

Dr Katrina Rainford

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Mr. Mark Roberts
Executive Officer
Electoral Matters Committee
Parliament of Victoria
Parliament House
Spring Street
East Melbourne Vic 3002

I thank the Victorian Government through this Parliamentary Committee for giving candidates and the community members the opportunity to provide feedback on their experiences of the 2014 Victorian State Election.

I stood as an Independent for Lowan in the 2014 Victorian State Election. I was asked to do so by community members familiar with the circumstances of the Edenhope and District Memorial Hospital. The CEO of their hospital was preselected by the National Party to replace sitting member Hugh Delahunty as the candidate for Lowan.

I am a veterinary surgeon with extensive private and also government veterinary experience with 15 years as a Victorian Shire Councilor having served on the inaugural West Wimmera and currently serving as a Southern Grampians Shire Councilor.

I am aware of Codes of Practice, Ethics, Quality Assurance and Good Governance.

I had thirteen years membership of the Liberal Party of Australia until 2009 and experienced contesting the seat of Lowan on behalf of the Liberals. I have also stood as an Independent for Wannon against parachuted candidate and Liberal party employee Dan Tehan.

The issues I wish to raise with this Parliamentary review are relevant to the integrity of our representation and governance.

1. Members of Parliament allowing Party Candidates to Publicly Launch Government Funded Programs

In May 2014 Nationals Candidate Emma Keady replaced MP member for Lowon Hugh Delahunty to launch a Government and Shire funded project. The Resilient Communities PCP and Southern Grompans Gleneg Shire Project and this launch was still on the government web sites at the time of the State Election.

I attended as a Southern Grompans Shire Councilor at the request of our council representing our Shire in our Mayor's absence.

I was intrigued at the time to be placed as an MC to witness the misrepresentation of the Nationals Candidate to replace the invited Hugh Delahunty to perform the launch. The running sheet reflected this elevation from Nationals preselected candidate to representing the member for Lowon.

2. Promotion of Nationals Preselected candidate through Media Releases of Government Funded projects

Local media outlets raised the issue of the inclusion of the Nationals Candidate Emma Keady in the media releases from sitting member for Lowon Hugh Delahunty. Examples were: The Hamilton Times, The Hamilton Spectator, The West Wimmera Advocate, Radio

3. Nationals Candidate Emma Keady being formally included as a speaker at State Government funding launches by Government Agency.

Included on Public Transport Victoria's running sheet for the launch of the new Sunday Bus Service between Hamilton and Boscald to be operated by Trotters Bus Line. The member for Lowon Hugh Delahunty was also listed to speak. No other candidates. As a Southern Grompans Shire Councilor I was attending this launch along with other Councilors. The Southern Grompans Shire CEO Mr. Richard Perry saw the running sheet and insisted that I, as a declared candidate for Lowon also be allowed to speak.

To have a Government Agency Public Transport Victoria complicit in promoting a preselected party candidate is displaying political bias. What was PTV doing? And why? There were weekly launches of CFA facility upgrades during the campaign and my question is were there any other Government agencies selectively inviting and providing a platform for the incumbent Government candidate to speak?

4. Bias to bus services over V line Passenger Rail

The question then must be asked as to why the National Candidate did not support the Passenger Rail for Western Victoria feasibility funding application supported by all Western Victorian Councils. A small request for approximately \$ 60,000 dollars failed to gain support. Why? Funding for millions was being supported over this request only costing tens of thousands of dollars. Buses preferred over Trains. Why?

5. Pressure on Media?

The Hamilton Spectator was the only paper that published the questions being asked generated from the Edenhope community as to what was happening at the Edenhope Memorial & District Hospital during the election period. The National Candidate had been the CEO there for five years. Two issues were raised in the Hamilton Spectator by Journalist Rex Marchich.

The employment by the Hospital of the CEO's husband as a social worker when unqualified at the time, over and above existing employee and qualified applicants.

A concern about the removal of an ECG machine from the access of the private doctor in the town of Edenhope under the question of whether the doctor or the hospital owned it. This was all happening in the background of getting the doctor to work from the Hospital facility rather than existing private consulting rooms. During the election the local Edenhope Doctor resignation from the Edenhope Hospital as the visiting doctor. The community could not get any answers or media interest.

The question is why a candidate for election for public office was not being given the same level of public scrutiny and media scrutiny as is evident in other places.

The question is, was any pressure applied from interested parties to block public scrutiny? Would this have happened in Melbourne or Geelong, Ballarat or Bendigo?

Dr Katrina Rains!