

Peter Campbell



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The Executive Officer
Electoral Matters Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street East Melbourne Vic 3002
Via emc@parliament.vic.gov.au

Submission to 2014 Victorian state election inquiry

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this inquiry. I was an independent candidate for the seat of Burwood in the 2014 Victorian state election.

Election Manager and Office, Burwood

The information, including email bulletins, provided to me as candidate by Ed Stewart, Election Manager at the Election Office at Unit 1 15-23 Huntingdale Road, Burwood was excellent.

Registering as a candidate

The partial online registration process was convenient and easy to use. However, as an independent candidate I had to be nominated by six residents of Burwood on the electoral roll. This requirement creates difficulty and is a disincentive for independent candidates.

I recommend that this requirement should either apply to all candidates (including those who are a member of a political party) or no candidates.

Candidate materials

As a resident of the seat of Burwood, I received over 6 glossy expensive leaflets from the incumbent Graham Watt, the incumbent Member of Parliament for Burwood. I am concerned that some of the resources and money provided by the State of Victoria for the purpose of communicating with constituents was diverted to election materials, giving him an unfair advantage over other candidates.

Early voting

The Early Voting centres provide some people with a convenient means to vote if they are unable to access a polling booth on election day. However, I noted that candidates for the three political parties also contesting the seat (Liberal, Labor and Greens) all had people rostered outside the centre handing out how to vote cards for the duration of early voting.

This practice greatly disadvantages independent candidates such as myself who do not have a large team of supporters provided by a political party.

I also note that Graham Watt MP and some of his electoral staff spent considerable time at the Burwood Early Voting centre handing out how to vote cards. I do not think it is appropriate that salaried electoral staff or MPs use their time for this during business hours as it gives incumbents considerable advantage.

Information in polling booths

There is no information about candidates available in polling booths or early voting centres other than their how to vote cards.

I recommend that information provided by candidates on a single A4 page should be available in polling booths, including early voting centres, so that voters can access more information about candidates other than their name and political party (if they are representing one).

How to vote cards

Designing and printing How to Vote cards was very expensive. Mine were of significantly lower quality than those printed and distributed by Labor, Liberal and Green candidates to keep my costs down. In addition, political party candidates had teams of people handing out the cards at every polling booth. As an independent candidate I was not able to do this, which put me at considerable disadvantage.

I recommend that the practice of handing out How to Vote cards at polling booths be banned and that instead, How to Vote cards for each candidate be available in dispensers at each polling booth. In addition, plastic coated versions of the How to Vote cards should be provided at each polling booth, fixed by a string, for voters to peruse.

This practice would also reduce the environmental impact of each candidate several thousands of their how to vote cards, which are all discarded after election day.

VEC Mobile Phone app

The mobile phone app (Android) provided by the Victorian Election Commission was very useful for finding polling booths and election results.

Mandatory distribution of preferences

I believe that the requirement for mandatory distribution of all preferences for a vote to be valid be dropped.

The distribution of preferences by voters should be optional. For example, as only one candidate will eventually be elected, specifying "1" only should be a valid vote. If there are four candidates, all the following should be valid votes:

- 1
- 1,2
- 1,2,3
- 1,2,3,4

Voters should be able to choose if their preference is distributed, rather than forcing the distribution of all preferences for all voters.

Online voting

Electronically assisted voting was available at selected early voting centres within Victoria and overseas in London using touchscreen tablets. However, this facility was only available to voters who could not vote without assistance because of vision or motor impairment or insufficient literacy skills.

I recommend that electronically assisted voting be available at all polling booths for those who request it, and that voting online via the Internet also be provided.

Conduct of other candidates and their helpers

I found that all other candidates for the seat of Burwood and their helpers were polite and respectful to me.