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4 August 2017

Chairman of the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee
Parliament of Western Australia
By Email: lacjdsc@parliament.wa.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Western Australia Party is a registered political party based in the State of Western Australia. Its primary purpose is to advocate for and represent the interests of Western Australian residents and businesses.

Please find attached our party's submission to the Inquiry into the Administration and Management of the 2017 WA State General Election.

In our submission we detail our views regarding the conduct of future elections to improve voter turnout, formality and reduce cost of elections.

Please feel free to call or email me if you have any queries.

Yours Sincerely,

Julie Matheson, BA, DipFP, CFP®, LRS®
Party Convenor



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**Submission to the Inquiry into the Administration and Management of the 2017 WA
State General Election**

AUGUST 2017

Western Australia is Australia's largest state in terms of land area (2.5M square km or 33% of Australia's land mass) and 11% of Australia's population. To conduct an election over such a large area with many small communities and farms using the current polling methods is costly and difficult to administer.

We believe the following should be considered to improve voter turnout, formality and reduce the cost of elections:

1. Equal per candidate funding per electorate or region.

We believe the current public funding model is unfair to smaller parties and in fact is wasteful of WAEC funds (WA Electoral Commission, 2016). We believe that a lower amount of electoral funding be made available to each party to cover the cost of a single information brief for each candidate included with the ballot forms is the simplest and fairest way to publically fund elections. This can be achieved in a 250 word information brief on each candidate (Matheson, 2015). Refer to local government elections [ballot paper materials](#)

2. Postal voting only

We believe in Postal voting as is already done in local government elections. This will remove the need to employ polling place staff, hire of school, church or other facilities, and wasteful amounts of paper on party how to vote cards being produced and disposed of. Perhaps online voting could be considered in the future. However, polling officers should be required to travel across the state to remote areas to conduct pre-polling.

3. Single publicly funding campaign mail out.

As per 1. and 2., we believe the extent of public funding of WA State Election campaigns should be limited to a 250 word information brief on each candidate mailed out with ballot papers.

4. Simplify voting to reduce informal voting.

We believe in simpler voting methods to improve formality. One suggestion is a single ballot paper for each electorate for both Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council positions.

5. Allow blank ballot forms to be lodged if there are no suitable candidates.

We believe in freedom of choice to vote. If an elector believes there is no suitable candidate in their electorate, they should be allowed to submit a blank ballot paper, which no longer be called "informal", instead "No candidate voted for". Informal votes should only be counted where the same preference number has been entered twice or more.



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In summary

The current WA Electoral Funding Reimbursement rules favour large parties, big donors and large teams of volunteers. Election "noise" created by large parties drowns out the messages of new parties who struggle to get media air time.

The Australian Broadcasting Commission has rules that permit only the current government and the opposition equal airtime, and other parties must share the remainder based on their previous election results. These rules make it difficult for new parties to promote their campaign messages on a fair and level playing field.

Many voters find out about a key election message after an election closes and the election noise from large parties stops. We therefore seek the support of this enquiry to reduce the costs of elections for parties and the tax payer by adopting postal voting and a 250 word information brief on each candidate.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA PARTY

Bibliography

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WA Electoral Commission. (2016). *Funding and Disclosure: Summary June 1996 to 2016*. Retrieved July 2017, from Western Australia Electoral Commission:
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