

WE NEED VOTER ID TO STOP MULTIPLE VOTING IN ELECTIONS

By Kevin Glancy

In the year 2000 I interviewed Dr Amy McGrath for an article I was writing for The Issue magazine. The good doctor had spent many years investigating electoral fraud. In the article I highlighted multiple examples of electoral fraud uncovered by Dr McGrath and perpetrated in both federal and state elections. At the time I was an advocate for the adoption of voter ID and still believe that it should be urgently introduced.

When seats can be won by a handful of votes, it's critical that we reduce the possibility of multiple voting. People voting more than once has been and still is a factor in the outcome of Australian elections. More than likely, we will soon have online voting and I dread to think how it will be abused.

Further; when an election is called there is a sudden rush of new enrollments. It can be 150,000 or more and logistically it's impossible for the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) to check the validity of those new enrollments before polling day, let alone check those already enrolled since the last election. In the 1993 federal election 500,000 new enrolments were registered on the eve of that election.

The AEC can do little to check the validity of last-minute enrollments but it does try to check all enrollments between elections. However, in fairness to the AEC it's a difficult and time-consuming process. By nature, people are transient and many of us are constantly on the move.

Recently, the Liberal Coalition raised the issue of voter ID again and typically it was opposed by Labor. Prominent media

identity Andrew Bolt, whose show the Bolt Report, I watch regularly, thought that voter ID was a non-issue. Mr Bolt is usually a thoughtful and balanced commentator and I was surprised and disappointed by his reaction.

Not least because anything that can be done to improve the integrity of our voting system should be considered. The vagaries of the 2-party preferred system already devalue our voting intentions nevertheless, voting is the only way that we can play some part in our supposed democracy.

In the interests of justifying my own point of view I decided to feature that article, headlined; **Who is the enemy within** which I wrote in October 2000 and to include an update as a preface.

With the federal election less than six months away it may well be timely.

Although the information therein relates to electoral fraud prior to 2000 you may be surprised by how suspect our election system is and that since then not much has changed. In every federal election since that year there has been many examples of individual voters indulging in multiple voting.

When your read Who is the Enemy Within? you might understand why the Labor party has always opposed the use of voter ID. Over the years Labor when in government, has tweaked the election process and in effect made the system more 'abuser friendly' for anyone wishing to defraud that system.

It began when former Prime Minister Bob Hawke established the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC). It was supposed to be the 'election watch dog' and to be in his words to act; 'without fear or favour'. Mr Hawke then proceeded to appoint six union members on the initial 12-member board. Unions have a reputation for running their own suspect elections; they know all the tricks and I would question whether they are the best people to oversee the integrity of our elections. Not

unlike putting the fox in charge of the chickens.

A brief snapshot of multiple voting in the last three Federal elections.

2010 Federal election: This was the Julia Gillard's 'there will be no carbon tax under any government I lead' election. Gillard won that election by less than the number of people who admitted voting more than once and we ended up with a carbon tax. Such is Australian democracy.

According to the Herald Sun (10/12/11) as many as 16,000 Australians got away with voting more than once in the 2010 razor's edge federal poll. Dozens may have voted three times or more, but only three copped a slap on the wrist.

2013 Federal election: Following that election, the AEC referred 8,000 cases of multiple voting to the Australian Federal Police. That number included 6,000 people who had not adequately explained why they voted multiple times. Now this is not all the people who voted more than once but those cases that the AEC believed worthy of reporting.

2016 Federal election: More than 18,343 people voted more than once. According to AEC Commissioner Tom Rogers at a Senate Estimates hearing. Turnbull won that election by only one seat.

When seats can be won by a handful of votes and winning an election relies on gaining enough seats, this type of electoral fraud should never be allowed to happen. When you consider the active role that unions play in elections along with the likes of Get Up, we have every right to be concerned. Calls to introduce voter ID should be encouraged not dismissed.

WHO IS THE ENEMY WITHIN?

By Kevin Glancy



In 1997 Andrew Kehoe, a Labor party office-bearer, became the first person in Australia to be convicted of electoral fraud under federal law. Two years later former Labor state candidate Karen Ehrmann became the first Australian to be jailed for electoral corruption. Her conviction followed that of ex Townsville Labor councillor Shane Foster who was also found guilty of similar offences.

It has been claimed by them and others since then that they were mere sacrifices, merely scapegoats used to protect a greater political power. A power wielded by influential unionists and others within the ranks of the Australian Labor Party.

The suggestion by these convicted Labor members, is that their comrades will stop at nothing to ensure victory for Labor candidates in local, state and federal elections and if that means adding fictitious names to electoral rolls and other acts of electoral fraud then according to them, so be it.

But how could this be? This is the Labor Party, the one that constantly talks of human rights and the importance of democracy. How could they show such little regard for its due process?

If we are to believe such claims, then these convicted criminals and their cronies are simply the face that conceals a most dangerous enemy within and one that operates with impunity. A political party that makes a mockery of any democracy we have left in Australia, by reducing an already suspect 2 party preferred electoral system to a set of rigged

election results.

While the Criminal Justice Commission continues to investigate those claims in relation to the Labor Party in Queensland, I decided to spend some time in the company of a remarkable woman.

Dr Amy McGrath, who despite being closer to the end of life's journey than the beginning, has the energy, wit and determination that would light up any room and put most of us younger folk to shame.

Here is a lady who could almost pass for anyone's charming and delightful grandmother. You know, the one that some are lucky enough to have, who lives quietly in a nearby suburb and yes! She has all those qualities, but there is another side and when I talked to Dr Amy McGrath it was like stepping into an Agatha Christie mystery novel; except the story she told is very real, very sinister and it affects us all. It's such a compelling story that it should be required reading for anyone and everyone who still believes that here in Australia we live in a democracy.

As we still bask in the glow of our Olympic sporting achievements, Dr Amy McGrath quietly or perhaps should I say, not quietly enough for the Australian Electoral Commission, goes about her business on the hunt for acts of electoral fraud. At a time when the media and our politicians heap more and more unjustified praise on our athletes, Dr Amy McGrath's work remains unheralded and yet, she certainly is one of Australia's unsung heroes because her 'business' is far more critical to the future welfare of Australia than any sporting performance could ever be.

Like a skilled forensic scientist on the trail of hidden clues, Dr McGrath is relentless in her pursuit of electoral fraud and if anyone was looking for an expert in such matters Dr McGrath would surely qualify. Responsible for three factual

books on the subject, Amy McGrath has spent countless hours over many years preparing submissions for Joint Standing Committees on Electoral Matters, along the way uncovering overwhelming evidence to suggest that, at the very least, there is wide spread electoral fraud and corruption.

Having spent time with the good doctor, I am left with little doubt that these enemies of Australian democracy have been around for a long time, they are still very active and extremely dangerous leaving us all like apathetic fools in their wake. Make no mistake, election results are being rigged. Our already suspect electoral system and our democracy is in tatters and we should all be outraged at its far-reaching consequences.

Much that has been written here is due to Dr McGrath's extensive and thorough research, her dedication and her valuable time and while I may have written these words, this is really the Dr Amy McGrath Story and it's only because of her patience and unlimited help that I have this story to tell.

But if you haven't got time to read this story, let me assure you that the ending you will miss, begs this question:

When on earth, are we Australians going to stand up and take notice of what is happening to our country and see how easily our politicians not only manipulate our votes, but steal them to further corrupt what is left of our democracy?

As Dr McGrath says, *"I no longer have any illusions about Australia as the Great Democracy. Our electoral system is a dangerous farce obscured by jargon and whitewashing practice. No democratic country can afford the luxury of an electoral system based wholly on honour and trust. We cannot ignore the lessons of history. Election fraud is a corruption that feeds on itself until it leads down the path to tyranny."*

As a professional electoral officer in the UK wisely said,

"Elections are about winning power and there are people who will stop at nothing to win that power."

January 6th, 1993

On that day just prior to the announcement of the March 93 federal election, a computer "hacker" broke into the Australian Electoral Commission's Sequent Computer System. The Sequent System is the AEC's nerve centre and controls the electoral rolls, the election management system and the election process. The hacker gained what is called 'superuser' status. A status that allows the "hacker" to carry out almost any activity throughout the whole system, including modifying its operation, altering files and configuring software. But in order to do so the "hacker" required the use of various secret passwords.

On January 23rd, 1993 the Australian Federal Police arrested Timothy Cooper, a Brisbane resident. A search of his house revealed positive proof that he was indeed the AEC hacker, including two of those secret passwords. They belonged to two AEC employees. Timothy Cooper was cited on 8 indictable charges, but it would be nearly 4 years later before he faced court.

In the meantime very few people outside the AEC were told of the "break in", apart from one politician and as far as we know, Labor Minister Frank Walker told no one else. The incident remained firmly "in-house". At best, only those "in the know" in the Labor Party and a few high-level AEC staff knew of the "break in". No one told the other political parties, their candidates or even the AEC's own Divisional Returning Officers, the very people in the front line who were responsible for the upcoming election process.

Less than two months later, in only the last week of voter enrolment before the election, 500,000 new names were added to the electoral rolls. As per usual, they were not checked as to

their validity or authenticity. Bearing in mind enrolling to vote is easier than hiring a video and you can even fax your enrolment to the AEC, so the possibility for errors in such a large number of entries is, at the very least, entirely possible. Divisional Office Staff were further frustrated by delays when the Sequent System “broke down” on various occasions during that enrolment process.

On the night of that 1993 federal election, during the counting of votes the same AEC computer system again mysteriously “broke down” on six separate and critical occasions between 7 pm and 11.30 pm.

Earlier in the evening Labor’s chances in the marginal seats in Sydney’s west were looking grim, the numbers indicated the possibility of defeat. During the various “break down” periods, analysts could only look at the same figures and wait for the network to resume.

According to the ABC’s Election Analyst Antony Green, instead of the usual steady flow of counted votes, each time the computer network resumed transmission the numbers ‘jumped’ dramatically. When the computers finally came back on air, following the series of breakdowns it appeared that the prediction of Labor’s loss had been premature and they were now winning. The count had miraculously reversed in Labor’s favour. But only just. Paul Keating won that 1993 election by a mere 1200 votes.

While none of these events may be connected the questions must be asked. Were the computer breakdowns a legacy of the hacker’s visits? Was the hacker working on behalf of a greater power? Why would you break in to a boring AEC computer network? There’s no money in it – or is there? How many of those 500,000 ‘last minute’ enrolments were valid? Or was Labor’s reversal of fortune and their narrow win all just a coincidence?

We'll probably never know because the January computer break-in and there were a few, remained shrouded in secrecy until nearly 4 years later when Timothy Cooper was finally brought before the courts. The AEC was forced to admit that a break-in had in fact happened and in the main, only because the Brisbane Courier Mail reported Cooper's conviction and his three-year sentence.

In the time between Cooper's arrest and his sentencing at least two federal elections and various state elections had taken place. Despite the 1993 break in and the obvious threat it imposed on the integrity of our electoral process; despite the AEC conceding in court that the offence was great enough to have compromised the entire election, they still claimed that the 1993 federal election was not in any way affected by this security breach.

But there was another 'coincidence' in the 1993 federal election. There were 53,000 more votes for the Senate than the House of Representatives, a huge imbalance and contrary to normal expectations. Again the AEC remained silent on this issue.

Following a petition to the High Court by Alisdair Webster in relation to that anomaly, the Keating Labor Government, the benefactors of any suspect behaviour reacted. They immediately legislated to prevent any individual in Australia, such as Mr. Webster ever challenging the result of a whole election.

As for the hacker Timothy Cooper? Unfortunately for us all, he pleaded guilty and therefore was not required to give any evidence and so the trail that may have led to his partners in crime came to a sudden halt. No further investigation has been conducted by the AEC or the Federal Police.

ELECTORAL OFFICES FIRE BOMBED

Before and since there have been many more 'coincidences' including Labor's narrow victory in the 1995 NSW State

Election.

Critical to that victory were two marginal seats with electoral offices in Gladesville and Badgery's Creek. Both seats were won by Labor but by only 107 votes and 260 votes respectively. The Liberals questioned the validity of some of the ballot papers and wanted a recount. Unfortunately, just before the recount both electoral offices, where the disputed returns were kept were coincidentally firebombed. The bombs did their damage, destroying enough of the disputed ballot papers. It was a violent attack that as a result discouraged what would have been an expensive legal petition by the Liberals to challenge the election result. As Dr McGrath recalls,

"The extraordinary thing at the time was the inexplicable silence of the media considering that this was an event that should have surely been front page news. In the end to find any reports of the firebombing I had to resort to the Police Media Unit which gave me a miniscule file of a few column inches in the local press."

A handful of votes goes a long way

As for the accuracy of electoral rolls. In an audit of multiple different surnames enrolled at a single street address on the electoral roll for the 1993 Dickson by-election, an Enterprise Council found that 813 addresses had more than 5 different names listed. 49 addresses were on vacant caravan lots. Many names on the roll were no longer in residence, being regarded as having 'moved'. The Council also reported 'glaring inaccuracies and discrepancies' on the same electoral roll and challenged 1,532 names out of a list of over 5000 names that were verified as return-to-sender mail. Labor's Michael Lavarch had won that election by only 370 votes.

Can we trust the Electoral roll?

Prior to the 1998 Federal Election, Liberal MP Jim Lloyd in the marginal NSW seat of Robertson did a mail-out and identified around 4,000 suspect names on the electoral roll. Initially the AEC were dismissive about his concerns but eventually under pressure, conducted their own check which resulted in nearly 4000 names being removed from the roll.

One can only speculate at what may have happened in the following election, had Jim Lloyd and his staff not been so vigilant. Bearing in mind that generally, electoral rolls aren't checked by the AEC or candidates and marginal seats/elections are often decided on a handful of votes.

The Cheryl Kernot dummy spit or; was it an alibi?

Then of course there's the infamous Cheryl Kernot "dummy spit" at the end of polling day at the 1998 federal election. Cheryl Kernot, the new Labor candidate for the seat of Dickson was visibly upset as she bemoaned her election defeat during a late evening press conference. Near tears she went on about how Labor (she had left the Democrats) deliberately placed her in an "unwinnable" seat. That was on polling night when most of the votes had been counted and Kernot's bitter comments were motivated by the fact that Liberal candidate Rod Henshaw had what appeared to be an unassailable lead. Or did he?

Here is a part of a submission made by one of the Dickson scrutineers to an inquiry into that 1998 federal election. Graeme J. Lee was a scrutineer appointed by the Sitting Member and Independent, Tony Smith.

"During the counting of votes, my wife, myself and a friend (all scrutineers) noticed on a number of occasions that a pile of ballot papers placed on the pile of votes for Cheryl Kernot, included votes for other candidates. We insisted that these ballot papers be rechecked and found that in most cases, ballot papers for other candidates had been included in Ms. Kernot's pile. One female Electoral Official seemed to be the

main person responsible for these mistakes. I recall that we found at least 20 ballot papers included incorrectly in Ms. Kernot's pile. By contrast we found only 2 incorrect ballot papers in Rod Henshaw's pile and one in Tony Smith's pile."

There were other discrepancies mentioned in Graeme Lee's submission but at the end of the day (Oct 3rd) Rod Henshaw Lib had 1907 primary votes and Cheryl Kernot had 1125. After preferences had been allocated Henshaw received a further 429 votes and Kernot 176.

Graeme Lee, noting that past election results and his own research had shown that postal and absentee votes still to be counted, usually favoured conservative candidates, left for a holiday with his wife on the following day (Oct 4th) assuming that the Liberal candidate had won.

While away on holiday, Mr. Lee was not directly in touch with developments in Dickson until,

"I heard via the press that after some weeks a large number of ballot papers (well over 100) had suddenly been found and that they were found at the Booth at Albany Creek where we had been scrutineers. These ballot papers were for Cheryl Kernot and suddenly gave her the votes needed to become the newly-elected Member for Dickson."

Graeme Lee went on in his submission to state, *"I believe there has been a massive fraud perpetrated on the people of Dickson and that a full criminal investigation should be undertaken to establish where these (extra) ballot papers came from. I can assure you that there were (according to the 3730 ballot papers issued) only 7 missing at the completion of counting on the night of the election and there is no way a further large number of ballot papers were overlooked or went missing."*

The AEC claimed, as they invariably do when any one questions theirs or other's conduct in an election, that following their

own investigation, no evidence of misconduct had been uncovered in the Dickson election.

While that may be the case and in fairness to all concerned, it would be easy to dismiss Graeme Lee's statement given that his candidate lost, but when you consider Cheryl Kernot's outburst as the loser on the night of the election, we can only speculate as to what really happened in the seat of Dickson. You may also remember that shortly after that election Cheryl Kernot went missing, reportedly suffering from a nervous breakdown.

Over many years in Australia there have been many allegations, much evidence and examples of electoral fraud. Unfortunately, far too many to mention in this story but it shouldn't come as any surprise to anyone when you consider how open our electoral system is to abuse. According to Dr McGrath since 1983, Labor Party governments have consistently made subtle changes to electoral law which have had the effect of opening up the Electoral Act and the voting process, to fraudulent voting.

In her words, *"The Labor party has made the voting process abuser-friendly."*

In the late eighties Mr. R. Cundy and Mr. I. Dickson who, at the time were both past and present Electoral Commissioners reported to the NSW Government that the electoral system was *"wide open to manipulation and fraud"*.

Unfortunately, when anyone protests to the AEC about electoral conduct, they usually encounter an 'attitude' exemplified by Dr Colin Hughes the Electoral Commissioner who in an interview with journalist, Laurie Oakes in late 1989 said,

"Over the past few years there has been such sustained criticism; such a campaign against the rolls and the voting procedure, that I think public confidence in the integrity of electoral outcomes has been undermined." (Bulletin Nov'89)

As far as Dr Hughes was concerned any criticism of the AEC was unjustified and that there was actually a conspiracy to undermine the AEC when he further claimed, that his state deputies shared his belief that "self-appointed watchdogs" inspired by fundamentalist organisations in the United States and extreme right-wing groups in Australia, were responsible.

What an extraordinary statement to make, particularly when you consider that no system is perfect and furthermore Australia's system is wide open to abuse, when all that's required to enrol to vote is a signature. You don't need real proof of identity when you enrol or vote and enrolments are very rarely checked. At best, the two-year check that the AEC conducts on the electoral roll only affects certain aspects at that moment in time. There's also the sudden flood of enrolments before an election that are never checked and if they are, it's not until after the election and of course by then, it's all too little and far too late, while the result still stands.

Also in the Bulletin article 'Behind the Conspiracy Theory', Laurie Oakes wrote about "Just plain old ballot-rigging" in union elections and how those who made any attempt to "clean up" union elections were branded as "fascists or reactionary rightists" by the communists whose "only method of argument was argument by abuse."

Laurie went on to say, *"Yet that is exactly what happens today to anyone, who dares to suggest that parliamentary elections may need cleaning up; that such elections may have become a new happy hunting ground of ballot riggers once bred in union brawls, who look to more open roads to power than the unions now offer."*

He also wrote, *"Those who offer this opinion or any other alleging defects in the electoral system, should be entitled to do so without running the gauntlet of abuse or damaging false attacks, even if they are wrong."* (Bulletin Nov '89)

2UE radio broadcaster Alan Jones and 2GB's Brian Wilshire, who have both highlighted the possibility of electoral fraud, are victims of this kind of abuse by electoral commissioners from the AEC. It began with one instance relating to the late author Frank Hardy, a Labor supporter and member of the Victorian Communist Party, who went public 'on air' with Alan Jones and 'off air' with Brian Wilshire regarding his claim that the 1987 federal election had been rigged.

According to Brian Wilshire, Frank Hardy made the allegation in a conversation with him, saying that unnamed friends of his in the Labor party were boasting that they had swung the '87 result in favour of their own party by rigging the system, which was something they had never been able to do before.

In a statement also made by Frank Hardy at a private party in Newtown he said, *"We've been doing it (ballot rigging) for a hundred years, but we've become more sophisticated at it."*

He was overheard by two people who are prepared to support their claim with statutory declarations.

That particular '87 federal election was curious to say the least, as Professor Cooray, a qualified observer noted (in part) at the time,

"There appears to be an unreal consistency in the marginal seats (NSW) where the Labor party holds its ground, or the swing against it is less than elsewhere."

In 1993 following heavy criticism of both broadcasters by the AEC, (Mr. Bell) Alan Jones quite rightly responded in part by saying, *"The obligation is upon the AEC to be able to guarantee to every person, every Australian, that the system is foolproof. My argument has been on all occasions that I have spoken to anyone from the AEC, that they have not been able to provide that guarantee."*

In reference to the 500,000 plus enrolments in the last week prior to the '93 federal election, Alan Jones asked the

Electoral Commissioner could he tell him of the 150,000 new names and the 300,000 changes of addresses *"which electorates had these people been enrolled in and had there been any check on whether any of these (150,000) people actually existed prior to that election?"* The Electoral Commissioner could not answer the question.

Alan Jones made the further valid point that, *"Why do we send delegations to Cambodia and Peru and everywhere else around the world to secure fair and proper elections, when we cannot actually guarantee fair elections in this country?"*

Of course Mr Jones is right to be concerned, as we all should be, and the AEC should know better than to pour scorn on any criticism of our electoral system. Apart from other suspect aspects, the enrolment factor is critical to any outcome. For instance in that 93 election, victory in various seats required the movement of a very small number of votes. e.g. Dawson 160, Paterson 21, Richmond 360, Low 460 etc. Without proof of identity and real checks of enrolment it is far too easy to rort the system and influence those outcomes.

Little has changed at the AEC since 1989 and an 'attitude' certainly still prevails. In the recent Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters there were 261 submissions from individuals and organisations related to objections to the 2-party preferred system, the distribution of preferences and the removal of the 'Langer Option'. (A voter allowed to vote for only one candidate)

In any true democracy these would be highly appropriate and valid concerns and in the main, without quoting any of the written responses from the AEC to these submissions, from those I have seen their reaction was patronising and dismissive, suggesting that these people and others required 'more education'.

One can only assume that in Australia, the right to vote does not include the right to control who actually gets your vote.

As Dr Amy McGrath said, *"Our electoral system is a dangerous farce."*

SO WHO WATCHES THE WATCHERS?

The Labor Party's relationship with the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) is obvious when you consider that it was the Labor Party who established the AEC in 1984. The AEC's role is to organise and monitor our parliamentary election process. Despite an obvious conflict of interest, given that at the end of the day the AEC ultimately answers to the government of that day, it is also the umpire in that same process with a duty to ensure the integrity and fairness of our election system in its application. Yet while there are and have been, many allegations of electoral fraud, few if any are investigated and if they are, election results still stand.

What should always be a democratic process beyond reproach suffers, not just because of inadequate staffing levels within the AEC, but more than likely because with respect to the AEC, it would appear that they may even be part of the problem. Even if staffing levels were sufficient, the AEC can't help but lack objectivity. After all any investigation must surely include scrutiny of its very own practices in carrying out the wishes of its political masters.

In the main they are the Labor and Liberal parties who have commandeered and molded the Australian election system to protect their own political interests and who, with what is I'm sure an acute sense of fair play, also appoint members by one means or another to that same Australian Electoral Commission. A recruitment process that is hardly conducive to the creation of an objective and independent watchdog.

As an example, by the mid nineteen eighties the Labor party, then in federal government, had included within the formal structure of the AEC a twelve-member National Consultative Council. Six of the members appointed by the AEC were ALP

union delegates, representing two unions now amalgamated under the Commonwealth Public Service Union. One of them was actually the National Industrial Officer of the union.

This piece of 'balanced' recruitment strategy was all for a body that the ALP had established in 1984 to be in their words, "free of politicisation" and to be able to act "without fear or favour" and with the greatest respect to all fair-minded and honest union members, I'm sure you're aware that there are those within your ranks who are past masters in the art of influencing the outcome of a union elections by fair means or foul. Violence, intimidation and ballot rigging have been proven features of certain union elections over the years with branch stacking seemingly a common practice in various Labor branches.

What is more disturbing is that as recent events in Queensland have revealed, union officials and members play a major part in all Labor elections. It is common knowledge that usually six weeks before the election, particularly in marginal seats, the union organiser will be sent to the electorate to organise the Labor candidate's election process.

It has been alleged by jailed Labor member Karen Ehrmann in Queensland during the Criminal Justice Commission inquiry into electoral behaviour that, *"It was like school and I was being told how things were done in other electorates."* and that, *"AWU member Warrick Powell had indicated they had someone on the inside of the AEC."*

Of course, when you consider the union appointments made by the ALP when they first established the AEC and the party's influence over the AEC while in government when they definitely made the system 'abuser friendly' throughout the 1980's and the early '90's, Ehrmann's statements should not surprise anyone. Nor should it, when you consider the number of current ex-union members who are now elected Members at State and Federal level within the Labor party.

While I am not suggesting that those Members have gained their positions by suspect means, it is clear that the independence of the Australian Electoral Commission can be questioned, when in fact, it should be clearly beyond reproach and answerable, not to any political party, but only to Australian voters outside those party machines.

What is of more concern is that since the Liberal party have been in government any attempt they have made to amend the Commonwealth Electoral Act, particularly to tighten the enrolment process with regard to identification, has been blocked by Labor with the help of the Democrats in the Senate and suspiciously, considering the current 'inquiry' by the Queensland Labor Government. A clear case of the foxes being given the job of minding the chickens.

In light of which, Special Minister of State, Senator Christopher Ellison said recently,

"Now that criminal acts of electoral fraud have been proved in Queensland and allegations of systematic electoral fraud within the ALP have been made, Premier Beattie should get serious about stamping out electoral rotting and supporting the Commonwealth's electoral reforms."

Given the past history of suspect behaviour in elections and the haphazard security of the electoral roll, combined with the lack of proof needed to identify anyone who enrolls or votes, one can only be highly suspicious of the motivation behind the ALP's behaviour in blocking sensible moves to install some integrity into our election system. Every fair-minded supporter of the Labor Party and the Democrats should be asking their local Member why?

There has been talk of breaches of civil liberties in terms of privacy, but the fact remains that we already furnish government agencies, banks etc. with similar information and quite frankly, this argument is almost frivolous and again

suspect, considering that the preservation of our democracy is paramount. That preservation is critical to our survival as a civilised society, critical to our ongoing and peaceful welfare and critical in maintaining our individual human rights. Efforts made to improve the security of our election process, the linch-pin in our democracy should not be stubbornly blocked by the very politicians who have possibly benefited from what clearly is, and proven to be, a highly suspect election process.

With the help of Dr Amy McGrath, I have only scratched the mere surface as far as the extent of electoral fraud is concerned and there is far more that should be said on the subject, far more that Dr McGrath could tell us. So in the absence of space it is only fitting that I leave the good Doctor with the final word. As a founding member of the HS Chapman Society, a body established to raise public awareness of electoral fraud in Australia, Dr McGrath makes one very sensible suggestion and it should be one that is immediately adopted and if not, one we should definitely all demand.

"We are the only English-speaking democracy in the world that has compulsory voting. Australia also has the dubious distinction of having a unique electoral system because of its incongruous combination of compulsion and voluntary honesty. The concern is that the AEC has no policy for the investigation of manipulation or fraud. In fact, the Electoral Act does not even require the AEC to investigate irregularities. For that reason alone the political parties should set up an office of Electoral Ombudsman to ensure accountability in the electoral process."

I couldn't agree more and when you consider the current range of Ombudsmen we have for such things as banking, defence, taxation, police, the ACT, the NSW Govt and shortly the retail industry, given the undemocratic situation that exists, why on earth don't we already have an Electoral Ombudsman – if only to expose the enemy within?

Footnote:

I am extremely grateful to Dr McGrath for allowing me to access her valuable research material in compiling this story. The range of books written by Dr McGrath include: Corrupt Elections; The Fraudling of Votes? and The Forging of Votes.

