now of a different persuasion that ignores our area in respect to schools, hospitals and roads.

The system is flawed in the way electorates, such as Bass, can be ignored because they are too safe for one or the other party. We considered from the outset that being a safe seat had worked against Bass and the campaign was driven on the call to make Bass marginal to make it matter. We achieved this driving the count in the electorate to preferences, yet the problem persists when the now governing party does not regard Bass as a realistic opportunity.

There is no doubt that the election process favours the established parties. My campaign as an independent was driven and funded by local community members, through local functions and small donations. We could not assume that we would achieve the critical number of votes to receive public funding so were left to operate only within the funds we raised locally. We did exceptionally well and have since received public funding (State reimbursement) but not in a time frame that assisted the campaign.

**How else could you do it?**

- A full Postal Ballot, similar to the Local Government (Council) elections, would limit the use of the rent a crowd resourcing of major parties, whereby people are brought in to bolster local resources of the major parties. It would also allow a standard approach to delivering a candidates message to go to all eligible voters. 2 weeks of pre-polling required too much resourcing for anyone standing outside of a major party because of the funding and resourcing it was a logistic nightmare.
- Campaign publicity could be through organised official channels that regulate the direct contact with voters from the electoral roll. Do you restrict advertising? What role does it play? Campaign advertising tends not to give real information but to deliver slogans or a scare campaign, it would be no great loss and confine candidates to personal effort to get out and meet constituents.

The team at the Hastings electoral office were most helpful, professional and guided me through the process very well. We thank the guys there.

Yours sincerely



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