

Dear Chair,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the conduct of the 2024 House of Assembly and Legislation Council elections.

## **2024 State Election**

### **Early election**

The ramifications of the Liberal Government's decision to call the state election more than a year early, for the second electoral cycle in a row, had ramifications for people's ability to participate in their democracy.

Only a week after Premier Rockliff announced he would call an election, enrolment to vote closed. We heard of some instances where enrolment to vote had closed before Tasmanians even knew an election was on. This particularly impacts young voters, who have turned 18 since the last electoral opportunity.

The early election also placed pressure on the Tasmanian Electoral Commission (TEC), who had to execute the election with little notice. We commend them for the work that they did in the limited time frame. For example, the calling of an early election limits the TEC's ability to reach voters to make them aware of the election, and has to impact people's ability to participate in the election.

Like all parties and candidates, an early election affected the Tasmanian Greens' ability to adequately prepare. This decision obviously benefits incumbents.

All the necessary preparation that needs to be done to run an effective campaign takes time – including preselecting candidates, hiring and training staff and ordering materials. When this is rushed, it reduces opportunities and places unnecessary pressure on those in the party delivering the election campaign.

This was compounded by the expansion of the House of Assembly to 35 seats. Simply put, with more candidates in an election, more time to prepare is needed.

Unlike the major parties, we don't take donations from the big end of town and run on the power of our grassroots members and supporters. When elections are called early, it provides less time

to mobilise volunteers to knock on doors, raise funds and promote our policies and vision.

### **Electoral material referencing a candidate without their permission**

There were several breaches of s. 196 of the Electoral Act 2004 during the election period, a provision which prohibits a candidate being mentioned in electoral material without their consent.

This provision limits political debate during election campaigns – a fact that makes it potentially unconstitutional. It means that presiding Government ministers, even the Premier, who have been responsible for past decisions and policies, cannot be named in electoral material.

According to the Electoral Commissioner, there were an “unprecedented” number of complaints about breaches of this section. It shows that some parties are simply ignoring this provision and getting away with it, which disadvantages those doing the right thing.

The Greens support moves to scrap s. 196 to ensure legitimate political discourse during the election period. It is our view that it should be paired with the introduction of truth in political advertising laws to protect candidates from untrue material being published about them.

### **Election day advertising breaches**

On Election Day, it became clear that Labor Party advertisements had been erected within 100 metres of polling booths across the state on Department of Education land, without their permission. Polling booths were instructed to remove these advertisements, but they had at that point been on display for a number of hours.

This was disappointing, and disadvantaged those doing the right thing, seeking permission from property owners before erecting electoral material and not campaigning within 100 metres of booths on polling day.

## **2024 Legislative Council Elections**

### **Election timing**

The calling of an early House of Assembly election, with polling day only six weeks before the Legislative Council elections, was confusing for voters, and had potential to reduce the number of people who turned out to vote.

Towards the Legislative Council election polling day, our volunteers were talking to voters who didn't realise the election was on, and they thought it had been held already because of the state election.

Kind regards,

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