



---

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters

**Combined Report on the Inquiries into the  
Conduct of the 2024 and 2025 House of Assembly  
General Elections, and 2024 and 2025 Legislative  
Council Elections**

---

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Legislative Council

Hon. Meg Webb (Chair)  
Hon. Mike Gaffney  
Hon. Cassy O'Connor  
Hon. Bec Thomas

House of Assembly

Mr Vica Bayley (Deputy Chair)  
Ms Ella Haddad  
Ms Kristie Johnston  
Mr Michael Ferguson



# CONTENTS

|                                                                      |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Contents .....                                                       | 1  |
| Chair’s Foreword.....                                                | 5  |
| Findings .....                                                       | 7  |
| Recommendations.....                                                 | 13 |
| 1 Appointment, Terms of Reference and Conduct of the Inquiries ..... | 15 |
| Appointment and Terms of Reference.....                              | 15 |
| Conduct of the 2024 Inquiry.....                                     | 16 |
| Conduct of the 2025 Inquiry .....                                    | 16 |
| Structure of this Report .....                                       | 16 |
| 2 Context of the 2024 Elections .....                                | 17 |
| 2024 House of Assembly General Election .....                        | 17 |
| 2024 Legislative Council Periodic Elections .....                    | 19 |
| 3 Context of the 2025 Elections .....                                | 21 |
| 2025 House of Assembly General Election .....                        | 21 |
| 2025 Legislative Council Periodic Elections .....                    | 23 |
| 4 Voting in Tasmania.....                                            | 25 |
| How People Voted .....                                               | 25 |
| Polling Day .....                                                    | 25 |
| Finding .....                                                        | 26 |
| Accessibility .....                                                  | 26 |
| Telephone Voting .....                                               | 27 |
| Finding .....                                                        | 28 |
| Vision-Impaired Voting System (VI-Vote) .....                        | 28 |
| Findings.....                                                        | 30 |
| Recommendation.....                                                  | 30 |
| Online Voting .....                                                  | 30 |
| Finding .....                                                        | 30 |
| Quiet Hours.....                                                     | 31 |
| Translation Services .....                                           | 31 |

|   |                                                              |    |
|---|--------------------------------------------------------------|----|
|   | Finding .....                                                | 32 |
|   | Recommendation.....                                          | 32 |
|   | Postal Voting .....                                          | 32 |
|   | Findings.....                                                | 34 |
|   | Electronic Voting and Counting of Votes.....                 | 34 |
|   | Finding .....                                                | 35 |
|   | Recommendation.....                                          | 35 |
|   | Voting in Prison .....                                       | 36 |
|   | Finding .....                                                | 37 |
|   | Recommendation.....                                          | 37 |
|   | Pre Polling .....                                            | 37 |
|   | Findings.....                                                | 42 |
|   | Recommendation.....                                          | 42 |
|   | Counting of Votes by the Tasmanian Electoral Commission..... | 42 |
|   | 2024 General Election Ballot Paper Stock Issues.....         | 42 |
|   | Electronic Entry of Ballot Paper Data.....                   | 43 |
|   | Finding .....                                                | 44 |
|   | Informal Voting .....                                        | 44 |
|   | Findings.....                                                | 47 |
|   | Recommendations .....                                        | 48 |
|   | Saving Provisions.....                                       | 48 |
|   | Findings.....                                                | 52 |
|   | Recommendation.....                                          | 52 |
|   | Voter Turnout .....                                          | 52 |
| 5 | Tasmanians and Elections .....                               | 55 |
|   | The Voting Public .....                                      | 55 |
|   | Education .....                                              | 55 |
|   | Findings.....                                                | 56 |
|   | Recommendations .....                                        | 56 |
|   | Trust and Integrity in Democracy .....                       | 56 |
|   | Findings.....                                                | 59 |
|   | Recommendation.....                                          | 59 |

|   |                                                                      |     |
|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
|   | Candidates.....                                                      | 60  |
|   | Nomination of Candidates.....                                        | 60  |
|   | Findings.....                                                        | 62  |
|   | Recommendations.....                                                 | 62  |
|   | Nominating as a Tasmanian State Servant.....                         | 63  |
| 6 | Structure and conduct of Elections .....                             | 65  |
|   | Fixed Term Elections.....                                            | 65  |
|   | Findings.....                                                        | 75  |
|   | Recommendation.....                                                  | 75  |
|   | The Hare-Clark Electoral System .....                                | 76  |
| 7 | <i>Electoral Act 2004</i> .....                                      | 79  |
|   | Section 196 (1).....                                                 | 79  |
|   | Findings.....                                                        | 84  |
|   | Truth in Political Advertising.....                                  | 84  |
|   | Findings.....                                                        | 86  |
| 8 | <i>Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023</i> .....               | 88  |
|   | Establishment of the Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023 ..... | 88  |
|   | Commencement of the Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023        |     |
|   | During the 2025 General Election .....                               | 90  |
|   | Findings.....                                                        | 93  |
|   | Disclosure of Political Donations.....                               | 94  |
|   | Assembly Election Campaign Returns and the Election Campaigns Fund   |     |
|   | .....                                                                | 95  |
|   | Findings.....                                                        | 99  |
|   | Recommendation.....                                                  | 99  |
|   | Administration Fund .....                                            | 100 |
|   | Expenditure Limits .....                                             | 100 |
|   | Finding .....                                                        | 102 |
|   | Recommendation.....                                                  | 102 |
|   | Registration of Official Agents .....                                | 102 |
|   | Finding .....                                                        | 102 |
|   | Recommendation.....                                                  | 103 |

|                                                                              |     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Dissenting Statement of Mr Michael Ferguson MP, Liberal Member for Bass..... | 104 |
| Appendix A – List of Submissions .....                                       | 106 |
| Appendix B – Public Hearing Witnessess .....                                 | 107 |
| Appendix C – Minutes.....                                                    | 109 |
| Appendix D – Transcripts of Evidence .....                                   | 138 |

## CHAIR'S FOREWORD

On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, I am pleased to present the Committee's first report, the combined Report on the Inquiry into the Conduct of the 2024 and 2025 House of Assembly General Elections and 2024 and 2025 Legislative Council Elections.

Formed in 2024, the Committee's first task was to undertake a review of the 2024 Assembly General Election and Legislative Council periodic election. However, a subsequent very early Assembly General election in July 2025 interrupted the progress of the 2024 review and, once reconstituted, the Committee commenced the additional task of reviewing the 2025 Assembly and Legislative Council elections.

Given the proximity of the 2024 and 2025 elections, and common themes arising in evidence to each set of elections, the Committee resolved to prepare this combined report on both inquiries.

The health and strength of our democracy relies on elections being conducted fairly, securely and accurately, and the maintenance of public confidence in their conduct.

The successful delivery of an election is a major undertaking, and I commend the Tasmanian Electoral Commissioner, Mr Andrew Hawkey and his staff for their professionalism in delivering the House of Assembly General Elections and Legislative Council Periodic Elections in 2024 and 2025.

While all eligible Tasmanians are enfranchised – they have the right to vote – a core indicator of the health of a democracy is assessing the degree to which this right may be exercised accessibly, equally, and securely. Also, key to a successful democracy is the fair and unencumbered participation of candidates in elections.

This Inquiry identified a range of areas of our electoral system which could be improved to better meet the needs of participants, better meet community expectations and deliver public confidence, including:

- The timing of Tasmanian Assembly General elections and challenges posed by a lack of fixed terms.
- The accessibility of our elections, including for disabled Tasmanians and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and the opportunity to improve access to voting for incarcerated Tasmanians.
- The increasing proportion of people voting early, primarily during the lengthy pre-polling period set for recent Tasmanian elections, resulting in a large proportion of people voting without receiving all information which may arise during a campaign.
- Issues relating to section 196 of the *Electoral Act 2004*, which are being examined in more detail by the Committee in a separate inquiry on the *Electoral Amendment Bill 2025* to amend section 196. In addition, that Bill inquiry will examine the proposal to introduce truth in political advertising laws in Tasmania.

Of particular note, during the 2025 Assembly General Election campaign, aspects of the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023* came into effect, introducing donation and election expenditure disclosure requirements for the first time in Tasmania. Significant practical implementation challenges were experienced by the Tasmanian Electoral Commission (TEC) and election participants. The Committee recommends the TEC, as a priority, undertake an operational review of this first application of the new requirements under the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023*.

In addition, the Committee has identified other important issues that require further consideration, investigation or monitoring, including:

- The suitability and effectiveness of technological solutions to provide accessibility for Tasmanian voters.
- Rates of informal voting, and the scope and effectiveness of savings provisions in the *Electoral Act 2004*.
- Election campaign expenditure for House of Assembly General Elections and the potential benefit of adopting caps to expenditure.

There are 17 recommendations in this report, some addressed to the Government and some to the Tasmanian Electoral Commission. Implementation of these recommendations will be important for maintaining and improving the health and strength of Tasmania's electoral system and democracy. I commend this report to members of Parliament, the Tasmanian Electoral Commission and the community for consideration.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank all those who took the time to make submissions or provide evidence to the inquiry and for sharing their invaluable experience and knowledge at our hearings.

In conclusion, I extend my thanks to Committee members for their careful work in finalising this Report – Hon Mike Gaffney MLC, Hon Cassy O'Connor MLC, Hon Bec Thomas MLC, Vica Bayley MP (Deputy Chair), Michael Ferguson MP, Ella Haddad MP, and Kristie Johnston MP. I also thank former Committee members Simon Wood and Rebecca White for their work with the Committee until March 2025.

Finally, the Committee takes this opportunity to provide its sincere thanks and acknowledgement of the work of Committee Secretary Ms Fiona Murphy and the support of Ms Mary de Groot, Assistant Committee Secretary.



**Hon. Meg Webb MLC**

**CHAIR**

**23 October 2026**

# FINDINGS

## The Committee finds:

1. Uncertainty of the dates of Tasmanian General elections impacts operational arrangements for the Tasmanian Electoral Commission, including staffing and booking of polling locations.
2. The expansion of telephone assisted voting for the 2025 House of Assembly General Election improved accessibility for those with a print disability and increased overall enfranchisement for Tasmanian voters.
3. Voters experienced difficulties using the VI-Vote system during the 2024 General Election.
4. During the 2024 General Election, technology-assisted voting options for people with vision impairment did not operate effectively for all users.
5. Online voting may provide an opportunity to further increase voter enfranchisement and warrants further consideration for Tasmania.
6. Translated information guides for Tasmanians who speak languages other than English, assist to increase voter understanding and enfranchisement.
7. Postal voting remains an important option for casting a ballot and appears to be increasingly utilised by Tasmanian voters.
8. The 10-day period in the *Electoral Act 2004* within which postal votes can be received by the Tasmanian Electoral Commission allows for delivery of ballots by Australia Post. This is currently sufficient to accommodate limitations to Australia Post services but may not be the case in future.
9. Any further adoption of electronic voting or electronic counting of votes in Tasmania, would require thorough investigation.
10. There are barriers to eligible incarcerated Tasmanians exercising their right to vote in elections.
11. An increasing and significant number of Tasmanians vote early at pre-polling places.
12. Extended pre-polling periods mean early voters cast their ballots before having access to all available information on candidates and parties contesting an election.

13. Extended pre-polling periods reduce the opportunity for candidates to connect with voters and provide information on their candidacy and their election platforms.
14. The pre-polling period for Tasmanian elections is not legislated but determined by the Tasmanian Electoral Commission.
15. The pre-polling period of 19 days in 2024 and 2025 Tasmanian elections is the longest of any Australian jurisdiction, state or Federal.
16. All jurisdictions, other than Tasmania, Queensland and the Northern Territory, have legislated pre-polling periods ranging from 7 to 12 days.
17. The introduction of electronic entry of ballots for future General Elections may make the counting process faster and more accurate.
18. There was a notable increase in informal voting at the 2024 General Election, although the reasons for this are unknown.
19. Following the increase in informal voting in the 2024 General Election, it was noted that the rate of informal voting dropped in the 2025 General Election.
20. The Tasmanian Electoral Commission analysis determined the change in formality requirements in the 2024 General Election did not have a significant impact on the total number of informal votes.
21. Despite notable rates of informal voting in the 2024 General Election, expert opinion is that the informality rate had no material impact on the outcome for each seat.
22. The Tasmanian Electoral Commission established an education program to engage voters on the changed formality requirements for both the 2024 and 2025 General Elections.
23. To preserve integrity and public confidence in the counting of votes, it is important that Returning Officers and Tasmanian Electoral Commission staff possess and maintain continued preparedness, including training in identifying informal votes.
24. The Tasmanian Electoral Commission regards the formality requirement for a ballot paper to have a vote of '1 to 7,' to be an adequate savings provision.
25. The Australian Capital Territory, which uses a Hare-Clark voting system, has more permissive savings provisions than Tasmania.

26. There is some support for amendment of the *Electoral Act 2004* to include savings provisions, to prevent votes from being classified as informal when the intention of the vote is clear.
27. There is an opportunity to improve the level of civics education in the Tasmanian community.
28. Civics education, including that provided in schools and by the Parliament of Tasmania Education Office, is key to improving public understanding of the Tasmanian electoral system and Parliament.
29. Promises made by candidates and parties for specific expenditure of public money prior to and during an election period may influence voter intentions in the electorate.
30. The Integrity Commission asserts election promises for the specific expenditure of public money in local communities, depending on the processes used in selecting and delivering the funding, may be perceived as indirect electoral bribery.
31. To nominate as a candidate in a House of Assembly General Election or Legislative Council election, an individual must pay a \$400 deposit in cash or cheque form only. This amount was set in 2004.
32. There are differing views on the number of elector signatures which should be required for a candidate to nominate in a House of Assembly General Election or Legislative Council election.
33. Candidates in a House of Assembly General Election and Legislative Council elections are not required to provide a publicly available email address or phone number.
34. Tasmania is the only Australian jurisdiction, other than the Commonwealth, that does not have fixed parliamentary terms.
35. In the absence of fixed terms, an early election may be called at a time that is advantageous to the government of the day.
36. All Australian states, including those with fixed term arrangements, reserve the Governor's power to dissolve Parliament and issue the writs for an early election.
37. Early elections have financial, legislative, administrative and social impacts for Tasmania, and present logistical challenges for candidates and the Tasmanian Electoral Commission.

38. Legislated fixed term elections for Tasmania would allow more certainty in electoral cycles.
39. There is broad agreement the interpretation and application of section 196 of the *Electoral Act 2004* is problematic and a review is necessary.
40. The Committee is currently undertaking an inquiry into the Electoral Amendment Bill 2025 following its referral from the House of Assembly.
41. There is a level of community concern about political misinformation and disinformation during election periods, the impact on participants, and influence on democratic outcomes.
42. The Committee is currently undertaking an inquiry following the referral of the Electoral Amendment Bill 2025 from the House of Assembly, including on additional proposed amendments on truth in political advertising.
43. The scheduled commencement of the final provisions of the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023* coincided with an unexpected early House of Assembly General Election in 2025.
44. Commencement of the final provisions of the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023*, during the 2025 House of Assembly General Election campaign, caused implementation challenges for the Tasmanian Electoral Commission and participants.
45. Online resources provided by the Tasmanian Electoral Commission for the 2025 House of Assembly General Election gave some guidance to assist participants in meeting the requirements of the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023*, however challenges were reported regarding preparation, clarity and compliance.
46. The Tasmanian Electoral Commission's interpretation of the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023* created impractical and onerous reporting obligations for participants by requiring advertising material, including multiple versions of the same or similar material, to be provided with Assembly Election Campaign Returns.
47. Any failure to address impractical and onerous reporting obligations required by the Tasmanian Electoral Commission in relation to the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023* would lead to future resourcing demands for the organisation.

48. Political parties received their preliminary payments for Election Campaigns Fund claims within the prescribed 60 days; however remaining claim amounts were paid after substantial delays. These delays impacted on the timely payment of supplier invoices by political parties.
49. Unlike political parties, independent candidates were not provided with preliminary payments under the Election Campaigns Fund during the 2025 House of Assembly General Election and experienced payment delays in excess of 60 days.
50. While expenditure of public funds requires appropriate oversight, the Tasmanian Electoral Commission's interpretation of the electoral expenditure reporting requirements under the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023* does not reasonably accommodate or reflect contemporary election campaign practices.
51. There is some support for the inclusion of election campaign expenditure limits in the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023* for House of Assembly General Elections.
52. Differing interpretations of Official Agents exist within the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023*, which currently prescribes in one instance that Official Agents must be registered in Tasmania. This interpretation is inconsistent with the rest of the Act and the function of Official Agents.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Committee recommends the Tasmanian Electoral Commission, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, review the suitability and effectiveness of the VI-Vote system for use in Tasmanian elections.
2. The Committee recommends the Tasmanian Electoral Commission expand the range of translated information guides for Tasmanian elections to include further languages.
3. The Committee recommends the Tasmanian Electoral Commission establish a mechanism to consistently engage with relevant stakeholders in relation to voting accessibility, including Tasmanians with a disability, culturally and linguistically diverse Tasmanians, and other people who experience barriers to voting.
4. The Committee recommends, in line with the recommendations from the Custodial Inspector report on voting in prisons, the Tasmanian Electoral Commission establish a memorandum of understanding with the Tasmania Prison Service, including to:
  - a. Raise awareness about voting and civic engagement in prisons;
  - b. Increase enrolment rates of eligible prisoners; and
  - c. Explore options for offering telephone voting in prisons in addition to in-person and postal voting.
5. The Committee recommends the Government amend the *Electoral Act 2004* to prescribe a short pre-polling period in Tasmania.
6. The Committee recommends the Tasmanian Electoral Commission review and continue the community education program on how to cast a formal vote.
7. The Committee recommends the Tasmanian Electoral Commission ensure adequate training for Returning Officers and Tasmanian Electoral Commission staff in the identification of informal votes.
8. The Committee recommends the Government review savings provisions in the *Electoral Act 2004* and examine the merit of expanding these provisions.
9. The Committee recommends the Government improve and expand civics education in Tasmania.
10. The Committee recommends the Tasmanian Electoral Commission expand community education programs on the Tasmanian electoral system, including outside of election periods.

11. The Committee recommends the Government implement the following substantive Integrity Commission recommendations on funding promises made during election periods:
  - a. Before the next House of Assembly election, review the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (Cth) with a view to introducing legislation into Tasmania incorporating the sentiment of section 71 of that Act;
  - b. Before the next House of Assembly election, introduce mandatory grant rules modelled on the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines; and
  - c. Adopt the remainder of the recommendations made in 2011 by the Tasmanian Auditor-General about the Premier's Sundry Grants program (now known as the Premier's Discretionary Fund).
12. The Committee recommends the Government review the *Electoral Act 2004* to consider:
  - a. The deposit amount and method of payment for candidates standing in Tasmanian elections; and
  - b. The number of nominator signatures required to validate a candidate in Tasmanian elections.
13. The Committee recommends candidates in House of Assembly General Elections, or Legislative Council elections, be required to provide a preferred method of contact to the Tasmanian Electoral Commission for publication.
14. The Committee recommends the Government consider, consult and report on the merit of amending the *Constitution Act 1934* to legislate fixed term elections.
15. The Committee recommends as a matter of priority, the Government and the Tasmanian Electoral Commission undertake an operational review of the application of the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023* during the 2025 General Election, including engagement with participants on identified challenges and issues.
16. The Committee recommends the statutory independent review of the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023* consider the following:
  - a. The inclusion of election campaign expenditure limits for House of Assembly elections; and
  - b. The current election campaign expenditure limits for Legislative Council elections.
17. The Government and the Tasmanian Electoral Commission clarify the interpretation of Official Agents in the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023*.

# 1 APPOINTMENT, TERMS OF REFERENCE AND CONDUCT OF THE INQUIRIES

## Appointment and Terms of Reference

- 1.1 During the 51<sup>st</sup> Parliament, on 13 June 2024, the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters (the Committee) was established. As a part of its broader establishing resolution, the Committee was to inquire into and report upon: -

*Any aspects of the administration, operation and conduct of the 23 March 2024 General Election of Members of the Assembly and the 2024 Legislative Council periodic elections... for any inquiry the Committee may wish to make.<sup>1</sup>*

- 1.2 The Committee commenced the Inquiry on 28 June 2024. The Parliament of Tasmania (the Parliament) was prorogued on 11 June 2025 and all committee activity, including the 2024 Inquiry, ceased.

- 1.3 On 24 September 2025, the new Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters was established by the 52<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, with the authorisation to receive all evidence and papers received by the former committee of the 51<sup>st</sup> Parliament.

- 1.4 The establishing resolution of the new Committee stated that a new version of the 2024 Inquiry be created and also provided that it could inquire into the administration, operation and conduct of the: -

*19 July 2025 General Election of Members of the Assembly and the 2025 Legislative Council periodic elections... for any inquiry the Committee may wish to take.<sup>2</sup>*

- 1.5 On 8 October 2025, the Committee formally resolved to conduct the Inquiry into the Conduct of the 2025 House of Assembly General Election and 2025 Legislative Council elections (the 2025 Inquiry).

- 1.6 Also, on 8 October 2025 the Committee agreed to re-establish the 2024 Inquiry, receiving all evidence and papers from its former iteration.

- 1.7 Given the close proximity between the 2024 Elections and 2025 Elections and the similarity in evidence arising from the Committee's Inquiries, it was resolved to produce a combined report for publication. This combined report provides an analysis of the elections and assesses relevant matters arising regarding their administration, operation and conduct.

- 1.8 This Report should be read in conjunction with the attached documents.

---

<sup>1</sup> Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, Establishing Resolution, [https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0015/83013/51st-Parliament-Resolution-establishing-the-Joint-Standing-Committee-on-Electoral-Matters.pdf](https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0015/83013/51st-Parliament-Resolution-establishing-the-Joint-Standing-Committee-on-Electoral-Matters.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, Establishing Resolution, [https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0037/97759/Resolution-52nd-Parliament-establishment-of-the-Joint-Standing-Committee-on-Electoral-Matters.pdf](https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0037/97759/Resolution-52nd-Parliament-establishment-of-the-Joint-Standing-Committee-on-Electoral-Matters.pdf)

- 1.9 Submissions to the Inquiries are listed in Appendix A.
- 1.10 A list of public hearing witnesses is provided in Appendix B.
- 1.11 The minutes of the Committee are attached as Appendix C.
- 1.12 Copies of the Hansard Transcripts of Evidence from public hearings are available in Appendix D.

## **Conduct of the 2024 Inquiry**

- 1.13 The 2024 Inquiry received its evidence during the 51<sup>st</sup> Parliament. The Committee had resolved to invite, by way of advertisement on the Parliament of Tasmania website and in the three major Tasmanian newspapers, interested persons and organisations to make a submission to the Committee in relation to the Terms of Reference. In addition to this general invitation, the Committee directly invited a number of persons and organisations to provide the Committee with any information they deemed to be relevant to the Inquiry.
- 1.14 The 2024 Inquiry received 29 submissions, and held three public hearings in Hobart, with 25 witnesses.

## **Conduct of the 2025 Inquiry**

- 1.15 The same process for the collection of evidence was undertaken by the Committee for the 2025 Inquiry during the 52<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, with newspaper advertisements and direct invitations to selected persons and organisations to provide a submission, distributed. This process resulted in the receipt of 11 submissions. One public hearing was subsequently held in Hobart in February 2026, at which 12 witnesses attended. In September 2026, the Committee also held one additional hearing in Hobart with four witnesses.

## **Structure of this Report**

- 1.16 This report consists of the following Chapters:
- Chapter 1 – Appointment and conduct of the Inquiries;
  - Chapter 2 – Context of the 2024 Elections;
  - Chapter 3 – Context of the 2025 Elections;
  - Chapter 4 – Voting in Tasmania;
  - Chapter 5 – Tasmanians and Elections;
  - Chapter 6 – Structure and Conduct of Elections;
  - Chapter 7 – The *Electoral Act 2004*; and
  - Chapter 8 – The *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023*.

## 2 CONTEXT OF THE 2024 ELECTIONS

### 2024 House of Assembly General Election

- 2.1 The House of Assembly General Election (2024 General Election) was held on Saturday 23 March 2024. The Election was held early, having been due in 2025. On 14 February 2024 the Parliament was prorogued and House of Assembly dissolved. The writs were issued on Wednesday 21 February 2024, with candidate nominations closing on Thursday 29 February 2024. Early voting commenced on Monday 4 March 2024 and applications for postal voting closed on Friday 15 March 2024.
- 2.2 The 2024 Election was the first held since the *Expansion of House of Assembly Act 2022* was passed, restoring the House of Assembly from 25 to 35 Members. This change brought the return of seven seats in each of the five multi-member electorates of Bass, Braddon, Clark, Franklin and Lyons.
- 2.3 The number of candidates and electors for each of the electorates were as follows:

| Electorate | Candidates | Enrolled Electors |
|------------|------------|-------------------|
| Bass       | 32         | 80,126            |
| Braddon    | 33         | 83,875            |
| Clark      | 35         | 74,236            |
| Franklin   | 31         | 82,238            |
| Lyons      | 36         | 87,722            |

- 2.4 The total number of candidates who stood for the Election was 167.<sup>3</sup> Of the 167 candidates, 67 were female, 96 male and four identified as other.<sup>4</sup> The Tasmanian Electoral Commission (the TEC) noted that the 2024 General Election saw a record number of candidates and a record number of columns on the ballot papers, alongside the legislative change for the formality requirement for voting shifting to 1 to 7, compared to the previous 1 to 5.<sup>5</sup> This change was made to reflect the restoration of numbers of the House of Assembly to 35 Members. When combined, the columns across all ballot papers totalled 49, leading to the production of 714 versions of ballot papers under the Robson Rotation.<sup>6</sup>
- 2.5 Across the state the TEC provided 355 polling sites in total, of which 255 were open on polling day, 14 were run as pre-poll centres, and 86 were run as mobile polling locations.<sup>7</sup> 1,911 Tasmanians were employed by the TEC to provide

<sup>3</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, '2024 State Election,' <https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/house-of-assembly/elections-2024/index.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Submission No. 14, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Submission No. 14, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 5 November 2024, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry, p. 46.

<sup>7</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 5 November 2024, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry, p. 46.

services during the 2024 General Election.<sup>8</sup> The TEC also indicated that the cost of the 2024 General Election was \$12.37 per elector.<sup>9</sup>

2.6 The Declaration of the Polls was conducted on Tuesday 9 April 2024, with the writs returned to Her Excellency the then-Governor, the Honourable Barbara Baker AC, on the same day. The declared makeup of the House was 14 Members of the Liberal Party, 10 Members of the Labor Party, five Members of the Tasmanian Greens, three Members of the Jacqui Lambie Network (JLN) and three independents.<sup>10</sup> This result saw the retention of Government by the Liberal Party, with the Honourable Jeremy Rockliff MP reappointed as Premier.

2.7 A complete list of elected Members and their electorates can be found below:<sup>11</sup>

| Division        | Members elected  |                  |                  |                  |               |                  |                   |
|-----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Bass</b>     | Michael Ferguson | Michelle O'Byrne | Janie Finlay     | Rob Fairs        | Cecily Rosol  | Rebekah Pentland | Simon Wood        |
| <b>Braddon</b>  | Jeremy Rockliff  | Felix Ellis      | Anita Dow        | Roger Jaensch    | Shane Broad   | Miriam Beswick   | Craig Garland     |
| <b>Clark</b>    | Ella Haddad      | Vica Bayley      | Josh Willie      | Kristie Johnston | Helen Burnet  | Simon Behrakis   | Madeleine Ogilvie |
| <b>Franklin</b> | Rosalie Woodruff | Dean Winter      | Jacquie Petrusma | Meg Brown        | David O'Byrne | Eric Abetz       | Nic Street        |
| <b>Lyons</b>    | Rebecca White    | Guy Barnett      | Jane Howlett     | Jen Butler       | Mark Shelton  | Andrew Jenner    | Tabatha Badger    |

2.8 As per the proclamation of Her Excellency the then-Governor, the 51<sup>st</sup> Parliament first met on Tuesday 14 May 2024.

2.9 Dr Kevin Bonham, election analyst, provided a review of the voting trends exhibited in the 2024 General Election, comparing the result for 35 seats to what would have occurred in a previous 25 seat House of Assembly:

*The return to the 35-member system saw an election that had a seat share result remarkably proportional to the primary vote for different parties:*

<sup>8</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 5 November 2024, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry, p. 47.

<sup>9</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 5 November 2024, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry, p. 47.

<sup>10</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, '2024 State Election,' <https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/house-of-assembly/elections-2024/candidates-elected.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, '2024 State Election,' <https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/house-of-assembly/elections-2024/candidates-elected.html>.

|              | vote% | seat | seat% |
|--------------|-------|------|-------|
| <b>Lib</b>   | 36.7  | 14   | 40    |
| <b>ALP</b>   | 29    | 10   | 28.6  |
| <b>Green</b> | 13.9  | 5    | 14.3  |
| <b>Ind</b>   | 9.6   | 3    | 8.6   |
| <b>JLN</b>   | 6.7   | 3    | 8.6   |
| <b>SFF</b>   | 2.3   | 0    | 0     |
| <b>AJP</b>   | 1.5   | 0    | 0     |
| <b>LN</b>    | 0.3   | 0    | 0     |

*This is although Hare-Clark is not a purely proportional system and is not necessarily designed to produce this sort of result. If the same votes had been cast at a 25-seat election there would also have been a rather proportional result though slightly better for Labor at the expense of the Greens - I get the most likely seat breakdown as 10 Liberal 8 ALP 3 Green 2 IND 2 JLN, so 40%-32%-12%-8%-8%.*

*34 of the 35 seats were won by parties that were leading on primary vote quotas or remainders, and these 34 seats were also won by the candidates within those parties that were leading their intra-party rivals. The exception was the seat won by Craig Garland (IND) whose primary vote of 5.1% was the lowest winning primary vote for a lone independent or a party ticket ever, the previous lowest being 7.2% for Benjamin Pearsall in 1934. Garland was able to win by overtaking the Greens ticket by outperforming them on preferences from the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers and minor independents, and on leakage from party tickets. He then defeated the Liberals on Greens preferences.*

*No seat was decided by a margin of less than 1%. There was an extremely close exclusion point between the last two Liberals in Braddon but it was irrelevant as whichever Liberal candidate survived would have lost to Garland on Greens preferences.<sup>12</sup>*

## 2024 Legislative Council Periodic Elections

- 2.10 On Wednesday 3 April 2024, the writs were issued for the 2024 Legislative Council elections for the Divisions of Hobart and Prosser, and a by-election for the Division of Elwick. The Elwick by-election arose as the result of then MLC, the Hon. Josh Willie's, resignation from the Legislative Council on 27 February 2024 to stand as a candidate for Clark in the 2024 General Election. Nominations closed at 12 noon on Thursday 11 April 2024. The 2024 Legislative Council Elections were held on Saturday 4 May 2024.

<sup>12</sup> Submission No. 13, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2024 Inquiry, pp. 2-3.

- 2.11 A total of 16 candidates stood across the three Divisions, as per the below:

| Division | Candidates |
|----------|------------|
| Elwick   | 4          |
| Hobart   | 7          |
| Prosser  | 5          |

- 2.12 Of these candidates, five were women and 11 were men.<sup>13</sup> 76,626 Tasmanians were enrolled as electors to vote across the three divisions.<sup>14</sup>
- 2.13 The TEC provided 74 polling places for the 2024 Legislative Council elections, 49 of which operated on polling day, five of which were pre-poll centres and 20 were mobile polling locations.<sup>15</sup> 447 employees were appointed by the TEC to support the provision of the 2024 Legislative Council elections.<sup>16</sup> The TEC calculated that the cost of the 2024 Legislative Council elections totalled \$18.07 per elector.<sup>17</sup>
- 2.14 On Thursday 9 May 2024 the Declaration of the Polls was held, with the three successful candidates announced by the TEC as per the below:<sup>18</sup>

| Division | Candidate      |
|----------|----------------|
| Elwick   | Bec Thomas     |
| Hobart   | Cassy O'Connor |
| Prosser  | Kerry Vincent  |

---

<sup>13</sup> Submission No. 14, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry, p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 5 November 2024, Tasmania Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry, p. 49.

<sup>15</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 5 November 2024, Tasmania Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry, p. 49.

<sup>16</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 5 November 2024, Tasmania Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry, p. 49.

<sup>17</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 5 November 2024, Tasmania Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry, p. 50.

<sup>18</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, Media Release, 'Results declared in 2024 Legislative Council Elections,' [https://app4.vision6.com.au/em/message/email/view.php?id=1480639&a=58639&k=cM-yAoLFvQHXBKS7ioX\\_NO4oYoCNg05hqMTnXr-EAyo](https://app4.vision6.com.au/em/message/email/view.php?id=1480639&a=58639&k=cM-yAoLFvQHXBKS7ioX_NO4oYoCNg05hqMTnXr-EAyo).

### 3 CONTEXT OF THE 2025 ELECTIONS

#### 2025 House of Assembly General Election

- 3.1 The 2025 House of Assembly General Election (2025 General Election) was held on Saturday 19 July 2025, 16 months after the 2024 General Election. After the 2024 General Election, the next standard Tasmanian General Election was not due to be held until 2028.
- 3.2 The Election was called following a successful no confidence motion moved by the Labor Opposition in the Premier, Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP.<sup>19</sup>
- 3.3 The no confidence motion was passed in the affirmative through a casting vote of then-Speaker, the Honourable Michelle O’Byrne MP, on the sitting day of Thursday, 5 June 2025, which suspended and then continued on Tuesday, 10 June 2025.<sup>20</sup>
- 3.4 The Premier met with Her Excellency the then-Governor on the evening of Tuesday 10 June 2025 to request an election. On Wednesday 11 June 2025, Her Excellency the Governor met with then-Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Mr Winter MP, and again with the Premier. On this same evening, the House of Assembly was prorogued and the 51<sup>st</sup> Parliament was dissolved by Her Excellency the then-Governor.
- 3.5 The writs for the 2025 General Election were issued on Wednesday, 18 June 2025, with candidate nominations closing on Thursday 26 June 2025. Early voting commenced on Monday, 30 June 2025 and applications for postal votes closed on Friday, 11 July 2025.<sup>21</sup>
- 3.6 A total of 161 candidates stood in the 2025 General Election. The candidates and electors for each of the electorates were as follows:

| Electorate | Candidates | Enrolled Electors |
|------------|------------|-------------------|
| Bass       | 31         | 80,566            |
| Braddon    | 38         | 84,566            |
| Clark      | 26         | 74,385            |
| Franklin   | 31         | 82,928            |
| Lyons      | 35         | 89,460            |

<sup>19</sup> Parliament of Tasmania, House of Assembly, Parliamentary Debates, 4 June 2025, <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/house-of-assembly/chamber-proceedings/proceedings/2025/june/house-of-assembly-4-june>.

<sup>20</sup> House of Assembly, Parliament of Tasmania, Report of Debates, 5 June 2025. <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/house-of-assembly/chamber-proceedings/proceedings/2025/june/house-of-assembly-5-june>.

<sup>21</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, ‘2025 State Election’, <https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/house-of-assembly/elections-2025/index.html>.

- 3.7 Throughout the 2025 General Election, the TEC provided 256 polling places on the day of the election, 15 pre-poll centres, and mobile polling teams visited 92 locations.<sup>22</sup>
- 3.8 The results of the 2025 General Election saw the Liberal Party form Government. At the Declaration of the Polls, the numbers on the floor of the House were 14 Liberal Party Members, 10 Labor Party Members, five Tasmanian Greens Members, one Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party Member and five independent Members. A complete list of elected Members by electorate can be found below.<sup>23</sup>

| Division        | Members elected  |              |                  |               |                |                  |                   |
|-----------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|---------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Bass</b>     | Bridget Archer   | Janie Finlay | Michael Ferguson | Cecily Rosol  | Rob Fairs      | George Razay     | Jess Greene       |
| <b>Braddon</b>  | Jeremy Rockliff  | Gavin Pearce | Craig Garland    | Felix Ellis   | Anita Dow      | Roger Jaensch    | Shane Broad       |
| <b>Clark</b>    | Kristie Johnston | Vica Bayley  | Ella Haddad      | Josh Willie   | Helen Burnet   | Marcus Vermey    | Madeleine Ogilvie |
| <b>Franklin</b> | Peter George     | Eric Abetz   | Rosalie Woodruff | David O'Byrne | Dean Winter    | Jacquie Petrusma | Meg Brown         |
| <b>Lyons</b>    | Guy Barnett      | Jane Howlett | Tabatha Badger   | Jen Butler    | Brian Mitchell | Mark Shelton     | Carlo Di Falco    |

- 3.9 The 52<sup>nd</sup> Parliament met for the first time on Tuesday 19 August 2025 as per the proclamation of Her Excellency the then-Governor.
- 3.10 As with the 2024 General Election, Dr Bonham provided the Committee with a review of the 2025 General Election in which he expressed that the 2025 result was 'even more remarkably proportional'<sup>24</sup> than the last. Dr Bonham submitted to the Committee that:

*Although the result with more or less no change at seat level led to claims that hung parliaments are here for good, the election was actually quite close to being a Liberal majority. Outside of Braddon, the Liberals missed out on seats in each other electorate closely enough that a further swing of 3% to them could have won them the election outright, if that swing came at the expense of the right opponent in each seat. This confirms that a primary vote in the low 40s is capable of winning majority government in Tasmania at present.<sup>25</sup>*

<sup>22</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, '2025 State Election,' <https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/house-of-assembly/elections-2025/candidates-elected.html>

<sup>24</sup> Submission No. 9, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2025 Inquiry, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> Submission No. 9, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2025 Inquiry, p. 3.

## 2025 Legislative Council Periodic Elections

- 3.11 Her Excellency the then-Governor issued the writs for the 2025 Legislative Council elections for the Divisions of Montgomery, Nelson and Pembroke on Tuesday, 15 April 2025.<sup>26</sup> Candidate nominations closed on Thursday, 1 May 2025.
- 3.12 Due to a potential clash with the 2025 Federal Election, Her Excellency the Governor proclaimed that the Legislative Council elections were to be held on Saturday, 24 May 2025, as opposed to the standard first Saturday of May for Legislative Council elections.<sup>27</sup> This change is permitted under section 19 (4) of the *Constitution Act 1934* (Tas), but had not been invoked previously. In 2019, the electoral periods for Legislative Council elections and the Federal Election overlapped, but the actual polling days were fourteen days apart.<sup>28</sup>
- 3.13 A total of 13 candidates stood across the three Divisions as shown below.<sup>29</sup> Of the candidates who stood, four were women and nine were men.<sup>30</sup> 78,882 Tasmanians were enrolled as electors to vote across the three divisions.<sup>31</sup>

| Division   | Candidates |
|------------|------------|
| Montgomery | 5          |
| Nelson     | 3          |
| Pembroke   | 5          |

- 3.14 Voting was facilitated through the provision of 73 polling locations, 50 of which were open on polling day, six operated as a pre-polling centre and 17 as mobile

---

<sup>26</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2019 to 2021 *Report on Parliamentary Elections*, p. 1, [https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/info/Publications/ElectionReports/Report\\_on\\_Parliamentary\\_Elections\\_2019-2021\\_w.pdf](https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/info/Publications/ElectionReports/Report_on_Parliamentary_Elections_2019-2021_w.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 'The Candidates,' <https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/legislative-council/elections-2025/candidates.html>.

<sup>30</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, *Annual Report 2024-25*, p. 18, <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/house-of-assembly/tailed-papers/house-of-assembly-tabled-papers-2026/TP52-1-251.pdf>.

<sup>31</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 to 2025 *Report on Parliamentary Elections*, <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/house-of-assembly/tailed-papers/house-of-assembly-tabled-papers-2026/TP52-1-252.pdf>.

polling locations.<sup>32</sup> 436 election staff were employed by the TEC.<sup>33</sup> The TEC calculates that the 2025 Legislative Council elections cost \$18.30 per elector.<sup>34</sup>

- 3.15 The TEC held the Declaration of the Polls on Friday 30 May 2025 with the three successful candidates announced as per below:<sup>35</sup>

| Division   | Member        |
|------------|---------------|
| Montgomery | Casey Hiscutt |
| Nelson     | Meg Webb      |
| Pembroke   | Luke Edmunds  |

---

<sup>32</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, *Annual Report 2024-25*, p. 18, <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/house-of-assembly/taled-papers/house-of-assembly-taled-papers-2026/TP52-1-251.pdf>.

<sup>33</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, *Annual Report 2024-25*, p. 18, <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/house-of-assembly/taled-papers/house-of-assembly-taled-papers-2026/TP52-1-251.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, *Annual Report 2024-25*, p. 19, <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/house-of-assembly/taled-papers/house-of-assembly-taled-papers-2026/TP52-1-251.pdf>.

<sup>35</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, Media Release, 'Results Declared in the 2025 Legislative Council elections,' <https://app4.vision6.com.au/em/message/email/view.php?id=1585653&a=58639&k=NMZgCMMOvIEAGfpHKkKCGapIYdyUDWUoX3kxYJ8OBAw>

## 4 VOTING IN TASMANIA

- 4.1 This Chapter considers how Tasmanians voted in the 2024 and 2025 General and Legislative Council elections. While there were a number of options for casting votes available to enrolled voters, they were not always utilised to full effect to ensure voter enfranchisement. For example, telephone and VI-Voting could have been used more widely. The TEC also faced difficulties in finding suitable polling places which may have limited the options for voters. Additionally, some voters experienced accessibility issues and there were obstacles to voting faced by those in prison.

### How People Voted

#### Polling Day

- 4.2 The TEC faces ongoing difficulties in accessing appropriate locations for polling places to be used on election days or to facilitate pre-poll services:

*Mr HAWKEY - ... it's very hard because if you don't know when polling day is, we don't know what is available to us. With the Legislative Council, we can book six or eight months in advance where it's not a by-election, but we can't do that for a House of Assembly. One good example is the tally room. When the drops of rain appeared to be falling last year, I was on to the Grand Chancellor asking what dates they had available. They said that any day except 23 September would be fine. We ended up making it work because, as I said, the people moved out slightly early and we got something up and running. There was no other possible site for that in the south of Tasmania that met the particulars for that.*

*It is similar for other polling places; it's similar for pre-poll. We've had times where nothing has been available in Glenorchy even for an LC but when you get an announcement and you've got to have a pre-poll set up in three-and-a-half weeks, you've got to have the physical space. The site that was mentioned this morning, the one in the CBD, [Icon Complex] was the best we could do from my understanding in that environment. It wasn't ideal, but it still had a lift access and other things, but it was still hard to find. Finding another place is out of our control unless we spend a lot of money booking a lot of places and giving money to have retainers.*

*You have the secondary issue where you're out in the middle of nowhere and there's one hall that's within a 50-kilometre radius of nothing else. We had one year where a storm came and the roof fell in. Even if you might be able to book places, you can't guarantee that they're suitable at the time the polling day comes along.<sup>36</sup>*

- 4.3 The TEC confirmed it continues to assess the suitability, availability and accessibility of polling places in consideration of the needs of Tasmanians and the Work Health and Safety requirements for TEC employees.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 5 November 2024, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry, p. 57.

<sup>37</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2025, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, pp. 83-84.

## Finding

### The Committee finds:

1. Uncertainty of the dates of Tasmanian General Elections impacts operational arrangements for the Tasmanian Electoral Commission, including staffing and booking of polling locations.

## Accessibility

- 4.4 Evidence to the Committee highlighted ongoing concerns with the accessibility of voting in Tasmania,<sup>38</sup> with some Tasmanians reporting difficulties in exercising their right to cast a vote. Jackson Reynolds-Ryan from Blind Citizens Australia (Tasmania Branch), spoke to the Committee of the three key elements of a fully accessible vote: “secrecy, being able to vote in private; independence, being able to vote without the need for assistance by another person; and verifiability.”<sup>39</sup> However, it was reported that not all of these are able to be met through the current offerings for electors.
- 4.5 In their submission on behalf of Blind Citizens Australia (Tasmania Branch) and Disability Voices Tasmania, Duncan Meerding and Michael Small raised a number of issues with the electoral process and protections for ensuring independent secret ballots for every Tasmanian voter.<sup>40</sup> The submission provided case studies demonstrating difficulties in voting in the 2024 Elections which impacted the universal right to vote. These included problems with voting machines, closed polling places, limited accessible parking spaces, lack of confidentiality in voting and limited access to voting machines.<sup>41</sup>
- 4.6 The Blind Citizens Australia (Tasmania Branch) and Disability Voices Tasmania submission reflected on the Premier’s Disability Advisory Council and the Minister’s Disability Reference Group which are established to provide advice to Government on the impact of certain legislation and policies on people with disabilities.<sup>42</sup> It also discussed the work the organisations did with the TEC regarding the 2022 local government elections to help identify mechanisms to ensure people with disability and print impairments could vote. The submission suggested that a similar reference group should be established to work with

---

<sup>38</sup> Submission No. 1, Blind Citizens Australian (Tasmania Branch) and Disability Voices Tasmania, 2024 Inquiry; Submission No. 3, COTA Tasmania, 2024 Inquiry.

<sup>39</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 5 November 2024, Blind Citizens Australian (Tasmania Branch) and Disability Voices Tasmania, 2024 Inquiry, p. 8.

<sup>40</sup> Submission No. 1, Blind Citizens Australian (Tasmania Branch) and Disability Voices Tasmania, 2024 Inquiry, pp. 8-20.

<sup>41</sup> Submission No. 1, Blind Citizens Australian (Tasmania Branch) and Disability Voices Tasmania, 2024 Inquiry, pp. 8-20.

<sup>42</sup> Submission No. 1, Blind Citizens Australia (Tasmania Branch) and Disability Voices Tasmania, 2024 Inquiry, p. 6.

the TEC to further improve disability access to elections to ensure continued enfranchisement.<sup>43</sup>

- 4.7 The Committee notes there was some attempt to increase access to voting, throughout the 2024 and 2025 Elections, as discussed below. However, access to voting continues to be an issue in Tasmanian elections.

## Telephone Voting

- 4.8 For the 2024 General Election the TEC changed the way phone voting was implemented. Call centre operations for customer support and election results were used, including telephone assisted voting (TAV).<sup>44</sup> The TEC noted that for the 2024 General Election the call centre received more than 9,800 calls across the election period, with TAV teams receiving 3,936 registrations and 3,901 Tasmanians using the TAV service to cast their vote.<sup>45</sup>
- 4.9 For the 2024 Legislative Council elections the TAV service was promoted as the preferred option for electors who were overseas or interstate before or on polling day. TAV teams for the 2024 Legislative Council elections, received 930 registrations and 929 Tasmanians cast their votes via the service.<sup>46</sup>
- 4.10 Council on the Aging Tasmania (COTA), in its submission to the 2024 Inquiry, argued for the need to expand the accessibility of telephone voting beyond interstate and overseas voters.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, Blind Citizens Australia (Tasmania Branch) and Disability Voices Tasmania submitted that section 113 of the *Electoral Act 2004* (Electoral Act) allowed for telephone voting for those unable to vote unassisted.<sup>48</sup> The submission states however, that the TEC was unwilling to interpret the section in this manner.<sup>49</sup> As a result, the submission suggested amendments to the *Electoral Act 2004* which could facilitate greater access.<sup>50</sup>
- 4.11 It is noted changes were subsequently made to the *Electoral Act 2004* via the Electoral Amendment (Alternate Voting Procedures) Bill 2025 that allowed the TEC to provide telephone voting to the print disability community.<sup>51</sup> The Bill

---

<sup>43</sup> Submission No. 1, Blind Citizens Australia (Tasmania Branch) and Disability Voices Tasmania, 2024 Inquiry, p. 6.

<sup>44</sup> Submission No. 14, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry, p. 6.

<sup>45</sup> Submission No. 14, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry, p. 7.

<sup>46</sup> Submission No. 14, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry, p. 11.

<sup>47</sup> Submission No. 3, COTA Tasmania, 2024 Inquiry, p. 1.

<sup>48</sup> Submission No. 1, Blind Citizens Australia (Tasmania Branch) and Disability Voice Tasmania, 2024 Inquiry, p. 14.

<sup>49</sup> Submission No. 1, Blind Citizens Australia (Tasmania Branch) and Disability Voice Tasmania, 2024 Inquiry, p. 14.

<sup>50</sup> Submission No. 1, Blind Citizens Australia (Tasmania Branch) and Disability Voice Tasmania, 2024 Inquiry, p. 14.

<sup>51</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 3. Print disability is difficulty or inability to read printed material due to a perceptual, physical or visual disability

<https://www.visionaustralia.org/business-consulting/print-accessibility/what-is-print-disability>

- allows the Commission to ‘approve “alternative” voting procedures if satisfied an elector does not have a reasonable opportunity to vote under other provisions of the Act.’<sup>52</sup>
- 4.12 Subsequently, TAV was expanded for the 2025 General Election. This marked the first time that TAV was available for a House of Assembly Election for Tasmanians with a print disability.<sup>53</sup> That Election saw 8,268 electors cast their votes using TAV, of which 279 were living with a print disability.<sup>54</sup>
- 4.13 For the 2025 Legislative Council elections, TAV was used by 1,229 electors including 66 who disclosed a print disability.<sup>55</sup>
- 4.14 On 31 August 2026 the Committee wrote to the Electoral Commissioner requesting operational information on the function of the TAV system to enhance the Committee’s understanding of the system. The TEC committed to provide this information to the Committee, only following the conclusion of the local government elections to be held in October 2026.<sup>56</sup> Unfortunately this will occur after the Committee’s Inquiries have concluded.

## Finding

### The Committee finds:

2. The expansion of telephone assisted voting for the 2025 House of Assembly General Election improved accessibility for those with a print disability and increased overall enfranchisement for Tasmanian voters.

## Vision-Impaired Voting System (VI-Vote)

- 4.15 The Vision-Impaired voting system (VI-Vote) is an electronic voting system designed for electors who are blind or have low vision. VI-Vote is provided via terminals which offer enhanced audio, visual and print capabilities to support independent voting by Tasmanians with a disability.<sup>57</sup>
- 4.16 The TEC noted that during the 2025 Legislative Council elections, there were six electors who used the VI-Vote service.<sup>58</sup> VI-Vote was also available during early voting at the 2025 General Election, with six electors using the service.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> Fact sheet – Electoral Amendment (Alternative Voting Procedures) Bill 2025

[https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0021/91524/Att-2-Fact-Sheet-Electoral-Amendment-Alternative-Voting-Procedures-Bill-2025.pdf](https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0021/91524/Att-2-Fact-Sheet-Electoral-Amendment-Alternative-Voting-Procedures-Bill-2025.pdf)

<sup>53</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 6.

<sup>54</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 6.

<sup>55</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 3.

<sup>56</sup> Email from Tasmanian Electoral Commission dated 31 August 2026,

[https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0013/111550/2combined-corro\\_Committee-and-TEC-August-2026\\_Redacted.pdf](https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0013/111550/2combined-corro_Committee-and-TEC-August-2026_Redacted.pdf)

<sup>57</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025, p. 3

<sup>58</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p.3.

<sup>59</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 6.

- 4.17 Representatives from Blind Citizens Australia (Tasmania Branch) and Disability Voices Tasmania provided evidence on problems experienced with the VI-Vote system.<sup>60</sup> Mr Meerding, President of the Blind Citizens Australia (Tasmania Branch) noted the convoluted nature of the VI-Vote system. He stated that the process can be lengthy and problematic if a voter makes a mistake, as voters could not go back to make any changes.<sup>61</sup> Mr Meerding described issues in using the VI-Vote system, including initially being given the wrong ballot paper and the system's printer not working.<sup>62</sup> Mr Meerding also expressed that while well meaning, the staff assisting with the VI-Vote system require better training on how to describe where things are for vision impaired people.<sup>63</sup>
- 4.18 Mr Reynolds-Ryan from Blind Citizens Australia (Tasmania Branch), expressed concern that during the pre-poll period for the 2024 General Election, there were only three locations with VI-Vote terminals in operation across the state.<sup>64</sup> Mr Reynolds-Ryan commented it was important that VI-Vote was used in conjunction with a broad suite of measures to ensure certain electors are not disenfranchised.<sup>65</sup>
- 4.19 On 31 August 2026 the Committee wrote to the Electoral Commissioner requesting operational information on the function of the VI-Vote system to enhance the Committee's understanding of the system. The TEC committed to provide this information to the Committee, but only after the conclusion of the local government elections to be held in October 2026.<sup>66</sup> Unfortunately this will occur after the Committee's Inquiries have concluded.

---

<sup>60</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 5 November 2024, Blind Citizens Australia (Tasmania Branch) and Disability Voices Australia, 2024 Inquiry, pp. 4-5 & 7-8.

<sup>61</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 5 November 2024, Blind Citizens Australia (Tasmania Branch) and Disability Voices Australia, 2024 Inquiry, p. 4.

<sup>62</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 5 November 2024, Blind Citizens Australia (Tasmania Branch) and Disability Voices Australia, 2024 Inquiry, p. 4.

<sup>63</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 5 November 2024, Blind Citizens Australia (Tasmania Branch) and Disability Voices Australia, 2024 Inquiry, p. 4.

<sup>64</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 5 November 2024, Blind Citizens Australia (Tasmania Branch) and Disability Voices Australia, 2024 Inquiry, p. 8; Submission No. 21 Blind Citizens Australia, 2024 Inquiry, p. 9.

<sup>65</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 5 November 2024, Blind Citizens Australia (Tasmania Branch) and Disability Voices Australia, 2024 Inquiry, p. 8.

<sup>66</sup> Email from Tasmanian Electoral Commission dated 31 August 2026, [https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0013/111550/2combined-corro\\_Committee-and-TEC-August-2026\\_Redacted.pdf](https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0013/111550/2combined-corro_Committee-and-TEC-August-2026_Redacted.pdf)

## Findings

### The Committee finds:

3. Voters experienced difficulties using the VI-Vote system during the 2024 General Election.
4. During the 2024 General Election, technology-assisted voting options for people with vision impairment did not operate effectively for all users.

## Recommendation

### The Committee recommends:

1. **The Tasmanian Electoral Commission, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, review the suitability and effectiveness of the VI-Vote system for use in Tasmanian elections.**

## Online Voting

4.20 Some Australian jurisdictions offer online voting which allows votes to be cast by the voter on an internet-enabled electronic device. Blind Citizens Australia in its submission to the 2024 Inquiry raised the potential to use internet voting in Tasmania.<sup>67</sup> It was noted that New South Wales (NSW) has used the ‘iVote’ system for state and local elections since 2011 to assist voters who are blind or vision impaired, as well as people with other disabilities or people who have difficulty attending a polling place.<sup>68</sup>

4.21 The iVote system allows online voting using a computer, smartphone, tablet or telephone using an automated process. Blind Citizens Australia commented:

*Internet voting seems like an undeniably attractive option for people who are blind or vision impaired; however, it is not a silver bullet. Given Australia’s notoriously bad internet connectivity in regional, and remote areas, a reliance on online voting has the potential to disenfranchise many voters if they experience internet outages during an election period. In addition, system failure in online voting can have significant impacts.<sup>69</sup>*

## Finding

### The Committee finds:

5. Online voting may provide an opportunity to further increase voter enfranchisement and warrants further consideration for Tasmania.

---

<sup>67</sup> Submission No. 21, Blind Citizens Australia, 2024 Inquiry, pp. 7-8.

<sup>68</sup> Submission No. 21, Blind Citizens Australia, 2024 Inquiry, p. 7.

<sup>69</sup> Submission No. 21, Blind Citizens Australia, 2024 Inquiry, p. 8.

## Quiet Hours

- 4.22 At the 2025 Legislative Council elections, the TEC piloted a daily ‘quiet voting hour’ at all pre-poll venues.<sup>70</sup> This was to support voters who prefer low-sensory environments and to increase accessibility and inclusion of all electors.<sup>71</sup> To achieve quiet hours, the artificial light and unnecessary noise within pre-poll venues was reduced to the greatest extent possible.<sup>72</sup> Quiet hours were also offered in the 2025 General Election.<sup>73</sup>
- 4.23 The TEC noted its pilot program supported the need for providing the opportunity for quiet hours as an option for voters, however in some polling places it was difficult to implement.<sup>74</sup>

## Translation Services

- 4.24 The TEC submission to the 2025 Inquiry outlined the piloting of new resources to support the enfranchisement of Tasmanians who speak languages other than English.<sup>75</sup> Working with the Migrant Resource Centre, the TEC identified the most common languages spoken other than English in Tasmania.<sup>76</sup> As a result of this collaboration, guides for voting in the 2025 General Election were produced in Nepali, Hindi, Punjabi, Karen, Arabic, Tigrinya and Farsi.<sup>77</sup> The guides described the experience of attending a polling place and described how to formally vote.<sup>78</sup>
- 4.25 The translated versions of the guides were available on the TEC website with posters displayed at pre-poll and polling day locations with QR codes to download the relevant guide.<sup>79</sup> The TEC indicated the guide was also distributed through community organisations and promoted on social media.
- 4.26 Following positive anecdotal feedback, the TEC intends to expand the translation services to other languages in future and adapt it for Legislative Council elections.<sup>80</sup> The TEC is also looking at other formats for the guide, or

---

<sup>70</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 2.

<sup>71</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 2.

<sup>72</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 2.

<sup>73</sup> Quiet hours were offered at the following pre-poll centres: - Bass -George Town, Launceston and Scottsdale; Braddon – Burnie, Devonport, Queenstown and Smithton; Clark – Glenorchy and Hobart; Franklin – Kingston and Rosny; Lyons – Granton, New Norfolk, Sorell and St Helens as referenced in Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 5.

<sup>74</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 5

<sup>75</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 7.

<sup>76</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 7.

<sup>77</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 7.

<sup>78</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 7.

<sup>79</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 7.

<sup>80</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 7.

other such means of information transfer, including captioning for the deaf community.<sup>81</sup>

## Finding

### The Committee finds:

6. Translated information guides for Tasmanians who speak languages other than English, assist to increase voter understanding and enfranchisement.

## Recommendation

### The Committee recommends:

2. The Tasmanian Electoral Commission expand the range of translated information guides for Tasmanian elections to include further languages.

## Postal Voting

4.27 The TEC provides postal voting for General and Legislative Council elections. Tasmanians can register for a postal vote which is sent to them prior to the relevant polling day. All postal votes must be completed by 6pm on polling day and sent to the TEC by return post as soon as possible. The TEC receives postal votes for a period of 10 days post-polling day. The TEC Commissioner noted at a public hearing for the 2025 Inquiry that the 10-day return period for postal votes remains required to ensure Tasmanians have adequate time to cast and return their vote, accounting for limitations on postal services across Tasmania.<sup>82</sup>

4.28 In the 2024 General Election, 27,375 postal votes were received.<sup>83</sup> In the 2025 General Election, 38,947 postal votes (including telephone votes and votes from Antarctica) were issued, with 35,299 ballot papers returned.<sup>84</sup> TEC Commissioner, Mr Hawkey, described the process of postal vote counting for General Elections:

*The delay of 10 days is so that people have up until 10 days to have their postal vote returned, so we have - there's like five counts that make up the postal count. One of them is telephone, so the telephone voting is like count two, because we assume there would be small numbers, therefore we should hide the secrecy of the vote in the postal counts. I think they're sort of done on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, those early counts of postals, but the final postal isn't done until that final lot have come in 10 days later, and we can't start the Hare-Clark count until we finalise the*

---

<sup>81</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 7.

<sup>82</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 73 and p. 75.

<sup>83</sup> Submission No. 14, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry, p. 23.

<sup>84</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 to 2025 Report on Parliamentary Elections, p. 19, <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/house-of-assembly/tailed-papers/house-of-assembly-tailed-papers-2026/TP52-1-252.pdf>.

formality of every ballot paper, because that's where we strike the quota which is set for the whole election.<sup>85</sup>

- 4.29 At the 2024 Legislative Council elections, 5,145 postal vote ballot papers were received and counted, of which 5,050 were formal postal votes.<sup>86</sup> In the 2025 Legislative Council elections, 4,656 postal vote ballot papers were received and counted, of which 4,588 were formal postal votes.<sup>87</sup>
- 4.30 The future of postal voting, as a result of the shifting landscape of available postal services, was raised by the TEC. Mr Hawkey noted adaptations may need to occur to increase other voting options if a transition away from postal services continues:

**Mr HAWKEY** - Australia Post is not shy at saying that the letter postal process will have an endpoint, and it is of great concern to all electoral commissions. We meet about three to four times a year, and about once a year we talk directly with the hierarchy of Australia Post. That said, Australia Post has been extraordinarily good, a high level of service and achievement here in Tasmania. They delivered 4.5 million postal votes for Victoria last year and 3 million back. Again, it's such a small part of their normal work plan now. I'm not begrudging Australia Post at all. They've got a changing environment. But from a postal voting point of view, and this is what is a broader issue leading to the review of legislation for local government, is when do we get to a date when postal voting is not available?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Then what do we do?

**Mr HAWKEY** - This is part of why we're expanding telephone voting now. In 2025, for the first time we said, 'If you're overseas, give telephone voting a try'.

...

**Mr FERGUSON** - I recognise, and I think we all agree with the challenges around postal voting. I think what I'm hearing is that perhaps you don't have an opinion that it should change.

**Mr HAWKEY** - Look, I don't believe so.

**Mr FERGUSON** - That ... - 10-day period.

**Mr HAWKEY** - People have until 6 p.m. on polling day to fill in their postal vote, and then they can put it in the post. Over 90 per cent of our postals are inside Tasmania, because they're people generally who are general postal voters, and others who may be travelling to another address. I still see this advantage. Yes, it dwindles away considerably afterwards, but that's also because we have postal voting open from a very early period, so people can get their postal votes as soon as the candidates are announced and ballot papers produced. Again, it's a little bit of a -

---

<sup>85</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 75.

<sup>86</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, '2024 Legislative Council Elections results – Elwick,' <https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/legislative-council/elections-2024/results/elwick/index.html>.

<sup>87</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 to 2025 Report on Parliamentary Elections, pp. 13-17, <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/house-of-assembly/tables-tabled-papers/house-of-assembly-tabled-papers-2026/TP52-1-252.pdf>.

*this issue about accessibility, if someone is entitled to a vote, and can vote later, and still get it in in 10 days.*<sup>88</sup>

## Findings

### The Committee finds:

7. Postal voting remains an important option for casting a ballot and appears to be increasingly utilised by Tasmanian voters.
8. The 10-day period in the *Electoral Act 2004* within which postal votes can be received by the Tasmanian Electoral Commission allows for delivery of ballots by Australia Post. This is currently sufficient to accommodate limitations to Australia Post services but may not be the case in future.

## Electronic Voting and Counting of Votes

- 4.31 Currently, all non-assisted voting in Tasmania occurs using a physical ballot paper. Electronic voting is increasingly used globally, including in some Australian states. Electronic voting allows electors to cast their vote electronically and can be available in polling places, with electors given the choice of voting electronically or on paper.
- 4.32 The submission of Blind Citizens Australia considered that Australia needs to make more use of electronic voting, noting that electronic voting machines have become the most popular alternative voting method around the world.<sup>89</sup> Improvements to these voting machines in recent years has resulted in kiosks that can support voters with a variety of disability types.<sup>90</sup>
- 4.33 In supporting a shift to electronic voting, Tasmanian Labor pointed to the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) as an example of electronic voting use. Electronic voting was first used in the ACT in 2001.<sup>91</sup> Jarryd Moore, State Secretary of Tasmanian Labor, discussed electronic voting further in hearings:

**Mr MOORE** - ... *The electronic voting is the process of actually casting votes on a computer. You go to a polling place and there is a touch screen computer and you cast a ballot on the screen. The benefit of that is the ability to be able to quickly process those votes after the election, particularly, with the large increase that we've seen in early voting across the last decade or so. The electronic voting means that, come the close of polls, we can very quickly press a button and get the results of a very large number of votes.*

*That is efficient in terms of the cost of doing that. Obviously, you're not having to account for all the extra work required to manually count votes. But there are also some benefits in that of lowering the chance of people accidentally and informally*

---

<sup>88</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, pp. 73-74.

<sup>89</sup> Submission No. 21, Blind Citizens Australia, 2024 Inquiry, p. 6.

<sup>90</sup> Submission No. 21, Blind Citizens Australia, 2024 Inquiry, p. 6.

<sup>91</sup> Submission No. 28, Tasmanian Labor, 2024 Inquiry, p. 2. Also see discussion in Transcript of Evidence, 6 November 2024, Tasmanian Labor, 2024 Inquiry, p. 51.

*voting and things like that, because, obviously, on a computer screen, there's more limited ways that you can sort of mess up a ballot than with a pen and paper. The benefit of that doesn't just extend to the efficiencies in counting, it extends to the actual democratic process itself.*<sup>92</sup>

- 4.34 In hearings Dr Bonham suggested that implementing electronic voting would not be as simple in Tasmania as it was in the ACT.<sup>93</sup> Dr Bonham commented:

*... they [ACT] have a very concentrated population so you can get a very high proportion of the voter base going and voting electronically in a small number of pre-poll centres, and that makes it easy to get an electronic count that's representative of the ACT. In Tasmania, populations are more dispersed and voting patterns vary far more between different parts of the state. It's going to be hard to deliver the same thing on the night as the Labor submission is suggesting; it's a bit optimistic about what can be done.*<sup>94</sup>

- 4.35 The electronic counting of votes is also used in the ACT to scan data from physical ballot papers. This practice is not currently used by the TEC. The Tasmanian Labor submission to the 2024 Inquiry spoke to the potential benefits of using electronic vote counting in Tasmania.<sup>95</sup> These benefits included faster results, access to previously unavailable information on likely flow of preferences, and access to a digital dataset which would make any necessary countbacks easier.<sup>96</sup>

## Finding

### The Committee finds:

9. Any further adoption of electronic voting, or electronic counting of votes in Tasmania, would require thorough investigation.

## Recommendation

### The Committee recommends:

3. **The Tasmanian Electoral Commission establish a mechanism to consistently engage with relevant stakeholders in relation to voting accessibility, including Tasmanians with a disability, culturally and linguistically diverse Tasmanians, and other people who experience barriers to voting.**

---

<sup>92</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 6 November 2024, Tasmanian Labor, 2024 Inquiry, p. 51.

<sup>93</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 6 November 2024, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2024 Inquiry, p. 13.

<sup>94</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 6 November 2024, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2024 Inquiry, p. 13.

<sup>95</sup> Submission No. 28, Tasmanian Labor, 2024 Inquiry, p. 2.

<sup>96</sup> Submission No. 28, Tasmanian Labor, 2024 Inquiry, pp. 2-3.

## Voting in Prison

- 4.36 Under the *Electoral Act 2004*, prisoners serving a sentence of less than three years are entitled to be on the Tasmanian Electoral Roll and vote.<sup>97</sup> In Tasmania, people serving a sentence of three years or more are ineligible to enrol to vote in local, state or federal elections during their time of imprisonment.<sup>98</sup> While prisoners serving a sentence of less than three years are eligible to enrol and vote, they face considerable barriers to voting.<sup>99</sup> The Custodial Inspector stated that only 57% of people in Tasmanian prisons who are eligible to vote are enrolled.<sup>100</sup> Additionally, people in custody face barriers such as limited mobile polling services, a lack of awareness of people in custody of their rights and responsibilities concerning voting, and literacy issues.<sup>101</sup> The Custodial Inspector noted mobile polling services in Tasmanian prisons ceased in 2010 following a security incident in an Australian prison.<sup>102</sup> From then until 2023, the only voting option available to people in custody was postal voting, which is problematic given literacy limitations often experienced by people in custody.<sup>103</sup>
- 4.37 The Custodial Inspector argues that there is a need to explore phone access to the TEC in Tasmanian prisons.<sup>104</sup> This would allow people in custody to seek help or guidance as needed, rather than waiting for someone from the TEC to visit, or the need to ask for help from Tasmania Prison Service staff.<sup>105</sup>
- 4.38 There were no mobile polling services available in Tasmanian prisons for the 2024 General Election, only postal voting.<sup>106</sup>
- 4.39 At the 2025 Legislative Council elections, for the first time in over a decade, the TEC provided mobile voting to Tasmanian prisons.<sup>107</sup> The TEC visited the Ron

---

<sup>97</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 3; *Electoral Act 2004* (Tas), s 31.

<sup>98</sup> Office of the Custodial Inspector Tasmania, *Overcoming barriers to voting in prison – review report 2025*, p. 8; *Electoral Act 2004* (Tas), s 31.

<sup>99</sup> Office of the Custodial Inspector Tasmania, *Overcoming barriers to voting in prison – review report 2025*, p. 6.

<sup>100</sup> Office of the Custodial Inspector Tasmania, *Overcoming barriers to voting in prison – review report 2025*, p. 6.

<sup>101</sup> Office of the Custodial Inspector Tasmania, *Overcoming barriers to voting in prison – review report 2025*, p. 7.

<sup>102</sup> Office of the Custodial Inspector Tasmania, *Overcoming barriers to voting in prison – review report 2025*, p. 16.

<sup>103</sup> Office of the Custodial Inspector Tasmania, *Overcoming barriers to voting in prison – review report 2025*, p. 16.

<sup>104</sup> Office of the Custodial Inspector Tasmania, *Overcoming barriers to voting in prison – review report 2025*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>105</sup> Office of the Custodial Inspector Tasmania, *Overcoming barriers to voting in prison – review report 2025*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>106</sup> Office of the Custodial Inspector Tasmania, *Overcoming barriers to voting in prison – review report 2025*, p. 7 & 22.

<sup>107</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, pp. 6-7.

Barwick Prison, the medium and maximum-security areas of Risdon Prison, the Southern Remand Centre and the Mary Hutchinson Women's Prison with mobile voting teams.<sup>108</sup> A total of 21 ballots were collected in this manner.<sup>109</sup>

- 4.40 The TEC also offered mobile voting in Tasmanian prisons in the 2025 General Election. In this instance, the TEC visited the following sites with mobile polling teams; Risdon Prison, both medium and maximum security, the Hobart Reception Prison, the Ron Barwick Prison, the Southern Remand Centre and the Mary Hutchinson Women's Prison.<sup>110</sup> A total of 179 ballots were collected in this manner.<sup>111</sup>

## **Finding**

### **The Committee finds:**

10. There are barriers to eligible incarcerated Tasmanians exercising their right to vote in elections.

## **Recommendation**

### **The Committee recommends:**

4. In line with the recommendations from the Custodial Inspector report on voting in prisons, the Tasmanian Electoral Commission establish a memorandum of understanding with the Tasmania Prison Service, including to:
  - a. Raise awareness about voting and civic engagement in prisons;
  - b. Increase enrolment rates of eligible prisoners; and
  - c. Explore options for offering telephone voting in prisons in addition to in-person and postal voting.

## **Pre Polling**

- 4.41 A number of submissions to the 2024 Inquiry commented on the growing trend of people voting early. During the 2024 General Election, the TEC opened pre-poll voting on the Monday 4 March 2024, 19 days prior to polling day. In the hearing of 5 November 2024 for the 2024 Inquiry, TEC Commissioner Mr Hawkey stated that “almost 32 per cent of votes were cast early, predominantly pre-poll votes, followed by postal, then telephone voting, and the smallest proportion being mobile voting.”<sup>112</sup>

---

<sup>108</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 3.

<sup>109</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 4.

<sup>110</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, pp. 6-7.

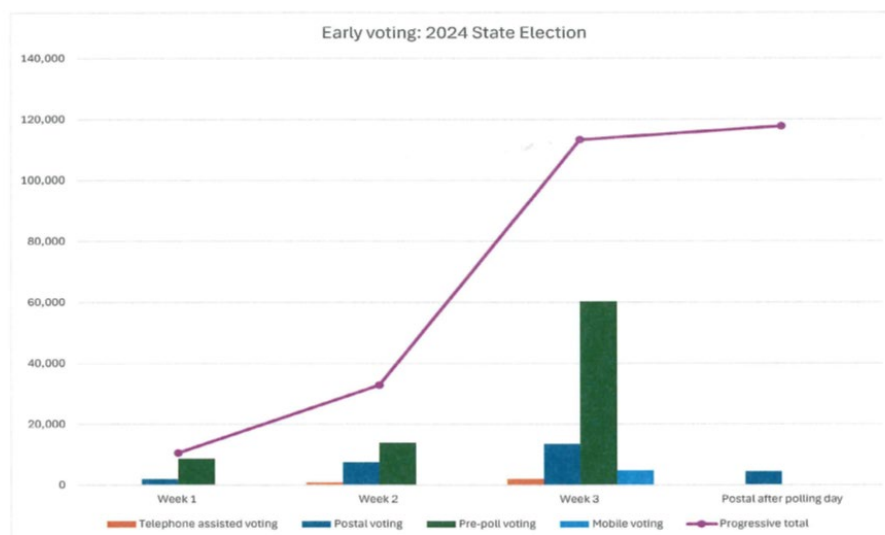
<sup>111</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 7.

<sup>112</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 5 November 2024, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry, p. 46.

- 4.42 The TEC provided the following information on early voting trends for the 2024 General Election:<sup>113</sup>

| Early voting: 2024 State Election |               |               |               |                          | Total  |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------------------|--------|
|                                   | Week 1        | Week 2        | Week 3        | Postal after polling day |        |
| Postal voting                     | 1,891         | 7,519         | 13,536        | 4,429                    | 27,375 |
| Telephone assisted voting         | 0             | 833           | 1,971         |                          | 2,804  |
| Pre-poll voting                   | 8,647         | 13,896        | 60,245        |                          | 82,788 |
| Mobile voting                     |               |               | 4,787         |                          | 4,787  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                      | <b>10,538</b> | <b>22,248</b> | <b>80,539</b> | <b>4,429</b>             |        |
| Progressive total                 | 10,538        | 32,786        | 113,325       | 117,754                  |        |
| % of all ballot papers counted    | 2.83%         | 8.81%         | 30.46%        | 31.65%                   |        |

Figures do not include declaration votes



- 4.43 In the case of the 2024 Legislative Council elections, Mr Hawkey noted that “over 37 per cent of votes were cast early, predominantly pre-poll, followed by postal, telephone, and the smallest being mobile voting.”<sup>114</sup>
- 4.44 Concerns were raised around early voting, in that it results in a large proportion of people voting without receiving all necessary information which may arise during a campaign.<sup>115</sup> Will Coats, providing a submission in his personal capacity, including as a former candidate in Clark, said the following in his submission to the 2024 Inquiry:

*... I am concerned with the increasing length and proclivity of early voting. The placement of early voting centres in more convenient locations (say Murray Street as opposed to the one at the Kingston community centre) seems to disproportionately impact early voting numbers in certain regions, it is clearly no*

<sup>113</sup> Originally provided to the House of Assembly Government Administration Committee B Inquiry into the Electoral Funding and Disclosure Amendment Bill 2024 (No. (9) and is Appendix B in Submission No. 14, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry.

<sup>114</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 5 November 2024, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry, p. 49.

<sup>115</sup> Submission No. 9, Will Coats, 2024 Inquiry, pp. 1-2 and Submission No. 10, Dr Angela Offord, 2024 Inquiry, p. 3.

longer used by those who simply cannot vote on the day. I do have concerns that there will be, at the margin, those who are voting out of convenience who then no longer have the ability to change their mind or vote given new information that comes out in the rest of the campaign. There is a benefit to everyone voting all at once with the same information. At the extreme we have seen circumstances where a significant number of people vote before costings have been made available (or had the chance to be scrutinised). It also influences the campaign and the ability to release and have policy scrutinised. Extensive pre poll periods mean that there is an ever-reducing number of 'active' voters still in the community. At a point in time where people are beginning to focus etc on the election and candidates should be trying to talk and engage as to their candidacy and policies you increasingly spend time talking to those who have already voted.

... Ultimately, I believe we need to strongly move back towards a single 'election day' whereby people can all collectively vote upon the same information.<sup>116</sup>

4.45 This was further expanded upon in hearings:

**Ms O'CONNOR** - ... As I understand it, the reason that the pre-poll period is as long as it is, is in order to make it easy to vote. I'm not sure what the problem is with making it easier for people to vote, is the first question to you. The second one is why would you completely remove pre-poll? Isn't there a capacity here to shorten it a bit as a recommendation rather than just getting rid of it completely?

**Mr COATS** - ... there's a natural difference between voting in terms of purely driving up participation and ensuring that those who do participate are best informed as possible. I guess there is always going to be a trade-off. If you make voting early accessible, then there will be people that cast votes early who don't then have the opportunity to change their vote given subsequent information. The classic example is you get people who vote, costings or policies get released, which then gets scrutinised, scrutinised by other candidates, scrutinised by the media, scrutinised by other commentariat. Those people have now been disenfranchised from being able to change their vote. Potentially, you get a scenario where an event happens or something happens that's relevant to that person, but they're no longer empowered.

You can argue where you draw the line. I'm arguing that actually you should just have an election day and not have pre-poll, or limit pre-poll genuinely to those who can't vote on the day - interstate, postal, et cetera. You could have a line one week, two weeks, 10 weeks out, but there is always that trade-off. You're never going to get 100 per cent participation. Of course, people are informed when they're voting only to a certain extent, but by definition, if someone casts a vote two weeks before the election day, they will not be as informed potentially as someone who votes on election day.<sup>117</sup>

---

<sup>116</sup> Submission No. 9, Will Coats, 2024 Inquiry, pp. 1-2.

<sup>117</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 12 February 2025, Will Coats, 2024 Inquiry, p. 4.

- 4.46 In hearings for the 2025 Inquiry, the Chair asked the Electoral Commissioner about the rise of pre-polling. The Commissioner noted the requirements of the Electoral Act are that people must vote, not that people hear all the same information to vote. The Commissioner was more concerned about ensuring participation rates for voting are maintained:

**CHAIR** - ... will you be reassessing the democratic appropriateness of a three-week pre-poll period, balanced against that democratic imperative that we go to vote with the same information?

**Mr HAWKEY** - Yes. There is no legislative requirement for us, in a sense, for everyone to hear the same information. The Electoral Act doesn't say all electors must have the same information when they vote. There is a requirement under our legislation that they must vote on polling day unless they have a reason they can't vote on polling day, but that is all the restriction. What you're bringing forward is a principle.

**CHAIR** - A principle. That's right. It's not legislative.

**Mr HAWKEY** - The Commission would be happy to look at that as a principle, but from a legislative point of view - so, the drag away from that, is - just look at our annual reports and look at our participation rates in Legislative Council and state elections, at any one around Australia, and they are on a slide. That is a big concern. We believe we have a responsibility to keep participation high. Again, that's not actually legislated other than that there's a non-voter process for people who aren't. That's the key thing - what are the initiatives we can do to try to keep people voting? If we took a week off, what if we drop by 4 per cent? We can't tell who would have pre-pollled in that first week, but if we saw that 3 per cent of people are voting in pre-poll on that first week and we're 4 per cent down, is that the right direction to go?<sup>118</sup>

- 4.47 Associate Professor Richard Herr was asked about pre-polling in a public hearing of the 2024 Inquiry and said the following:

**Prof HERR** - ... Pre-polling seems to me, in some ways, the kind of convenience that allows people to exercise a civic right at their convenience, but that - It shouldn't be a duty that they feel they have to do because of compulsory voting. And so, if they can get it off, out of the way on their way to work or whatever, I think it ought to be there for probably a more restricted period, so that if you're working on Saturdays or you're going to be somewhere where it's inconvenient to - fly fishing, or whatever - you can do it, but not necessarily for such a long period of time.

I mean, it must - I don't know what the Commissioner would say about the cost of keeping these pre-polling booths open, but there is a security issue; there is the additional problem of potentially people voting twice, ... - It does seem to me that it adds integrity issues by having it open for too long.<sup>119</sup>

---

<sup>118</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 94.

<sup>119</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 12 February 2025, Associate Professor Richard Herr, 2024 Inquiry, p. 39.

- 4.48 Pre-polling periods vary across Australian states and territories, with the power to have pre-polling set out in the respective Electoral Acts. Pre-polling timeframes are prescribed for the Commonwealth, Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory. Periods of pre-poll range from 7 to 12 days in those jurisdictions that are prescribed (Table 1 below). In Queensland, pre-polling begins 3 days after the cut-off day for nominations and closes the day before polling day, typically equating to approximately a 2-week period.<sup>120</sup> In Tasmania and the Northern Territory the Electoral Commission is empowered to administratively determine the pre-poll timeframes.

**Table 1: Summary of pre-polling periods<sup>121</sup>**

| Jurisdiction                 | Act                                | Mechanism        | Timeframe                                                                                      |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Commonwealth                 | <a href="#">Electoral Act 1918</a> | Section 200BA    | 12 days before polling day                                                                     |
| New South Wales              | <a href="#">Electoral Act 2017</a> | Section 114      | 7 days before polling day<br>Ending the day before polling day                                 |
| Victoria                     | <a href="#">Electoral Act 2002</a> | Section 99       | 10 days before polling day                                                                     |
| Queensland                   | <a href="#">Electoral Act 1992</a> | Section 112      | 3 days after the cut-off day for nominations.<br>Ending the day before the polling day         |
| South Australia              | <a href="#">Electoral Act 1985</a> | Section 77 (2a)  | 7 days before polling day                                                                      |
| Western Australia            | <a href="#">Electoral Act 1907</a> | Section 91 (2)   | 11 days before ending on the Friday before polling day                                         |
| Tasmania                     | <a href="#">Electoral Act 2004</a> | Section 92 (2)   | Commission to appoint a place for pre-poll                                                     |
| Australian Capital Territory | <a href="#">Electoral Act 1992</a> | Section 136B (2) | To commence the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Monday before polling day<br>Ending the day before polling day |
| Northern Territory           | <a href="#">Electoral Act 2004</a> | Section 42       | Commission to give public notice                                                               |

\*Tasmania and the Northern Territory do not have defined timeframes within their Acts.

<sup>120</sup> Electoral Act 1992 (Qld), s 112, <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-1992-028#sec.112>

<sup>121</sup> Summary provided by the Parliamentary Research Service, Parliament of Tasmania.

## Findings

### The Committee finds:

11. An increasing and significant number of Tasmanians vote early at pre-polling places.
12. Extended pre-polling periods mean early voters cast their ballots before having access to all available information on candidates and parties contesting an election.
13. Extended pre-polling periods reduce the opportunity for candidates to connect with voters and provide information on their candidacy and their election platforms.
14. The pre-polling period for Tasmanian elections is not legislated but determined by the Tasmanian Electoral Commission.
15. The pre-polling period of 19 days in 2024 and 2025 Tasmanian elections is the longest of any Australian jurisdiction, state or Federal.
16. All jurisdictions, other than Tasmania, Queensland and the Northern Territory, have legislated pre-polling periods ranging from 7 to 12 days.

## Recommendation

### The Committee recommends:

5. The Government amended the *Electoral Act 2004* to prescribe a short pre-polling period in Tasmania.

## Counting of Votes by the Tasmanian Electoral Commission

### 2024 General Election Ballot Paper Stock Issues

- 4.49 A key obligation of the TEC is that, in running an election, every elector should be able to cast a vote. However, in the case of the 2024 General Election, at the commencement of the early voting period, there was an issue identified with the production of ballot papers for Lyons.
- 4.50 The TEC identified that a small number of Lyons ballot papers had not received a security wash. This is where a coloured watermark is printed onto the paper before polling. Without this security wash, and without a signature of the issuing officer, ballot papers are not valid.<sup>122</sup>
- 4.51 A full audit was conducted of the Lyons ballot papers in pre-poll centres, and a small number of unwashed papers were found, removed and quarantined. The TEC established a team to contact all general postal voters in Lyons. The TEC commented:

---

<sup>122</sup> Submission No. 14, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry p. 7.

*...replacement ballot packs were issued to any elector who received an unwashed ballot paper or if they believed they may have done so having already completed and returned their original pack. The TEC's Integrated Postal Vote Management System was used to flag and remove duplicate and invalid ballot papers from the count.*

*A dedicated phone service was set up to receive elector queries, and overseas postal voters were further encouraged to make use of the TAV service.*

*There was a single white ballot paper identified as part of the informal ballot paper survey conducted post the election.<sup>123</sup>*

## **Electronic Entry of Ballot Paper Data**

- 4.52 The TEC continues to review and develop practices to increase the efficiency of vote counting for Tasmanian elections. Electoral Commissioner, Mr Hawkey informed the Committee that the organisation is in the final stages of preparing an electronic space for the entry of ballot paper data from General Elections.<sup>124</sup> The TEC currently uses a similar system for local government elections. Mr Hawkey explained how the organisation anticipates the system will work, as well as its security:

**Mr HAWKEY** - ... data entry of ballot papers. So, people still do the physical version, but then there's a process of data entry of what's put on that ballot paper. So, there's no broader system across external -

**CHAIR** - It's a closed system?

**Mr HAWKEY** - It's a closed system, just within the Electoral Commission and it's just data entered of what's on the ballot paper. So, it doesn't have the IT issues of an online system, and there are many of those, and it also - it still doesn't discriminate against people who aren't comfortable with IT systems either. So, from the electors' point of view, it's still the same process of a print; it's just that we, essentially, do a data entry rather than the hand count.

**CHAIR** - In terms of saving time, it doesn't save the time that we need to wait for the postal votes, but it does save the couple of days afterwards when we are doing the counting process?

**Mr HAWKEY** - It will probably save the couple of days afterwards, yes.

**CHAIR** - When we're doing the counting process and for any countback purposes later?

**Mr HAWKEY** - It will make it momentary for [countback]- so there are big savings. When we did one like the [Will] Hodgman, that's sort of 30 staff for a day and three staff for - or [Peter] Gutwein - because we're throwing 28,000 votes and everyone's being looked at individually and thrown between candidates. Now with local government, we do it in 30 seconds, for all local government. So, it saves them

---

<sup>123</sup> Submission No. 14, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry, p. 8.

<sup>124</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 64.

money and it's a good, accurate process. So, it is a good advancement and we're happy that it's a more accurate process when it comes to big counts as well.<sup>125</sup>

## Finding

### The Committee finds:

17. The introduction of electronic entry of ballots for future General Elections may make the counting process faster and more accurate.

## Informal Voting

- 4.53 As mentioned in Chapter 2 at 2.2, the 2024 General Election was the first election conducted following the restoration of the House of Assembly, from 25 to 35 Members.
- 4.54 The increase in Members changed the formality rules for a valid vote for the 2024 General Election.<sup>126</sup> Formality rules are set rules that a ballot paper must meet to be considered a valid vote.<sup>127</sup> Any ballot that does not meet formality rules is classified as an 'informal' vote and set aside.<sup>128</sup>

*The formality rules for House of Assembly ballot papers are established under sections 102 and 103 of the Electoral Act 2004 ('the Act'). To be formal a House of Assembly ballot paper must include preferences: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7; and none of these preferences can be repeated or missing.*

*A ballot paper can contain further preferences and the repetition or omission of a preference after the number 7 does not make the ballot paper informal. However, the counting process can only use the preferences marked on the ballot paper that are included in the unbroken sequence.*

*A ballot paper is also deemed informal if:*

- *no preferences have been recorded,*
- *it contains any writing which enables the elector to be identified, or*
- *it is not a ballot paper that contains the TEC's security mark or the issuing officer's initials.*

*A ballot paper will not be treated as informal if, in the opinion of the returning officer, the elector's intention is clear. It is usual for returning officers to err on the side of maintaining the franchise where possible.<sup>129</sup>*

---

<sup>125</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, pp. 64-65.

<sup>126</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, *Research Paper: Informal ballot papers at the 2024 & 2025 Tasmanian State elections*, December 2025, p. 6.

<sup>127</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, *Research Paper: Informal ballot papers at the 2024 & 2025 Tasmanian State elections*, December 2025, p. 6.

<sup>128</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, *Research Paper: Informal ballot papers at the 2024 & 2025 Tasmanian State elections*, December 2025, p. 6.

<sup>129</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, *Research Paper: Informal ballot papers at the 2024 & 2025 Tasmanian State elections*, December 2025, p. 6.

- 4.55 The shift in formality requirements resulted in a potential increased risk of informal voting. To mitigate this risk, the TEC launched a public awareness campaign with the tagline ‘7 or more to make your vote count.’<sup>130</sup>
- 4.56 The statewide rate of informal voting in the 2024 General Election rose to 6.31% from 5.13% in the 2021 General Election. The TEC determined that in analysing the 23,000 informal ballot papers, only 212 contained only 1 to 5 preferences, suggesting the change in formality did not have a significant impact on the total of informal votes.<sup>131</sup> The TEC made the following comments in relation to informal voting in the 2024 General Election:
- Ballot papers containing apparently unintentional errors accounted for nearly 60% of the informal vote. The repetition or omission of preferences between 1 and 7 was the most frequently observed issue (6,557 ballot papers). The 2022 to 2024 Report on Parliamentary Elections provides informal ballot paper survey statistics.*<sup>132</sup>
- 4.57 Dr Bonham pointed out that this rate of informal voting for the 2024 General Election was the second highest in Tasmanian history. He was critical of the lack of meaningful savings provisions for voters who make unintended errors in numbering.<sup>133</sup> While acknowledging the TEC’s advertising campaign about the changes to the formality of voting and that this campaign may have been more successful and educative should the Election not have been called early, Dr Bonham noted that, outside of the formality change, other causes of unintended informal voting in Tasmania remain largely unaddressed.<sup>134</sup>
- 4.58 Further, Dr Bonham acknowledged that in the case of the 2024 General Election, given the wide margins in the seats, he is confident that unintended informal voting did not impact who won which seat.<sup>135</sup> Dr Bonham however did say, that such a limited impact of informal voting could not be relied upon as occurring in future elections.<sup>136</sup>
- 4.59 The TEC indicated that, given the transition to the new ballot formality rules at the 2024 General Election, it had commenced a review and analysis of informal voting at Tasmanian General Elections.<sup>137</sup> The TEC stated the following about this review:

---

<sup>130</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry, p. 6. Further information about the ‘7 or more’ campaign is available in the TEC’s 2023-24 Annual Report

<sup>131</sup> Submission No. 14, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry, p. 8.

<sup>132</sup> Submission No. 14, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry, p. 8.

<sup>133</sup> Submission No. 13, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2024 Inquiry, p. 4.

<sup>134</sup> Submission No. 13, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2024 Inquiry, p. 4.

<sup>135</sup> Submission No. 13, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2024 Inquiry, p. 5.

<sup>136</sup> Submission No. 13, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2024 Inquiry, p. 5.

<sup>137</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 8. See: - Tasmanian Electoral Commission, *Research Paper: informal ballot papers at the 2024 and 2025 Tasmanian State elections*.

*The most interesting finding of the research paper is that columns on the ballot paper that (under the current rules) list less than seven candidates have a statistically significant higher frequency of informal ballot papers where the elector makes a preference sequence error.*

*The lower number of columns listing less than seven candidates is likely to be a key reason for the large reduction in apparent unintended informal ballot papers at the 2025 State election.<sup>138</sup>*

- 4.60 During the 2025 General Election, the TEC again used the “7 or more” campaign to remind Tasmanians of the changed formality requirements for a valid vote.<sup>139</sup> The TEC used television, print, digital and outdoor advertising over a five-week period to promote the changed voting requirements.<sup>140</sup> The “7 or more” campaign was run alongside an existing “Your vote is bigger than you think” campaign that the TEC have used since 2014.<sup>141</sup>

- 4.61 One submission to the 2024 Inquiry commented on a need for improved training in the counting of votes, using an example of the number of informal votes counted:

*In the 2024 HoA election there was a significant increase in the informal ballot papers from initial 1st preference figures to final rechecked figures for some divisions. For example, in Braddon the number of informals went from 4,555 at the end of 1st preference figures being published on Thursday evening 28 March 2024, to 5,220 following re-checks on Tuesday 2 April, despite only an additional 107 ballot papers being added. This was combined with a decrease in the quota of 69. This indicated an unusually large movement of ballot papers from formal into informal.*

*This is an unusual event, as informals would usually go down, or at most go up by a very small amount, due to the training of polling place staff to move any papers in doubt into informal for further review during rechecks. There was also a similar increase in the informal rate between initial 1st preferences and recheck figures for the division of Lyons, however Lyons added more ballot papers in the final figures and did not have a decrease in the total formal ballot papers or quota.*

*Was there any additional training put in place for ROs prior to and during this state election, particularly considering the change from 5 to 7 members, to ensure their polling place and scrutiny staff were effectively trained for this scrutiny? What oversight in the lead up to polling day, polling day and post polling day was provided for support of inexperienced interstate ROs, of which one was assigned to Braddon?*

---

<sup>138</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, pp. 8-9.

<sup>139</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 5.

<sup>140</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, *Research Paper: informal ballot papers at the 2024 & 2025 Tasmanian State elections*, p. 22. See also Transcript of Evidence, 5 November 2024, p. 48

<sup>141</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, *Research Paper: informal ballot papers at the 2024 & 2025 Tasmanian State elections*, p. 22. See also Transcript of Evidence, 5 November 2024, p. 48

*Has the EC conducted any analysis of this unusual increase in informal ballot papers. Has there been any post-election review and implementation of strategies for long term training and retention of ROs to minimise risks of these types of noticeable errors occurring. In particular, ensuring the skillset is established here in Tasmania and not outsourced to another state due to what appears to be lack of strategic thinking and planning.*<sup>142</sup>

- 4.62 The TEC provided the following comment on informal voting in the 2024 Legislative Council elections:

*Informal voting at these elections varied between the divisions.*

*In the division of Elwick, 816 informal votes were made (4.26% of total ballot papers counted). Ballot papers containing apparently intentional errors accounted for 66% of the informal vote.*

*In the division of Hobart, 497 informal votes were made (2.51% of total ballot papers counted). Ballot papers containing apparently intentional errors accounted for 63% of the informal vote.*

*In the division of Prosser, 856 informal votes were made (3.83% of total ballot papers counted). Ballot papers containing apparently intentional errors accounted for 66.5% of the informal vote.*<sup>143</sup>

- 4.63 The rate of informal voting in the 2025 General Election was 5.84%, down from 6.31% in the 2024 General Election.<sup>144</sup>

## Findings

### The Committee finds:

18. There was a notable increase in informal voting at the 2024 General Election, although the reasons for this are unknown.
19. Following the increase in informal voting in the 2024 General Election, it was noted that the rate of informal voting dropped in the 2025 General Election.
20. The Tasmanian Electoral Commission analysis determined the change in formality requirements in the 2024 General Election did not have a significant impact on the total number of informal votes.
21. Despite notable rates of informal voting in the 2024 General Election, expert opinion is that the informality rate had no material impact on the outcome for each seat.
22. The Tasmanian Electoral Commission established an education program to engage voters on the changed formality requirements for both the 2024 and 2025 General Elections.

---

<sup>142</sup> Submission No 12, Private Witness, 2024 Inquiry, p. 4.

<sup>143</sup> Submission No. 14, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry, p. 11.

<sup>144</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commissions, 2025 Inquiry, p. 8.

23. To preserve integrity and public confidence in the counting of votes, it is important that Returning Officers and Tasmanian Electoral Commission staff possess and maintain continued preparedness, including training in identifying informal votes.

## Recommendations

The Committee recommends that the Tasmanian Electoral Commission:

6. Review and continue the community education program on how to cast a formal vote.
7. Ensure adequate training for Returning Officers and Tasmanian Electoral Commission staff in the identification of informal votes.

## Saving Provisions

- 4.64 Savings provisions are rules designed to prevent votes from being classified as informal when a voter makes a mistake, yet the intention of their vote is clear. Currently, in Tasmania, no formal savings provisions are implemented in either House of Assembly or Legislative Council elections. However, it is the long-held view of the Electoral Commissioner that the formality requirements for votes in General Elections, now being 1 to 7, is a saving provision under the Hare-Clark system.<sup>145</sup> Dr Bonham and Tasmanian Labor provided ongoing support for the introduction of substantive savings provisions, raising the matter in both the 2024 and 2025 Inquiries.<sup>146</sup>
- 4.65 Support for savings provisions emphasises the need to ensure as many Tasmanians as possible are able to effectively participate in the democratic process. Tasmanian Labor suggested that the informality rates of 1 in 16 votes cast in the 2024 General Election<sup>147</sup> and 1 in 17 votes cast in the 2025 General Election,<sup>148</sup> “represents an unacceptable level of unintentional disenfranchisement.”<sup>149</sup> Dr Bonham also supported the consideration of ways to ensure that Tasmanians with varied levels of electoral knowledge are able to fairly participate in elections:

*Dr BONHAM - What concerns me most is seeing votes disallowed where the voter is trying to follow the instructions, they make a mistake because their number skills are not that good, and then, suddenly, because of some strange concern about people getting exact quotas or something that is totally irrelevant to the legitimacy*

---

<sup>145</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 5 November 2024, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry, pp. 50-51 and Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, pp. 63-64.

<sup>146</sup> Submission No. 13, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2024 Inquiry, pp. 4 – 5; Submission No. 9, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2025 Inquiry, pp. 4-5; Submission No. 28, Tasmanian Labor, 2024 Inquiry, p. 6; Submission No. 8, Tasmanian Labor, 2025 Inquiry, p. 6.

<sup>147</sup> Submission No. 28, Tasmanian Labor, 2024 Inquiry, p. 6.

<sup>148</sup> Submission No. 8, Tasmanian Labor, 2025 Inquiry, p. 6.

<sup>149</sup> Submission No. 8, Tasmanian Labor, 2025 Inquiry, p. 6.

of election under this system, we go to say 'No, your vote doesn't count'. We have to say that the integrity of this system means your vote can't be counted. That's silly. We need to be looking for ways to count votes, not ways to not count votes. The Parliament needs to tell the TEC to go and count these votes and not let the TEC keep coming up with excuses for not counting them. I can keep debunking these excuses, but it seems like there is an endless supply.<sup>150</sup>

- 4.66 Dr Bonham proposed that the Electoral Act be amended to introduce a savings provision which would provide for the following:

*Any vote where the voter has numbered at least 7 boxes with a unique 1 be considered formal and exhaust at the point of the first error.*<sup>151</sup>

- 4.67 Dr Bonham described this recommendation in more detail:

**Dr BONHAM** - I think the advantage ... is that if a voter has numbered at least seven boxes and they've got a unique one, then their vote's formal. I'm not sure whether you'd necessarily include things like 1, 2, 2, 2, 2, because in that case the voter, well 1 and six 2s, because in that case, the voter hasn't made a reasonable attempt to comply with the ballot paper instructions. If the voter's just missing a few numbers within the range 1 to 7 but they're trying to do 1 to 7.

**CHAIR** - For example, somebody's numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 5, 6, 7, 8, et cetera, this would allow their vote to be counted and, potentially, moved on, redistributed through to where they made the mistake at 5, but not past 5.

**Dr BONHAM** - Yes. If there's two 5s, then it's valid 1 to 4, at that point it's exhausted.

...

**Dr BONHAM** - The TEC could advise on how exactly to formulate it best within that range, whether you just say anything with a 1 and six other numbers counts or whether you make it a bit more restrictive than that. I think that the advantage of my second option is that it protects the voter who has made an unintentional error. It protects the voter who has read the instructions, is trying to comply with the instructions but makes a mistake, whereas a voter who votes 1 to 5 and stops, I have slightly less sympathy for that voter because they haven't read the instructions or it may be that they completely don't understand the instructions because of the language issue and possibly they think it's the same as last time or something like that. It's quite likely that they haven't actually read the instructions and taken in that they need to follow the instructions.<sup>152</sup>

- 4.68 Dr Bonham also provided a previous assessment he undertook of the exhaust rate in the 2024 General Election, suggesting that the inclusion of more votes from the public positively outweighs existing resistance in the Tasmanian community to introducing savings provisions. Dr Bonham proposed that such

---

<sup>150</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 6 November 2024, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2024 Inquiry, pp. 2-3.

<sup>151</sup> Submission No. 13, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2024 Inquiry, p. 5; Submission No. 9, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2025 Inquiry, p. 4; Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2025 Inquiry, p. 7.

<sup>152</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 6 November 2024, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2024 Inquiry, pp. 4-5.

concerns around saving provisions often assumed that, if implemented, they may enable the election of candidates who have not received a quota:

*“The statewide exhaust rate (the proportion of vote-values ending up leaving the count) was 5.5%, with Bass the highest with 7.4%. As a quota share (0.44 quotas average) this is very similar to 2014 and 2018, but much higher than 2021 which had very low exhaust rates (3.7% or 0.22 quotas average). The structure of the preference distributions can have a large effect on exhaust rates, since major party voters often vote for their own party then stop, and contests that end up between candidates from the same party often see a lot of voters not numbering that column. It's important to bear in mind that 5.5% of vote values exhausting does not mean 5.5% of voters' votes left the count entirely - exhaust includes votes coming from surpluses where part of a voter's vote value had helped elect somebody but part of it had later left the count.”<sup>153</sup>*

- 4.69 The Electoral Commissioner, across both Inquiries, maintained the view that voting 1 to 7 in the Hare-Clark system is an already functional savings provision. He indicated that this allows the General Election, and any potential recounts throughout a term of Parliament, to occur in an appropriate manner:

**Mr HAWKEY** - As I often say at these gatherings, for me, personally, and as I've said at other times, I think it's really important to set that bar at seven and I'm always of the view that seven is a savings provision. I think we heard earlier today that most states have full preferences required. Although, that said, most have single seats with much fewer candidates. But I think if we were to say - we normally say, 'Vote all the preferences you can and if you want your vote to count, you have to vote one to seven.' Now, if we have saving provisions, then that's actually not a true statement. So, do we then say, 'We want you to vote for all of them, you really should vote seven, but you're probably going to be okay with three?'

*There always has to be a point where you find a happy balance. For me, seven is a good one because..., it allows two things. It allows parties that are organised to have seven candidates because they don't want people to vote informally and that has a flow-on effect of two things. It reduces, to a certain degree, our exhaustion. More importantly, for me, it allows there to be reserve members of a party to fill a vacancy that may occur from people resigning from Parliament. Two or three times in my time, a party has run out of extras to backfill those recounts. If that occurs, under our legislation, the party director has the right to say, 'I wish to have a by-election.'*

...

*So, recounts allow the will and the mind of the people - and having seven and having parties maintain that seven has the advantage of the formality vote, but it also allows depth of field for recounts.<sup>154</sup>*

---

<sup>153</sup> Quote originally appears at <https://kevinbonham.blogspot.com/2024/04/tasmania-2024-is-this-hare-clarks-new.html>, included in Submission No. 13, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2024 Inquiry, p. 5.

<sup>154</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, pp. 62-63.

- 4.70 Consideration was also given to the current “intention of the voter” provision in the Electoral Act. Dr Bonham explained the existing provision does not allow votes which may have a number omitted, or repeated, to be deemed valid and proposing a savings provision to enable votes with a unique “1 vote” to be counted to address this limitation.<sup>155</sup> The TEC noted that when considering any suggestions regarding savings provisions, it was its strong view that the organisation should not be placed in a position “to decide somebody’s intent because that’s very difficult to do.”<sup>156</sup>
- 4.71 The change in the requirement for a formal vote at the 2024 General Election from “1 to 5” to “1 to 7” due to the restoration of seats in the House of Assembly, was also used as a case study to examine savings provisions. In his submission to the 2024 Inquiry, Dr Bonham proposed that savings provisions could be introduced to allow votes which would have been formal under the previous “1 to 5” formality to be included as valid.<sup>157</sup> The lack of informal votes arising from this issue, totalling only 212 of the informal votes in the 2024 General Election, led him to support more strongly to the Committee his recommendation of a “unique 1” savings provision.<sup>158</sup>
- 4.72 While noting the small number of informal votes in the 2024 General Election, the TEC also raised concerns regarding potential ballot paper and voting manipulation which could arise if the “1 to 5” savings provision was legislated. The Electoral Commissioner suggested that under the potential “1 to 5” savings provision, political parties may decide to run only five candidates per electorate, if it remains that only five votes are required for validity.<sup>159</sup> This could then cause administrative issues in the case of vacancies and countbacks and potentially led to by-elections being requested or required, which is currently atypical in the Hare-Clark system.<sup>160</sup> Dr Bonham refuted the Electoral Commissioner’s theorisation of potential actions of political parties, noting it is unlikely that major parties would run only five candidates. Additionally, in the ACT where a saving provision for a valid 1 vote is in place, the parties do not make active attempts to manipulate the number of candidates on the ballot paper.<sup>161</sup>

---

<sup>155</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 6 November 2024, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2024 Inquiry, p. 5.

<sup>156</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 65.

<sup>157</sup> Submission No. 13, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2024 Inquiry, p. 5.

<sup>158</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 6 November 2024, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2024 Inquiry, p. 4.

<sup>159</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 5 November 2024, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry, pp. 51-53

<sup>160</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 5 November 2024, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry, pp. 51-53

<sup>161</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 6 November 2024, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2024 Inquiry, pp. 2-3.

## Findings

### The Committee finds:

24. The Tasmanian Electoral Commission regards the formality requirement for a ballot paper to have a vote of ‘1 to 7,’ to be an adequate savings provision.
25. The Australian Capital Territory, which uses a Hare-Clark voting system, has more permissive savings provisions than Tasmania.
26. There is some support for amendment of the *Electoral Act 2004* to include savings provisions, to prevent votes from being classified as informal when the intention of the vote is clear.

## Recommendation

### The Committee recommends that:

8. The Government review savings provisions in the *Electoral Act 2004* and examine the merit of expanding these provisions.

## Voter Turnout

- 4.73 The Committee notes the average voter turnout for the 2024 General Election was 91.15% and 90.05% for the 2025 General Election. Voter turnout for the 2024 and 2025 General Elections per electorate are shown in the table<sup>162</sup> below:

|          | 2024     |       |         | 2025     |       |         |
|----------|----------|-------|---------|----------|-------|---------|
|          | Enrolled | Voted | Turnout | Enrolled | Voted | Turnout |
| Bass     | 80126    | 72630 | 90.64%  | 80566    | 71993 | 89.36%  |
| Braddon  | 83875    | 76213 | 90.86%  | 84566    | 75698 | 89.51%  |
| Clark    | 74236    | 67258 | 90.60%  | 74385    | 67157 | 90.28%  |
| Franklin | 82238    | 76156 | 92.60%  | 83928    | 76745 | 91.44%  |
| Lyons    | 87722    | 79820 | 90.99%  | 89460    | 80229 | 89.68%  |

- 4.74 The Committee also notes that for the 2024 Legislative Council elections voter turnout was 81.01%. For the Legislative Council elections held in 2025 voter turnout was 82.85%.<sup>163</sup> The below table shows the Legislative Council statistics by division<sup>164</sup>:

<sup>162</sup> Data provided by the Parliamentary Research Service, Parliament of Tasmania.

<sup>163</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, Annual Report 2024-25, p 23.

[https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/info/Publications/AnnualReports/TEC\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2024-2025\\_WEB.pdf?t=1003261150](https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/info/Publications/AnnualReports/TEC_Annual_Report_2024-2025_WEB.pdf?t=1003261150)

<sup>164</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, Annual Report 2024-25, p. 23.

[https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/info/Publications/AnnualReports/TEC\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2024-2025\\_WEB.pdf?t=1003261150](https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/info/Publications/AnnualReports/TEC_Annual_Report_2024-2025_WEB.pdf?t=1003261150)

**Table 3: Legislative Council elections statistics by division**

| Election year           | 2024                    |        |         | 2025       |        |          |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------|---------|------------|--------|----------|
|                         | Elwick<br>(by-election) | Hobart | Prosser | Montgomery | Nelson | Pembroke |
| Close of roll enrolment | 23,669                  | 24,538 | 27,419  | 29,824     | 25,560 | 23,438   |
| Ballot papers cast      | 19,134                  | 19,769 | 22,365  | 24,548     | 20,985 | 19,771   |
| Turnout                 | 80.84%                  | 80.56% | 81.57%  | 82.31%     | 82.10% | 84.35%   |
| Number of candidates    | 4                       | 7      | 5       | 5          | 3      | 5        |
| Formal ballot papers    | 18,318                  | 19,272 | 21,509  | 23,642     | 20,591 | 19,322   |
| Informality rate        | 4.26%                   | 2.51%  | 3.83%   | 3.69%      | 1.88%  | 2.27%    |



## 5 TASMANIANS AND ELECTIONS

### The Voting Public

- 5.1 The Committee received information regarding the engagement and understanding of the Tasmanian public in elections and the political landscape more broadly. Submissions discussed limited education on elections and the Parliament, and a lack of trust in democracy as concerns effecting the Tasmanian public.

### Education

- 5.2 A number of submissions<sup>165</sup> expressed concerns over the limited understanding of the voting public in Tasmania of elections and how they work. Dr Angela Offord, who stood as an independent candidate for Lyons in the 2024 General Election, described how she had spent a significant amount of time during her campaign explaining to people the role of an elected representative and how Parliament works.<sup>166</sup>
- 5.3 The Jacqui Lambie Network submission also discussed voter knowledge, indicating that many voters do not understand what an independent candidate is and what their job might entail if elected.<sup>167</sup>
- 5.4 A poor elector understanding of the conventions regarding the calling of an election was discussed by Dr Bonham in his submission to the 2024 Inquiry. Dr Bonham indicated the conspiracy theories and misunderstandings he encountered throughout, and after, the campaign suggest a need for greater public education on the process for calling elections in Tasmania.<sup>168</sup>
- 5.5 The Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party Tasmania (SFF Tasmania) submission also raised the issue of voter education, indicating a lack of understanding of the voting public of preferential voting, and the rights and responsibilities associated with voting.<sup>169</sup> The SFF Tasmania submission suggested there is a need for increased resources for education on our electoral system in schools to help encourage informed and deliberate voting.<sup>170</sup>
- 5.6 The Tasmanian Constitution Society (the Society) also advocated for increased education on the structure and process of government, and civic

---

<sup>165</sup> Submission No. 10, Dr Angela Offord, 2024 Inquiry; Submission No. 13, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2024 Inquiry; Submission No. 23, Tasmanian Constitution Society, 2024 Inquiry; Submission No. 25, Jacqui Lambie Network, 2024 Inquiry; Submission No. 11, McKinnon, 2025 Inquiry; Transcript of Evidence, 6 November 2024, 2024 Inquiry, p. 19, pp. 22-23, p. 26 and p. 33.

<sup>166</sup> Submission No. 10, Dr Angela Offord, 2024 Inquiry, p. 2.

<sup>167</sup> Submission No. 25, Jacqui Lambie Network, 2024 Inquiry, pp. 2-3.

<sup>168</sup> Submission No. 13, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2024 Inquiry, p.2.

<sup>169</sup> Submission No. 20, Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party Tasmania, 2024 Inquiry, p. 1.

<sup>170</sup> Submission No. 20, Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party Tasmania, 2024 Inquiry, p. 1.

- participation.<sup>171</sup> The Society suggested increased resourcing for the Parliamentary Education Unit to enable it to travel to more schools.<sup>172</sup>
- 5.7 Dr Offord stated there needed to be better voter awareness of the candidates in elections, including their contact details and platforms.<sup>173</sup> Dr Offord suggested that candidate information should be sent to all electors in the same way as is done in local government elections.<sup>174</sup>
- 5.8 The publication of candidate profiles in local/regional newspapers was also proposed by Dr Offord in order to provide electors access to information about candidates.<sup>175</sup>

## Findings

### The Committee finds:

27. There is an opportunity to improve the level of civics education in the Tasmanian community.
28. Civics education, including that provided in schools and by the Parliament of Tasmania Education Office, is key to improving public understanding of the Tasmanian electoral system and Parliament.

## Recommendations

### The Committee recommends:

9. The Government improve and expand civics education in Tasmania.
10. The Tasmanian Electoral Commission expand community education programs on the Tasmanian electoral system, including outside of election periods.

## Trust and Integrity in Democracy

- 5.9 The public's perception of trust and integrity in the democratic process was examined in a number of submissions.<sup>176</sup> The Tasmanian Constitution Society stated:

*Confidence in politicians, the political system and institutions, throughout democratic countries is low. Almost six out of 10 Australians don't agree politicians "can generally be trusted to act in the interests of the people they*

---

<sup>171</sup> Submission No. 23, Tasmanian Constitution Society, 2024 Inquiry, p 3.

<sup>172</sup> Submission No. 23, Tasmanian Constitution Society, 2024 Inquiry, p. 3.

<sup>173</sup> Submission No. 10, Dr Angela Offord, 2024 Inquiry, p. 1.

<sup>174</sup> Submission No. 10, Dr Angela Offord, 2024 Inquiry, p. 1.

<sup>175</sup> Submission No. 10, Dr Angela Offord, 2024 Inquiry, p. 1.

<sup>176</sup> Submission No. 5, Tasmanian Constitution Society, 2025 Inquiry, p. 2; Transcript of Evidence, 6 November 2024, Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party Tasmania, 2024 Inquiry, pp. 22-23; Transcript of Evidence, 12 February 2025, Dr Angela Offord, 2024 Inquiry, p. 25.

*represent”<sup>177</sup>. Loss of faith in political actors and institutions leads to disillusionment and dissatisfaction which is detrimental to democracy’s survival.*

5.10 It was suggested that, as a result of the swift pace of the 2024 and 2025 General Elections, this disillusionment could have had an influence on the shift of some voters to independent and minor party candidates in the two elections.<sup>178</sup>

5.11 Electoral Commissioner Mr Hawkey discussed the positive role a public tally room and live broadcast of results on polling night for Tasmanian General Elections, plays in engaging the public with the democratic process and assisting to increase trust:

*...Part of the thing, for me, in the longer term is, it is people seeing Tasmanian democracy in action. As mis- and disinformation grows, people still, at the moment, have the possibility to turn on the television. So, if someone says, 'No figures coming in,' on social media, 'No figures coming in for Braddon,' they can turn on the television and go, 'No, there they are and here's how it's going.'*

*It is still, in a place like Tasmania, a good place to have a good profile on election night to show that all is well - hopefully, all is well. As well as it being a part of our tradition and a part of, therefore, our acceptance and understanding of what a Tasmanian election is.<sup>179</sup>*

5.12 The potential use of current or proposed public funds through the form of “election promises” by incumbent Members of Parliament, as a mechanism through which to obtain support from the voting public, was also raised as a concern impacting the integrity of elections.<sup>180</sup> This use of public funds is separate to those legislated under the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023*. Professor Pam Sharpe, a candidate in the 2024 Legislative Council election in the Division of Prosser noted the following regarding the potential influence of “election promises” on the outcomes of elections:

*Mr Vincent who was successful had a three-week campaign where the Liberals and himself put very great resources into the campaign. Sorell were promised a new Men’s Shed and club house facilities to cost \$700,000. In Swansea the golf club were asked what they needed and settled on a new shed for a few tens of thousands. To me this is blatantly unfair competition and poor conduct. Most Australians do not want American-style politics but it is possible to ‘buy’ a seat as far as I can see.<sup>181</sup>*

---

<sup>177</sup> Footnote I, ABC: Australia Talks Reveals We Have Very Little Faith Our Politicians Will Do The Right Thing, 16 June 2021. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-06-16/annabel-crabb-analysis-australia-talks-politicians-accountability/100214236>, Submission No. 5, Tasmanian Constitution Society, 2025 Inquiry, p. 2.

<sup>178</sup> Submission No. 5, Tasmanian Constitution Society, 2025 Inquiry, p. 2.

<sup>179</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 91.

<sup>180</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 12 February 2025, Integrity Commission Tasmania, 2024 Inquiry, p. 11; Transcript of Evidence, 6 November 2024, The Australia Institute, 2024 Inquiry, p. 90; Submission No. 5, Tasmanian Constitution Society, 2025 Inquiry, p. 4.

<sup>181</sup> Submission No. 11, Professor Pam Sharpe, 2024 Inquiry, p. 1.

- 5.13 Associate Professor Herr also provided comments on the impact of “election promises” on the community:

*Of course the law is against it. The law says you can't bribe people to vote. It's just that people make exceptions for political promises, but the law is very clear. You can't bribe people to vote and if you promise them a sports ground or special programs for the school or whatever ... but I believe that those discretionary grants can be delivered after an election without the same degree of scrutiny that occurs in Parliament.*<sup>182</sup>

- 5.14 The Tasmanian Integrity Commission provided the 2024 Inquiry with copies of its research into ethical conduct, and potential misconduct risks, during Tasmanian elections. Paper 1, released in 2021, titled *Tasmania's Electoral Act offences and campaign conduct*, focused on the potential risk of indirect electoral bribery during Tasmanian elections.<sup>183</sup> The paper defined indirect electoral bribery as “the promise or giving of a benefit to a small or localised group of electors to ‘buy’ their vote,” which can colloquially be known as pork-barrelling.<sup>184</sup>
- 5.15 Paper 2 from the Integrity Commission titled, *Grant Commitment in Election Campaigns*, was released in 2022 and focused on the potential risks of indirect electoral bribery, especially in the form of grant commitments, during Tasmanian elections undermining public trust in government.<sup>185</sup> Paper 2 notes “there are no mandatory regulations, legislation or policies about how Tasmanian Ministers manage grants – including those they pledge during an election campaign.”<sup>186</sup> The Paper includes examples from both the 2010 and 2018 General Elections during which grant commitments were used by the Labor and Liberal parties respectively as a form of electoral commitment.<sup>187</sup> The 2010 instance led the Tasmanian Audit Office to produce a report which

---

<sup>182</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 12 February 2025, Associate Professor Richard Herr, 2024 Inquiry, p. 42.

<sup>183</sup> Integrity Commission Tasmania, ‘Paper 1: Tasmania’s Electoral Act Offences and Campaign Conduct,’ 2021, [https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0024/84912/5.a.-Integrity-Commission-Paper-1-Tasmanias-Electoral-Act-Offences-and-Campaign-Conduct.pdf](https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0024/84912/5.a.-Integrity-Commission-Paper-1-Tasmanias-Electoral-Act-Offences-and-Campaign-Conduct.pdf).

<sup>184</sup> Integrity Commission Tasmania, ‘Paper 1: Tasmania’s Electoral Act Offences and Campaign Conduct,’ 2021, p.3, [https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0024/84912/5.a.-Integrity-Commission-Paper-1-Tasmanias-Electoral-Act-Offences-and-Campaign-Conduct.pdf](https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0024/84912/5.a.-Integrity-Commission-Paper-1-Tasmanias-Electoral-Act-Offences-and-Campaign-Conduct.pdf).

<sup>185</sup> Integrity Commission Tasmania, ‘Paper 2: Grant Commitments in Election Campaigns,’ 6 April 2022, [https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0025/84913/5.b.-Integrity-Commission-Paper-2-Grant-Commitments-in-Election-Campaigns.pdf](https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0025/84913/5.b.-Integrity-Commission-Paper-2-Grant-Commitments-in-Election-Campaigns.pdf).

<sup>186</sup> Integrity Commission Tasmania, ‘Paper 2: Grant Commitments in Election Campaigns,’ 6 April 2022, p. 9., [https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0025/84913/5.b.-Integrity-Commission-Paper-2-Grant-Commitments-in-Election-Campaigns.pdf](https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0025/84913/5.b.-Integrity-Commission-Paper-2-Grant-Commitments-in-Election-Campaigns.pdf).

<sup>187</sup> Integrity Commission Tasmania, ‘Paper 2: Grant Commitments in Election Campaigns,’ 6 April 2022, pp. 12-15., [https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0025/84913/5.b.-Integrity-Commission-Paper-2-Grant-Commitments-in-Election-Campaigns.pdf](https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0025/84913/5.b.-Integrity-Commission-Paper-2-Grant-Commitments-in-Election-Campaigns.pdf).

recommended a number of clear guidelines which should be followed when grant commitments are made.<sup>188</sup>

- 5.16 The Integrity Commission concluded Paper 2 by advocating for the development of a grant system which, if grants are used as a form of electoral commitment, enables the appropriate checks and balances to ensure the Tasmanian public can be informed of any such instances:

*It is an important part of the democratic process that aspiring parties should provide their election commitments during the election period. Ideally, financial promises made during an election would be to establish a grant program, with all the checks and balances a program entails. But this is not always the case, and we cannot – and should not – fetter the kinds of policy commitments that election candidates can make. This means it is unavoidable that grant promises will continue to be made with little process or policy backing, and may be – or be perceived to be – for political outcomes only i.e. pork barrelling.<sup>189</sup>*

## Findings

### The Committee finds:

29. Promises made by candidates and parties for specific expenditure of public money prior to and during an election period may influence voter intentions in the electorate.
30. The Integrity Commission asserts election promises for the specific expenditure of public money in local communities, depending on the processes used in selecting and delivering the funding, may be perceived as indirect electoral bribery.

## Recommendation

### The Committee recommends:

11. The Government implement the following substantive Integrity Commission recommendations on funding promises made during election periods:
  - a. Before the next House of Assembly election, review the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (Cth) with a view to introducing legislation into Tasmania incorporating the sentiment of section 71 of that Act;
  - b. Before the next House of Assembly election, introduce mandatory grant rules modelled on the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines; and

---

<sup>188</sup> Tasmanian Audit Office, 'Premier's Sundry Grants Program and Urban Renewal and Heritage Fund,' 2011, <https://audit-tas-gov-au.assets.ionatahosting.net/uploads/URHF-and-Premiers-Sundry-Grants-Fund.pdf>.

<sup>189</sup> Integrity Commission Tasmania, 'Paper 2: Grant Commitments in Election Campaigns,' 6 April 2022, p. 21, [https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0025/84913/5.b.-Integrity-Commission-Paper-2-Grant-Commitments-in-Election-Campaigns.pdf](https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0025/84913/5.b.-Integrity-Commission-Paper-2-Grant-Commitments-in-Election-Campaigns.pdf)

- c. Adopt the remainder of the recommendations made in 2011 by the Tasmanian Auditor-General about the Premier’s Sundry Grants program (now known as the Premier’s Discretionary Fund).**

## **Candidates**

- 5.17 In the 2024 and 2025 Inquiries the Committee received evidence from individuals who stood as candidates in both General and Legislative Council elections. Evidence included the discussion of matters such as inequitable access to funds and support,<sup>190</sup> lack of support for candidates in understanding the processes,<sup>191</sup> and inappropriate standards of conduct<sup>192</sup> - all of which were noted as impacting on campaigns. Other key matters raised were the requirements for nomination and rules regarding the candidacy of Tasmanian State Servants.

## **Nomination of Candidates**

- 5.18 Currently, people wishing to run as a candidate in a House of Assembly General Election are required to pay a deposit of \$400 to the TEC and provide the signatures of 10 nominators from the electorate.<sup>193</sup> For independent candidates, this number of signatures will place them in an ‘ungrouped’ column on the ballot paper of their electorate. If the candidate wishes to be in a column of their own on the ballot paper, they require signatures from 100 nominators.<sup>194</sup>
- 5.19 Dr Bonham submitted that the barrier to entry for candidates who seek to run as independents is too low, leading to increased independent participation.<sup>195</sup> This participation places additional pressure on the electoral system, with larger ballot papers for the TEC to prepare and count, as well as more complex voting requirements for the public. Dr Bonham provided data which showed that in the 2025 General Election, ‘21 of the 44 independents polled 200 votes or less with another ten polling between 201 and 500 votes.’<sup>196</sup> He suggests that if the requirements for nominating as a candidate are increased to a \$600 deposit and 50 signatures, this may deter campaigns of some potential independents.<sup>197</sup> Dr Bonham noted these proposed numbers were options which presented a

---

<sup>190</sup> Submission No. 10, Dr Angela Offord, 2024 Inquiry, p. 1; Submission No. 11, Professor Pam Sharpe, 2024 Inquiry, p. 1.

<sup>191</sup> Submission No. 11, Pam Sharpe, 2024 Inquiry, p. 2.

<sup>192</sup> Submission No. 25, Jacqui Lambie Network, 2024 Inquiry, p. 4.

<sup>193</sup> Submission No. 9, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2025 Inquiry, p. 5. Also see *Electoral Act 2004 (Tas)*, s 77.

<sup>194</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2025 Inquiry, p. 5.

<sup>195</sup> Submission No. 9, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2025 Inquiry, p. 4.

<sup>196</sup> Submission No. 9, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2025 Inquiry, p. 4.

<sup>197</sup> Submission No. 9, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2025 Inquiry, p. 5.

“happy medium,”<sup>198</sup> but that he was open to consideration of proposals of any increase.

- 5.20 Dr Offord, an independent candidate for Lyons in the 2024 General Election, supported the notion of increasing the number of signatures required for a nominee to both increase their support in the community and to lessen ballot paper confusion.<sup>199</sup>
- 5.21 The TEC discussed matters of eligibility and the processing of nominations. The TEC noted, under the Electoral Act, nomination deposits are to be paid via cheque or in cash, which places undue strain on nominees and the TEC, as well as safety concerns for the administration of such deposits.<sup>200</sup> The TEC was open to a review of deposit amount and required signatures for nominating candidates.<sup>201</sup> The deposit amount was last reviewed when the new Electoral Act was enacted in 2004 where it was raised from \$200.<sup>202</sup> The Commissioner raised the TEC’s openness to a review of the number of nominator signatures required for a valid nomination:

*Mr HAWKEY - ... certainly, the number of electors who support you, I think there should be room to increase that as they're looking to do with local government from three to 30. I don't see any reason why there isn't a good justification for going from 10 to 50. You could argue the same thing then for a group. Should it be more than 100? Then if it's 50 just to get on the paper or is 100 still fine or should it be more?*

*The issue that you have is like the snap election now, how easy is it to get? And there's a member; who could probably talk about that. Does it take two days, five days or 10 days to get 150 names to support you when you know the election is called and you've got eight days to get your nomination in.*

*There is a range of things there. Similarly, if you're lifting these other items, a registered party only needs 100 registered members. They have to do a lot more because they have to be registered members, they have to support the nomination, they have to have their name on the paper. But should that be more than 100, which was set quite a - not as long ago that was a more recent one that one - that was late 1990s.*

*Again, from our point of view, it's been a long time and some of these things are reasonable to have considered.*<sup>203</sup>

- 5.22 The Tasmanian Constitution Society also recommended candidates should be required to make a contact email address publicly available. Currently, an email address and phone number are to be provided to the TEC, but candidates can

---

<sup>198</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Dr Kevin Bonahm, 2025 Inquiry, pp. 5-6.

<sup>199</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 12 February 2025, Dr Angela Offord, 2024 Inquiry, pp. 27-28.

<sup>200</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, pp. 90-91.

<sup>201</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 90.

<sup>202</sup> Tasmania, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Assembly, 26 October 2004, Electoral Bill 2004 (No. 63), 71, (Judy Jackson, Minister for Justice and industrial Relations).

<sup>203</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, pp. 90-91.

nominate if their information is made public. The Society suggests candidates should be accessible and accountable to the public and that therefore:

*Candidates' contact details should be available to all voters, community organisations, interest groups and others. The intention is not to invade privacy, but to improve accountability. Candidates could set up a specific email address for campaign purposes that would give electors a way of contacting someone who is seeking to represent them in parliament.*<sup>204</sup>

- 5.23 Jack Davenport, an independent candidate for Bass at the 2025 General Election, suggested a Registration to Work with Vulnerable People should be required for those nominating as candidates. Mr Davenport proposed that the role of a politician leads to ongoing interactions with potentially vulnerable Tasmanians or sensitive information, and that Tasmanians have a right to expect from politicians the same “basic level of trust that they would expect from any public servant or many other positions.”<sup>205</sup>

## Findings

### The Committee finds:

31. To nominate as a candidate in a House of Assembly General Election or Legislative Council election, an individual must pay a \$400 deposit in cash or cheque form only. This amount was set in 2004.
32. There are differing views on the number of elector signatures which should be required for a candidate to nominate in a House of Assembly General Election or Legislative Council election.
33. Candidates in a House of Assembly General Election and Legislative Council elections are not required to provide a publicly available email address or phone number.

## Recommendations

### The Committee recommends:

12. The Government review the *Electoral Act 2004* to consider:
  - a. The deposit amount and method of payment for candidates standing in Tasmanian elections; and
  - b. The number of nominator signatures required to validate a candidate in Tasmanian elections.
13. Candidates in House of Assembly General Elections, or Legislative Council elections, be required to provide a preferred method of contact to the Tasmanian Electoral Commission for publication.

---

<sup>204</sup> Submission No. 5, Tasmanian Constitution Society, 2025 Inquiry, p. 3.

<sup>205</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Jack Davenport, 2025 Inquiry, pp. 55 -56.

## Nominating as a Tasmanian State Servant

- 5.24 Mr Davenport, a candidate for Bass in the 2025 General Election, provided insight into his experiences standing as a candidate whilst employed in the Tasmanian State Service. As an employee of the Department for Education, Children and Young People (DECYP), Mr Davenport reported substantial difficulty in accessing clear and available information regarding his eligibility to stand as a candidate and any DECYP requirements for this process. After seeking support from DECYP Workplace Relations, Mr Davenport states he received “a series of confusing and contradictory messaging”<sup>206</sup> regarding his leave entitlements and the Department’s expectations for him during his leave over the campaign period, which appeared to differ from those provided by the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC). Mr Davenport also stated DECYP requested he submit campaign media releases to the communications team in the Department before making them public.<sup>207</sup>
- 5.25 The requirements relating to State Service employees and State Service officers<sup>208</sup> who are candidates at Federal, State or Local Government elections are outlined in the State Service, Practices, Procedures and Standards No. 3.<sup>209</sup>
- 5.26 A State Service employee is not required to resign if they are contesting a Tasmanian election. Leave without pay is provided under the provisions of Section 2(2)(b) of the *Constitution (State Employees) Act 1944* for up to two months. Paid leave is also an option where available subject to Head of Agency approval. If an individual is not elected, they may complete their scheduled leave, either with or without pay or make a request to return to work early to the Head of Agency. If an individual is elected, their employment is terminated.
- 5.27 State Service officers are required to resign if they contest a Tasmanian election. Depending on the person’s appointment, they may or may not be eligible for reappointment should they not be elected.<sup>210</sup>
- 5.28 The Committee requested the Head of the State Service to provide information regarding the policies, procedures or arrangements that are department-specific to State Service employees who contest Tasmanian elections. The response indicated there are varied approaches in different departments,

---

<sup>206</sup> Submission No. 10, Jack Davenport, 2025 Inquiry, p. 2.

<sup>207</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Jack Davenport, 2025 Inquiry, p. 52.

<sup>208</sup> The term ‘Tasmanian State Servant’ refers to those employed under Section 37 of the *State Service Act 2000* (Tas). The term ‘State Service Officer’ or ‘Officer’ refers to individuals appointed under Section 31 of this Act and includes the following roles: Heads of Agencies, Prescribed Officers, Senior Executive Officers and Equivalent Specialist Officers.

<sup>209</sup> Letter from Head of the State Service, Kathrine Morgan-Wicks PSM, to Committee Chair, Hon. Meg Webb MLC, dated 11 September 2026, p. 4. Also available here: [https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0021/507630/Contesting-Federal-State-Local-Elections.pdf](https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0021/507630/Contesting-Federal-State-Local-Elections.pdf)

<sup>210</sup> Practice, Procedures and Standards No. 3, Contesting Federal, State and Local Government Elections, pp. 4-5

ranging from actively checking names of candidates released by the TEC, to having no department-specific procedures in place.<sup>211</sup>

---

<sup>211</sup> Letter from Head of the State Service, Kathrine Morgan-Wicks PSM, to Committee Chair, Hon. Meg Webb MLC, dated 11 September 2026,  
[https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0021/111549/11092026\\_Head-of-the-State-Service.pdf](https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0021/111549/11092026_Head-of-the-State-Service.pdf)

## 6 STRUCTURE AND CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS

- 6.1 This chapter considers issues raised in the 2024 and 2025 Inquiries in relation to the structure of elections in Tasmania. The two issues considered are fixed term elections and the Hare-Clark electoral system.

### Fixed Term Elections

- 6.2 The *Tasmanian Constitution Act 1934* provides that the House of Assembly operate under four-year Parliaments, unless dissolved sooner by the Governor of the day.<sup>212</sup> This provides a notional four-year electoral cycle in the state, not a specified fixed term period.
- 6.3 In recent times, Tasmanian General Elections have occurred more frequently than the traditional four-year cycle, with four House of Assembly General Elections in a space of seven years. These Elections occurred in 2018, 2021, 2024 and 2025. This frequency of elections has been described as creating “chronic political instability”<sup>213</sup> in Tasmania.
- 6.4 The 2021 General Election arose when the Liberal Government, then led by Premier Peter Gutwein, entered minority following the resignation from the Liberal Party by the then-Speaker, Ms Sue Hickey. This resignation followed Premier Gutwein informing her on 21 March 2021 that she would not be endorsed by the Party for the next General Election which, at that time, was due to be held in 2022. Ms Hickey guaranteed supply and confidence to the Liberal Government. However, on 26 March 2021, Premier Gutwein requested the then-Governor, the Hon. Kate Warner AC, dissolve the House citing that Tasmania required a “strong, stable, majority Government.”<sup>214</sup> The then-Governor granted this request on the same day.
- 6.5 The 2024 General Election came about following the Liberal Government moving into minority in May 2023. Claiming dissatisfaction with their party, two then-Liberal backbenchers chose to sit as independents, guaranteeing supply and confidence to the minority Liberal Government. When the Premier regarded these supply and confidence agreements to be unworkable, he requested an election, which was called by the then-Governor in February 2024.
- 6.6 The 2025 General Election was called following a successful no confidence motion in the Premier on 5 June 2025, after which the Premier chose not to resign, and on 10 June 2025 sought the dissolution of the House by the then-

---

<sup>212</sup> *Constitution Act 1934* (Tas), s 23, <https://www.legislation.tas.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-1934-094>.

<sup>213</sup> Submission No. 4, Dr Justin Harding, 2025 Inquiry, p. 1.

<sup>214</sup> Adam Langenberg, ‘Peter Gutwein calls Tasmanian state election for May 1,’ ABC News, (online, 26 March 2021), <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-03-26/tasmania-state-election-announcement/100022084>

- Governor. The Governor granted this request on 11 June 2025 and an election was called.
- 6.7 The frequency of these elections has prompted questions on whether Tasmania may benefit from having fixed term elections. A fixed term election is one that is to occur on a set date. Such set date can only be changed in exceptional circumstances. The Tasmanian Constitution Society stated that Tasmania is the only Australian jurisdiction, besides the Federal Parliament, that does not currently have fixed terms.<sup>215</sup>
- 6.8 Evidence received by the Committee mostly considered the advantages of fixed terms. The Tasmanian Constitution Society argued that fixed terms provide certainty and stability<sup>216</sup> and this was also echoed by other submissions.<sup>217</sup> Submissions noted that snap elections may place candidates, other than those in government, at a disadvantage, and that fixed terms may reduce the chances of “snap” elections.<sup>218</sup>
- 6.9 The Tasmanian Constitution Society recommended Tasmania move to four-year fixed terms, as this would:
- (i) Provide more stability and certainty for government, the private sector and the electorate which enables more consistent policy development and program delivery*
  - (ii) Mean fewer elections and lower costs*
  - (iii) Reduce voter fatigue*
  - (iv) Align Tasmania with all other jurisdictions, except the federal House of Representatives.*
- Fixed terms would not affect the parliament’s capacity to move a no-confidence or censure motion in the government which would cause an early election.*<sup>219</sup>
- 6.10 Neil Spark from the Tasmanian Constitution Society spoke further in public hearings into the 2025 General Election about the costs of fixed terms elections, as well as the other advantages he saw:
- The first point to make is that every other jurisdiction except the federal parliament and Tasmania have fixed terms. That tells me that there might be some benefits in that. As you pointed out, Cassy, 2021, 2024 and 2025 were all early elections that didn't need to be. We think that money could be saved by having*

<sup>215</sup> Submission No. 23, Tasmanian Constitution Society, 2024 Inquiry, p. 3.

<sup>216</sup> Submission No. 23, Tasmanian Constitution Society, 2024 Inquiry; Transcript of Evidence, 6 November 2024, The Tasmanian Constitution Society, 2024 Inquiry, p. 28.

<sup>217</sup> Submission No. 17, The Australia Institute, 2024 Inquiry, p. 22; Submission No. 19, Morris Worsley, 2024 Inquiry, p. 1; Submission No. 2, Robert Holderness-Roddam, 2024 Inquiry, p. 4; Submission No. 25, Jacqui Lambie Network, 2024 Inquiry, p. 4.

<sup>218</sup> Submission No. 17, The Australia Institute, 2024 Inquiry, Attachment A – *Democracy agenda for the 51<sup>st</sup> Tasmanian Parliament, options for reform*, p. 16; Submission No. 25, Jacqui Lambie Network, 2024 Inquiry, p. 4.

<sup>219</sup> Submission No. 5, Tasmanian Constitution Society, 2025 Inquiry, p. 3.

*fixed four-year terms. Elections are expensive exercises. We all know that an election disrupts the economy and society generally. Everything sort of comes to a halt during the campaign and then we have to wait until a government's formed, so there's a break in continuity there.*

*Also, from a government's point of view, three years is not a long time to implement your program. Everyone knows that in the 12 months before an election, you start getting into election mode. In your first-year you're sort of bedding things down and I guess your second year is when you can do things. I think the period of four years would give governments a bit more time to implement their policies and it would save the community money by not having as many elections. No-one wanted the last election. I think it would provide stability and certainty for governments, the private sector and the electorate; it would reduce voter fatigue and, as I said, it would align Tasmania with other jurisdictions.<sup>220</sup>*

6.11 At a hearing, Dr Justin Harding outlined the following advantages of fixed, four-year terms:

- 1) it provides for better government and better public policy making because decisions can be made in the interests of outcomes and better services..., rather than short-term political gain or what may be the news of the day;*
- 2) it removes constant speculation from the political process and provides fairness to all political parties rather than what is in the interest of the government of the day; and*
- 3) it provides confidence in government and certainty in government, from the public and also from the business community, which drives investment, economic confidence and job creation.<sup>221</sup>*

6.12 The advantages of fixed term elections were also discussed by Dr Robert Hortle:

**Dr HORTLE** - ... I want to point out some of the advantages that we see in terms of fixed-term parliaments - first up being that it removes the government's trump card in terms of being able to choose the election date that maximises political advantage for them.

*Secondly, fixed-term parliaments, in my view, provide greater stability and certainty, not only for the Government and the Parliament but also for the public service, for businesses, for community organisations and for voters as well. This allows better planning of legislative programs, but also business decisions and community service provision decisions as well.*

*Fixed-term parliaments, I believe, encourage governments to work with the Parliament that they are given, rather than providing an easy way out if Parliament becomes difficult for them to manage, for whatever reason.*

---

<sup>220</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Tasmanian Constitution Society, 2025 Inquiry, p. 27.

<sup>221</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 15 September 2026, Dr Justin Harding, 2025 Inquiry, p. 4.

*Fourth, fixed-term parliaments are a great way of reducing election fatigue. I'm sure everyone remembers how many elections we had last year, or maybe you don't because there were too many.*<sup>222</sup>

6.13 Alignment with other jurisdictions and best practice, greater certainty for staff, community engagement and improved access to appropriate premises for polling places were also stated as advantages of fixed terms.<sup>223</sup>

6.14 Dr Hortle was also asked about the disadvantages of fixed term elections:

**Mr GAFFNEY** - ... Would you like to comment on any disadvantages that you see of fixed terms even though that might be against what you prefer?...

**Dr HORTLE** - Yes. I think, certainly, if our parliamentary culture isn't able to shift towards that more cooperative, collaborative model, we could end up with a situation where you have a highly dysfunctional parliament. At the same time, if you have the right triggers in place for dissolution, you're never going to be really stuck with that parliament in the ways it is sometimes framed. ... it does create some challenges where we had the situation with the two Liberals who defected and became Independents, John Tucker and Lara Alexander, and there is an interesting argument there around the fact that they were able to enter parliament with a relatively small number of first preference votes because they were themselves replacements for earlier resignations on their party's ticket and then they were able to have a really large influence on that parliament, despite having come in with that low number of first-term votes. That is a challenge but again my argument for how we fix that would be parties need to vet better. You need to be ready for seven people from your party to come into the Parliament under Hare-Clark system. It's probably never going to happen, but you need to be prepared for that. So, it's one of these things where we don't want to change the rules of the game just because the actors within the game haven't been operating effectively in that very specific instance.<sup>224</sup>

6.15 Dr Hortle was also asked if fixed-term elections caused unworkable parliaments:

**CHAIR** - ... we have heard from some about the fact that fixed-term elections enforce an unworkable parliament to continue, potentially. Would you like to reflect on if that's an accurate sort of assertion to make?

**Dr HORTLE** - I think it's hugely overblown. We don't have any absolute fixed-term parliament systems in Australia and I doubt that's what would be implemented in Tasmania. We have qualified fixed-term parliaments. Every jurisdiction in Australia has various mechanisms for dissolving an unworkable parliament. They might be as simple as a no-confidence motion, which is what was used in the

---

<sup>222</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 15 September 2025, Dr Robert Hortle, Dr Lachlan Johnson and Sarah Hyslop, 2025 Inquiry, p. 14.

<sup>223</sup> Submission No. 1, Private Witness, 2025 Inquiry, p. 1; Submission No. 12, Private Witness, 2024 Inquiry, p. 5.

<sup>224</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 15 September 2026, Dr Robert Hortle, Dr Lachlan Johnson and Sarah Hyslop, 2025 Inquiry, p. 19.

Parliament early last year. So, fixed-term parliaments might not necessarily have prevented some of those elections we had last year. That's not the point.

The point, in part, is symbolic. So, having the expectation of the Parliament running full term legislated or in the Constitution Act, however it may be implemented, is a really important signalling mechanism and it's for that reason that, even with all of those options for dissolving a parliament that other states have, we've seen, since they implemented their qualified fixed terms, the length of their parliaments has increased in every case. I think that's the main thing I want to say.<sup>225</sup>

- 6.16 The Tasmanian Constitution Society gave the following example of exceptions to a government completing its fixed term:

1. Losing a no-confidence vote.
2. Loss of support. If the government ceases to have a majority.
3. If a government has acted unlawfully, outside its constitutional powers, or has broken the law, which cannot be resolved.<sup>226</sup>

- 6.17 Dr Bonham, in his submission to the 2024 Inquiry, said he did not support fixed terms for Tasmania.<sup>227</sup> Dr Bonham was invited to explain his position to the Committee:

*One thing I would say there is that fixed terms are not fixed in certain situations; governments can collapse. When you have situations - you sort of have exemptions for fixed terms, for cases where governments collapse. Governments can even, if necessary, often engineer an early election under fixed terms, if they want to. For instance, they can even move a no confidence motion in themselves for the purposes of this, although it would look kind of strange.*

*I think with the situations that we've had in the last two parliaments, it's not necessarily the case that fixed terms would have stopped those. Fixed terms are more likely to stop the situation where a majority government just picks an opportunistic time and says, 'We think we'll do well if we call the election early.' I think that is a matter for voters to decide, and voters often have punished governments that have gone too early, cynically. Gray was an example. Gray went too early and was kicked out. There was one in Western Australia - Carpenter went needlessly early. Kicked out. There are other examples of that, as well. Voters are wise to it if a party is going much too early for no good reason.*

*I think it's good that an election was called in a circumstance in view of the previous parliament having lost its mandate, in the circumstance of the defections, and for many other reasons as well. In terms of the issues, the personalities that the 2020 [2021] election was fought on, by the stage of late last year, early this year, what was going on in parliament bore no resemblance to that at all. It was sort of like, 'Let's keep Peter Gutwein in the premier's chair so he*

---

<sup>225</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 15 September 2026, Dr Robert Hortle, Dr Lachlan Johnson and Sarah Hyslop, 2025 Inquiry, p. 16.

<sup>226</sup> Submission No. 23, Tasmanian Constitution Society, 2024 Inquiry, p. 3.

<sup>227</sup> Submission No. 13, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2024 Inquiry. Also asked in the 2025 Inquiry hearings, Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2025 Inquiry, p. 9.

*can give us a strong, stable majority government that will protect us from COVID.' Well, maybe the chair is still there somewhere, but all the rest of that stuff had gone.*<sup>228</sup>

- 6.18 Evidence to the 2024 Inquiry also raised that the lack of fixed terms for elections makes planning for election events more difficult, both for the TEC and for potential candidates.<sup>229</sup>
- 6.19 Dr Harding, who provided a submission to the 2025 Inquiry,<sup>230</sup> argued that Tasmania should look towards the NSW model under the New South Wales Constitution (*Fixed Term Parliaments*) Special Provisions Act 1991 No 70.<sup>231</sup> Dr Harding suggests the NSW model demonstrates that minority governments arising from minority parliaments are not inherently unstable.<sup>232</sup> Dr Harding stated:

*... the assurance provided to the electorate by the foreknowledge of exactly when the next election will take place is, in and of itself, something that necessarily tends the body politic more towards stability than uncertainty. And, as the adage goes, "the proof of the pudding is in the eating." In the nearly thirty-five years since New South Wales adopted fixed terms, there have been no early dissolutions of the Legislative Assembly, notwithstanding minority governments from 1991 to 1995, and since February 2022 encompassing both the Perrottet Liberal and Minns Labor Governments (from 25 March 2023), as well as some with very small majorities of between one and three seats, where the Premier may have been tempted by favourable opinion polls to chance their arm early.*<sup>233</sup>

- 6.20 This was further discussed at a hearing:

**Dr HARDING** - ... Essentially, I think the most important thing about moving forward in our current parliamentary democracy is the question of stability, and there has been a certain amount of controversy over that in recent times. Specifically, we have had four early elections - sorry, three early elections in recent years.

Without wishing to cast aspersions on the premiers who gave the advice to the Governor to dissolve the Parliament in those circumstances, I'd just like to say that it is possible, I believe, to put an objective test on the granting of an early dissolution of the House of Assembly, as has been in place in New South Wales since 1991, and that when - the best guarantee of stability is knowing when an election

---

<sup>228</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 6 November 2024, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2024 Inquiry, pp. 16-17. See also comments in Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2025 Inquiry, pp. 9-10.

<sup>229</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 5 November 2024, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry, p. 47; Also in Submission No. 25, Jacqui Lambie Network, 2024 Inquiry, p. 4; Submission No. 1, Private Witness, 2025 Inquiry, p. 1.

<sup>230</sup> Submission No. 4, Dr Justin Harding, 2025 Inquiry.

<sup>231</sup> Constitution (*Fixed Term Parliaments*) Special Provisions Act 1991 No 70 (NSW), s 6, <https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/whole/html/inforce/current/act-1991-070#sec.6>

<sup>232</sup> Submission No. 4, Dr Justin Harding, 2025 Inquiry, p. 7.

<sup>233</sup> Submission No. 4. Dr Justin Harding, 2025 Inquiry, pp. 7-8.

*will take place every four years on a specific day, and I think New South Wales has demonstrated over the last 35 years, even during periods of minority government, that having that provision in place has allowed the parliaments to fulfil their full four-year term without necessarily being forced to an early election at the convenience of the temporary occupant of the highest political office in the state.*

*So, my feeling is that this is a good and important reform that Tasmania should adopt, and that the benefits will be more certainty in the ability to make better and more certain forward planning, and the public, in my opinion, is best served when they get the full four years' worth out of their elected representatives.<sup>234</sup>*

- 6.21 The abovementioned NSW legislation allows for the dissolution of the NSW Legislative Assembly early only if a no confidence motion in the government is passed, and in the following eight days from the passage of such motion, there is no motion of confidence passed in the government.<sup>235</sup> The Legislative Assembly cannot be prorogued until the eight days have passed. Additionally, the Legislative Assembly may be dissolved if an Appropriation Bill fails to be passed.<sup>236</sup> Section 6 of the NSW legislation preserves the NSW Governor's power to dissolve the Legislative Assembly in accordance with established constitutional conventions. Dr Harding concludes that:

*In proposing fixed-term parliaments for Tasmania, it is by no means intended that an early election for the House of Assembly should never take place. Other than the exceptions suggested above, there will be – inevitably, if rarely – times of political upheaval when the Governor believes they are duty-bound to act against the advice of their Premier, and there is no other alternative to dissolution of the lower house and fresh elections. In such elections, the position of the Crown's representative would be as much at stake as that of any politician. That is why both the New South Wales and Queensland state constitutional amendments providing for fixed four-year terms also preserve what are commonly referred to as the "Reserve Powers of the Crown"<sup>237</sup> for which there is no codified definition, no should there be, with such endeavour requiring the accumulated wisdom of soothsayer and sybil.<sup>238</sup> Suffice it to say, the eminent constitutional authorities cited herein would afford any Viceroy ample precedent to guide their deliberations.<sup>239</sup>*

---

<sup>234</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 15 September 2026, Dr Justin Harding, 2025 Inquiry, p. 2.

<sup>235</sup> *Constitution (Fixed Term Parliaments) Special Provisions Act 1991 No 70 (NSW)*, s 5.

<sup>236</sup> *Constitution (Fixed Term Parliaments) Special Provisions Act 1991 No 70 (NSW)*, s 5.

<sup>237</sup> Footnote 54 cited in Submission No.4, Dr Justin Harding, 2025 Inquiry - See explanatory notes: <https://cabinet.qld.gov.au/documents/2015/Nov/Intro4yrterms/Attachments/CFExNotes.pdf> and <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/historicbills/files/17358/Various%20Versions%201.pdf> See also: Evatt and Forsey on the Reserve Powers, (Legal Books, Sydney) 1990, pp. xi to xcvi, and Evatt, op cit, pp. xv to xxxviii.

<sup>238</sup> Footnote 55 cited in Submission No. 4, Dr Justin Harding, 2025 Inquiry - For a full discussion of the Reserve Powers, see Twomey: Microsoft Word - Twomey lecture.doc.

<sup>239</sup> Submission No. 4, Dr Justin Harding, 2025 Inquiry, pp. 8-9.

- 6.22 At a hearing of the Committee, Dr Harding was asked to further expand upon the step test used in the NSW example:

**Ms O'CONNOR** - ... I wonder if we could just take a step back a little bit and you could just explain, in really simple terms, that step test that has been in place in New South Wales since 1991, and maybe then reflect on how that might apply here and possibly even - you know, we've had three early elections, as you point out - if there'd been that step test, arguably, we wouldn't have had so many premature elections.

**Dr HARDING** - Yes, well, I mean the test is that the government cannot secure supply to the Crown or maintain the confidence of the House of Assembly, and that no alternative government from within the existing House of Assembly can be formed with a reasonable prospect of carrying on the business of government. Now, that would be a matter for the individual parties and personnel within the House of Assembly to work out. It's part of the normal political process; that's how you work through your business. It's a matter of compromise and working together.

It's becoming increasingly apparent that the two-party system that has prevailed in Australia, largely since 1910, is in decline in my opinion, and that we are likely to see more multi-party and independent members elected. I think that having some guarantee in the form of fixed terms is essential within that context. There is a huge amount of power involved in the premiers' current, largely untrammelled, ability to call an early election to suit their convenience. I'm not saying that that has necessarily happened in recent times. I'm saying that could be construed from recent actions. But if there is this objective test, saying that there can only be an early election unless there is no viable government able to carry on the business of government from the existing parliament, and in those circumstances, yes, you can dissolve the House of Assembly ahead of time.<sup>240</sup>

- 6.23 It was also suggested that fixed term elections along with the objective test could result in a better reflection of the will of voters:

**Ms JOHNSTON** - ... Would you suggest that the fixed-term approach and your objective test where an alternative can be formed on the floor is probably a greater reflection in a multi-member seat situation, a reflection of the will of the community - that the community are insisting?

**Dr HARDING** - Yes, I do. With the Hare-Clark system, people don't necessarily vote one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, Labor, Liberal, Green, whatever; there is cross-party voting. I know - I've examined these figures over the years and I've seen a vote which was cast one for the premier and two for a prominent opposition frontbencher. That occurs. If it was a straight-ticket voting, like we used to have in the Senate after the 1984 reforms until the 2016 reforms, where it was basically a ticket voting and you were elected according to where you were on the party's ticket, that's a different case. In Hare-Clark, there is cross-party

---

<sup>240</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 15 September 2026, Dr Justin Harding, 2025 Inquiry, p. 3.

voting. I think people get much better value for their vote under Hare-Clark, because in a single-member electoral system every vote above 50 per cent plus one is wasted. Under Hare-Clark, you can elect up to seven members with your vote or contribute towards the election of many members rather than one, and that everybody needs to get the same number of votes in order to be elected. So, in effect, you have a much more representative system now and you have a parliament that represents what the people want and it is up to the politicians, frankly, to try to make it work.<sup>241</sup>

6.24 Dr Harding was also questioned about the Western Australian (WA) model of fixed terms:

**CHAIR** - ... One of the things I was interested to ask you about was why you pointed us towards New South Wales, for example, and not Western Australia. In other material I've read, it seems Western Australia would be a halfway step for us, in a sense, because they don't have fixed terms as such, but they do have a standing date for elections that can be readily changed but just the act of having to change a presupposed date seems to dissuade them from going to early elections. Would that be a smaller shift for us to contemplate as a state more towards the WA model for setting terms for election, rather than fully going to fixed terms like the New South Wales model that you suggested?

**Dr HARDING** - It's an interesting question. It's called 'partial fixed terms.' In some jurisdictions, only the first three years of a four-year term are fixed and the government, if it commands a majority of the House, can basically call an election any time after the expiration of the third year. But that wouldn't be much of a change from what we have had in terms of the 2021 and 2024 elections. If we'd had partially fixed terms, they would have happened anyway, because you can, you know, effectively call an election early any time after the third year, and the fourth year of the term isn't guaranteed. So, I don't think it makes much of a difference in terms of our lived experience in Tasmania.

As I say, even having fixed terms doesn't mean we can't have an early election. The situation is there, I believe, frankly, that even under fixed terms we would've still had to have an election last year, because there simply wasn't a viable government able to be formed out of the existing House of Assembly. And I don't think partially fixed terms would have made any difference in those circumstances.<sup>242</sup>

6.25 The WA model was also discussed with Dr Lachlan Johnson as having potential to being replicated in Tasmania:

**Dr JOHNSON** - I think if we were to adopt fixed terms, Western Australia is certainly my preferred model, particularly given how unusual Tasmania is, maintaining the greatest possible degree of flexibility seems like an advantage to me. That would allow us to adopt a sort of presumptive election date without changing any of our triggers for dissolving the Parliament, which I think is probably, you know, a sort of modest, incremental reform that judging by the

---

<sup>241</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 15 September 2026, Dr Justin Harding, 2025 Inquiry, p. 8

<sup>242</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 15 September 2026, Dr Justin Harding, 2025 Inquiry, p. 10.

*evidence would almost certainly have the desired effect. I guess I'd probably go back to Sarah's earlier comments that it all depends what you think success looks like. If we adopted a fixed date, we almost certainly would have longer parliaments. I think the evidence is pretty clear that that would be the outcome. I suppose it's just a question of whether we think that that's the outcome we want. Are longer parliaments necessarily more desirable?*

*Yes, I think, broadly speaking, if I really had to say yes or no, I would probably say I think fixed terms are a pretty good idea, with this Western Australian model.*<sup>243</sup>

- 6.26 Under the *Electoral and Constitutional Amendment Act 2011*, WA state elections are held every four years, on the second Saturday in March.<sup>244</sup> The model synchronises the elections so that both Houses are polled together. The Act removed the incumbent government's discretion to call an opportunistic early election for political advantage.<sup>245</sup> However, the Governor retains the constitutional power to dissolve the Legislative Assembly on the formal advice of the Premier.<sup>246</sup>
- 6.27 A summary of statutory approaches to fixed term elections in Australian jurisdictions is presented in *To fix or not to fix: That is the parliamentary terms question* by Policy in My Backyard (PIMBY), of the Tasmanian Policy Exchange<sup>247</sup>:

---

<sup>243</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 15 September 2026, Dr Robert Hortle, Dr Lachlan Johnson, and Sarah Hyslop, 2025 Inquiry, p. 23.

<sup>244</sup> *Electoral and Constitutional Amendment Act 2011* (WA), s 71.

<sup>245</sup> Media statement, Electoral Affairs Minister, Norman Moore, dated 16 March 2011, <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/media-statements/Barnett%20Liberal%20National%20Government/New-Bill-paves-way-for-four-year-fixed-terms-of-Government-20110316> Also see Second Reading found here:- <https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/parliament/bills.nsf/BillProgressPopup?openForm&ParentUNID=D478A0259CA9D4E482578550041066C>

<sup>246</sup> *Constitution Act 1889* (WA), s 3.

<sup>247</sup> Policy in My Backyard (PIMBY), *To fix or not to fix: That is the parliamentary terms question*, dated 18 September 2026, <https://www.policyinmybackyard.org/>.

### An early election could be called if...

|                                                                                                                                | NSW<br>S 24B<br>Constitution                                            | SA<br>Ss 28A, 41<br>Constitution | VIC<br>Ss 8-8A<br>Constitution | ACT<br>S 16<br>Self Governance<br>Act                                                                                | NT<br>Ss 24-25<br>Electoral Act                                  | WA<br>S 3<br>Constitution                                                                                       | QLD<br>S 19E<br>Constitution |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| A motion of no confidence is passed                                                                                            | <b>X</b><br>(unless a motion of confidence is passed soon after)        | <b>X</b>                         | <b>X</b>                       |                                                                                                                      | <b>X</b><br>(unless a motion of confidence is passed soon after) |                                                                                                                 | <b>X</b>                     |
| A motion of confidence is defeated                                                                                             |                                                                         | <b>X</b>                         |                                |                                                                                                                      |                                                                  |                                                                                                                 |                              |
| An appropriation or other 'money' Bill cannot be passed                                                                        | <b>X</b>                                                                |                                  |                                |                                                                                                                      | <b>X</b>                                                         |                                                                                                                 | <b>X</b>                     |
| There is a deadlock*<br><small>*this is defined in each Act, as it is complicated</small>                                      |                                                                         | <b>X</b>                         | <b>X</b>                       |                                                                                                                      |                                                                  |                                                                                                                 |                              |
| A Bill of Special Importance is defeated<br>(a Bill is of special importance if it is declared to be by the House of Assembly) |                                                                         | <b>X</b>                         |                                |                                                                                                                      |                                                                  |                                                                                                                 |                              |
| Governor may dissolve based on their discretion                                                                                | <b>X</b><br>(in accordance with established constitutional conventions) |                                  |                                | <b>X</b><br>(if they believe the Assembly cannot perform its functions, or is acting in a 'grossly improper manner') |                                                                  | <b>X</b><br>(as they see fit – this sounds broad, but is similar to the way Tasmanian elections are called now) |                              |

## Findings

### The Committee finds:

34. Tasmania is the only Australian jurisdiction, other than the Commonwealth, that does not have fixed parliamentary terms.
35. In the absence of fixed terms, an early election may be called at a time that is advantageous to the government of the day.
36. All Australian states, including those with fixed term arrangements, reserve the Governor's power to dissolve Parliament and issue the writs for an early election.
37. Early elections have financial, legislative, administrative and social impacts for Tasmania, and present logistical challenges for candidates and the Tasmanian Electoral Commission.
38. Legislated fixed term elections for Tasmania would allow more certainty in electoral cycles.

## Recommendation

### The Committee recommends:

14. The Government consider, consult and report on the merit of amending the *Constitution Act 1934* to legislate fixed term elections.

## The Hare-Clark Electoral System

- 6.28 General Elections for the House of Assembly use the Hare-Clark Electoral System (Hare-Clark), which is a “Single Transferable Vote (STV) method of proportional representation.”<sup>248</sup> Hare-Clark has been used in Tasmania since 1907.<sup>249</sup>
- 6.29 The Committee received substantial support for the merits of Hare-Clark and broad support for its continued use.<sup>250</sup> Dr Bonham discussed with the Committee his support for Hare-Clark and the concern he has with suggestions to move to 35 single seat electorates:

**Dr BONHAM** - The comment I make generally is that people who support a move to 35 single seats have not thought through the downsides of that, or don't want to admit to the downsides of that.

*In terms of very small electorates, in a lot of cases the electorates would have fewer voters than some of the large councils, and that's not ideal. I tend to think that state electorates below about 20,000 have problems.*

*As to the question of whether it would actually avoid hung parliaments, I am very dubious that it would. I mean, when you have very lopsided results, you get majorities, but I think you would get them in this system anyway. You would still get a pretty substantial crossbench in such a system, but you might get more of a sort of Legislative Council independents rather than quite as many Greens, for instance.*

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Even major party politicians potentially if it becomes that localised.

**Dr BONHAM** - Yes, it becomes a very localised system in terms of what individual candidates are running on. It's likely to become more parochial than running for larger electorates. We've had people talking about the difficulty of running for large electorates. It's not as if Lyons is exactly Parkes in New South Wales or O'Connor in Western Australia, or something like that. They're not that large.

...

**Dr BONHAM** - It is also a fact that under Hare-Clark, although candidates are competing with each other to a degree, you also have multiple candidates covering the electorate and multiple members covering the electorate for the major parties that are elected. I am concerned about the lack of thought behind the 35 single seat proposal, and that the people putting it forward are not really addressing the concerns about it.<sup>251</sup>

---

<sup>248</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 'Tasmania's Hare-Clark Electoral System,' <https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/info/Publications/HareClark.html>.

<sup>249</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 'Tasmania's Hare-Clark Electoral System,' <https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/info/Publications/HareClark.html>.

<sup>250</sup> Submission No. 5, Tasmanian Constitution Society, 2025 Inquiry, p. 2; Submission No. 6, The Proportional Representation Society of Australia Inc, 2025 Inquiry, pp. 1-2 and Submission No. 9, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2025 Inquiry, p. 3.

<sup>251</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2025 Inquiry, pp. 4-5.

6.30 The Proportional Representation Society of Australia advocated for the entrenchment of the Hare-Clark electoral system, noting that the ACT undertook this in 1994.<sup>252</sup>

6.31 The Honourable Tania Rattray MLC encouraged the Committee to consider the use of Hare-Clark, citing that after the 2024 and 2025 General Elections the system had been a point of discussion in the Tasmanian community:

*The discussions range from the current system being complicated to understand for those who are not fully engaged with the electoral process. In addition, other comments relate to the process being time consuming for the voter in regard to completing the ballot to achieve an individuals desired preference distribution and importantly for the Electoral Commission in finalising results.*<sup>253</sup>

6.32 Reflecting on party-aligned criticism of the Hare-Clark system, Dr Bonham stated:

*It is of concern to me that parties continue to embarrass themselves by allowing resolutions about the electoral system to be passed at internal party events without first seeking expert review of whether the claims being made by proponents of the motion are factual.*<sup>254</sup>

---

<sup>252</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, The Proportional Representation Society of Australia Inc, 2025 Inquiry, p. 38.

<sup>253</sup> Submission No. 2, The Honourable Tania Rattray MLC, 2025 Inquiry, p. 1.

<sup>254</sup> Submission No. 9, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2025 Inquiry, p.3.



## 7 ELECTORAL ACT 2004

### Section 196 (1)

- 7.1 On 31 May 2022 the Electoral Matters (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2022 was introduced to the Parliament of Tasmania. Clause 26 of this Bill proposed to limit the application of section 196 of the *Electoral Act 2004* (Tas) to only apply to how-to-vote cards and modify the limitation to extend to “keeping on display” as well as printing, publishing and distribution. This 2022 Bill passed the House of Assembly with the amendment to section 196 remaining; however this was removed during debate in the Legislative Council on 15 November 2023.<sup>255</sup>
- 7.2 On 18 June 2024, the Electoral Amendment Bill 2024 (2024 Bill) was introduced to the Parliament of Tasmania. The only substantive clause of the 2024 Bill addressed section 196. While the 2024 Bill passed the House of Assembly, the Legislative Council, on 23 October 2024, referred the 2024 Bill to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters for consideration and report. Due to the prorogation of Parliament on the 11 June 2025, the Committee could not report on its inquiry.
- 7.3 A new, identical version of the Bill was introduced in the 52<sup>nd</sup> Parliament on 5 November 2025. At the time of tabling of this Report, the House had referred the Bill to this Committee for Inquiry, which has now commenced.<sup>256</sup>
- 7.4 Section 196 (1) of the *Electoral Act 2004* (Tas) currently states:
196. *Candidate names not to be used without authority*
- (1) *A person must not between the issue of the writ for an election and the close of poll at that election print, publish or distribute any advertisement, "how to vote" card, handbill, pamphlet, poster or notice which contains the name, photograph or a likeness of a candidate or intending candidate at that election without the written consent of the candidate.*
- Penalty: Fine not exceeding 300 penalty units or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months, or both.*
- 7.5 The proposed Bill<sup>257</sup> amends the section to read:
196. *Candidate names not to be used without authority*

---

<sup>255</sup> Tasmania, *Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Council, 15 November 2023, pp. 43-48.

<https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/legislative-council/chamber-proceedings/calendars/2023/november/legislative-council-15th-november>

<sup>256</sup> Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, *Inquiry into the Electoral Amendment Bill 2025*, <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/committees/joint-committees/standing-committees/joint-standing-committee-on-electoral-matters/inquiries/inquiry-into-the-electoral-amendment-bill-2025-62-of-2025>

<sup>257</sup> Electoral Amendment Bill 2025, No. 62, [https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0036/98478/62-of-2025.pdf](https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0036/98478/62-of-2025.pdf)

*(1) A person must not between the issue of the writ for an election and the close of poll at that election print, publish or distribute or keep on display a "how to vote" card, which contains the name, photograph or a likeness of a candidate or intending candidate at that election without the written consent of the candidate.*

*Penalty: Fine not exceeding 300 penalty units or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months, or both.*

- 7.6 Dr Robin Banks argued the amendment proposed in the Bill would not prevent misleading election advertising in any form other than on how to vote cards.<sup>258</sup> Dr Banks stated:

*Section 196(1) – like its predecessor provision – provides some protection against misleading conduct in election campaigns. It has the effect of preventing a person or campaign from falsely attributing statements or positions to a particular candidate or using their image in attack ads. It is a provision that seeks to ensure some level of truth in political advertising, and is currently the only mechanism available to raise potentially misleading electoral conduct with the TEC.<sup>259</sup>*

- 7.7 Dr Banks also argued the section is not sufficiently robust and should be strengthened and expanded upon, particularly given the expansion of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its use in Australian election campaigns.<sup>260</sup>

- 7.8 Several submissions<sup>261</sup> flagged breaches of section 196 during the 2024 General Election. Dr Banks commented:

*Media reporting about these breaches indicated that the Tasmanian Electoral Commission contacted those who had authorised the materials and this resulted in the materials being withdrawn. As I understand it, some of the breaches were by newcomers to the electoral processes and laws in Tasmania. I submit that, in relation to such participants, it is quite appropriate for the TEC to take this warning approach. There were, however, several instances where more experienced campaigners engaged in such breaches. They too were simply warned of the breach and, as I understand it from media reporting, no further action was taken. This is not the first time that this has happened. For example, in 2014, the TEC issued a media release indicating there had been five incidents identified in the 2014 House of Assembly election campaign.<sup>262</sup> These included apparent breaches authorised by:*

- Jacquie [sic] Lambie (which she denied she had authorised): a new[s]paper advertisement for Palmer United Party;*

---

<sup>258</sup> Submission No. 22, Robin Banks, 2024 Inquiry, p. 2.

<sup>259</sup> Submission No. 22, Robin Banks, 2024 Inquiry, p. 3.

<sup>260</sup> Submission No. 22, Robin Banks, 2024 Inquiry, pp. 3-4

<sup>261</sup> Submission No. 22, Robin Banks, 2024 Inquiry, p. 4; Submission No. 24, The Tasmanian Greens, 2024 Inquiry, p. 2; Submission No. 26, The Liberal Party of Australia (Tasmanian Division), 2024 Inquiry, pp. 1-2; Submission No. 27, Private Witness, 2024 Inquiry, p.1 and Submission No. 8, Tasmanian Labor, 2025 Inquiry, p.5.

<sup>262</sup> Cited in Submission No. 22, Robin Banks, 2024 Inquiry, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 'Apparent breaches of section 196 of Electoral Act' (Media Release, 1 April 2014).

- Clive Palmer: a pamphlet for Palmer United Party;
- Sam McQuestin, then Liberal Party State Director for Tasmania: an newspaper advertisement and pamphlet;
- M Tighe: a pamphlet for Right to Life Australia.

*The TEC noted previous breaches of this provision had resulted in ‘monetary penalties of \$500 and \$850. It indicated that, in relation to the five apparent breaches listed in the media release, it had ‘decided ... that it will not seek to initiate proceedings against any person’.*<sup>263</sup>

7.9 The Liberal Party (Tasmanian Division) expressed concern about the interpretation of section 196 during the 2024 General Election, including how this was communicated to political parties and TEC staff.<sup>264</sup> The Liberal Party (Tasmanian Division) contended that the interpretation of section 196 during the 2024 General Election campaign changed, particularly in relation to whether material on the internet fell within the definition of “publish” or “broadcast”.<sup>265</sup>

7.10 Tasmanian Labor expressed the view that the “legislation [is] poorly designed for the digital era, it fails to achieve its objective and may well be contrary to the High Court’s ruling in *Lange v Australian Broadcasting Corporation* (1997) HCA 25.”<sup>266</sup> It was Tasmanian Labor’s assertion that “section 196 be amended to remove the restriction on political communications during election campaigns and restricted to “how to vote” cards.”<sup>267</sup>

7.11 Dr Banks argued that the lack of prosecution of offenders against section 196 does little to deter repeat offenders:

*The effectiveness of the prohibition in section 196(1) is significantly undermined by the failure to prosecute repeat offenders. By the time the TEC raises its concerns about a breach with a long-term participant in our electoral processes, the damage has been done: electors have received misleading information that could have an influence on their vote. This is not undone by the removal of the material. Rather than repeal or limit section 196, more needs to be done to ensure it addresses contemporary mechanisms used in election campaigning to mislead votes and to recognise the seriousness of breaches through prosecution.*<sup>268</sup>

7.12 Dr Bonham supported the review of section 196, noting difficulties in interpretation and concerns about truth in advertising amendments:

*Section 196 has been long overdue for review as it not only unnecessarily and probably unconstitutionally limits free speech, but also does so in a way that the TEC has struggled to interpret clearly. The interpretation problem arises from the*

<sup>263</sup> Submission No. 22, Robin Banks, 2024 Inquiry, p. 4.

<sup>264</sup> Submission No. 26, The Liberal Party of Australia (Tasmanian Division), 2024 Inquiry, pp. 1-2.

<sup>265</sup> Submission No. 26, The Liberal Party of Australia (Tasmanian Division), 2024 Inquiry, pp. 1-2.

<sup>266</sup> Submission No. 8, Tasmanian Labor, 2025 Inquiry, p. 5.

<sup>267</sup> Submission No. 8, Tasmanian Labor, 2025 Inquiry, p. 5.

<sup>268</sup> Submission No. 22, Robin Banks, 2024 Inquiry, pp. 5-6. Further discussion in Transcript of Evidence, 5 November 2024, The Liberal Party of Australia (Tasmanian Division), pp. 27.

section's outdated references to "advertisement, "how to vote" card, handbill, pamphlet, poster or notice" in an Act that supposedly applies to online publications. It does not appear that the TEC is able to determine what the concepts "advertisement" and "notice" should be taken to mean in the internet age.

During debate in 2023 the Legislative Council resisted amending Section 196 without replacing it with some form of truth in electoral advertising law. I have concerns about "truth in electoral advertising" law proposals, especially in the Tasmanian context<sup>269</sup> and I think it is most important that Section 196 be reformed irrespective of whether truth in electoral advertising can be passed. It is unsatisfactory that political actors involved in a Tasmanian election are subject to a law that is impossible to understand. It exposes Tasmania to the risk of an election result being affected by an incorrect decision by the TEC.<sup>270</sup>

- 7.13 The Tasmanian Greens noted its support for the removal of section 196; however, the Party was also in favour of the introduction of truth in political advertising laws.<sup>271</sup>
- 7.14 Private Witness No. 27 to the 2024 Inquiry provided examples of potential breaches of section 196 and said:

*Publication of this type of material with no apparent recourse not only has the potential to influence the way people vote and damage the reputation of the candidate more broadly, but also has an emotional impact on family members and friends of the candidate, as well as the candidate themselves.*

*Further to this, it likely limits the candidate pool, in serving to discourage people from nominating for election for fear of personal attack and reputational damage that could be detrimental to their mental health, career and the wellbeing of their family and friends.*

*If anyone has information about the integrity of a candidate that voters ought to know it should be reported through appropriate channels where it can be investigated and reported on. It is not acceptable that voters are influenced by baseless claims that a candidate can only refute via a costly and lengthy defamation claim.*

*I urge the Committee to make recommendations that enforcement of S.196 be strengthened or new provisions established within the Electoral Act 2004 to address these concerns.*<sup>272</sup>

---

<sup>269</sup> Cited in Submission No. 13, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2024 Inquiry, See [https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/83450/13-Dr-Kevin-Bonham.pdf](https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/83450/13-Dr-Kevin-Bonham.pdf) and also transcript of verbal evidence at [https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0030/83685/HA-GAB-26-July-2024-Finaltranscript.pdf](https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0030/83685/HA-GAB-26-July-2024-Finaltranscript.pdf).

<sup>270</sup> Submission No. 13, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2024 Inquiry, p. 6.

<sup>271</sup> Submission No. 24, The Tasmanian Greens, 2024 Inquiry, p. 2.

<sup>272</sup> Submission No. 27, Private Witness, 2024 Inquiry, p. 1.

- 7.15 Dr Bonham spoke further about the problems with section 196 and its links with truth in political advertising:

*The Liberal Party submission quoted the advice that the TEC sent out about section 196. The TEC sent out advice which said the words 'notice' and 'advertisement' are not defined and so should be understood to have their ordinary meaning. This is completely sensible. Somehow this later morphs into a situation where a mock advertisement is an advertisement because, based on yesterday's evidence, it comments about the performance of government. That is not the ordinary meaning of the word 'advertisement'.*

*I have very severe concerns about the quality of advice that has been given on this issue. I would like to see all legal advice that was received by the TEC on this matter released publicly. This also raises concerns for me about truth in electoral advertising. I'm not very convinced about full-scale truth in electoral advertising anyway, but what is going to happen if we have truth in the electoral advertising laws and they are interpreted in such a bizarre manner as this? You're going to have people stopped from saying things they should be allowed to say.*

*For me, people being stopped from saying things they should be allowed to say in an election is a far more serious problem than people being allowed to say things that are questionable. If people can say misinformation and other people can rebut misinformation, that's one thing, but if people can't even say something that is true or reasonable in the first place because of restrictive law, that is a big problem and this law has to be fixed. There's a question that it does have some positive impacts and whether you replace them with something, but this situation where we are having rulings like this should not continue.*

*There have been points made that this law is helpful in stopping misinformation, but there could also be situations in which this law contributes to perpetuating misinformation. For instance, suppose there was a confrontation between two candidates, such things happen in places from time to time, and someone is putting out misinformation about this confrontation. The candidate who is the target of the misinformation has a video of this situation and they would like to put out an advertisement with this video to show that it did not happen as it's being alleged. They cannot put that out as an advertisement without the consent of any other candidates who may be shown on the video. The candidate putting out the misinformation says, 'No, you don't have my permission, you can't do that'. That's an example of how, in theory, this law can serve to aid misinformation as well as to stop it.<sup>273</sup>*

- 7.16 The TEC informed the Committee that during the 2025 Legislative Council elections, five complaints were lodged and 38 during the 2025 General Election.<sup>274</sup> Of the five complaints in the Legislative Council elections, three were resolved with no further action needed, the TEC was unable to see the outcome of their contact in one instance and in the final matter, the TEC

---

<sup>273</sup> Transcript of Evidence, Dr Kevin Bonham, 6 November 2024, 2024 Inquiry, pp. 7-8.

<sup>274</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 87.

provided the appropriate advice.<sup>275</sup> In the 2025 General Election, 29 complaints were made by political parties, three by members of the public, two were initiated by the TEC, two by anonymous complainants and one each by a candidate and a third party campaigner.<sup>276</sup> The TEC's management of the 38 complaints ranged from having content edited or removed, the provision of general advice regarding section 196 and, in some instances, the failure of related parties to respond to requests for action.<sup>277</sup> A table detailing the complaint, the response and any associated outcomes is available on the Committee's webpage.<sup>278</sup>

## Findings

### The Committee finds:

39. There is broad agreement the interpretation and application of section 196 of the *Electoral Act 2004* is problematic and a review is necessary.
40. The Committee is currently undertaking an Inquiry into the Electoral Amendment Bill 2025 following its referral from the House of Assembly.

## Truth in Political Advertising

- 7.17 The Committee heard there is concern around misinformation and disinformation in Tasmanian elections, including the risk it may mislead voters and has the potential to influence election results.
- 7.18 After the referral of the Electoral Amendment Bill 2025 from the House of Assembly, the Committee considered its approach to an Inquiry on this Bill. Evidence received by the Committee during its former Inquiry on the 2024 version of the Bill, showed a link in consideration of section 196 of the *Electoral Act 2004* alongside truth in political advertising. The Committee consequently resolved to investigate both of these elements in its new Inquiry.<sup>279</sup>
- 7.19 The 2024 and 2025 Election Inquiries were broad in scope; therefore, not all participants addressed every matter raised. Accordingly, the Committee notes that neither Tasmanian Labor nor the Liberal Party of Australia (Tasmanian Division) addressed the matter of truth in political advertising in their evidence

---

<sup>275</sup> Response to Questions on Notice, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, received 24 April 2026, Attachment A.

<sup>276</sup> Response to Questions on Notice, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, received 24 April 2026, Attachment A.

<sup>277</sup> Response to questions on Notice, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, received 24 April 2026, Attachment A.

<sup>278</sup> Response to Questions on Notice, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, received 24 April 2026, Attachment A.

<sup>279</sup> Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, *Inquiry into the Electoral Amendment Bill 2025 (62 of 2025)*, <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/committees/joint-committees/standing-committees/joint-standing-committee-on-electoral-matters/inquiries/inquiry-into-the-electoral-amendment-bill-2025-62-of-2025>

- to these Inquiries. The Committee will, however, seek this input during its Inquiry into the Electoral Amendment Bill 2025.<sup>280</sup>
- 7.20 The Tasmanian Greens support the inclusion of truth in political advertising amendments to the Electoral Act to protect candidates from having false and misleading information published about them.<sup>281</sup> The Australia Institute also supported truth in political advertising measures, indicating that polling research it had conducted in 2021 showed support for it by nine out of ten Tasmanians.<sup>282</sup>
- 7.21 The Tasmanian Constitution Society gave several reasons for supporting truth in political advertising laws including; reducing instances of false or misleading statements; strengthening the nexus between truth and trust that underpins the contract between voters and their elected representatives; and to provide a deterrent for potential bad actors.<sup>283</sup>
- 7.22 In hearings, Mr Spark from the Tasmanian Constitution Society commented:
- We think truth in political advertising would improve people's confidence in the political process and elections, and that can only be a good thing. It could also deter potential bad actors.*<sup>284</sup>
- 7.23 Both the Tasmanian Constitution Society<sup>285</sup> and Robert Holderness-Roddam<sup>286</sup> pointed to truth in political advertising laws in South Australia as a potential option for Tasmania. The Tasmanian Constitution Society suggested that a review of the Electoral Act should be done which considers the structure and operations of the South Australian and ACT legislation in relation to truth in advertising, with a focus on assessing their management of digital advertising and Artificial Intelligence.<sup>287</sup>
- 7.24 Mr Spark said the following regarding truth in advertising and the South Australian and ACT contexts:
- South Australia has had truth in advertising laws for nearly four decades and similar laws were recently proclaimed in the ACT. I know that there are arguments against*

---

<sup>280</sup> Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, *Inquiry into the Electoral Amendment Bill 2025 (62 of 2025)*, <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/committees/joint-committees/standing-committees/joint-standing-committee-on-electoral-matters/inquiries/inquiry-into-the-electoral-amendment-bill-2025-62-of-2025>

<sup>281</sup> Submission No. 24, The Tasmanian Greens, 2024 Inquiry, p. 2.

<sup>282</sup> Submission No. 17, The Australia Institute, Attachment A: Democracy Agenda for the 51<sup>st</sup> Tasmanian Parliament Options for Reform, p. 19. See also Transcript of Evidence, 6 November 2024, The Australia Institute, 2024 Inquiry, pp. 82-83.

<sup>283</sup> Submission No. 23, Tasmanian Constitution Society, 2024 Inquiry, p. 2 and Submission No. 5, Tasmanian Constitution Society, 2025 Inquiry, p. 2.

<sup>284</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 6 November 2024, Tasmanian Constitution Society, 2024 Inquiry, p. 26.

<sup>285</sup> Submission No. 23, Tasmanian Constitution Society, 2024 Inquiry, p. 2 and Submission No. 5, Tasmanian Constitution Society, 2025 Inquiry, p. 2.

<sup>286</sup> Submission No. 2, Robert Holderness-Rodam, 2024 Inquiry, pp. 2-3.

<sup>287</sup> Submission No. 5, Tasmanian Constitution Society, 2025 Inquiry, p. 2.

*truth in advertising. The freedom of speech argument usually comes up. How's that managed? Who decides what freedom of speech is? Who decides what's misleading advertising and no-one is pretending that there are simple answers to this. These are complex matters. But that shouldn't preclude trying to improve the law. No law is perfect. We think the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.*<sup>288</sup>

- 7.25 Eloise Carr, representing The Australia Institute, further explained the South Australian provisions addressing truth in political advertising:

*...South Australia's proven model could be adopted here just as it was, with unanimous support by Labor, Liberal and the Greens parliamentarians in the Australian Capital Territory. Here, Labor announced their support for these laws in 2021.*

*During the recent inquiry into the Greens Bill on donations disclosure, the Electoral Commissioner raised some concerns about administering proposed truth in political advertising provisions. South Australia raised similar concerns when they were adopting their laws, but have subsequently changed their position.*

*It's fine for the Electoral Commissioner to raise concerns, but ultimately, it's Parliament's job to decide how and who is best placed to administer laws. Truth in political advertising provisions should clearly allow for the court to be the ultimate arbitrator if required. The South Australian model gives the Commissioner the power to request only and leaves it to the courts to compel an ad to be retracted. This is an important limitation of executive power that should be included in such provisions.*<sup>289</sup>

- 7.26 Ms Carr and her colleague, Bill Browne, further commented the removal of section 196 of the Electoral Act could be paired with the introduction of truth in advertising laws.<sup>290</sup> They contend this will protect candidates from untrue material being published about them.<sup>291</sup>

## Findings

### The Committee finds:

41. There is a level of community concern about political misinformation and disinformation during election periods, the impact on participants, and influence on democratic outcomes.
42. The Committee is currently undertaking an inquiry following the referral of the Electoral Amendment Bill 2025 from the House of Assembly, including on additional proposed amendments on truth in political advertising.

---

<sup>288</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 6 November 2024, Tasmanian Constitution Society, 2024 Inquiry, p. 26.

<sup>289</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 6 November 2024, The Australia Institute, 2024 Inquiry, p. 83.

<sup>290</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 6 November 2024, The Australia Institute, 2024 Inquiry, p. 89.

<sup>291</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 6 November 2024, The Australia Institute, 2024 Inquiry, p. 89.



## 8 ELECTORAL DISCLOSURE AND FUNDING ACT 2023

### Establishment of the Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023

- 8.1 There have been attempts in recent years to implement funding and disclosure laws for Tasmanian elections,<sup>292</sup> with successful amendments made via the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023* (EDF 23) which received Royal Assent on 11 December 2023. Following this, on 16 April 2025 the Electoral Disclosure and Funding (Donation Disclosure) Amendment Bill 2024 (55 of 2024) (EDA 24), which was brought into the House of Assembly by Dr Rosalie Woodruff MP, received Royal Assent, amending the EDF 23.
- 8.2 While Royal Assent was given to the EDF 23 in December 2023, Her Excellency the then-Governor proclaimed on 20 June 2024 the following commencement dates for different elements of the EDF 23:
- (a) fix 1 July 2024 as the day on which Part 1 and sections 5 and 180 of that Act commence; and
  - (b) fix 1 July 2025 as the day on which the provisions of that Act, other than Part 1 and sections 5 and 180, commence.<sup>293</sup>
- 8.3 The commencement dates of the EDF 23 therefore occurred after the 2024 elections and during the 2025 General Election. While under clause (a) of the proclamation some parts and sections of the Bill had commenced by the 2025 Legislative Council elections, they were not relevant to the responsibilities of candidates.
- 8.4 The EDF Act provided for the development of funding requirements for House of Assembly election campaigns, including eligible political parties and candidates are provided access to public funds for their campaign. The public funding elements of the Act do not apply to Legislative Council elections.
- 8.5 Initially, Section 13 of the EDF 23 defined a reportable political donation as \$5,000 or more. This threshold was lowered to \$1,000 by the EDA 24 Bill in 2025. Due to the proclamation date of the EDF 23, \$5,000 was never actively used as the reportable political donation threshold. A number of submissions to the 2024 Inquiry proposed support for a decrease of the then legislated \$5,000 disclosure threshold.<sup>294</sup>

---

<sup>292</sup> Electoral Amendment (Integrity of Elections) Bill 2021, [https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0026/41849/61\\_of\\_2021.pdf](https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0026/41849/61_of_2021.pdf) and Electoral Amendments (Electoral Expenditure and Political Donations) Bill 2020, [https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0021/39135/45\\_of\\_2020.pdf](https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0021/39135/45_of_2020.pdf).

<sup>293</sup> Proclamation under the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023*, <https://www.legislation.tas.gov.au/view/whole/html/inforce/current/sr-2024-024>

<sup>294</sup> Submission No. 23, Tasmanian Constitution Society, 2024 Inquiry, p. 4; Submission No. 10, Dr Angela Offord, 2024 Inquiry, p. 2; Submission No. 2, Bob Holderness-Roddam, 2024 Inquiry; p. 2, Submission

- 8.6 Part 5 of the EDF 23 requires Members of Parliament, political parties, election candidates, third-party campaigners, associated entities and broader political donors to disclose reportable political donations. It also legislates the process for disclosure, and related offences for failure to disclose.
- 8.7 During an election period reportable political donations by relevant persons are to be declared “within 7 days after the day on which the political donation is received or made.”<sup>295</sup> Disclosures outside of election periods are to be made monthly and lodged “within the monthly period after the monthly period in which the political donation was received or made.”<sup>296</sup>
- 8.8 Parts 6 and 7 of the EDF 23 set the requirements for the tracking and reporting of electoral expenditure by candidates and parties during House of Assembly elections. Part 8 provides such a provision for Legislative Council elections and candidates.
- 8.9 The EDF 23 provides two funding sources for candidates of House of Assembly elections. Part 11 provides for the TEC to keep an Election Campaigns Fund (Campaigns Fund), defining application criteria for candidates to access this Fund, and the process for payment claims. The Campaigns Fund can be accessed for electoral expenditure which was “incurred for the dominant purpose of creating or communicating electoral matter in relation to a House of Assembly Election.”<sup>297</sup>
- 8.10 Part 12 establishes the Administration Fund which can be accessed on application by registered parties and independent Members of the House of Assembly, (not election candidates). The TEC defines the Administration Fund as a mechanism through which registered parties and independent Members “may claim quarterly payments, to receive publicly funded reimbursement of administrative expenses they incurred.”<sup>298</sup> Despite the fact that Legislative Council Members have the same administrative and compliance costs, they are not able to access this Administration Fund.
- 8.11 On its website, the TEC provides its interpretation of what can be claimed as administrative expenditure, as follows:
- *for their administration or management of operational activities*
  - *for conferences, seminars or meetings where policies are being created or discussed*

---

No. 24, The Australia Institute, 2024 Inquiry, pp. 1-2 and Submission No. 25, Jacqui Lambie Network, 2024 Inquiry, p. 3.

<sup>295</sup> Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023 (Tas), s 40.

<sup>296</sup> Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023 (Tas), s 40.

<sup>297</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, ‘Election Campaigns Fund,’

<https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/disclosure-and-funding/funding/election-campaigns-fund.html>.

<sup>298</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, ‘Administration Fund,’ <https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/disclosure-and-funding/funding/administration-fund.html>.

- providing information to the public about themselves
- providing information to registered party members or supporters, or the supporters of independent House of Assembly members
- auditing their financial accounts
- on equipment and training to ensure compliance with the Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023
- on reasonable remuneration for their staff undertaking activities in this list
- on reasonable expenditure for equipment or vehicles used for undertaking activities in this list
- on office accommodation and equipment for staff.<sup>299</sup>

## Commencement of the Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023 During the 2025 General Election

8.12 The disclosure and funding requirements of the EDF 23 commenced on 1 July 2025, 18 days prior to polling day in the 2025 General Election. This occurred mid-election campaign period.

8.13 While the EDF 23 was not implemented for the 2024 General Election, evidence received by the 2024 Inquiry addressed the matter. The TEC explained the approach to developing the regulation of the EDF 23:

*It is a large workload and we're building momentum, but nothing necessarily external yet. Essentially, there's about six different streams of management that need to be undertaken here. The first one is recruitment, and hopefully within days we'll have the full complement of staff processes up and running. There's the IT system and structures. There's stakeholder management, which we'll look to get rolling. Then there's also precedent and policies in relation to things like the peculiarities of Tasmania. I raised this in the review that we did when the first draft legislation was put through. While there is a structure that is fairly straightforward, looking at the three of you here, you're a party member in the Legislative Council, you're a party member in the lower House and there are certain rules, independents have certain rules different from the parties, while independents in the upper House have different rules, you don't get any funding.<sup>300</sup>*

8.14 At the time of this evidence, the amendments to the EDF 23 which were later passed through the EDA 24, had not been confirmed, but the TEC was considering the impact of the lowering of the disclosure amount and the increase in the frequency of disclosures, that may result, if passed:

*That [potential amendments to the EDF Act] impacts our time frame. Essentially, we have over a year to have that operation in the current environment. But if the legislation goes through, and we don't know when or if*

<sup>299</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 'Administration Fund,' <https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/disclosure-and-funding/funding/administration-fund.html>.

<sup>300</sup> Transcript of Evidence, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry, p. 78.

it's going to get through, that will mean things will need to be done at the end of July rather than the end of January. We try to prepare for both scenarios. They are the sorts of things that make it more complicated.

...

That will have a massive admin pressure cost. Again, if that's the will of the parliament, that's fine, but the timetables are concerning. We're hoping to be starting the strategic stakeholder work early in the new year [2025], once we've got some staff, and get some ground rules on some of those elements, but for some things like this change, we'll start from the position of what the current legislation is but will need to be ready to change if the 1 May legislation comes through that changes it for 1 July.<sup>301</sup>

- 8.15 In meeting its legislative requirements as prescribed in the EDF 23, the TEC launched the Electoral Disclosure and Funding Regulations 2025 (Regulations 2025) on 27 June 2025.<sup>302</sup> The Regulations 2025 provided instructions on the receipt of political donations and the maintenance of records and evidence of electoral expenditure.<sup>303</sup> Additional information was provided on the TEC website to guide eligible electoral participants in 'meeting their disclosure obligations and (for some) understanding their potential eligibility to claim public funding through either the Election Campaigns Fund or the Administration Fund.'<sup>304</sup> The TEC noted the potential for varied levels of the understanding of obligations under the EDF 23, given its commencement alongside the 2025 General Election:

*Noting the lack of lead time for electoral participants to understand the Electoral Disclosure and Funding Scheme (the Scheme) requirements ahead of the 2025 State election, the TEC has initially taken an educative approach to compliance obligations. However, the EDF Act does contain penalties for those who do not meet its requirements, and the TEC has established a Compliance and Investigations team with the necessary skills to act against future non-compliance.*<sup>305</sup>

- 8.16 The commencement of the EDF 23 after the campaign for the 2025 General Election had already commenced led to some additional complications for implementation by the TEC and compliance by eligible participants. The TEC indicated its website was a key resource for participants, providing information on processes and relevant forms.<sup>306</sup> Mr Hawkey reflected upon the TEC's experience of implementing the regulations during this complex time:

---

<sup>301</sup> Transcript of Evidence, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2024 Inquiry, p. 79.

<sup>302</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 9.

<sup>303</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 9.

<sup>304</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 9.

<sup>305</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 9.

<sup>306</sup> Transcript of Evidence, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 67.

Again, some of our regulations weren't actually in place when the state election started, so we also had the additional complexity of part way through a state election when it came in, which carried some other broader complexities...

Yes, there are some things that don't work. There are bits where the legislation is slightly hard to interpret. There were times when we needed to - and, in responding to some good requests from political participants, legal advice because of the peculiarities of Tasmania. Even though we picked up the New South Wales legislation, which is a good, firm foundation stone, Tasmania is still different.<sup>307</sup>

8.17 Tasmanian Labor discussed its expectation of the ideal implementation of the EDF 23 and how the implementation eventuated during the 2025 General Election:

**Mr MOORE** - ... During the election period, we were certainly able to get advice, but given the urgency of it all, I think it's fair to say that the advice was delayed. In fairness to the TEC, it has certainly taken a non-punitive approach to that, if you are attempting to comply and seek advice from it; nonetheless, not ideal that it took that amount of time. We wrote to the [Electoral] Commissioner, not last year, was the year before now -

**CHAIR** - 2024?

**Mr MOORE** - Yes, that is correct. - and requested that the first set of guidelines around exactly how the implementation would work, ideally, would be issued about six months before, so in December 2024. I believe they weren't actually issued until - don't quote me on the exact date - but sometime in April 2025.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Quite late.

**Mr MOORE** - Yes, which, for a very complex piece of legislation and complex administratively to comply with, even outside an election, is not a sufficient amount of time to properly get an organisation structured in a way that allows that compliance without significant disruption.<sup>308</sup>

8.18 The TEC included in their 2025 submission the number of registrations under the Regulations 2025, as calculated at 30 November 2025:

*The number of electoral participants formally registered under the Scheme at 30 November 2025 is:*

- Assembly Members - 35
- Candidates - 161
- Party Agents – 7 (including 2 cancelled registrations)
- Official Agents - 83 (including 3 cancelled registrations)
- Associated Entities - 6
- Third Party Campaigners - 10<sup>309</sup>

---

<sup>307</sup> Transcript of Evidence, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, pp. 67-68.

<sup>308</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Tasmanian Labor, 2025 Inquiry, p. 21.

<sup>309</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 10.

- 8.19 Section 182 of the EDF 23 provides that an independent review of the Act be undertaken “within 12 months after the completion of the second Assembly general election held under this Act, unless an earlier independent review is completed under subsection (3).”<sup>310</sup> Section 182 (3) provides that the Minister could request such a review at an earlier point in time if they wish. The TEC suggested it would be most beneficial for a review of the EDF 23 to be conducted after, at least, a ‘full cycle’ of elections had been held under its rules, i.e. the 2025 General Election and the 2026 Legislative Council periodic elections.<sup>311</sup> The TEC noted the following matters arising out of the 2025 General Election for future review: the definition of advertisement, consultation with stakeholders regarding adherence to regulations, and the log of issues kept by the organisation arising during the campaign.
- 8.20 In addition to the formal review process prescribed by the Act, the TEC also provided information regarding their ongoing emphasis on developing the disclosure and reporting scheme in Tasmania, to provide a more efficient experience. The TEC indicated it is facilitating ongoing engagement with the Victorian Electoral Commission to migrate an online disclosure system to the House of Assembly’s multi-electorate setting, noting its intention that this go live in a trial phase from 1 July 2026 to provide an opportunity for stakeholder feedback.<sup>312</sup> Tasmanian Labor recommended that the TEC adopt digital systems for the disclosure of reportable donations, returns and claims and requested the opportunity to provide feedback on their experiences in the 2025 General Election and on the potential provision of any digital services into the future.<sup>313</sup>

## Findings

### The Committee finds:

43. The scheduled commencement of the final provisions of the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023* coincided with an unexpected early House of Assembly General Election in 2025.
44. Commencement of the final provisions of the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023*, during the 2025 House of Assembly General Election campaign, caused implementation challenges for the Tasmanian Electoral Commission and participants.
45. Online resources provided by the Tasmanian Electoral Commission for the 2025 House of Assembly General Election gave some guidance to assist participants in meeting the requirements of the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023*,

---

<sup>310</sup> *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023* (Tas), s 182.

<sup>311</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 77.

<sup>312</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 87.

<sup>313</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Tasmanian Labor, 2025 Inquiry, pp. 22-23; Submission No. 8, Tasmanian Labor, 2025 Inquiry, p. 4.

however challenges were reported regarding preparation, clarity and compliance.

## Disclosure of Political Donations

8.21 The EDF 23 requires the disclosure of reportable political donations of \$1,000 or more to a registered party, an independent Member of, or candidate, for either House of Parliament. During elections of either House of Parliament, donations are to be declared within seven days of their receipt, while outside of election periods disclosures are to be made within the next monthly period after the monthly period any donation is received in. Disclosure requirements are also applied to associated entities, third-party campaigners and significant political donors.<sup>314</sup>

8.22 The TEC provided the following data on disclosed donations, as at 30 November 2025, which included the valid period during the 2025 General Election:

*Reportable political donations (that is, donations of \$1000 or more) made or received during the 2025 State election were required to be disclosed from 1 July 2025, when the EDF Act commenced. Participants were not required to disclose political donations prior to 1 July.*

*For the State election campaign period:*

- 177 (7-day) reportable donation disclosures were made, totalling \$1,118,904 (including a \$500,000 reportable loan).

*Outside of the election campaign period to 30 November 2025:*

- 13 monthly reportable donation disclosures were made, totalling \$25,525.

*The total reportable donations disclosed by registered parties, at 30 November 2025, are:*

- Australian Labor Party - \$280,103
- Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party Tasmania - \$10,000
- Tasmanian Greens - \$62,450
- The Liberal Party of Australia, Tasmanian Division - \$678,047 (including one \$500,000 reportable loan)
- The National Party of Australia – Tasmania - \$11,525

*‘Non-reportable’ political donations—that is, any donations valued from \$0 -to \$999.99—are also included in campaign returns. As of 30 November 2025, the total value of all nonreportable political donations disclosed under the Scheme is \$551,702.<sup>315</sup>*

---

<sup>314</sup> Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023, ss 42-44.

<sup>315</sup> Submission No. 7, Tamarian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 10.

Full information on disclosures is publicly available on the TEC website.<sup>316</sup>

- 8.23 While several recommendations to the 2024 Inquiry supported changes since enacted by the EDA 24, a number remain unaddressed. In addition to supporting the successful changes to disclosure amounts and timeframes, the Australia Institute also recommended the broadening of the definition of gift, requiring third-party campaigners to disclose relevant donations regardless of when they were made during the electoral cycle, a ban on donations from developers and the fossil fuel, tobacco and gambling industries.<sup>317</sup> Mr Holderness-Roddam suggested that consideration be given to the potential for promises of donations being made before an election to be paid after an election.<sup>318</sup>

### **Assembly Election Campaign Returns and the Election Campaigns Fund**

- 8.24 Provisions for the Returns, or financial disclosure, of parties, Members or candidates in House of Assembly or Legislative Council elections are found in Part 7 and Part 8 of the EDF 23. There is slight variance between the Parts, but both provide that within 60 days of the end of the campaign period for the House or the declaration of the polls for the Council, returns are to be lodged with the TEC.<sup>319</sup>
- 8.25 With slight variance in the regulations of Returns across each House of Parliament, it is standard that Returns include the reporting of electoral or election expenditure, an account of reportable political donations, the disclosure of political donations and amounts paid by Members of either House to support a campaign.<sup>320</sup>
- 8.26 The Electoral Commissioner emphasised in his evidence to the Committee that a Return and a claim for payment under Part 11 and Part 12 of the EDF 23 are different processes, with separate rules and regulations guiding them.<sup>321</sup>
- 8.27 The TEC provided a review of Returns for the 2025 General Election, as of 30 November 2025:

*A total of 66 campaign returns were anticipated for the 2025 State election from registered parties, independent candidates and members, associated entities, and third-party campaigners.*

*As of 30 November 2025:*

---

<sup>316</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 'Reportable Political Donations', <https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/disclosure-and-funding/registers-and-reports/donations/seven-day-disclosures-ha25.html>.

<sup>317</sup> Submission No. 17, The Australia Institute, 2024 Inquiry, pp. 9-10.

<sup>318</sup> Submission No. 2, Bob Holderness-Roddam, 2024 Inquiry, pp. 1-2.

<sup>319</sup> *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023*, (Tas), Parts 7 and 8.

<sup>320</sup> *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023*, (Tas), Parts 11 and 12.

<sup>321</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 72.

- 49 valid election campaign returns were received
- 11 were lodged but invalid, with remediation under way
- 3 participants were not required to lodge (third-party campaigners below \$5,000 threshold)
- 3 are outstanding and overdue, comprising one associated entity, one unsuccessful candidate, and one third-party campaigner.<sup>322</sup>

- 8.28 Election Returns are to include expenditure relating to advertisements made by parties or independent candidates. Under a Guideline issued by the TEC for the 2025 General Election, the EDF 23 was interpreted to require the provision of “copies of any advertising material to which any portion of the electoral expenditure relates (except online advertising material if the cost of the transaction did not exceed \$50)”<sup>323</sup> in election Returns. The information disclosed in Returns may be considered by the TEC in relation to claims for the Election Campaigns Fund.<sup>324</sup>
- 8.29 The experience of participants and political parties in lodging their Returns for the 2025 General Election, including in relation to the use of the TEC of these Returns as an assessment tool for claims under the Election Campaigns Fund.
- 8.30 The EDF 23 provides for the TEC to administer the Election Campaigns Fund. The Election Campaigns Fund allows House candidates to claim some electoral expenditure and receive publicly funded reimbursement.<sup>325</sup> The TEC provides an online “Election Campaigns Fund payment claim form” and a draft payment claim template to assist for eligible individuals<sup>326</sup> or parties to lodge their claims. Claims must be lodged within 120 days after the return of the writs.
- 8.31 The EDF 23 further provides that, if reimbursement is not paid by the TEC within 60 days of lodgement, registered parties are eligible for a preliminary payment of ‘an amount equal to 90% of the total amount estimated by the Commission to be payable to the party, reduced by the amount of any advance payments made for the election concerned.’<sup>327</sup>

---

<sup>322</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 11.

<sup>323</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, Electoral Disclosure and Funding Regulations 2025, ‘Election campaign return disclosure of advertising material for the 2025 House of Assembly Election,’ 12 December 2025, <https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/disclosure-and-funding/edf-guidelines/Election-campaign-return-disclosure-of-advertising-material-for-the-2025-House-of-Assembly-election.pdf>.

<sup>324</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, ‘Disclosure of electoral expenditure,’ 12 December 2025, <https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/disclosure-and-funding/edf-guidelines/Disclosure-of-electoral-expenditure-guideline.pdf>.

<sup>325</sup> Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023, (Tas), Part 11.

<sup>326</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, ‘Election Campaign Fund payment claim’ form, 12 December 2025, [https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/disclosure-and-funding/edf-forms/EDF137\\_Election-campaigns-fund-payment-claim.pdf?t=2508191632.pdf](https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/disclosure-and-funding/edf-forms/EDF137_Election-campaigns-fund-payment-claim.pdf?t=2508191632.pdf).

<sup>327</sup> Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023, (Tas) s 141 (2).

- 8.32 As of 30 November 2025, the TEC had received 16 valid claims from eligible parties under the Election Campaigns Fund for the 2025 General Election, which totalled \$2,333,778. The TEC noted:

*Preliminary payments of \$1,267,666 have been made against these claims, with full assessments currently in progress. Once assessments are complete, final reimbursements will be issued or any overpayments recovered in accordance with the provisions of the EDF Act.*<sup>328</sup>

- 8.33 As of the same date, four valid claims to the Elections Campaigns Fund had been received from eligible independent candidates, totalling \$242,500:

*These claims are under assessment, with no payments made to date (noting that, unlike registered parties, independent candidates are not entitled to preliminary Election Campaigns Fund payments under the EDF Act).*<sup>329</sup>

- 8.34 At the Committee’s hearing on 16 February 2026 into the 2025 elections, Kristie Johnston MP noted that, according to the TEC website, she was at that stage the only person to have received final payment of their campaign funding application.<sup>330</sup> Updated details on payments under the Election Campaigns Fund are available on the TEC payment tables.<sup>331</sup>

- 8.35 The outstanding final payments of claims under the Election Campaigns Funds were raised during the 2025 Inquiry. Tasmanian Labor raised concerns that the EDF Act has no legislated timeline for the payment of the remaining 10% of party claims if preliminary payments have been sought by a given party.<sup>332</sup> Tasmanian Labor raised concerns that the absence of such a clause left the funding payments “too slow,”<sup>333</sup> which could affect the ability of parties and independent candidates to pay invoices arising during election campaigns:

*The vast majority of suppliers provide 30 day terms for the payment of invoices. However, the EDFA provides the Commission with 60 days to make a compulsory 90% payment of a claim. This is likely to cause issues for parties and candidates in the future, who have both an obligation to pay suppliers on-time and comply with the Act which (rightfully) restricts their ability to use other funds to pay for electoral expenditure.*

*Parties and candidates should not be forced to choose between paying Tasmanian businesses on time, or compliance with the Act. They should also not be forced to take out temporary loans to bridge the gap, because of two competing intentions of the Act (i.e. the restriction on the source of funds for*

---

<sup>328</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 11. Refer to submission for a breakdown of Election Campaigns Fund claims.

<sup>329</sup> Submission No. 7, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 12.

<sup>330</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Tasmanian Labor, 2025 Inquiry, p. 14.

<sup>331</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, ‘Election Campaigns Fund claims – July 2025 State election,’ <https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/disclosure-and-funding/registers-and-reports/campaigns-fund/election-campaigns-fund-claims.html>.

<sup>332</sup> Submission No. 8, Tasmanian Labor, 2025 Inquiry, p. 3.

<sup>333</sup> Submission No. 8, Tasmanian Labor, 2025 Inquiry, p. 3.

*Electoral Expenditure, and an administrative process that delays the receipt of one of those sources).*<sup>334</sup>

- 8.36 The lack of timely reimbursements through the Election Campaigns Fund was considered as a potential outcome of the broad interpretation of electoral expenditure considered for lodgement with election Returns. Mr Moore, representing Tasmanian Labor, explained that the Party had been advised to submit in their Return every piece of advertising material used for candidates during the 2025 General Election campaign, even if it was a snippet of a substantive piece of advertisement. Consequently, all of these versions of a single advertisement were being considered by the TEC before payment of the final 10% of the Election Campaigns Fund would be paid.<sup>335</sup>
- 8.37 In addition to concerns regarding the quantity of electoral material lodged in Returns and being assessed in the Election Campaigns Fund, there were issues with inconsistencies with the format of invoices and the information required by the TEC for its consideration of electoral expenditure. Mr Moore discussed the lump sum invoices for Meta and Google, organisations who require payment for a whole service agreement, not singular advertisements or posts on particular days:

*... Yes, that is the case and I suspect probably one of the reasons for the delay - the ability to match those pieces of material and exact invoices is not a perfect system. We can't control how suppliers bill us, especially when we're talking about essentially monopolies on social media. The bill is what it is. It comes as it is. We do our best, but, yes, I suspect that's having an impact on the time it takes.*<sup>336</sup>

- 8.38 Tasmanian Labor recommended that the EDF 23 be amended to “only require the submission of material related to a claim for public funding, which should be submitted with the claim and not the election return” and that the prepayment of the Election Campaigns Fund be provided to parties 30 days after the claim has been lodged and the outstanding 10% within 60 days.<sup>337</sup>
- 8.39 In response to the concern raised by Tasmanian Labor, the TEC confirmed that all parties had been provided with the 90% prepayment within 60 days of lodging a claim, but that the organisation was thoroughly examining the use of public funds, leading to the outstanding portion payments.<sup>338</sup> The Electoral Commissioner also noted that while the TEC was not actively considering the re-interpretation of advertising materials under the EDF 23 to potentially assist with streamlining the lodgement and processing of Returns and Claims, the

---

<sup>334</sup> Submission No. 8, Tasmanian Labor, 2025 Inquiry, p. 3.

<sup>335</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Tasmanian Labor, 2025 Inquiry, p. 15.

<sup>336</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Tasmanian Labor, 2025 Inquiry, p. 16.

<sup>337</sup> Submission No. 8, Tasmanian Labor, 2025 Inquiry, pp. 2-3.

<sup>338</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 70.

legislated review of the EDF 23 may consider such matters as modern advertising culture.<sup>339</sup>

## Findings

### The Committee finds:

46. The Tasmanian Electoral Commission's interpretation of the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023* created impractical and onerous reporting obligations for participants by requiring advertising material, including multiple versions of the same or similar material, to be provided with Assembly Election Campaign Returns.
47. Any failure to address impractical and onerous reporting obligations required by the Tasmanian Electoral Commission in relation to the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023* would lead to future resourcing demands for the organisation.
48. Political parties received their preliminary payments for Election Campaigns Fund claims within the prescribed 60 days; however remaining claim amounts were paid after substantial delays. These delays impacted on the timely payment of supplier invoices by political parties.
49. Unlike political parties, independent candidates were not provided with preliminary payments under the Election Campaigns Fund during the 2025 House of Assembly General Election and experienced payment delays in excess of 60 days.
50. While expenditure of public funds requires appropriate oversight, the Tasmanian Electoral Commission's interpretation of the electoral expenditure reporting requirements under the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023* does not reasonably accommodate or reflect contemporary election campaign practices.

## Recommendation

### The Committee recommends:

15. **As a matter of priority, the Government and the Tasmanian Electoral Commission undertake an operational review of the application of the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023* during the 2025 General Election, including engagement with participants on identified challenges and issues.**

---

<sup>339</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2025 Inquiry, p. 71.

## Administration Fund

- 8.40 Provision for the Administration Fund is also made in the EDF 23. The Administration Fund is available to House Members in a quarterly payment. A valid claim must be made by an individual Member or Party to access the available public funding.<sup>340</sup>
- 8.41 The TEC provided the following update on Administration Fund amounts claimed by House of Assembly Members, and their associated parties, as at 30 November 2025:

| Registered Party                                      | Claim<br>Q3 2025 | Advance Claim<br>Q4 2025 | Advance Claim<br>Q1 2026 |
|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Australian Labor Party                                | \$30,372         | \$37,700                 | -                        |
| The Liberal Party of Australia,<br>Tasmanian Division | \$44,398         | \$37,700                 | -                        |
| Shooters, Fishers and<br>Farmers Party Tasmania       | -                | \$11,100                 | -                        |
| Tasmanian Greens                                      | -                | \$22,100                 | \$23,100                 |
| Peter George                                          | -                | \$11,100                 | -                        |

## Expenditure Limits

- 8.42 Under the EDF Act, expenditure limits only apply to Legislative Council periodic elections. Section 82 of the EDF 23 sets an expenditure limit on candidates running for the Legislative Council.<sup>341</sup> For the 2024 Legislative Council elections the expenditure limit was set at \$19,500<sup>342</sup> and at \$20,000 for the 2025 Legislative Council elections.<sup>343</sup> Penalties may be applied if the maximum amount spent by a candidate exceeds the set amount and further, “if an elected candidate exceeds the permitted maximum amount by more than \$1,000, a court may declare their election void.”<sup>344</sup>
- 8.43 Some evidence presented to both the 2024 and 2025 Inquiries supported the amendment of the EDF 23 to establish expenditure limits for House of Assembly elections.<sup>345</sup> Tasmanian Labor proposed that this inclusion would assist in

<sup>340</sup> Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023, (Tas), Part 12.

<sup>341</sup> Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023, (Tas), s 82.

<sup>342</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, ‘Information for Candidates,’ <https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/legislative-council/elections-2024/candidate-info.html>.

<sup>343</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, ‘Legislative Council Elections 2025 Candidate Handbook,’ p. 21, [https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/legislative-council/assets/LC\\_Candidate\\_Information\\_Booklet.pdf](https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/legislative-council/assets/LC_Candidate_Information_Booklet.pdf).

<sup>344</sup> Tasmanian Electoral Commission, ‘Legislative Council Elections 2025 Candidate Handbook,’ p. 21, [https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/legislative-council/assets/LC\\_Candidate\\_Information\\_Booklet.pdf](https://www.tec.tas.gov.au/legislative-council/assets/LC_Candidate_Information_Booklet.pdf).

<sup>345</sup> Submission No. 2, Bob Holderness-Roddam, 2024 Inquiry, pp. 1-2; Submission No. 28, Tasmanian Labor, 2024 Inquiry, p. 6 and Submission No. 23, Tasmanian Constitution Society, 2024 Inquiry, p. 4.

protecting the integrity of public funding as now provided under the EDF 23, reducing the influence of money in politics and reducing fundraising demands.<sup>346</sup>

- 8.44 The Tasmanian Constitution Society also expressed support for expenditure limits for both Houses of Parliament, however noted that it is important to consider the potential for disproportionate impacts of caps on independent candidates, compared to candidates from political parties.<sup>347</sup>
- 8.45 The Committee also questioned if there may be problematic consequences of expenditure caps applying to political parties:

**Mr FERGUSON** - *I'd ask the question: do you see a problem with two parties that are aligned being able to outspend their opponents two-to-one?*

...

**Mr SPARK** - *Well, the quick answer to that is we haven't really addressed our thoughts to that, Michael. We take your point but yes, we would need to give some more thought to that to come to a position.*<sup>348</sup>

- 8.46 In addressing expenditure limits, Dr Bonham provided support for a review of expenditure limits in the EDF 23, including those for the Legislative Council which he deems 'on the strict side.' Dr Bonham also provided an analysis of the potential interplay of House of Assembly elections on Legislative Council elections if held one after the other, if expenditure limits are not imposed for the House:

*The holding of Legislative Council and Assembly elections in close proximity creates issues with the Legislative Council's strict spending caps. When an Assembly election is held directly before a Council election, a candidate who runs unsuccessfully for the Assembly then runs for the Council will have gained publicity from running for the Assembly (where there is currently no expenditure cap) for their run for the Council (where there is a quite strict expenditure cap). At this election two Legislative Councillors resigned to run for the Assembly. Had either not succeeded they would then have been able (albeit narrowly based on the timeframe for the return of writs) to recontest their Legislative Council seat in the by-election.*

*The problem was more acute in 2021 when Legislative Council candidates who were endorsed by a political party were able to benefit from that party's general publicity for the state election, while independent candidates had no such benefit.*<sup>349</sup>

---

<sup>346</sup> Submission No. 8, Tasmanian Labor, 2025 Inquiry, pp. 5-6.

<sup>347</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Tasmanian Constitution Society, 2025 Inquiry, pp. 29-31.

<sup>348</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Tasmanian Constitution Society, 2025 Inquiry, p. 32.

<sup>349</sup> Submission No. 13, Dr Kevin Bonham, 2024 Inquiry, pp. 6-7.

## Finding

### The Committee finds:

51. There is some support for the inclusion of election campaign expenditure limits in the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023* for House of Assembly General Elections.

## Recommendation

### The Committee recommends:

16. The statutory independent review of the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023* consider the following:
  - a. The inclusion of election campaign expenditure limits for House of Assembly elections; and
  - b. The current election campaign expenditure limits for Legislative Council elections.

## Registration of Official Agents

- 8.47 Tasmanian Labor identified an unintended oversight in the EDF 23 relating to the interpretation of Official Agents. In one section of the EDF 23 the interpretation is inconsistent with the others and consequentially implies that, “in certain administrative circumstances, that Official Agents for political participants (including Donors, Associated Entities and Third Parties) must be enrolled in Tasmania.”<sup>350</sup> Tasmanian Labor recommends:

*that this drafting error be resolved to ensure clarity and that there are no unintended issues where a participant exercises their right to participate but struggles with, or is left unclear as to, their administrative compliance on non-material matters.*<sup>351</sup>

- 8.48 Mr Moore from Tasmanian Labor acknowledged that the TEC had provided advice during the 2025 General Election campaign as to a loophole that allowed for appropriate measures to be enacted.<sup>352</sup>

## Finding

### The Committee finds:

52. Differing interpretations of Official Agents exist within the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023*, which currently prescribes in one instance that Official

---

<sup>350</sup> Submission No. 8, Tasmanian Labor, 2025 Inquiry, p. 3.

<sup>351</sup> Submission No. 8, Tasmanian Labor, 2025 Inquiry, p. 3.

<sup>352</sup> Transcript of Evidence, 16 February 2026, Tasmanian Labor, 2025 Inquiry, pp. 20-21.

Agents must be registered in Tasmania. This interpretation is inconsistent with the rest of the Act and the function of Official Agents.

### **Recommendation**

**The Committee recommends:**

- 17. The Government and the Tasmanian Electoral Commission clarify the interpretation of Official Agents in the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023*.**

# **Dissenting Statement of Mr Michael Ferguson MP, Liberal Member for Bass**

## **Dissenting Report**

### **Introduction**

I thank the Chair, fellow Committee members and Secretariat for their work on these inquiries. I support the overwhelming majority of the Committee's findings and recommendations, particularly those directed towards improving electoral administration, transparency and public confidence.

However, I respectfully dissent from two specific aspects of the report.

### **A. Election commitments and electoral bribery (Finding 30)**

I did not agree with the wording of Finding 30, which adopts an assertion that election commitments involving public expenditure in local communities "may be perceived as indirect electoral bribery".

Election commitments are a legitimate and essential feature of representative democracy. Candidates and political parties must be free to identify community needs, propose solutions and seek electoral support for specific projects and services.

There is a major difference between making a transparent commitment to fund a community initiative and improperly inducing an individual to vote in a particular way. Indeed, section 187 of the Electoral Act 2004 recognises this point specifically. It defines electoral bribery as a crime, while expressly excluding public declarations of policy or promises of public action.

The fact that an election commitment may influence voters does not make it improper. Indeed, persuading electors through competing policy commitments is central to democratic elections.

To be clear, I have long supported transparency, proper financial accountability and merit-based administration of public expenditure. Election commitments must be implemented through lawful and appropriate processes.

However, governance requirements (and even improvements in governance requirements) should not be confused with the legitimacy of making election promises in the first place. This is the reason I disagreed with the chosen terminology.

### **B. Expenditure caps for House of Assembly elections (Recommendation 16)**

I opposed Recommendation 16(a), which proposes a move toward expenditure caps for House of Assembly elections.

Expenditure caps introduce significant questions of fairness and electoral freedom. In particular, caps applying separately to political parties and candidates will risk unequal outcomes where politically aligned parties, independents or third-party campaigners (eg trade unions, lobby groups) will effectively combine their separate

expenditure allowances to gain a significant electoral advantage over their political opponents who will be comparatively less competitive.

Two aligned organisations operating under separate expenditure limits could effectively outspend a single political opponent by two to one. This concern was raised during the Committee's hearings and remains unresolved.

During the 2010-2014 Labor-Green Government, legislation was introduced to impose expenditure caps on House of Assembly elections. At the time, the Liberal State Opposition argued vigorously that this was an inappropriate attempt to manipulate future elections to disadvantage the Liberal Party. We alleged the Labor-Green coalition's motives were improper. I hold the same concern today.

Political communication is fundamental to free elections. Restrictions on campaign expenditure should not be advanced without compelling evidence that they are necessary, effective and genuinely fair.



Michael Ferguson MP

*Member for Bass*

27 October 2026

## APPENDIX A – LIST OF SUBMISSIONS

### 2024 Inquiry submissions

1. Blind Citizens of Australia (Tasmania Branch) and Disability Voices Tasmania;
2. Bob Holderness-Roddam;
3. COTA Tasmania;
4. Dean Cocker;
5. Integrity Commission Tasmania;
6. Roland Browne;
7. Geoffrey Dodd;
8. Private Witness;
9. Will Coats;
10. Dr Angela Offrod;
11. Professor Pam Sharpe;
12. Private Witness;
13. Dr Kevin Bonham;
14. Tasmanian Electoral Commission;
15. Proportional Representation Society of Australia Inc.;
16. Private Witness;
17. The Australia Institute;
18. Associate Professor Richard Herr;
19. Morris Worsley;
20. Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party Tasmania;

21. Blind Citizens Australia;
22. Robin Banks;
23. Tasmanian Constitution Society;
24. The Tasmanian Greens;
25. The Jacqui Lambie Network;
26. The Liberal Party of Australia (Tasmanian Division);
27. Private Witness;
28. Tasmanian Labor; and
29. The Office of the Custodial Inspector.

### 2025 Inquiry submissions

1. Private Witness;
2. Honourable Tania Rattray MLC;
3. Roland Browne;
4. Dr Justin Harding;
5. Tasmanian Constitution Society;
6. Proportional Representation Society of Australia Inc.;
7. Tasmanian Electoral Commission;
8. Tasmanian Labor;
9. Dr Kevin Bonham;
10. Jack Davenport; and
11. McKinnon.

## APPENDIX B – PUBLIC HEARING WITNESSES

### 2024 Inquiry witnesses

| Tuesday 5 November 2024, Parliament House, Hobart |                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Witness                                           | Organisation (if applicable)                    |
| Jackson Reynolds-Ryan                             | Blind Citizens Australia                        |
| Vaughn Bennison                                   | Disability Voices Tasmania                      |
| Duncan Meerding                                   | Tasmania Branch, Blind Citizens Australia       |
| Dean Cocker                                       |                                                 |
| Peter Coulson                                     | Liberal Party of Australia (Tasmanian Division) |
| Andrew Hawkey                                     | Tasmanian Electoral Commission                  |
| Howard Michael Blake                              | Tasmanian Electoral Commission                  |
| Roland Browne                                     |                                                 |

| Wednesday 6 November 2024, Parliament House, Hobart |                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Witness                                             | Organisation (if applicable)        |
| Dr Kevin Bonham                                     |                                     |
| Ben Hansen                                          | Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party |
| Neil Spark                                          | Tasmanian Constitution Society      |
| Dr Robin Banks                                      |                                     |
| Jarryd Moore                                        | Tasmanian Labor                     |
| The Hon. Guy Barnett MP, Attorney-General           |                                     |
| Kristy Bourne                                       | Department of Justice               |
| Pauline Van Adrichem                                | Department of Justice               |
| Bruce Paterson                                      | Department of Justice               |
| Bill Browne                                         | The Australia Institute             |
| Eloise Carr                                         | The Australia Institute             |

| Wednesday 12 February 2025, Parliament House, Hobart |                               |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Witness                                              | Organisation (if applicable)  |
| Will Coats                                           |                               |
| Ellen McKenzie                                       | Integrity Commission Tasmania |
| Sarah Frost                                          | Integrity Commission Tasmania |
| Dr Angela Offord                                     |                               |
| Associate Professor Richard Herr                     |                               |

**2025 Inquiry witnesses**

| <b>Tuesday 5 November 2024, Parliament House, Hobart</b> |                                                  |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Witness</b>                                           | <b>Organisation (if applicable)</b>              |
| Dr Kevin Bonham                                          |                                                  |
| Jarryd Moore                                             | Tasmanian Labor                                  |
| Neil Spark                                               | Tasmanian Constitution Society                   |
| Phillip Kaufman                                          | Tasmanian Constitution Society                   |
| Richard Upton                                            | Tasmanian Constitution Society                   |
| Peter Confeggi                                           | Tasmanian Constitution Society                   |
| Geoffrey Goode OAM                                       | Proportional Representation Society of Australia |
| Roland Browne                                            | Our Place                                        |
| Jack Davenport                                           |                                                  |
| Andrew Hawkey                                            | Tasmanian Electoral Commission                   |
| Howard Michael Blake                                     | Tasmanian Electoral Commission                   |
| Allyson Warrington                                       | Tasmanian Electoral Commission                   |

| <b>Tuesday 15 September 2026, Parliament House, Hobart</b> |                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Witness</b>                                             | <b>Organisation (if applicable)</b> |
| Dr Justin Harding                                          |                                     |
| Dr Robert Hortle                                           |                                     |
| Dr Lachlan Johnson                                         |                                     |
| Sarah Hyslop                                               |                                     |

## APPENDIX C – MINUTES

### 51<sup>st</sup> Parliament

#### **Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters**

##### **Meeting 1 – Thursday, 20 June 2024**

The Committee met at Parliament House, Hobart, in Committee Room 3, at 2.04 p.m.

##### **Members present:**

Mr Bayley  
Mr Gaffney  
Ms Johnston  
Ms O'Connor  
Ms Thomas  
Ms Webb  
Ms White  
Mr Wood

##### **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies.

##### **ELECTION OF CHAIR**

The Secretary took the Chair, read the Resolution establishing the Committee, and called for nominations for Chair.

Ms Johnston nominated Ms Webb, seconded by Ms Thomas.

Ms Webb consented to the nomination.

There being no further nominations, the Secretary declared Ms Webb elected as Chair.

Ms Webb took the Chair.

##### **ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIR**

The Chair called for nominations for Deputy Chair.

Mr Gaffney nominated Ms Johnston.

Ms O'Connor nominated Mr Bayley.

Mr Bayley consented to the nomination.

Ms Johnston declined to consent to the nomination.

Ms White seconded the nomination of Mr Bayley.

There being no other candidates nominated and consenting to the nomination, the Chair declared Mr Bayley elected as Deputy Chair.

Resolved,

- a) That unless otherwise ordered the Standing Orders of the House of Assembly be adopted as the Standing Orders of the Committee.
- b) That unless otherwise ordered Officers of the Parliamentary Research Service be admitted to the proceedings of the Committee whether in public or private session.
- c) That the Chair be the spokesperson in relation to the operations of the Committee.
- d) That unless otherwise ordered, press statements on behalf of the Committee be made only by the Chair after approval in principle by the Committee or after consultation with committee members. (Ms White)

##### **OTHER MATTERS**

The Committee agreed to discuss options for an inquiry into a review of the 2024 State Election and 2024 Legislative Council periodic elections

at its next meeting on a date to be determined.

At 2.26 p.m. the Committee adjourned until a date to be determined.

Confirmed,

### **Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters**

#### **Meeting 2 – Friday, 28 June 2024**

The Committee met at Parliament House, Hobart, in Committee Room 1, at 11.00 a.m.

#### **Members present:**

Mr Bayley (*via Webex*)

Mr Gaffney (*via Webex*)

Ms Johnston

Ms O'Connor (*via Webex*)

Ms Thomas

Ms Webb

Ms White (*via Webex*)

Mr Wood (*via Webex*)

#### **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies.

#### **INQUIRY INTO THE CONDUCT OF THE 2024 HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY GENERAL ELECTION AND LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ELECTIONS**

The Committee considered the resolution of both Houses establishing the Committee, particularly paragraph (2) of the resolution.

*Resolved*, That the Committee proceed with an inquiry into the conduct of the 2024 House of Assembly General Election and 2024 Legislative Council elections (Ms Webb).

*Resolved*, That the inquiry's terms of reference be:

To inquire into and report upon aspects of the administration, operation and conduct of the 23 March 2024 General Election of Members of the House of

Assembly and the 2024 Legislative Council elections. (Ms Webb)

The Committee noted that, per the resolution establishing the Committee, the Committee is required to report on the outcome of the inquiry within 18 months of the Resolution establishing the Committee being agreed to by both Houses.

*Resolved*, That the Committee proceed with the following timeline for the inquiry, including dates for the opening and closing of submissions, and that public hearings be held on the dates indicated:

Submissions open: Monday 1 July

Advertisement: Saturday 6 July

Submissions close: Friday 30 August

Meeting 3: Thursday 5 September, 2.00pm-4.00pm

Hearing 1: Tuesday 5 November (with the TEC)

Hearing 2: Wednesday 6 November

Hearing 3: Tuesday 11 February 2025

Hearing 4: Wednesday 12 February 2025

Hearing 5: (post release of TEC report on Parliamentary Elections) July/August 2025

Chair's Draft Report completed: Mid-September 2025

Meeting 4 to consider Report: Late September 2025

Meeting 5 to consider report: Late September/Early October 2025

Meeting 6 to consider report: Early/Mid-October 2025

Report to be Tabled: Tuesday 18 November 2025 (Ms Webb)

*Resolved*, that the following list of stakeholders are invited to make a submission to the inquiry, with political parties requested to make their

candidates for the 2024 elections aware of the Committee's call for submissions:

1. The Premier (for the Tasmanian Government)
2. Liberal Party
3. Labor Party
4. Tasmanian Greens
5. Jacqui Lambie Network
6. Any other party that ran candidates at the 2024 elections
7. All Independent Members of the Tasmanian Parliament
8. Dr Kevin Bonham
9. Dr Richard Herr
10. Tasmanian Constitution Society
11. Tasmanian Electoral Commission
12. UTAS Institute for the Study of Social Change
13. All independent candidates from the 23 March 2024 General Election of Members of the Assembly and the 2024 Legislative Council elections, for whom contact details can be obtained
14. Professor Fred Gale, Head of Discipline, Politics and International Relations UTAS
15. Integrity Commission
16. Australia Institute
17. Civil Liberties Australia
18. Proportional Representation Society of Australia (Victoria-Tasmania) Inc
19. Disability Voices Tasmania
20. TasCoss
21. Roland Browne
22. The Mercury
23. The Examiner
24. The Advocate

25. 7
26. WIN
27. ABC
28. Tasmanian Times
29. Inquirer
30. FontPR
31. Pulse
32. Corporate Communications
33. Any further Tasmanian media organisations reporting on the 2024 elections as identified by the Parliamentary Library
34. Multicultural Council of Tasmania
35. Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre
36. Tasmanian Regional Aboriginal Communities Alliance. (Ms Webb)

Resolved, that a media release be issued when submissions are open to the public, including the names of all Members of the Committee, and adverts published in the 3 major regional papers. (Ms Webb)

#### **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Resolved, that the Minutes of the previous Meeting (no. 1 of 20 June 2024) be confirmed. (Ms Thomas)

At 11.42 a.m. the Committee adjourned until 2 p.m., 5 September 2024.

Confirmed,

### **Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters**

#### **Meeting 3 – Thursday, 5 September 2024**

The Committee met at Parliament House, Hobart, in Committee Room 1, at 2.01 p.m.

#### **Members present:**

Mr Bayley (Deputy Chair)

Mr Gaffney

Ms Johnston  
Ms O'Connor (via Webex)  
Ms Thomas  
Ms Webb (Chair)  
Ms White  
Mr Wood (via Webex)

#### **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies.

#### **MINUTES**

Resolved, That the minutes of the previous meeting (No. 2 of 28 June 2024) be confirmed. (Ms Webb)

#### **INQUIRY INTO THE CONDUCT OF THE 2024 HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY GENERAL ELECTION AND LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ELECTIONS-**

Resolved, That all submissions received be taken into evidence. (Mr Gaffney)

Resolved, That submission 12.a, provided in confidence, not be published (Mr Bayley).

Ms Thomas joined the meeting at 2.04 p.m.

#### **SUBMISSIONS**

Resolved, That submissions 8 and 12, where the submitter has requested their name and personal details remain private, be published with such information redacted (Mr Gaffney).

Resolved, That submission 16, where the submitter has requested their name and personal details remain private and specified information in the submission remain confidential, be published with such information redacted (Mr Gaffney).

Resolved, That submissions, 1, 3-7, 9-11, 13-15, 17-20, be published in full, with only the personal details of individuals redacted (Ms Johnston).

Resolved, That the Chair, upon request by a submitter, may grant an extension to make a late submission by 30 September (Ms Johnston).

#### **HEARINGS**

Resolved, That the Committee invite the following to appear as witnesses at a hearing on either 5 or 6 November:

- Disability Voices Tasmania, Blind Citizens Australia and COTA Tasmania (to appear together for 1 hour)
- Dean Cocker (30 minutes)
- Roland Browne (30 minutes)
- Private Witness, Submission No. 12 (45 minutes)
- Private Witness, Submission No. 16 (45 minutes)
- Tasmanian Electoral Commission (2 hours)
- Kevin Bonham (1 hour)
- Richard Herr (1 hour)
- Liberal Party of Australia (Tasmanian Division) (45 minutes)
- Tasmanian Greens (45 Minutes)
- Tasmanian Labor Party (45 Minutes)
- Tasmanian Government (1 hour)
- Australia Institute (1 hour if sufficient time, otherwise February 2025)
- Integrity Commission (1 hour if sufficient time, otherwise February 2025) (Mr Gaffney)

#### **ANY OTHER MATTERS**

Resolved, That submission 21 be received and taken into evidence and published (Mr Gaffney).

Resolved, That the correspondence from Senator Pauline Hanson be noted

and that the Committee write to the Senator to extend an invitation to make a submission. (Ms Thomas).

At 3.30 p.m. the Committee adjourned until Tuesday 5 November 2024.  
Confirmed,

### **Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters**

#### **Meeting 4 – Thursday, 17 October 2024**

The Committee met at Parliament House, Hobart, in Committee Room 3, at 1.31 p.m.

#### **Members present:**

Ms Webb (Chair)  
Mr Bayley (Deputy Chair)  
Mr Gaffney  
Ms Johnston  
Ms O'Connor  
Ms Thomas  
Mr Wood

#### **APOLOGIES**

An apology was received from Ms White.

#### **MINUTES**

Resolved, That the minutes of the previous meeting (No. 3 of 5 September 2024) be confirmed. (Ms Webb)

#### **INQUIRY INTO THE CONDUCT OF THE 2024 HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY GENERAL ELECTION AND LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ELECTIONS-**

Resolved, That all late submissions be received and taken into evidence. (Ms Webb)

Resolved, That submission 27, where the submitter has requested their name and personal details remain private, be published with such information redacted (Ms Webb).

#### **LATE SUBMISSIONS**

Resolved, That submissions, 22-26 and submission 28, be published in full, with only the personal details of individuals redacted (Ms Webb).

#### **INQUIRY INTO THE CONDUCT OF THE 2024 HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY GENERAL ELECTION AND LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ELECTIONS- PUBLICATION OF SUBMISSION No. 2**

The Committee deliberated.

And the Question being proposed - That submission No. 2 be published in full. (Ms Webb)

The Committee divided.

|             |            |
|-------------|------------|
| AYES 5      | NOES 2     |
| Ms Webb     | Mr Gaffney |
| Mr Bayley   | Mr Wood    |
| Ms Johnston |            |
| Ms O'Connor |            |
| Ms Thomas   |            |

It was resolved in the Affirmative.

#### **OTHER MATTERS**

The Chair asked the Committee Secretary to request that Andrew Hawkey bring copies of the Tasmanian Electoral Commission Annual report 2023-2024 and the TEC Report on Parliamentary Elections 2022 to 2024 to be tabled at the public hearing on 5 November 2024.

The Committee discussed issues related to the publication of submissions. The Chair asked the Committee Secretary to draft a letter to the Clerks seeking confirmation that publication procedures would be revised and updated.

At 2.00 p.m. the Committee adjourned until Tuesday 5 November 2024.  
Confirmed,

## **Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters**

### **Meeting 5 – Tuesday, 5 November 2024**

The Committee met at Parliament House, Hobart, in Committee Room 3, at 9.00 a.m.

#### **Members present:**

Ms Webb (*Chair*)

Mr Bayley (*Deputy Chair*)

Ms Johnston

Ms O'Connor

Ms Thomas

Mr Wood (via Webex)

#### **APOLOGIES**

An apology was received from Mr Gaffney and Ms White.

#### **IN CAMERA HEARING**

At 9.00 a.m., the confidential witnesses (submitter no. 12 and submitter no. 16) were examined by the Committee in camera.

Submitter no. 12 tabled 2 confidential documents.

In camera hearing concluded at 10.12 a.m.

#### **DELIBERATIVE MEETING**

Resolved, that submission no. 16 be republished with redactions removed, at the request of the submitter. (Ms Webb)

#### **PUBLIC HEARING**

At 10.57 a.m. the following witnesses were sworn and examined by the Committee in public:

- Duncan Meerding, Coordinator, Blind Citizens Australia (Tasmania)

- Vaughn Bennison, Executive Officer, Disability Voices Tasmania
- Michael Small, Director, Disability Voices Tasmania
- Jackson Reynolds-Ryan, Senior Policy Officer, Blind Citizens Australia (via Webex)

At 12.04 p.m. the witnesses withdrew.

Hearing suspended from 12.04pm to 12.14 p.m.

At 12.14 p.m. the following witness was sworn and examined by the Committee in public:

- Mr Dean Cocker

At 12.45 p.m. the witness withdrew.

Hearing suspended from 12.45 p.m. to 1.00 p.m.

At 1.00 p.m. the following witness was sworn and examined by the Committee in public:

- Peter Coulson, State Director, Liberal Party of Australia (Tasmanian Division)

At 1.49 p.m. the witness withdrew.

Hearing suspended at 1.50 p.m.

#### **DELIBERATIVE MEETING**

At 2.40 p.m. the Committee resumed the deliberative meeting.

Resolved, That the minutes of the previous meeting (No. 4 of 17 September 2024) be confirmed. (Ms Webb)

Resolved, That the Secretariat be authorised to publish the transcripts of the hearings to the Inquiry's webpage, once completed by Hansard, and after the relevant witnesses have had the

opportunity to review the transcript for any mistranscriptions within two business days (Ms Webb)

Resolved, That the Committee accept the Legislative Council's referral of the Electoral Amendment Bill 2024 (No. 25) to the Committee for inquiry (Ms Webb).

Resolved, that the correspondence from the Hon Guy Barnett be noted. (Ms Webb)

#### **PUBLIC HEARING**

At 2.59 p.m., the following witnesses were sworn and examined by the Committee in public:

- Andrew Hawkey, Electoral Commissioner, Tasmanian Electoral Commission
- Mike Blake, Chair, Tasmanian Electoral Commission

Mr Hawkey tabled the following documents:

- Tasmanian Electoral Commission Annual Report 2023-24;
- Tasmanian Electoral Commission 2022 to 2024 Report on Parliamentary Elections.

At 5.03 p.m. the witnesses withdrew.

Hearing suspended from 5.03 p.m. to 5.06 p.m.

At 5.06 p.m. the following witness was sworn and examined by the Committee in public:

- Roland Browne

At 5.42 p.m. the witness withdrew.

At 5.42 p.m. the Committee adjourned until Wednesday 6 November 2024.

Confirmed,

### **Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters**

#### **Meeting 6 – Wednesday, 6 November 2024**

The Committee met at Parliament House, Hobart, in Committee Room 3, at 9.00 a.m.

#### **Members present:**

Ms Webb (Chair)  
Mr Bayley (Deputy Chair)  
Ms Johnston  
Ms O'Connor  
Ms Thomas  
Mr Wood (via Webex)

#### **APOLOGIES**

An apology was received from Mr Gaffney and Ms White.

#### **PUBLIC HEARING**

At 9.00 a.m. the following witness was sworn and examined by the Committee in public:

- Dr Kevin Bonham

At 10.04 a.m. the witness withdrew.

Hearing suspended from 10.04 a.m. to 10.15 a.m.

At 10.15 a.m. the following witness was sworn and examined by the Committee in public:

- Ben Hansen, Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party

At 10.44 a.m. the witness withdrew.

Hearing suspended from 10.44 a.m. to 11.13 a.m.

At 11.15 a.m. the following witness was sworn and examined by the Committee in public:

- Neil Spark, President,  
Tasmanian Constitution Society

At 11.57 a.m. the witness withdrew.

Hearing suspended from 11.57 a.m. to 12.12 p.m.

At 12.12 p.m. the following witness was sworn and examined by the Committee in public:

- Dr Robin Banks

At 1.00 p.m. the witness withdrew.

Hearing suspended from 1.00pm to 2.30 p.m.

At 2.30 p.m. the following witness was sworn and examined by the Committee in public:

- Jarryd Moore, Acting State  
Secretary, Tasmanian Labor

At 3.21 p.m. the witness withdrew.

Hearing suspended from 3.21 p.m. to 3.27 p.m.

At 3.27 p.m. the following witness was examined by the Committee in public:

- The Hon. Guy Barnett, Attorney-General

At 3.27 p.m. the following witnesses were sworn and examined by the Committee in public:

- Kristy Bourne, Acting Secretary,  
Department of Justice
- Paulien van Adrichem,
- Bruce Paterson,

At 4.33 p.m. the witnesses withdrew.

Hearing suspended from 4.33 p.m. to 4.37 p.m.

At 4.37 p.m. the following witnesses were sworn and examined by the Committee in public:

- Eloise Carr, Director, Australia  
Institute Tasmania
- Bill Browne, Director,  
Democracy and Accountability  
Program, Australia Institute

At 5.14 p.m. the witnesses withdrew.

#### **DELIBERATIVE MEETING**

Resolved, that the confidential documents tabled by Submitter No. 12 be received taken into evidence and not published. (Ms Webb)

Resolved, that the documents tabled by Mr Hawkey be received and taken into evidence. (Ms Webb)

Resolved, that the Committee agree to the request from Roland Browne to make a supplementary submission. (Ms Webb)

At 5.25 p.m. the Committee adjourned until Tuesday 11 February 2025.

Confirmed,

### **Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters**

#### **Meeting 7 – Monday, 13 January 2025**

The Committee met at Parliament House, Hobart, in Committee Room 1, at 3.30 p.m.

#### **Members present:**

Mr Bayley (Deputy Chair)

Mr Gaffney

Ms Johnston

Ms Thomas

Ms Webb (Chair)

Ms White

Mr Wood

#### **APOLOGIES**

An apology was received from Ms O'Connor.

**MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

Resolved, that the Minutes of the following Meetings be confirmed:

- 5 November 2024
- 6 November 2024 (Ms Webb)

....

**CORRESPONDENCE FROM PRIVATE WITNESS  
(SUBMITTER NO. 16 TO 2024 ELECTIONS  
INQUIRY)**

The Committee considered further correspondence from Private Witness, submitter no. 16 to the 2024 Elections Inquiry, regarding the opportunity for other persons to make a submission to the Committee's Inquiry.

Resolved, that the Secretary write to Private Witness, submitter no. 16 noting that no further submissions will be taken, but indicating the Committee's willingness to accept correspondence from the persons concerned, and to clearly indicate if they wish to remain confidential (i.e. their name not appear in the minutes, but it is noted as correspondence from a private correspondent). (Ms Webb)

At 4.26 p.m. the Committee adjourned until 9a.m., 11 February 2025.  
Confirmed,

**Joint Standing Committee on  
Electoral Matters**

**Meeting 8 – Wednesday 12 February  
2025**

The Committee met at Parliament House, Hobart, in Committee Room 2, at 1.00 p.m.

**Members present:**  
Ms Webb (Chair)

Mr Gaffney  
Ms Johnston  
Ms O'Connor  
Mr Wood (via Webex)

**APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Mr Bayley, Ms Thomas, and Ms White.

**PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE INQUIRY INTO THE  
CONDUCT OF THE 2024 HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY  
GENERAL ELECTION AND 2024 LEGISLATIVE  
COUNCIL ELECTIONS**

At 1.02 p.m. the following witness appeared via WebEx, was sworn and examined by the Committee in public:

- William Coats

At 1.29 p.m. the witness withdrew.

Hearing suspended from 1.29 p.m. to 1.32 p.m.

At 1.32 p.m. the following witnesses appeared, were sworn and examined by the Committee in public:

- Ellen McKenzie, CEO, Integrity Commission
- Sarah Frost, Director Operations, Integrity Commission

At 2.23 p.m. the witnesses withdrew.

Hearing suspended from 2.23 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

At 2.30 p.m. the following witness appeared, was sworn and examined by the Committee in public:

- Dr Angela Offord

Dr Offord requested to provide evidence *in camera*.

At 2.51 p.m. the broadcast was stopped and the room was cleared.

**PRIVATE DELIBERATIVE MEETING**

At 2.52 p.m. the Committee held a private meeting to deliberate on the request to give *in camera* evidence.

Resolved, that the Committee grant the request of Dr Offord to provide evidence *in camera* (Ms Webb).

#### **IN CAMERA HEARING**

At 2.53 p.m., the Committee resumed the hearing *in camera* and Dr Offord returned to the room to give evidence *in camera*.

At 2.59 p.m. the witness withdrew.

Hearing suspended from 2.59 p.m. to 3.02 p.m.

#### **PUBLIC HEARING**

At 3.02 p.m. the public hearing resumed, and the following witness appeared, was sworn and examined by the Committee in public:

- Associate Professor Richard Herr

At 3.59 p.m. the witness withdrew, and the public hearing closed.

#### **DELIBERATIVE MEETING**

Resolved, That the minutes of the previous meeting (No. 7 of 13 January 2025) be confirmed. (Ms Webb)

Resolved, That the Premier be invited to appear and give evidence in relation to the Inquiry into the Conduct of the 2024 House of Assembly General Election and 2024 Legislative Council elections at a Public Hearing. (Ms Webb)

Resolved, That the Tasmanian Electoral Commissioner be invited to appear and give further evidence in relation to the Inquiry into the Conduct of the 2024 House of Assembly General Election

and 2024 Legislative Council elections at a further Public Hearing (Ms Webb).

The Committee agreed to hold the appearance of the Premier at hearing at an earlier date than the further appearance of the Commissioner, and for appropriate hearing dates to be circulated to Members by the Chair and Secretary for their consideration.

At 4.08 p.m., Mr Wood left the meeting.

Meeting suspended due to lack of quorum.

At 4.10 p.m., Mr Wood rejoined the meeting via telephone.

Deliberative meeting resumed.

Resolved, That the Committee send those questions taken on notice at this day's hearing to the Integrity Commission. (Ms Webb).

Resolved, That the Chair settle the wording of the questions on notice with the Secretary and communicate them to the Integrity Commission. (Ms Webb).

At 4.11 p.m. the Committee adjourned until Tuesday 25 February 2025.

Confirmed,

### **Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters**

#### **Meeting 9 – Tuesday, 25 February 2025**

The Committee met at Parliament House, Hobart, in Committee Room 2, at 3.30 p.m.

#### **Members present:**

Mr Bayley (Deputy Chair)

Mr Gaffney

Ms Johnston

Ms O'Connor  
Ms Webb (Chair)  
Mr Wood (*via Webex*)

**APOLOGIES**

An apology was received from Ms Thomas.

**MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

Resolved, that the Minutes of the previous meeting (No. 8, of 12 February 2025) be confirmed (Ms Webb).

....

**INQUIRY INTO THE CONDUCT OF THE 2024 HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY GENERAL ELECTION AND LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ELECTIONS**

Resolved, That the Secretary write to Dr Angela Offord seeking her agreement to make public the evidence given *in camera* at the hearing held on 12 February 2025. (Ms Webb)

At 4.10 p.m. the Committee adjourned until 1 p.m., 24 March 2025.  
Confirmed,

**52<sup>nd</sup> Parliament**

**Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters**

**WEDNESDAY, 8 October 2025**

The Committee met in Committee Room 1, Parliament House, Hobart at 12:09 p.m.

**Members Present:**

Mr Bayley  
Mr Gaffney (*via Webex*)  
Ms Webb  
Ms Johnston  
Ms O'Connor  
Ms Haddad (*via Webex*)

**ORDER OF THE HOUSES READ**

The Secretary took the Chair and read the Resolution appointing the Committee.

**APOLOGIES**

An apology was received from Mr Ferguson and Ms Thomas

**ELECTION OF CHAIR**

The Secretary called for nominations, Ms Johnston nominated Ms Webb, who consented to the nomination, seconded by Ms O'Connor.

There being no other nominations, the Secretary declared Ms Webb elected as Chair.

Ms Webb took the Chair.

**ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIR**

The Chair called for nominations, Ms Johnston nominated Ms O'Connor, who declined the nomination. Ms O'Connor nominated Mr Bayley who consented to the nomination, seconded by Ms Johnston.

There being no other candidates nominated, the Chair declared Mr Bayley elected as Deputy Chair.

**PROCEDURAL MOTIONS**

Resolved, that unless otherwise ordered the Standing Orders of the House of Assembly be adopted as the Standing Orders of the Committee. (Ms Webb)

Resolved, That the Chair be the spokesperson in relation to the operations of the Committee. (Ms Webb)

Resolved, That unless otherwise ordered, press statements on behalf of the Committee be made only by the Chair after approval in principle by the

Committee or after consultation with committee members. (Ms Webb)

Resolved, that the following submissions received by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters from the 51<sup>st</sup> Parliament be taken into evidence and published:

- Bret Walker AO SC; and
- Hon Duncan Kerr AO SC.

(Ms Webb)

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

Resolved, That the Committee proceed with the following timeline for the Inquiry into the 2025 House of Assembly and Legislative Council Elections, including dates for the opening and closing of submissions, and that public hearings be held on dates to be confirmed:

Submissions open: Saturday 18 Oct 2025

Advertisement: Saturday 18 Oct 2025

Submissions close: Monday 15 December 2025

Noted, that the Electoral Amendment Bill 2024 has not been reintroduced and as such the previous inquiry cannot continue. However, the subject matter of this inquiry can be included in the recontinued Inquiry into the 2024 House of Assembly and Legislative Council Elections

#### **NEXT MEETING**

At 12.49 p.m. the Committee adjourned until 28 October next.

Confirmed,

**Joint Standing Committee on  
Electoral Matters**

**TUESDAY, 28 October 2025**

The Committee met in Committee Room 1, Parliament House, Hobart at 9:02 a.m.

#### **Members Present:**

Mr Bayley

Mr Gaffney (via Teams)

Ms Webb

Ms Johnston

Ms Haddad

Ms Thomas – from 9.07 a.m.

#### **APOLOGIES**

An apology was received from Mr Ferguson and Ms O'Connor.

#### **INQUIRY INTO 2025 HoA AND LC ELECTIONS**

Noted, public notice of inquiry was not placed in The Advocate and Examiner as planned due to an error in their booking system. Replacement ads were published on Wednesday and Saturday the following week.

Resolved, to agree to the draft project plan and timeline.

Resolved, to hold a meeting to consider submissions and identify witnesses on 18 Dec 2025 at 11:00am.

Resolved, to dates for public hearings on 16, 19 and 20 February 2026.

#### **CONTINUATION OF INQUIRY INTO 2024 HoA AND LC ELECTIONS**

Resolved, to agree to the draft project plan and timeline.

Resolved, to meet and consider draft report on 8, 9 and 23 April 2026.

#### **MINUTES**

The minutes of the last meeting held 8 October 2025, as read, were agreed to as an accurate record (Ms Haddad).

#### **ANY OTHER MATTERS**

There were no other matters.

#### **NEXT MEETING**

At 9.23 a.m. the Committee adjourned until 18 Dec 2025 at 11.00 a.m.

Confirmed,

### **Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters**

#### **THURSDAY, 18 December 2025**

The Committee met in Committee Room 1, Parliament House, Hobart at 11:01 a.m.

#### **Members Present:**

Mr Bayley

Mr Gaffney (*via Teams*)

Ms Webb

Ms Johnston (*via Teams*)

Ms Haddad (*via Teams*)

Ms Thomas (*via Teams*)

Mr Ferguson (*via Teams*)

Ms O'Connor

#### **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies.

#### **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held 28 October 2025, as read, were agreed to as an accurate record. (Ms Johnston)

#### **INQUIRY INTO THE CONDUCT OF THE 2025 HOA GENERAL AND LC PERIODIC ELECTIONS**

Resolved, that all submissions received be taken into evidence and published. (Ms Webb)

- Submission 1     Anonymous
- Submission 2     Hon. Tania Rattray MLC
- Submission 3     Roland Browne
- Submission 4     Justin Harding
- Submission 5     Tasmanian Constitution Society
- Submission 6     PRSA
- Submission 7     Tasmanian Electoral Commission

- Submission 8     Tasmanian Labor
- Submission 9     Kevin Bonham
- Submission 10    Jack Davenport

#### **DATES FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Resolved, Public hearings to be held 16 and 19 February 2026.

#### **SUBMITTERS TO BE INVITED TO APPEAR AT PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Resolved, That the following submitters be invited to appear at a public Committee hearing on either 16 or 19 February 2025:

- Roland Browne, 30 minutes
- Justin Harding, 30 minutes
- Tasmanian Constitution Society, 30 minutes
- PRSA, 30 minutes
- Tasmanian Electoral Commission, 2 hours
- Tasmanian Labor, 45 minutes
- Kevin Bonham, 45 minutes
- Jack Davenport, 30 minutes

#### **ANY OTHER MATTERS**

Resolved, if possible, TEC to appear last before the Committee.

Resolved, to write to the following inviting them to make a late submission until 6<sup>th</sup> February 2026:

- Tasmanian Greens
- Tasmanian Liberal Party
- Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party

Independent Members elected to the House of Assembly at the 2025 election

#### **NEXT MEETING**

At 11.46 a.m. the Committee adjourned until 16 Feb 2026.

Confirmed,

### **Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters**

### **Wednesday, 11 February 2026**

The Committee met in Committee Room 2, Parliament House, Hobart at 4:30 p.m.

#### **Members Present:**

Ms Webb  
Mr Gaffney (via Teams)  
Ms Johnston (via Teams)  
Ms Haddad (via Teams)  
Ms Thomas (via Teams)  
Mr Ferguson (via Teams)

#### **APOLOGIES**

Ms O'Connor and Mr Bayley were apologies.

**INQUIRY INTO THE CONDUCT OF THE 2025 HOA GENERAL AND LC PERIODIC ELECTIONS**  
Resolved, that the following submission be received, taken into evidence and published. (Ms Webb)

- Submission 11 McKinnon

#### **SUBMITTERS TO BE INVITED TO APPEAR AT PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Resolved, that representatives from McKinnon (Submission 11) be invited to appear at the hearing on Monday 16 February (Ms Webb).

#### **ANY OTHER MATTERS**

The Committee noted the hearing scheduled for Thursday 19 February was not required and will be cancelled.

#### **NEXT MEETING**

At 4.40 p.m. the Committee adjourned until 9.00 a.m., 16 Feb 2026.

Confirmed,

### **Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters**

**MONDAY, 16 February 2026**

The Committee met in Committee Room 1, Parliament House, Hobart, at 9.03 a.m.

#### **Members Present:**

Ms Webb (Chair)  
Mr Bayley (Deputy Chair)  
Mr Ferguson (via Teams)  
Mr Gaffney  
Ms Haddad  
Ms Johnston  
Ms O'Connor  
Ms Thomas

#### **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies.

#### **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held 18 December 2025 were agreed to as an accurate record (Ms Webb).

The minutes of the meeting held 11 February 2026, as amended, were agreed to as an accurate record (Ms Webb).

#### **2025 INQUIRY PUBLIC HEARING**

At 9.15 a.m. Dr Kevin Bonham was called, made the Statutory Declaration and was examined by the Committee in public.

At 9.38 a.m. Mr Gaffney left the Table.

At 9.42 a.m. Mr Gaffney returned to the Table

At 9.43 a.m. Mr Gaffney left the Table

At 9.47 a.m. Mr Gaffney returned to the Table

At 9.58 a.m. the witness withdrew.

Suspension of sitting from 9.58 a.m. to 10.00 a.m.

At 9.59 a.m. Mr Bayley left the Table.

#### **2025 INQUIRY PUBLIC HEARING**

At 10 a.m. Mr Jarryd Moore, Acting State Secretary, Tasmanian Labor, was called, made the Statutory Declaration and was examined by the Committee in public.

At 10.42 a.m. the witness withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 10.42 a.m. to 11.00 a.m.

**2025 INQUIRY PUBLIC HEARING**

At 11.00 a.m. Mr Neil Spark, President, Tasmanian Constitution Society, Mr Phil Kaufman, Secretary/Treasurer Tasmanian Constitution Society, Mr Peter Confeggi, Vice President, Tasmanian Constitution Society, and Mr Richard Upton, Committee member, Tasmanian Constitution Society, were called, made the Statutory Declaration and were examined by the Committee in public.

At 11.31 a.m. the witnesses withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 11.31 a.m. to 11.33 a.m.

**2025 INQUIRY PUBLIC HEARING**

At 11.33 a.m. Mr Geoffrey Goode OAM, Vice-President, Proportional Representation Society Australia was called via Teams and was examined by the Committee in public.

At 11.56 a.m. the witness withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 11.56 a.m. to 12.10 p.m.

**2025 INQUIRY PUBLIC HEARING**

At 12.10 p.m. Mr Roland Browne, Our Place, was called, made the Statutory Declaration and was examined by the Committee in public.

At 12.21 p.m. Mr Gaffney left the Table.

At 12.24 p.m. Mr Gaffney returned to the Table

At 12.41 p.m. the witness withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 12.41 p.m. to 1.45 p.m.

At 1.45 p.m. Mr Bayley returned to the Table

**2025 INQUIRY PUBLIC HEARING**

At 1.45 p.m. Mr Jack Davenport appeared via Teams, made the Statutory Declaration and was examined by the Committee in public.

At 2.16 p.m. the witness withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 2.16 p.m. to 3 p.m.

**2025 INQUIRY PUBLIC HEARING**

At 3 p.m. Mr Andrew Hawkey, Tasmanian Electoral Commissioner, Mr Mike Blake AM, Tasmanian Electoral Commission Chair, and Ms Allyson Warrington, Member, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, were called, made the Statutory Declaration and were examined by the Committee in public.

At 3.33 p.m. Mr Gaffney left the Table.

At 3.35 p.m. Mr Gaffney returned to the Table.

At 4.09 p.m. Ms Haddad left the Table.

At 4.12 p.m. Ms Haddad returned to the Table.

At 4.33 p.m. Mr Ferguson left the Table.

At 5.01 p.m. the witnesses withdrew.

At 5.14 p.m. the Committee adjourned until 8 April next.

Confirmed,

## **Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters**

### **FRIDAY, 24 APRIL 2026**

The Committee met in Committee Room 1, Parliament House, Hobart, at 9.02 a.m.

#### **Members Present:**

Ms Webb (Chair)  
Mr Bayley (Deputy Chair)  
Mr Ferguson (via Teams)  
Mr Gaffney (via Teams)  
Ms Haddad  
Ms Johnston  
Ms O'Connor

#### **APOLOGIES**

Ms Thomas was an apology.

#### **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held 16 February 2026, as read, were agreed to as an accurate record (Ms Johnston).

#### **2024 INQUIRY REPORT AND 2025 INQUIRY REPORT**

The Committee Chair proposed that the 2024 inquiry and 2025 inquiry reports be combined into one report given the significant theme overlap and for expediency.

*Resolved*, that the reports for the 2024 elections and the 2025 elections be combined into one report (Ms Haddad).

#### **2024 INQUIRY**

##### **RECEIPT OF SUBMISSION**

The Committee considered the following correspondence received:

- Custodial Inspector submission to the 2024 inquiry dated 7 May 2025.

*Ordered*, that the above submission be received and published in full, with the

personal contact details of individuals being removed (Ms O'Connor).

#### **2025 INQUIRY**

Transcript of evidence – 16 February 2026:

*Resolved*, that the transcript of evidence from 16 February 2026 be published (Ms Haddad).

#### Outgoing correspondence:

- Questions on notice from 16 February 2026 hearing to Tasmanian Electoral Commission.

The outgoing correspondence was noted.

#### **FURTHER MEETING DATES**

The following future meeting dates were noted and discussed:

- Monday 29 June 2026 – booked for Report Deliberative meeting, 9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.;
  - Tuesday 30 June 2026 – booked for Report Deliberative meeting, 9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.;
  - Monday 20 July 2026 – booked for Report Deliberative meeting, 9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.;
  - Tuesday 21 July 2026 – booked for Report Deliberative meeting, 9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.; and
- Resolved*, to cancel the above July 20 and 21 meeting dates due to member availabilities.

*Resolved*, to amend the finishing time of the 29 June meeting to 3 p.m.

- Discussion of any further potential meetings and potential tabling date.

*Resolved*, to hold report deliberative meetings on the following dates:

- 25 August 2026, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- 26 August 2026, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

- 15 September 2026 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- 16 September 2026 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- 21 September 2026 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

22 September 2026 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
(Ms Webb).

#### **OTHER MATTERS**

There were no other matters.

At 9.28 a.m. the Committee adjourned until a date to be determined.

Confirmed,

### **Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters**

**TUESDAY, 25 AUGUST 2026**

The Committee met in Committee Room 1, Parliament House, Hobart, at 10.03 a.m.

#### **Members Present:**

Ms Webb (Chair)

Mr Bayley (Deputy Chair)

Mr Ferguson (via Teams)

Mr Gaffney

Ms Haddad

Ms Johnston (via Teams)

Ms O'Connor

Ms Thomas

#### **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies.

#### **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held 24 April 2026 were agreed to as an accurate record (Ms Haddad).

#### **CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED**

The Committee received and noted the following correspondence: -

- a. TEC answers to questions on notice, dated 24 April 2026;

- b. Dr Rosalie Woodruff MP and the Hon. Cassy O'Connor MLC, dated 18 August 2026; and
- c. Dr Justin Harding dated 19 August 2026 (Ms Thomas).

Resolved, the answers to questions on notice from the TEC be published (Mr Bayley).

The Committee discussed the letter from Dr Woodruff and Ms O'Connor, which fed into the future discussion of the 196 Bill Inquiry below.

Resolved, the letter from the Greens be published (Ms Thomas).

Resolved, to reply to Dr Harding inviting him to attend a hearing on 15 or 16 September 2026 to speak to his submission to the 2025 Inquiry (Ms Webb).

Mr Ferguson also proposed that the Committee hear from Dr Robert Hortle in regard to a PIMBY publication by the TPE.

Resolved, to invite Dr Hortle and the TPE to speak to the Committee at a hearing on the same day as Dr Harding (Mr Ferguson).

#### **REFERRAL OF INQUIRY HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

The Committee noted and discussed the following referral from the House of Assembly, dated 18 August 2026:

*“The Electoral Amendment Bill 2025 (No. 62) be referred to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters for inquiry and report thereon.”*

The Committee's discussion included the following matters:

- The approach to the Inquiry;

- The status of the former Inquiry;
- The fact that the House referred the Bill and is awaiting a response;
- If the proposed recommendations from the Tasmanian Greens regarding Truth in Political Advertising (TIPA) should be considered in any such Inquiry (and if this was appropriate);
- If TIPA should be included in the Inquiry at all and what participation this may draw;
- If the matters of section 196 and TIPA are inherently linked or not;
- If the Committee should complete an Interim Report purely on section 196 and a final Report regarding TIPA; and
- If submissions should be reopened on section 196.

The Chair moved that the former Inquiry into Section 196, including all papers and evidence, be brought forward, that Truth in Political Advertising form part of the Committee's Inquiry and that the existing evidence on Section 196 form the majority of the evidence on that matter (Ms Webb).

And the Question being put;-

The Committee divided:

|             |             |
|-------------|-------------|
| Ayes 7      | Noes 1      |
| Mr Bayley   | Mr Ferguson |
| Mr Gaffney  |             |
| Ms Haddad   |             |
| Ms Johnston |             |
| Ms O'Connor |             |
| Ms Thomas   |             |

Ms Webb

And so it was resolved in the Affirmative.

*Resolved*, to further discuss the Bill Inquiry at the commencement of tomorrow's meeting.

#### **2024 AND 2025 ELECTIONS INQUIRY REPORT**

The Committee considered the Chair's Draft Report.

Chapter 1 considered and amended.

Chapter 2 considered and amended.

*Resolved*, to insert a table of candidates following paragraph 2.7 and paragraph 2.14.

Chapter 3 considered and amended.

*Resolved*, to insert a table of candidates following paragraph 3.8 and paragraph 3.14.

Chapter 4 considered and amended.

*Suspension of sitting from 11.19 a.m. to 11.36 a.m.*

Chapter 4 continued to be considered and amended.

*Suspension of sitting from p.m. to 1.53 p.m.*

Members present: Ms Haddad, Ms Webb, Ms O'Connor, Ms Johnston and Mr Ferguson.

Chapter 4 continued to be considered and amended.

At 1.57 p.m. Mr Bayley took a seat at the Table.

At 2.01 p.m. Mr Gaffney took a seat at the Table.

Findings and recommendations throughout Chapter 4 considered and amended.

Resolved, to write to the TEC to request further information about how VI-Voting and telephone voting work in practice, including available video run throughs if possible (Mr Ferguson).

Resolved, to request the Parliamentary Research Service prepare a paper on a jurisdictional analysis of pre-polling period in other Australian jurisdictions in both Lower and Upper Houses, including if they are legislated (or otherwise instated) (Ms Webb).

Noted the Chair will define 'enfranchisement' in the Chair's foreword.

#### **OTHER MATTERS**

There were no other matters.

At 3.52 p.m. the Committee adjourned until a 26 August 2026 at 9.30 a.m.

Confirmed,

### **Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters**

**WEDNESDAY, 26 AUGUST 2026**

The Committee met in Committee Room 1, Parliament House, Hobart, at 9.31 a.m.

#### **Members Present:**

Ms Webb (Chair)

Mr Bayley (Deputy Chair)

Mr Ferguson (via Teams)

Mr Gaffney

Ms Haddad

Ms O'Connor

Ms Thomas

#### **APOLOGIES**

Ms Johnston was an apology.

#### **CONSIDERATION OF SECTION 196 BILL INQUIRY**

The Committee considered how the Bill Inquiry should be approached.

Consideration was given to:

- Options to include Truth in Political Advertising (TIPA) in the Inquiry;
- If reporting on section 196 in an Interim Report would be possible given that potential findings or recommendations in regard to that or TIPA may conflict or align;
- The timeliness of the Inquiry and limitations to a swift completion, including potential timelines for submissions and dates for public hearings;
- What public interest may be drawn by extending the Inquiry to include TIPA;
- Potential Interim and Final Report models;
- If TIPA is included, if the Houses should be informed; and
- The practicality of steps moving forward.

Resolved, that the Bill Inquiry merge matters regarding section 196 and Truth in Political Advertising and that the Committee take appropriate time to undertake this body of work. An Interim Report, consisting of an update to the Houses (but no Findings or Recommendations) informing them that TIPA is to be included, will be tabled in 2026. At the next meetings in September, the Committee can look to consider next steps further, including the formal launch of the Bill Inquiry (Ms Webb).

#### **2024 AND 2025 ELECTIONS INQUIRY REPORT**

The Committee continued to consider the Chair's draft report.

Chapter 4 further considered and amended.

*Suspension of sitting from 11.05 a.m. to 11.27 a.m.*

Chapter 4 continued to be considered.

Findings and recommendations throughout Chapter 4 considered and amended.

Chapter 5 considered and amended.

At 12.29 p.m. Ms O'Connor withdrew from the Table and returned at 12.39 p.m.

*Suspension of sitting from 12.58 p.m. to 2.05 p.m.*

Chapter 5 considered and amended.

*Suspension of sitting from 3.21 p.m. to 3.30 p.m.*

Findings and recommendations throughout Chapter 5 considered and amended.

Chapter 6 considered and amended, with consideration of the subsection on fixed-term elections deferred.

Findings and recommendations throughout Chapter 6 considered and amended.

The Committee concluded consideration at the commencement of Chapter 7.

*Resolved*, to write to the TEC a request for data on enrolled electors who did not vote at the 2021, 2024 and 2025 General Elections. Request that this data include a breakdown of how many of this number did so without applying for an 'excuse' (Mr Ferguson).

*Resolved*, to write to DPAC in regard to information and procedures for State

Servants who wish to stand in elections and if these resources are used in all Department and, if not, could any such resources be provided to the Committee (Ms Haddad).

#### **OTHER MATTERS**

There were no other matters.

At 4.06 p.m. the Committee adjourned until 15 September 2026 at 8.45 a.m.

Confirmed,

### **Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters**

**TUESDAY, 15 SEPTEMBER 2026**

The Committee met in Committee Room 2, Parliament House, Hobart, at 8.46 a.m.

#### **Members Present:**

Ms Webb (Chair)

Mr Bayley (Deputy Chair)

Mr Ferguson (via Teams)

Mr Gaffney

Ms Haddad

Ms Johnston

Ms O'Connor (from 8.59 a.m.)

Ms Thomas

#### **DELIBERATIVE MEETING**

##### **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies.

##### **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings held on 25, and 26 August 2026 were agreed to as an accurate record (Mr Gaffney).

##### **INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE**

Correspondence from the Tasmanian Electoral Commission dated 31 August 2026 was discussed, noted and received (Mr Ferguson).

Given the wait on the requested data from the TEC, the Committee *resolved*, to request that PRS look at the

requested information in relation to numbers of electors who failed to vote in the 2021, 2024 and 2025 elections (Mr Ferguson).

Correspondence from the Head of the State Service dated 11 September 2026 was noted and received (Ms Webb).

Resolved, to publish the correspondence from the Head of the State Service (Mr Gaffney).

#### **OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE**

The Committee noted the following items of outgoing correspondence:

- Letter to the Tasmanian Electoral Commissioner dated 31 August 2026; and

Letter to DPAC Secretary dated 31 August 2026.

#### **PRS PAPER**

The Committee noted and received the paper as requested from the Parliamentary Research Service on pre-polling (Ms Haddad).

#### **PUBLIC HEARING**

##### **WITNESS**

At 9.01 a.m., Dr Justin Harding was called, made the Statutory Declaration and was examined by the Committee in public via Microsoft Teams.

At 9.48 a.m., the witness withdrew.

*Suspension of sitting from 9.48 a.m. to 10.00 a.m.*

##### **WITNESSES**

At 10.01 a.m., Dr Robert Hortle, Deputy Director (Impact), Dr Lachlan Johnson and Ms Sarah Hyslop, from the Tasmanian Policy Exchange, were called, made the Statutory Declaration and were examined by the Committee in public.

At 10.47 a.m., the witnesses withdrew.

*Suspension of sitting from 10.47 a.m. to 11.35 a.m.*

The Committee relocated to Committee Room 3.

#### **DELIBERATIVE MEETING**

##### **2024 AND 2025 ELECTIONS INQUIRY REPORT**

The Committee continued to consider the Chair's draft report.

The Committee worked through amendments that had been made since last meeting:

Paragraphs 1.15 and 2.6 amended.

Table in 2.7 and Table in 2.14, amended.

Paragraph 3.7 amended.

Table in 3.08 amended.

Table in 3.15 amended.

Footnote regarding print disability amended.

Committee discussed its request for further information from TEC regarding TAV noting that the information requested along with information on Vi-voting and failures to vote, will not be provided until after the Local Government Elections.

Resolved, to publish correspondence between the Committee and the TEC requesting the above information (Ms Haddad).

Proposed new paragraph to follow 4.45 in relation to pre-polling agreed to.

The Committee further discuss pre-polling. Resolved, to insert a paragraph in relation to that the committee requested further information from the Tasmanian

Electoral Commission, but it was unable to provide a response before the Committee's likely reporting date (to be provided after the Local Government elections in October 2026).

Paragraphs 5.11 and 5.19 amended.

Paragraph 5.17 omitted,

Paragraphs 5.18 and 5.22 amended.

Finding in relation to paragraph 5.22 amended to reflect paragraph accurately.

Proposed new paragraphs to follow 5.28 amended and agreed to.

Noted, the need to insert a new footnote to clarify who are Officers and employees.

Noted, that the section on fixed-term elections be again postponed until the transcript comes back from today's hearings for inclusion.

Paragraphs 5.25 and 5.27 omitted.

Paragraphs 5.26 and 5.28 amended.

Paragraph 5.28 merged into paragraph 5.26.

At 12.50 p.m. Mr Gaffney left the Table.

Paragraph 6.21 considered.

At 12.53 p.m. Mr Gaffney returned to the Table.

Paragraph 6.21 omitted.

The Committee continued its consideration of the Chair's Draft Report:

#### Chapter 7:

At 12.57 p.m. Ms Thomas left the Table.

Paragraph 7.1 amended.

Paragraph 7.2 considered.

At 1 p.m. Ms Thomas returned to the Table.

Paragraph 7.3 and 7.4 amended.

Paragraph 7.5 considered.

Noted, evidence in paragraph 7.6 – secretariate to see if the mentioned press release exists in the public domain and names the groups/individuals listed. If so, add to footnote.

Paragraphs 7.7 to 7.12 considered.

Paragraphs 7.13 and 7.14 amended.

Noted, to insert footnote about committee inquiry of s196 in paragraph 7.1.

*Suspension of sitting from 1.19 p.m. to 2.18 p.m.*

Members present: Ms Webb, Ms Johnston, Ms O'Connor, Mr Ferguson, Ms Haddad and Mr Gaffney.

The Committee further considered the Report.

Ms Thomas joined via Teams at 2.20 p.m.

The Committee discussed meeting times for tomorrow, Monday the 21<sup>st</sup> and Tuesday the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September 2026.

Findings considered in Chapter 7.

Paragraphs 7.15 and 7.16 amended.

Noted, to look for any additional evidence on truth in political advertising from the parties.

Insert sentence at the beginning of truth in political advertising section about the committee's current inquiry.

Paragraphs 7.18 and 7.19 amended.  
Paragraphs 7.20 and 7.21 considered.  
Paragraph 7.22 amended.

Findings considered and amended.  
Recommendation omitted.

Chapter 8 considered.

Committee to consider abbreviations for the Bills.

Paragraphs 8.1 and 8.2 considered.

Paragraphs 8.3 to 8.7 amended.

Paragraph 8.8 and 8.9 considered.

Paragraph 8.10 to 8.12 amended

Paragraphs 8.13 to 8.16 considered.

Paragraphs 8.17 and 8.18 amended.

Paragraph 8.18 and 8.20 amended.

Paragraph 8.11 amended. *Resolved*, to write to the Tasmanian Electoral Commission to ask where the list came from referenced in paragraph 8.10.

#### **OTHER MATTERS**

There were no other matters.

At 3.56 p.m. the Committee adjourned until 16 September 2026 at 9.00 a.m.  
Confirmed,

### **Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters**

**WEDNESDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER 2026**

The Committee met in Committee Room 1, Parliament House, Hobart, at 9.03 a.m.

#### **Members Present:**

Ms Webb (Chair)  
Mr Bayley (Deputy Chair)  
Mr Ferguson  
Mr Gaffney

Ms Haddad (via Teams)  
Ms Johnston  
Ms O'Connor (from 9.29 a.m.)  
Ms Thomas (via Teams)

#### **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies.

#### **2024 AND 2025 ELECTIONS INQUIRY REPORT**

The Committee continued to consider the Chair's draft report.

The Committee commenced in Chapter 8 at page 79, findings.

Findings considered and amended.

At 9.29 a.m. Ms O'Connor came to the Table.

Findings further considered and amended.

Recommendations considered and amended.

At 9.40 a.m. Mr Gaffney left the Table and returned at 9.42 a.m.

Recommendations further considered and amended.

Chapter 8 further considered.  
Subsections 'Assembly Election Campaign Returns' and 'Election Campaigns Fund' merged.

Findings considered and amended.

At 10.38 a.m. Ms O'Connor left the Table and returned at 10.42 a.m.

Findings further considered and amended.

Recommendations considered and amended.

*Suspension of sitting from 10.44 a.m. to 11.08 a.m.*

Chapter 8 further considered.

Findings considered and amended.

Recommendations considered and amended.

Chapter 8 further considered.

At 11.40 a.m. Ms O'Connor left the Table and returned at 11.43 a.m.

Findings considered and amended.

Recommendations considered and amended.

Having read the Draft Report, the Committee reconsidered the draft Findings and Recommendations.

Chapter 4 Findings and Recommendations reconsidered and amended.

At 11.56 a.m. Mr Gaffney left the Table and returned at 12.01 p.m.

Chapter 4 Findings and Recommendations further reconsidered and amended.

The Committee concluded deliberations at the subsection 'Saving provisions/exhaust.'

Resolved, that the Committee write to the TEC, the Attorney-General and PRS regarding the potential drafting error in relation to the use of the phrase 'Official Agent' in the *Electoral Disclosure and Funding Act 2023* (Ms Webb).

#### **OTHER MATTERS**

There were no other matters.

At 12.45 p.m. the Committee adjourned until 21 September 2026 at 9.30 a.m. Confirmed,

**Joint Standing Committee on  
Electoral Matters**

#### **MONDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 2026**

The Committee met in Committee Room 1, Parliament House, Hobart, at 9.32 a.m.

#### **Members Present:**

Ms Webb (Chair)  
Mr Bayley (Deputy Chair)  
Mr Ferguson (via Teams)  
Mr Gaffney  
Ms Haddad  
Ms Johnston  
Ms O'Connor  
Ms Thomas (from 10.28 a.m.)

#### **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies.

#### **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings held on 15, and 16 September 2026 were adopted as an accurate record (Ms Johnston).

#### **INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE**

Nil.

#### **OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE**

The Committee endorsed outgoing correspondence to the Attorney-General and the Tasmanian Electoral Commission, both dated 18 September 2026.

#### **2024 AND 2025 ELECTIONS INQUIRY REPORT**

The Committee continued to consider the Chair's draft report.

The Committee worked through amendments that had been made since last meeting:

Paragraph 4.14 amended.

Paragraph 4.46 amended.

Findings 15 and 16 amended.

At 9.43 a.m. Ms O'Connor withdrew from the Table.

Consideration of proposed amendments continued.

Inserted Finding 23 amended. Order of Findings amended.

At 9.50 a.m. Ms *Johnston* withdrew from the Table and returned at 9.55 a.m.

Consideration of proposed amendments continued.

At 9.56 a.m. Mr *Gaffney* withdrew from the Table and returned at 9.59 a.m.

Consideration of proposed amendments continued.

Proposed paragraphs and tables on 'Voter turnout' considered and amended.

At 10.01 a.m. Ms *O'Connor* took a seat at the Table.

Consideration of proposed amendments continued.

Footnote 206 considered.

Proposed inclusion of quote from Dr Harding into Hare-Clark section of Chapter 6 considered and omitted.

Paragraph 7.1 considered and amended, splitting into three paragraphs (7.1, 7.2 and 7.3).

Paragraph 7.14 considered.

Paragraph 7.18 amended.

Paragraph 7.19 amended.

Paragraph 8.11 considered.

Paragraph 8.43 amended.

At 10.27 a.m. Ms *O'Connor* withdrew from the Table.

At 10.28 a.m. Ms *Thomas* took a seat at the Table.

*Suspension of sitting from 10. 28 a.m. – 10.34 a.m.*

All Members present.

New Paragraph 8.48 inserted by proposal of Mr *Ferguson*.

Chapter 6 considered.

Paragraphs 6.1 – 6.3 considered.

Paragraphs 6.4 and 6.5 amended.

Paragraph 6.6 considered.

*Suspension of sitting from 11. 04 a.m. – 11.25 a.m.*

All Members present.

New Inserted Paragraph 6.4 considered.

New Paragraphs 6.8 and 6.9 considered.

Former New Paragraph 6.10 omitted.

New Paragraph 6.10 considered.

New Paragraph 6.11 amended.

New Paragraph 6.12 considered.

New Paragraph 6.13 amended.

New Paragraphs 6.14 – 6.21 considered.

New Paragraph 6.22 amended.

New Paragraph 6.23 considered.

At 11.53 a.m. Ms *O'Connor* withdrew from the Table and returned at 11.56 a.m.

Consideration of Chapter 6 continued.

New Paragraphs 6.24 – 6.26 considered.

At 12.02 p.m. Mr *Gaffney* withdrew from the Table and returned at 12.07 p.m.

New Inserted Paragraph 6.27 considered.

Findings and Recommendations considered and amended.

*Suspension of sitting from 1.00 p.m. – 1.45 p.m.*

Members Present: Ms Webb, Ms Haddad, Ms Johnston, Mr Ferguson, Mr Gaffney and Ms Thomas.

The Committee recommenced its reconsideration of Findings and Recommendations throughout the Report.

At 1.49 p.m. Mr Bayley took a seat at the Table.

The Committee continued its reconsideration of Findings and Recommendations throughout the Report.

At 1.49 p.m. Ms O'Connor took a seat at the Table.

The Committee continued its reconsideration of Findings and Recommendations throughout the Report.

At 2.45 p.m. Mr Gaffney withdrew from the Table and returned at 2.47 p.m.

The Committee continued its reconsideration of Findings and Recommendations throughout the Report.

Resolved, that the Committee meet from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. tomorrow.

#### **OTHER MATTERS**

There were no other matters.

At 2.58 p.m. the Committee adjourned until 22 September 2026 at 10.00 a.m.

Confirmed,

## **Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters**

**TUESDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER 2026**

The Committee met in Committee Room 1, Parliament House, Hobart, at 10.02 a.m.

#### **Members Present:**

Ms Webb (Chair)  
Mr Bayley (Deputy Chair)  
Mr Ferguson (via Teams)  
Mr Gaffney  
Ms Haddad  
Ms Johnston  
Ms O'Connor (via Teams)  
Ms Thomas (via Teams)

#### **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies.

#### **2024 AND 2025 ELECTIONS INQUIRY REPORT**

The Committee continued to consider the Chair's draft report.

The Committee continued to review the Report's findings and Recommendations.

Finding 39 considered.

Findings 40 to 42 amended.

Finding 43 considered.

Findings 44 to 50 amended.

Recommendation 15 amended.

Finding 51 considered.

Recommendation 16 considered.

Noted, that the Committee is still waiting on answers for the Official Agents sections. Proposed that should answers be received these will be added to the report for consideration at the next meeting.

Chairs foreword read and considered.

Noted, there were a number of administrative changes for the Secretariate. These will be completed and the Committee will receive a final copy of the report for the next meeting to sign off on.

*Resolved*, that the committee table its report on Thursday, 29 October 2026 and that a media release be sent regarding the tabling.

#### **NEXT MEETING**

*Resolved*, that the next meeting be held on 23 October 2026 at 8.30 a.m. to 10 a.m.

.....

#### **OTHER MATTERS**

There were no other matters.

At 11.49 a.m. the Committee adjourned until 8.30 a.m. on Friday, 23 October 2026.

Confirmed,

### **Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters**

#### **FRIDAY, 23 OCTOBER 2026**

The Committee met in Committee Room 3, Parliament House, Hobart, at 8.32 a.m.

#### **Members Present:**

Ms Webb (Chair)

Mr Bayley (Deputy Chair) (via Teams)

Mr Ferguson (via Teams)

Mr Gaffney (via Teams)

Ms Haddad

Ms Johnston

Ms O'Connor (via Teams)

Ms Thomas (via Teams)

#### **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies.

#### **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings held 21 and 22 September 2026 were agreed to, as read, as an accurate record (Ms Johnston).

#### **CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no incoming correspondence.

...

#### **TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

*Resolved*, that the transcript of evidence from the hearing held on 15 September 2026 be published (Mr Gaffney).

#### **2024 AND 2025 ELECTIONS INQUIRY REPORT**

The Committee continued to consider the Chair's draft report.

Recommendations further considered and amended.

The Committee discussed the formatting and structure of the Report.

Paragraphs 1.1 to 1.16 agreed to.

Question was put – That Chapter 1 stand as part of the Committee's Report.

And it was resolved in the Affirmative.

Paragraphs 2.1 to 2.14 agreed to.

Question was put – That Chapter 2 stand as part of the Committee's Report.

And it was resolved in the Affirmative.

Paragraphs 3.1 to 3.15 agreed to.

Question was put – That Chapter 3 stand as part of the Committee's Report.

And it was resolved in the Affirmative.  
 Paragraphs 4.1 to 4.3 agreed to.  
 Finding 1 agreed to.  
 Paragraphs 4.4 to 4.14 agreed to.  
 Finding 2 agreed to.  
 Paragraphs 4.15 to 4.19 agreed to.  
 Findings 3 and 4 agreed to.  
 Recommendation 1 agreed to.  
 Paragraphs 4.20 and 4.21 agreed to.  
 Finding 5 agreed to.  
 Paragraphs 4.22 to 4.26 agreed to.  
 Finding 6 agreed to.  
 Recommendation 2 agreed to.  
 Paragraphs 4.27 to 4.30 agreed to.  
 Findings 7 and 8 agreed to.  
 Paragraphs 4.31 to 4.35 agreed to.  
 Finding 9 agreed to.  
 Recommendation 3 agreed to.  
 Paragraph 4.36 to 4.40 agreed to.  
 Finding 10 agreed to.  
 Recommendation 4 agreed to.  
 Paragraphs 4.41 to 4.48 agreed to.  
 Findings 11 to 16 agreed to.  
 Recommendation 5 agreed to.  
 Paragraphs 4.49 to 4.52 agreed to.  
 Finding 17 agreed to.  
 Paragraphs 4.53 to 4.63 agreed to.  
 Findings 18 to 23 agreed to.  
 Recommendations 6 and 7 agreed to.  
 Paragraphs 4.64 to 4.72 agreed to.  
 Findings 24 to 26 agreed to.

Recommendation 8 agreed to.  
 Paragraphs 4.73 and 4.74 agreed to.  
 Question was put – That Chapter 4 stand as part of the Committee’s Report.  
 And it was resolved in the Affirmative.  
 Paragraphs 5.1 to 5.8 agreed to.  
 Findings 27 and 28 agreed to.  
 Recommendations 9 and 10 agreed to.  
 Paragraphs 5.9 to 5.16 agreed to.  
 Finding 29 agreed to.  
 Finding 30 considered.  
 Question was put – That Finding 30 be agreed to;

The Committee divided

|             |             |
|-------------|-------------|
| Ayes 7      | Noes 1      |
| Mr Bayley   | Mr Ferguson |
| Mr Gaffney  |             |
| Ms Haddad   |             |
| Ms Johnston |             |
| Ms O’Connor |             |
| Ms Thomas   |             |
| Ms Webb     |             |

And it was resolved in the Affirmative.  
 Recommendation 11 agreed to.  
 Paragraphs 5.17 to 5.23 agreed to.  
 Findings 31 to 33 agreed to.  
 Recommendations 12 and 13 agreed to.  
 Paragraphs 5.24 to 5.28 agreed to.  
 Question was put – That Chapter 5 stand as part of the Committee’s Report.  
 And it was resolved in the Affirmative.  
 Paragraphs 6.1 to 6.27 agreed to.

Findings 34 to 38 agreed to.  
 Recommendation 14 agreed to.  
 Paragraphs 6.28 to 6.32 agreed to.  
 Question was put – That Chapter 6 stand as part of the Committee’s Report.  
 And it was resolved in the Affirmative.  
 Paragraphs 7.1 to 7.16 agreed to.  
 Findings 39 and 40 agreed to.  
 Paragraphs 7.17 to 7.26 agreed to.  
 Findings 41 and 42 agreed to.  
 Question was put – That Chapter 7 stand as part of the Committee’s Report.  
 And it was resolved in the Affirmative.  
 Paragraphs 8.1 to 8.20 agreed to.  
 Findings 43 to 45 agreed to.  
 Paragraphs 8.21 to 8.39 agreed to.  
 Findings 46 to 50 agreed to.  
 Recommendation 15 agreed to.  
 Paragraphs 8.40 to 8.46 agreed to.  
 Finding 51 agreed to.  
 Recommendation 16 considered.  
 Question was put – That Recommendation 16 be agreed to;  
 The Committee divided

|             |             |
|-------------|-------------|
| Ayes 7      | Noes 1      |
| Mr Bayley   | Mr Ferguson |
| Mr Gaffney  |             |
| Ms Haddad   |             |
| Ms Johnston |             |
| Ms O’Connor |             |
| Ms Thomas   |             |
| Ms Webb     |             |

And it was resolved in the Affirmative.  
 Paragraphs 8.47 and 8.48 agreed to.  
 Finding 52 agreed to.  
 Recommendation 17 agreed to.  
 Question was put – That Chapter 8 stand as part of the Committee’s Report.  
 And it was resolved in the Affirmative.  
*Resolved*, that the unconfirmed minutes of today’s meeting be included in Appendix C (*Ms Webb*).  
 Appendix A agreed to as amended.  
 Appendix B – D agreed to.  
 Cover page, title page, contents page, Chair’s Foreword and collated Findings and Recommendations pages agreed to.  
 And the Question being put that the Report be the Report of the Committee.  
 And it was resolved in the Affirmative.  
*Resolved*, that any dissenting report be provided to the Secretary by 5 p.m. on Tuesday, 27 October 2026 for appending to the Report (*Ms Webb*).

#### **MEDIA RELEASE 2024 AND 2025 ELECTIONS INQUIRY REPORT**

The Committee considered the draft media release in regard to the tabling of the 2024 and 2025 elections report.  
*Resolved*, that a media release advising the tabling of the Report, as amended, be published on 27 October 2026 (*Ms Haddad*)

....

*Unconfirmed*

## **APPENDIX D – TRANSCRIPTS OF EVIDENCE**