Submission No 3a

INQUIRY INTO ADMINISTRATION OF THE 2007 NSW ELECTION AND RELATED MATTERS

Organisation:

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Position:

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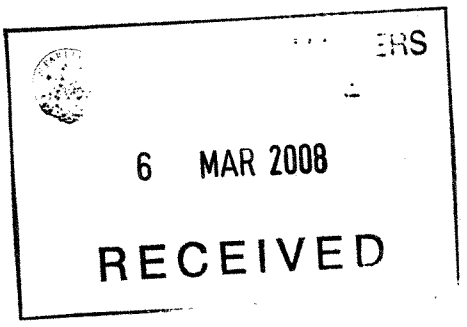
Attachments (not reproduced):
Results and outcomes 3 State Election 18 March 2006 State Electoral Office South Australia



Malcolm Mackerras

28 February 2008

Ms Helen Minnican
Committee Manager
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Parliament of New South Wales

Dear Helen

Further to our conversation yesterday at Parliament House, Sydney, I write because I think it desirable to place some of my opinions in writing.

First, I acknowledge that you gave me a copy of Antony Green's analysis of the 2007 election, for which the date given is February 2008. It takes the form of Background Paper No 1/08. I have now had a chance to study this paper.

On pages 32 and 33 of Green's paper there is a summary of the two-party preferred votes and at the bottom there is a note which reads:

> This table contains differences from the table of two-party preferred totals published on pages 99-100 of the Electoral Commission's "Report on the 2007 State Election". The table published here is based on the actual distribution of preferences in the 72 electorates that finished as two-party preferred contests, where the Electoral Commission's table is based on election night booth counts of preferences. The differences between the two tables are only minor.

Let me compare now the Labor two-party preferred vote as shown by Green (1,790,257) and as shown by the Electoral Commission, namely 1,788,142. A difference of 2,115 votes may be "only minor" but the reality is there should be no difference at all.

Since Green seems so unwilling to speak the brutal truth himself he should be commended, perhaps, for his modesty. However, I can say for him that which he seems not to say for himself. His table is correct while that of the Electoral Commission is riddled with minor errors which aggregate to understating Labor's total vote by 2,115.

For that reason I suggest the Committee ask the Electoral Commission to issue a corrigendum for their table on pages 99 and 100. That corrigendum should exclude the right hand column of Green's table but should otherwise follow it. When I say that, I do not mean to suggest that the percentages should be rounded to one decimal place, my practice and Green's practice also. Since the Commission's practice is to go to two decimal places then the new table should also go to two decimal places. Apart from that the Commission's corrected table should follow Green's exactly.

The second matter I raised with you in our conversation yesterday relates to the fact that the Commission's Report takes so long to produce. Apart from my criticism of pages 99 and 100 I think this is a magnificent report. However, we have (as usual) been required to wait a long time for this.

In South Australia they recognize that analysts do not wish to wait so long for the big report. Consequently they issue, typically about two months after polling day, an abbreviated report which is very satisfactory to customers like me.

If South Australia can be so accommodating to the wishes of customers I see no reason why New South Wales should not also be. Consequently I recommend that, after the next state election in NSW, the example of South Australia be copied. That is the purpose of my enclosure.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Mackerras

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