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Executive Officer

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Parliament House, Spring Street

East Melbourne VIC 3002

I thank you for the opportunity to make comment of social media on elections and electoral administration

My comments are based on the grounds as an Independent Candidate at the State Election and some of the difficulties that I encountered as one that was not tied to a party or coalition of Independent Candidates.

What My experiences were after the recent State election.

As an independent candidate I had a small team of supporters that could not match the candidates in obtaining broad coverage either in the social media or any other media (radio in particular). Your profile counted for a lot and independents were not as prominent as say Jane Garret on the ABC Regional Drive program.

Resources for any independent person are limited to their own commitment. The larger parties had good financial backing from their respective resources and in general terms they could gamble on getting the necessary % to get their costs covered by the VEC.

I appreciate that it is the decision of an individual to stand and take the risk. But in my opinion democracy will be the poorer if individuals are prevented from standing because of the financial pressures.

The biggest indictment I found in my involvement is the ballot paper for the Upper House, it is totally loaded against an individual, Independent Candidate, and has been corrupted by the use of the "Preference Whisperer". The hardest thing to swallow is the positioning of an independent on the ballot paper – as an individual you are placed last. You have no choice unless you join with another independent and create a group and use the preference whisperer.

There is nothing DEMOCRATIC in the current system.

The biggest question is how you make the Election process equitable for all participants- assuming the parliament and community has the will.

Suggestions

1. Create a social media page for each electorate, each person that then nominates; to stand, is given access to it and then used by them to promote their platform. The candidate takes responsibility for it and guide lines are put in place by VEC, to be followed..
2. Allow independent candidates to be part of the draw for positions on the ballot paper, for the Upper House.
3. That an initial amount is allocated for each candidate to assist them in their election and then any other money spent is reimbursed on the current arrangement of 4% votes.
4. That any candidate cannot have extra publicity by way of them doing a media program- an example last time was that was a Jane Garret was a guest speaker, on the ABC Regional drive Show, and was a candidate for the Upper House Seat of Eastern Victoria. In my opinion this was an unbalanced approach to one candidate.

I look forward to the opportunity of expanding on my concerns and issues and hope that change does occur to make the system fairer and equitable to all.

Yours Sincerely

Michael Fozard OAM, PHF

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