

Submission to Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters

30<sup>th</sup> August 2024

Terms of Reference 'To inquire into and report upon aspects of the administration, operation and conduct of the 23 March 2024 General Election of Members of the House of Assembly and the 2024 Legislative Council elections'

I stood in the 2024 Legislative Council election for Prosser as an independent candidate. I campaigned in Prosser for six months while carrying out a part-time paid job. I believe the Upper House should be largely independent in Tasmania and this motivated me to stand.

Circumstances very much changed during the lead up to the May 4<sup>th</sup> with an unexpected Lower House election and the move of the sitting member, Jane Howlett to stand for the Lower House. In the event I won 2378 first preference votes and came third to Labor and Liberal.

While pleased with this result, I felt I was put in an unwinnable position by the resources of the two major parties and the individual effort and expenditure necessary to stand make it doubtful that I would ever try to be elected again.

Both Liberal and Labor made extensive and expensive use of corflutes and other forms of visual advertising whereas I only had a small support team who could volunteer time to do that and I lacked the money for such a big advertising campaign. Prosser is a very large rural electorate and this puts the independent individual candidate at a great disadvantage. I spent time in all parts of the electorate incurring large accommodation and travel costs. Most of this expenditure does not even have to be declared and certainly is not reimbursed.

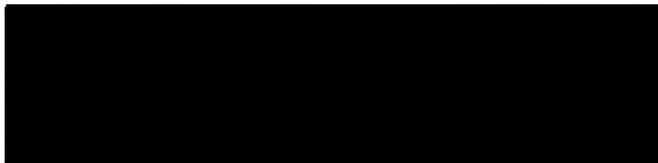
Mr Vincent who was successful had a three-week campaign where the Liberals and himself put very great resources into the campaign. Sorell were promised a new Men's Shed and club house facilities to cost \$700,000. In Swansea the golf club were asked what they needed and settled on a new shed for a few tens of thousands. To me this is blatantly unfair competition and poor conduct. Most Australians do not want American-style politics but it is possible to 'buy' a seat as far as I can see.

During the process, and perhaps mainly due to media reporting those standing for small parties or indeed anyone not standing for Liberal or Labor seemed to be seen as 'independent' whereas candidates like myself who are truly independent are in a very different position.

The information put out by the Electoral Commission did not tell electors how to vote in this election: that is that they had to number 3 candidates so I had to inform voters. They should have had an image of a hypothetical voting paper. The many elections in Australia make the system confusing and the ballot paper for the Legislative Council looked totally different from the House of Assembly paper and most people weren't aware of this.

I was astonished by the lack of understanding of even tertiary educated members of the electorate about the Tasmanian Parliamentary system and who was being elected for what and why there were two elections close together. Much more voter education is needed because if an electorate is largely uneducated we are not practicing democracy just pretending to.

There was no mentoring or other support such as follow up or feedback. The individual MPs I spoke to were off-putting about the election process. While I think some of my professional skills such as the ability to read and assimilate material quickly and my general knowledge and understanding of current affairs would be very useful as an MP I found the process of getting there prohibitively difficult.



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