



6 April 2022

Heather Gilmour
President
Canning Division
Via email: hgkm@bigpond.com.au

CANNING PRESELECTION REFORM WORKSHOP

Dear Heather,

I extend my sincere thank you to the Canning Division for hosting me at a meeting of your Division on 5 February 2022. I apologise for the delay in writing to you.

As you know, State Executive has agreed to a rigorous grassroots consultation process for preselection reform. This letter is to confirm discussions at the workshop you hosted. I would appreciate if you could write back to me with your understanding of the conversations which took place across each of the four principles.

I have attached the results of the exercise your members participated in on the day. Notably, not one person was of the view we should remain with the status quo – all were in favor of reform across each principle.

I do not believe there has been a time in our recent history where the appetite for reform has been so widespread. In all the workshops I have facilitated, the question is not whether we should have reform, but rather what it should look like.

My understanding of the views expressed during the workshop is summarised below.

Larger

All workshop attendees agreed the number of preselectors currently entitled to attend preselections is too few, and that preselection committees should comprise a greater number of delegates. You will recall the fact pack showed the average number of entitled delegates for preselections for Legislative Assembly “key seats” was just 35.

Attendees articulated a clear view that selection committees should be around 3-3.5x larger. Based on the key seat average used in the exercise, this would mean around 105-122 people participating in a preselection. This is in keeping with preselection models used in other states.

The desire for having such large numbers of delegates participating means the preferred model is a plebiscite model – allowing all grassroots members to participate in a preselection.

For example, Canning Division has 12 branches. To continue the delegate system and reach the desired number of preselectors for a House of Representatives preselection, there would need to be an increase in delegates at a branch level to between 9 and 10.

Given an average branch typically comprises ~30 members, there is a strong case to be made that the whole membership of the Division should be enfranchised.

Local

All workshop attendees agreed that the current proportion of local delegates attending key seat pre-selections was too low. You will recall the fact pack showed only ~58% of delegates in most key seat preselections were locals who lived and worked in the electorate.

Attendees agreed preselections should comprise at least 75% local delegates.

Further, as has been the case in each workshop, there was considerable discussion over the definition of what should constitute a “local delegate”. Attendees were largely unanimous in their view that the definition of local should only enfranchise those delegates who are on the electoral roll at a residential address within the electorate where the pre-selection is being conducted.

This view received strong support on the basis that adopting a looser definition of “local” could result in the signing-up of members who live outside the electorate, with those “outside” members having a disproportionate influence over preselections. Attendees viewed this as insidious branch stacking, which should be resisted.

This has implications for those members of the Division who are not on the electoral roll within the boundaries of Canning Division, namely those who live in:

- The electorate, but by virtue of lacking Australian citizenship, are not on the electoral roll
- Another area, but choose to be members of Canning Division because they:
 - Wish to contribute where they are a member because of historical links to that community or their support for the candidate or MP
 - Joined Canning Division or one of its branches because those constituent bodies are particularly active, whereas the bodies where they live are less active
 - Have strong friendships with other members of Canning Division, and want to associate with them

I would be grateful if you could discuss these issues with your members, and confirm whether they want to include the above members in future Canning Division preselections.

Simpler

All workshop attendees favored a simpler preselection system that was easy to administer.

To achieve this, attendees expressed support for a selection committee composition with a mixture of local and central delegates – which could be all local members, and a percentage of State Council delegates, as is the case now with the plebiscite trial.

Your members favored preselection delegates having been a member of the Party for 12 months and on the electoral roll.

Better Vetting

No one at the workshop believed the current arrangements around candidate vetting were adequate. Attendees accepted that the WA Liberal Party needed to codify its vetting processes, and were willing to look to other States for guidance on how to achieve this.

There were two schools of thought on how vetting could be improved:

- Some members believe that a vetting committee should exist, and should provide advice to State Executive which could then stop an application from progressing.
- Another group believe a vetting committee should provide advice directly to the relevant selection committee where the candidate has nominated.

Despite these disparate schools of thought, I did not sense any attendees felt overwhelmingly wedded to their preferred model – they were willing to consider alternative vetting models as reform discussions progressed across the Party.

Additionally, given the recent issues with the NSW Liberal Party's Nomination Review Committee, I have sensed some reticence on the part of attendees in the most recent workshops to institute any sort of vetting committee at this time.

Other matters

In addition to the above, there were a range of views put by members on the night which have been consistently raised in other workshops. I offer no opinion on these points, but ask that you consider them in the response from your Division given they continue to be a topic of discussion.

- That being an office bearer in a Division or local branch is a measure of contribution and that person should be enfranchised with a vote, even if not otherwise eligible. The counterargument has been made that this could skew executive positions to those who are not local.
- That there could be a grandfather or sunset clause on eligibility to vote in local preselections for those who are not local, but once were. For example, the Victorian Liberal Party's constitution makes allowances for those who were a member of a local branch on 12 October 2008 and who lived in the area at some point from 1 July 2007. This could, however, undermine the simpler to administer principle, and create two classes of membership.

Next steps

I have conducted workshops in most Divisions, after which they have received a letter just like this, allowing a further opportunity to put their views. Taking those into account, we will then identify and models which deliver against the four principles.

Proposed models and drafting instructions for C&D have been circulated (and attached) with another opportunity for consultation and feedback.

Please extend my sincere appreciation to all those who participated on the day. There was a very high level of engagement, with the majority of people in the room expressing their view at some point.

That demonstrates not only the appetite for reform, but that we can have a respectful, sober and mature conversation about the future of selecting candidates to represent our great Party in the community, and ultimately, in Parliament.

I look forward to your response and continuing to work with you and the Canning Division. Please note I plan on releasing this letter publicly on the reform section of the Party's website, as well as your response.

Yours sincerely,

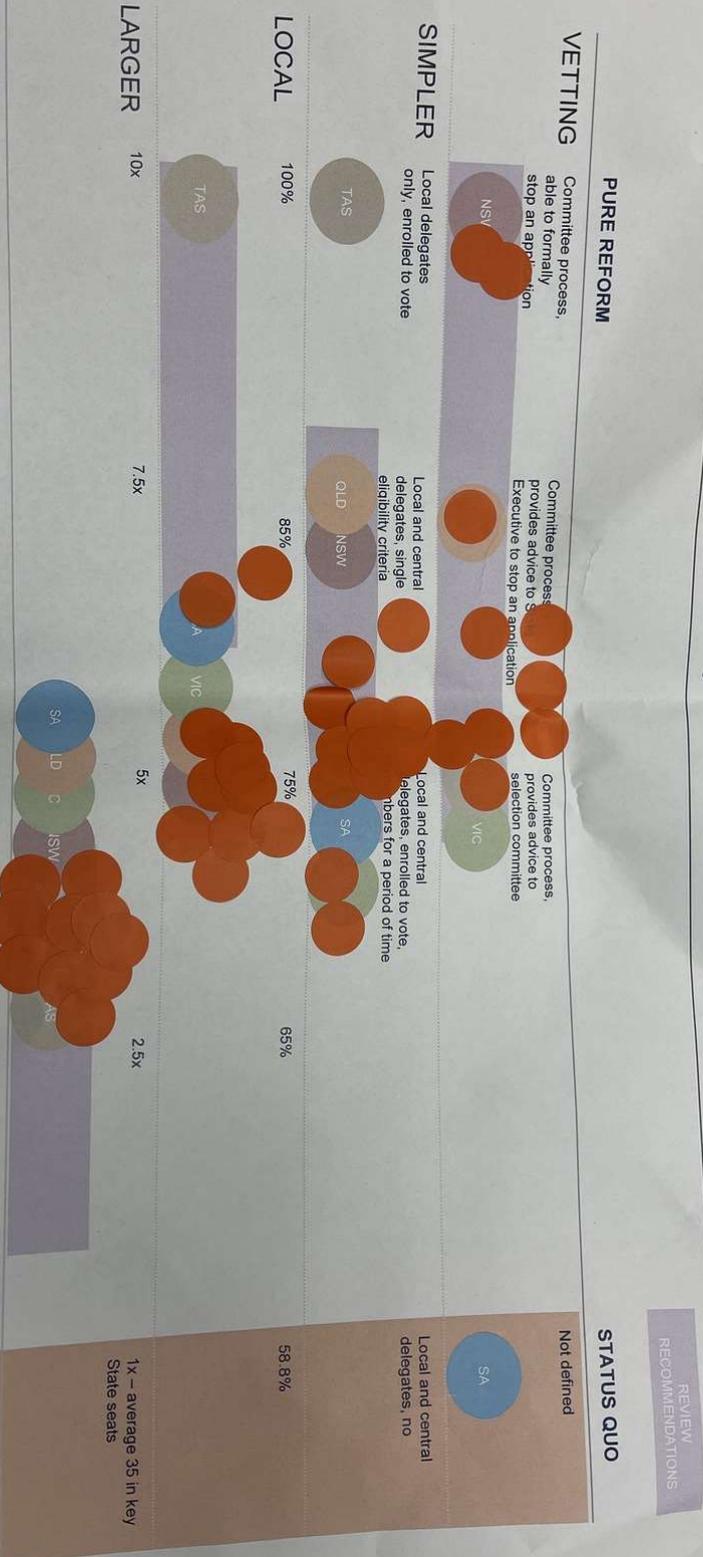
A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'RW', enclosed within a large, loopy blue oval stroke.

Richard Wilson
State President

Options | Which states are already where we want to be?



Respondents



Note: The above table provides a general average representation of where each state sits on these basic principles based on the information contained in the previous slides. The purple box also shows, in a general sense, the impact recommendations of the review panel could have if implemented.