

STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY

BUILDING BACK GREENER & FAIRER: A GREEN NEW DEAL FOR LUTRUWITA/TASMANIA

BACKGROUND

In a healthy democracy, citizens have a voice and a vote as active participants in society. In democratic societies, all individuals and groups, regardless of race, religion, gender, identity, wealth or sexual orientation have a role in shaping law and policy.

In lutruwita/Tasmania as in many democratic societies, constant vigilance is needed to ensure the foundations of our democracy are strong. This requires a robust, strategic response.

The proportion of Tasmanians enrolled to vote has been increasing since 2010, from 95.1% in 2010 to 96.6% in 2020. Despite this, the number of voters turning up to vote at elections is declining.

A 2018 assessment of apathy in Australian politics found 20% of voters are generally uninterested, 25% aren't interested in election campaigns, and 33% don't care who wins elections.

Tasmania's electoral finance laws are the weakest in the country. The State also has ineffectual transparency and accountability laws, which affects people's confidence in the decisions taken by government. There is a comparatively small number of members in the House of Assembly. Fixing the flaws in our political system is not the only answer to improving civic engagement, but it's a strong place to start.

Electoral Finance

Cap political donations

A cap of \$3,000, on aggregate political donations from the same source, per electoral term, will be introduced.

Limiting donations to natural persons

Political donations will only be allowed from 'natural persons' who are citizens or permanent residents.

Real-time disclosure of political donations

Tasmania will enact a real-time disclosure laws, requiring donation disclosures 7 business days after receipt, and within 24 hours during the 7 days before election polling day.

Caps on electoral expenditure

Tasmania will enact the electoral expenditure rules providing a cap of \$81,000 for individual candidates and \$810,000 indexed by \$1,000 and \$10,000 respectively per year.

Public Funding of Elections

A public funding scheme for House of Assembly elections will be introduced, providing a reimbursement at the Australian rate (currently \$2.83 per first preference vote). There will be no threshold for reimbursement eligibility.

Third Parties and Enforcement

Third party regulations, offences, and consequential regulations will be developed to remove loopholes and maximise the effect of electoral finance regulations.

House of Assembly

House of Assembly – Restoration of Seats and Ministry

The House of Assembly will be restored to 35 seats, and the maximum number of ministers will be increased from 9 to 10.

Truth in Political Advertising

Repeal of Ban on Referring to Candidates by Name

Section 196 of the Electoral Act 2004, which prohibits referring to a candidate by name without their written consent, will be repealed. This provision will be replaced by a ban on distributing advertisements purporting to be on behalf of a candidate without the permission of that person.

Truth in Political Advertising Laws

Tasmania will develop 'truth in political advertising' laws. These laws will be modelled on South Australian legislation, but will only require the Commissioner to be satisfied that the advertisement is inaccurate and misleading to a material extent. Appeal rights will be available if a statement correction is directed to be issued, guidelines will be developed and published by the Commissioner, and legislated timeframes will be established for determinations.

Political Advertising Commissioner

A statutory Political Advertising Commissioner will be established. An assessment of the appropriate officer to be the Commissioner will be undertaken – with a specific assessment of the Tasmanian Electoral Commission and the Office of the Ombudsman. The matter of the resourcing required will also be canvassed.

Transparency and Accountability

New Information Accessibility and Transparency Laws

The *Right to Information Act 2009* will be repealed and replaced with an *Information Accessibility and Transparency Act*. This will govern general information accessibility and transparency standards as well as provide for an information disclosure framework.

Transparency and Information Commissioner

The *Information Accessibility and Transparency Act* will establish a Transparency and Information Commissioner, with the Ombudsman appointed as Commissioner. The Commission will measure and report on compliance with the Act, make general recommendations about the state of transparency and accessibility of information, and be empowered to issue formal performance improvement notices to agencies.

NGO Transparency

The Information Accessibility and Transparency Act will require NGOs that have contracts for government service delivery to provide a minimum amount of information reporting, and be subject to the information disclosure framework.

Commercial Information

The Information Accessibility and Transparency Act will require the disclosure of details of contracts, leases and licences, including location, value, entities and minimum details of terms and conditions. The act will also provide detailed definitions relating to commercial in confidence provisions.

Misconduct in Public Office

An offence of Misconduct in Public Office will be established.

The Tasmanian Greens acknowledge and pay respect to the palawa/pakana people as the original owners and ongoing custodians of lutruwita/Tasmania. We are committed to Truth, Treaty, Justice, and the return of lands.

GREEN NEW DEAL

