

Liberal Party of Australia

Victorian Division



State Director

11 December 2023

Electoral Review Expert Panel
Panel Secretariat
Department of Premier & Cabinet
Via: electoral.review@dpc.vic.gov.au

Dear Panel Members,

Thank you for providing the Liberal Party of Australia (Victorian Division) (the “Liberal Party”) the opportunity to participate in the Electoral Review Expert Panel’s consultation on appropriate legislative amendments to ensure that major political parties fulfil minimum requirements of party administration to qualify for public funding.

The Liberal Party supports retaining the existing minimum standards for political parties receiving administrative funding.

For a political party to receive Administrative Expenditure Funding in Victoria, they must be a Registered Political Party that have at least one Member of Parliament elected at the previous election.

Registered Political Parties in Victoria are volunteer-run unincorporated associations responsible for setting their own conditions for membership. There is no sound reason why the State Government should take over setting the conditions for how a volunteer organisation should manage its own affairs.

The only current legal requirements regarding membership of a Registered Political Party in Victoria are that they have a written constitution providing rules for membership, and that the Registered Political Party has at least 500 members.

There is currently no requirement that members of a Registered Political Party pay membership subscription fees, nor a requirement that a Registered Political Party offer differential subscription fees based on concession status.

While Liberal Party members currently do pay membership subscription fees via traceable means and we do offer concessional memberships, we see no reason why this should be mandated of other parties whom might not wish to.

Beyond the requirement that a Registered Political Party remains registered for the duration of a parliamentary term, there are currently no other requirements connecting the receipt of administrative funding to the rules about how somebody may join the party. Funding is currently tied to electoral success at the previous election, and there

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is no sound case to instead tie it to something else like how a party chooses to offer a concessional membership (if at all).

In that context, the measures the Panel have been asked to consider would tie the receipt of Administrative Expenditure Funding to new conditions that otherwise have no bearing on a party's current eligibility for Administrative Expenditure Funding.

Payment of membership fees by traceable means and checking of concession cards should remain an internal matter for parties to decide, as there is no relationship between a party's number of cash-paying or concessional members, and the party's ability to claim Administrative Funding.

Such proposed changes would significantly curtail the freedom of association that Victorians enjoy by virtue of the right to determine the conditions on which they will associate with others to form a political party.

The proposed changes are not designed to better connect the way parties spend Administrative Expenditure to the purposes for which it is provided, or to change the operation of political parties to serve a public good.

There is no benefit to the Victorian public or Victorian democracy that could be achieved via the introduction of unnecessary new proposals that would justify this curtailment of freedom of association.

The *Electoral Act 2002* already provides rules for the use of enrolment information by political parties, and provides penalties for the Registered Officers of parties that breach these rules. There is no justification for additional regulation on the use of enrolment by parties.

We note that there are already significant regulatory hurdles that a major political party must meet in order to get members elected to the Victorian Parliament, and consequently be eligible for Administrative Expenditure Funding.

Further regulatory burden on the internal administration of volunteer parties is unnecessary, given Administrative Expenditure Funding is already rightly linked to other measures.

Kind Regards



Stuart Smith

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Liberal Party of Australia (Victorian Division)