

SUBMISSION TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SESSIONAL COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION B TASMANIAN ELECTORAL COMMISSION.

My submission relates to three points in order of importance.

1. The voter be given more information about candidates to assist him in casting his vote.
2. There should be a readily available code of ethics for politicians. (If it does not exist it should be determined. If it exists it should be readily available and regularly referred to.)
3. There should be readily available statement of what makes a good law.

1. Voter information.

In very simple terms there are law makers and law enforcers.

If the question is asked, "Who are most important, good law makers or good law enforcers?" The answer would be, "Both are essential for effective government." But if further pushed for an answer, the statement, "It is easier for law enforcers to enforce a good law than a bad one. Good laws guide and bind the law enforcers." would be the next answer.

If we look at the selection of law enforcers.

When a person applies to become a police officer he fills out a very comprehensive form that asks about his age, education, employment history, achievements, health (illnesses and injuries), law infringements, referees and much much more.

The selectors then choose from the applicants those to undergo a full days written testing. This will tell the selectors, his reading and writing skills, his oral and written comprehension abilities, decision making skills, beliefs, knowledge about the job and much more, including the results of a psychological profile test, marked and scored by an independent interstate expert organisation. (And it is far too good a test to fool.)

From those tested the selectors will then investigate the criminal, regulation offences and civil actions, financial situation, etc.

From the applicants who satisfy the selectors and the list has been substantially reduced, applicants are invited to undergo a full days testing at the police academy. This will include rigorous fitness testing, memory testing and decision making directly relevant to the job. They will be observed operating in a group and debating in a group (including an impromptu speech on a topic chosen for them.) The day concludes with an interview by four selectors. (You cannot fool four. And they are in possession of the psychological profile.)

The successful applicants at this stage will have a comprehensive physical examination and a home visit to determine the level of support and commitment of the family.

Then commences an 8 month, full time, live in course of training. If the trainee is successful, (and not all are) the applicant becomes a probationary constable who will be watched for a period of some months and this includes further training.

The selectors know an awful lot about the candidates before they are permanently appointed.

Compare this with what the selectors (voters) know about candidates to become law makers. I think that, in most cases, it is limited to which party they belong to. Not a lot on which to base their voting.

My point is: Government in a modern world democracy demands that voters have more information about the candidates. We don't even know the most basic thing, that is, his preferred thinking pattern ie is he left brained (a detail person) or right brained (an overall picture, creative, imaginative person.)

If disinterested voters know more about the candidates they will become more interested and put more effort into choosing how their voting will run.

The Tasmanian Police selection method produces a very good police service.

Should the committee wish to investigate this further a discussion with the commander of the Tasmanian Police Academy would be of great assistance

2. A readily available code of ethics.

One may exist but I couldn't find it. Social workers have one, most professions do. Doctors have one in the Hippocratic Oath, and its first section may be a good place to start. "First I will do no harm", and, this would refer, not only to the present but in the future. (Laws passed one hundred years ago have resulted in six Tasmanian towns having had unacceptable levels of poisons in their drinking water for many years. Lead, a nerve poison has been released by mining, into the water catchments, of a number of towns. There has been a belief that some Tasmanians have been a bit ga-ga. We now know why. Developed nations have known about the effects of lead for a couple of hundred years, at least. (see ABC programme Background Briefing, "Don't drink the Water.")

3. What is a good law?

To guide constituents, a clear and readily available statement of what the Tasmanian Government sees a good law to be should exist. (It may do so, but I couldn't find it.)

This would create a lot of discussion of the topic. A good thing for voters and politicians alike. We also know that "good law" changes over time.

I am, here, not suggesting what that list could be but an example of the highest priority might be. There is a basic however, "In a modern democracy a good law must preserve human life and health", and in a modern world that means ALL people across the world, not just the locals. (For example the Canadian law that allowed asbestos to be sold as a building material to China and India was patently a bad law under this criteria.

Conclusion.

I believe that all three of the above would undergo continued refinement but in doing so would improve our government and the state's understanding of the Tasmanian Parliament. I also believe it would go a long way to raising the status of and confidence in the Tasmanian Parliament and its members.

I imagine that the parties will play up a bit, but the Parliament and its member will gain respect.

WHAT IF we instituted these three ideas, Tasmania as a democracy could lead the nation – maybe the world and we could sell the ideas and the method used to institute them.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these ideas.

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