



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY
Mr Jeremy Hanson MLA (Chair), Dr Marisa Paterson (Deputy Chair), Ms Jo Clay MLA

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into 2020 ACT Election and the Electoral Act

Submission Number: 028

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From: [Bill Stefaniak](#)
To: [LA Committee - JCS](#)
Subject: Re: Election inquiry
Date: Saturday, 15 May 2021 4:31:30 PM

Dear Brianna,

I now make a brief submission on behalf of the Belco party to your enquiry.

I am also happy to attend your hearings if you wish to answer any questions the committee may want to ask me.

SUBMISSION BY THE BELCO PARTY (ACT)

Having been involved in various ACT elections since the first one in 1989, Might I say that this one was conducted by all participants (at least at Ginninderra Polling booths) with good grace and largely with good humour.(as indeed have most of them)

The candidates and their assistants seemed to get on well on the whole.

It was unfortunate that COVID truncated the campaign to an extent and there were not nearly as many public meetings as I would have liked.

I thought the pre poll period was too drawn out and if a similar format is adopted in future I might suggest a pre poll at only one central location in each electorate, perhaps going to 3 for the last week. (although I don't think that is necessary and one should be sufficient)

I believe, having manned polling booths at all selections except 1998 -(no one did which was great- I was at the Polish Club having a Zywiec beer at 3pm as there was nothing more I could do as a candidate)- then from 2001 onwards when everyone worked out a way to do it within the new 100 metre rule, that you either keep the 100 metre rule or ban it all together .(like 1998 was) .

The Belco party is strongly against bringing back the 6 metre rule (1989 , 1922, 1995) . Tasmania doesn't have it and as a small party we can't man all the booths. I'm sure most independents would agree.

There is considerable merit in exploring not allowing how to vote cards to be handed out but instead having them displayed on a wall at each polling booth. This would largely negate the need to have hundreds of supporters 100 plus metres outside polling booths across the territory.and would be fair for all parties and independents who all could have a how to vote card on the wall of each booth. instead .

How to vote cards could be handed out in door knocking and at shopping centres along with other election material and of course letter boxed and forming part of ads in local papers and on radio and TV.. but not at or near polling booths .

Whilst I hate corflutes as a whole it is one of the few effective ways candidates can signal

who they are and what they look like and gives minor parties and independents a chance to advertise themselves. not to mention lesser known candidates from the 3 major parties.

Despite the spate of rivals both from other parties and internal party rivals knocking over and/or stealing, defacing their supposed enemy's corflute. (and whilst it happens a fair bit its not of endemic proportions) and the general clutter on nature strips etc it remains a fair and effective way for a candidate communicating with his/her electorate .

I thank the electoral commission for allowing candidates to write a blurb that then appears on the electoral offices website .

it is crucially important for especially the minor parties and independents ,

I know its old fashioned but I believe the electoral commission could do two publicly funded mail outs to all electors , one about 4 weeks out and then repeat the exercise 2 weeks out letting every household know who was standing and briefly a few words from each candidate about what they stand for

Most electors won't read the mail out in full or some not at all, but it at least helps those candidates who are not as well known as the sitting MLAs. The Cost would not be great and at any rate , as the ACTs \$ \$8. 61 refund per vote (or whatever it is exactly) is the most generous in the country , that could be reduced so as to pay for the costs of the mail out or indeed any other general publication on behalf of all candidates.

Whilst no doubt beyond the remit of this enquiry , the local media can do a lot more and I would suggest the ABC and the Canberra Times could devote (in the ABC's case) a one hour slot once every friday at 5pm for the 10 weeks leading up to the election where any all non sitting candidates are given a couple of minutes to have a say.

Similarly, the Canberra Times should devote a page in the paper once a week for a similar time frame allowing all candidates to do the same thing..As there are 5 electorates this gives all these candidates 2 goes. if the period was 15 weeks that would be 3 goes

Not only would this make the election more interesting , but it would at least assist in letting interested voters know something about all the people standing..

Finally my congratulations to all candidates elected., especially the new ones .

Most of what the Assembly does is basic management of the Territory and is not particularly ideological. Assisting your constituents with their individual problems also should be your bread and butter and it's your duty to do so to the best of your ability regardless of whether they voted for you or not.

Legends of the past , when Canberra was much smaller and most people knew each other or at least of each other , like the late Jimmy Fraser kept getting elected again and again because he did just that . That is also why in Hare Clarke you often see voters voting say 1 for a labor member and 2 for a liberal member- or vice versa - because they are good local members first and foremost. This probably even occurs with green members!!!!

Good luck to you all, and if you wish to ask me any questions I can appear before your committee if you so wish.

regards,

Bill Stefaniak
Convenor Belco Party and former MLA .

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