

Speech

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ELECTORAL (PUBLICATION OF ELECTORAL MATERIAL) AMENDMENT BILL

Mr BROCK (Frome) (12:47): I, along with other members in this house, would like the opportunity to speak on the Electoral (Publication of Electoral Material) Amendment Bill. First up, I will make it quite clear that I believe in honesty, being upfront and giving all my opponents a fair go. I believe that everybody who puts their name up for an election, whether it is in state, federal or local government, should be honest and everything should be equal. They put themselves up to serve their electorate in whatever form, and the people of their communities will make their decision based on the information that is given to the media of that particular region and also based on what is in the state media. I have some grave concerns—and it did not happen in my electorate of Frome—and I was very surprised and disappointed when I saw some of the misleading information in other electorates of the state leading up to the previous state election.

As do other members here—and I will mention the member for Stuart in particular—I believe in allowing certain things, for example, what happens with the corflutes. Whilst time allowed us to put up those corflutes, I was on the road with three other groups, and we split my electorate into different regions. Basically, we were allowed to go in straight after midnight, but we got on the road at 7am. We went to some of my small communities in the electorate of Frome. In terms of my staff and volunteers, I am very appreciative of the 125 people who gave me a hand on the day.

We had to place my corflutes basically on every pole that I could grab in the small communities leading into that region. I do not think that is the best way to do it. If you have five candidates for an election, each one is entitled (if they are legally entitled) to put up that promotional material, ensuring that we all share the small amount of space and that we do not pollute the small communities. In the electorate of Frome everybody wore T-shirts, but the message on them was very clear. They very clearly showed the candidate's name and whether they were Independent, Country, Labor, Family First, or whatever they were; they were very clear messages.

So, when people come to the polling booth on the day, it is very confronting because, if five candidates are standing, and five people are trying to get there first to give out the how-to-vote cards, it is terrifying for some people, and some are so concerned or disappointed that they really fear going to a polling booth for fear of being intimidated. I honestly have to say that I pay tribute to every candidate in my electorate, because it was very fair. It was very clean and clear, with no misinterpretation to the electors. The only thing I would say is that, if you are handing out how-to-vote cards, the card should state the name of the candidate whose No. 1 vote is being asked for.

We had a how-to-vote card for the leader of one of the major parties, and I believe that is very misleading, as small communities are going to vote for the person who they think should represent them for the next four years. We do not personally pick the Premier of the state or the Prime Minister of our country. The parties pick those, and that is the democratic system. Similarly, the how-to-vote cards should be for the candidate themselves, not for the leader of the political party. This was very confusing and daunting to some of the older people, and to some of the younger people, who really do not understand the system.

I will now touch on the postal voting cards that went out. Both major parties send these out to as many as they can in their electorates, and it is very confusing for the voters out there. People came to me saying, 'Why haven't I got one of your postal vote cards?' I explained that I did not believe in doing that and that, if they wanted an application for a postal vote, they should apply to the Electoral Commissioner. However, it is very confusing because people see that card and ask why they need to send that application (they presume it is an actual voting card) back to the candidate of that electorate. Going forward, this is

something that I believe we really should be putting a stop to, and I would love the committee to be able to look at that as one of those items.

On the occasion of the last election, one of the major parties (I am not going to name the party as they know who they are) sent how-to-vote applications to aged-care facilities in the electorate. I am a novice at this, as I have only been here for 14 to 16 months, but even I know that the Electoral Commissioner has people who go to hospitals and aged-care facilities. The major parties should not send application cards or applications for postal votes to aged-care facilities.

It becomes very confusing because what happens is, as you are probably aware, Madam Deputy Speaker, they get these cards, they think it is the only card they have to fill out and they send it back. When the Electoral Commissioner comes around on polling day with their staff, the professionals from the Electoral Commission, they are very confused because they then vote again, which puts more pressure on the Electoral Commissioner. If the polling in that particular electorate is very close, it can put the result in doubt or make it a long time before a decision is made. That is something that we really need to do going forward, and I hope that this committee will look at that.

The member for Stuart paid tribute to his opponents. I will do that with mine. I will compare this general election with the by-election. In February last year, the by-election was entirely different. It was very clear, very fair and we all got on very well. We all knew that we would put our hands up and the people would make the choice. I am grateful that the people of Frome gave me the opportunity to represent them for the next four years and I will be working with all the parties here to ensure that we go forward.

We have a couple of minutes remaining. One of the things is that, in the community, there is a fair bit of cynicism towards major parties and politics. I think we need to be very clear and upfront, because leading up to an election we all get bombarded with promises and lots of statements and commitments, and it is very confusing. If we had to pay for all the commitments made during the election campaign, I think we would be up to about \$1.5 billion, which is not going to help the budget going forward.

The last thing we should do is create more confusion for the electors on polling day. Electors should be able to come to a polling booth and, when they are approached, it should be in a friendly manner. There should be very clear—not misleading—information on people's T-shirts and/or the how-to-vote cards. The member for Stuart has just handed me a note; I agree with the member for Stuart. We get on very well, we have adjoining electorates and we will be working very closely together on various issues, as I will be with the member for Schubert and the member for Goyder, among others. I will finish by referring to the member for Stuart's note: 'The way you campaign indicates the way you will operate as a member if you are successful.' I thank the member for Stuart for that: it is a very good saying and I certainly endorse it. I rest my case.