GAB|INQ|TEC 21

Submission

Legislative Council Sessional Committee Government Administration B

Tasmanian Electoral Commission

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the enquiry into the Tasmanian Electoral Commission.

The focus of this submission is Local Government Elections, specifically the General Managers Roll (GM Roll).

I believe that the GM Roll should be abolished. In a democratic system, all eligible are entitled to one vote one value.

However, in LG elections, business owners are entitled to an extra vote or votes on behalf of their business or businesses. If they own several businesses, then other members of the company or family can be nominated to vote on behalf of each business. This would seem very undemocratic.

Why do business owners deserve a second or indeed multiple votes on the GM Roll?

Many business owners do not pay rates but get a second vote. Numerous businesses can operate from one building, and each one is entitled to an extra vote.

Sitting aldermen on the HCC who do not reside in the area can also have two votes, one for owning a business and one for owning property. An inspection of the GM Roll will reveal this.

Those who own property in other local government area are also entitled to vote in that council's election. This allows absentee landlords or property investors who may own numerous properties the ability to vote in multiple local government areas. Is this democratic? People who do not live in an area or indeed in the state or country can have multiple votes.

The second category of people currently eligible to vote on the GM Roll are those that 'own or occupy' property.

This category has no definition of what 'occupy' means and allows manipulation of the GM Roll to occur.

At the 2014 LG election, there was an orchestrated campaign to enrol hundreds of international students on the Hobart City Council GM Roll to distort the outcome of election results.

There is no qualification for eligibility to enrol on the GM roll. Students here for a short course or indeed visitors to the state have the potential to enrol and vote.

It was reported directly to me by a person involved in the enrolment strategy that about 400 students were enrolled. The same person estimated that approximately 200 returned their ballot papers.

Many enrolment forms were rejected by the HCC and during the ballot count numerous ballots were rejected by the Tasmanian Electoral Commission because enrolment signatures did not match the ballot envelop signature. The exact amount of rejected returned ballots has not been revealed.

If signatures did not match, as a different person signed the return envelope, then this amounts to fraud.

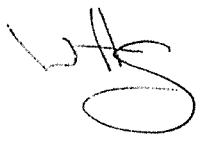
When scrutinizing the GM roll and door knocking people enrolled, I identified one house which contained seven people on the GM roll, but the house appeared abandoned and all three entry points were chained closed. In a cluster of three student houses, there were 14 international students enrolled. One PO box in Moonah was the mailing address for 15 people on the GM roll.

I believe that this harvesting of student votes, though not illegal, has compromised the integrity of the GM roll and if should not be allowed to occur again. An investigation into the stacking of the GM Roll should also be undertaken.

Stacking the GM Roll was an abuse of the intention of the GM roll and if the GM Roll is retained, then an amendment is required to prevent this type of roll stacking at future elections.

I would be more than happy to discuss the issue in person with any members of the committee.

Yours sincerely



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