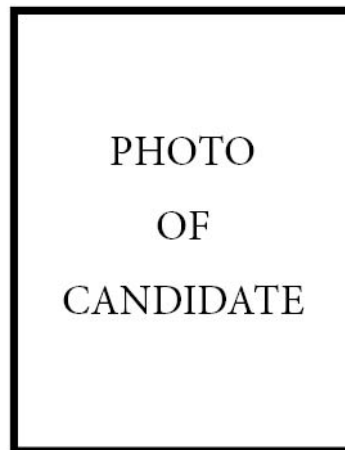


media release #9



GREG McMAHON

**INDEPENDENT SENATE CANDIDATE for QUEENSLAND
FEDERAL ELECTION - 2 JULY 2016**

Complaint to Human Rights Commission

Queensland Senate candidate alleges political discrimination in determining ballot paper positions

A Queensland Senate candidate will lodge a complaint with the Human Rights Commission claiming that the process used to allocate positions on the Senate ballot paper for the July 2 election constituted political discrimination against him in favour of candidates in political parties.

Independent Senate candidate Greg McMahon said that 38 political parties and 19 independents in Queensland had nominated to stand for the Senate election next month but in the draw for places on the ballot paper, the 38 political party groups were allocated the first 38 places on the ballot paper, and the Independents were not considered until the first 38 places were filled.

When he questioned Australian Electoral Commission officials as to why he was not allowed to compete with the parties for a place on the ballot paper, he was told: "It is the law,"

Mr McMahon said that on the basis of advice he had received, he would be lodging a formal complaint with Human Rights Commission, and he would also be informing the Australian Electoral Commission that he reserved the right to take the matter to the Court of Disputed Returns.

Mr McMahon said if the law required that women candidates, or followers of a particular faith, or a particular ethnic group, had to go last on the ballot paper, there would be an outcry.

"That would be a form of discrimination that is well understood, and the community would not cop it," he said.

"By the same token, politically motivated discrimination is also something that we should not tolerate in this country.

“Independent candidates are being treated unfairly by the parties and Australians should not tolerate that.

“Politically motivated discrimination is simply an offence against human rights, and that is why I have lodged my complaint with the Human Rights Commission,” Mr McMahon said.

He said there was no reason why the Independents could not be given the opportunity to compete for the first 38 places.

“Even making the Independents the 39th group, and allowing them to compete for the first 39 places, would have been fairer than the directed, automatic relegation to the back of the queue,” he said.

“The opportunity to have independent voices in our parliaments, instead of people who just toe the party line, is an essential ingredient of democracy.

“I will be arguing that being an Independent, being free of any political obligation to a dominant party view, is politically opposite to being a member of a political party.

“That difference appears to be the only factor at play in imposing this disadvantage upon Independents by the major parties.”

Mr McMahon said it was fine for the Government and the Opposition to argue against Independents when campaigning, and it was fine for them to swap preferences in an effort to defeat such candidates.

“However, the Government cannot allow such politics to spill-over into the legislation that it enacts in ways that discriminate against Independents just because the Independents might oppose, or threaten to oppose, the free rein of the major parties in the Senate.”

Mr McMahon said disadvantaging a person seeking election to Parliament was un-Australian, and the Human Rights Commission should move quickly to resolve the issue.

As an officer of field rank in the Australian Army, Mr McMahon has been a long-time campaigner against discriminatory treatment of soldiers, trainees, whistleblowers and reservists.

He said he was surprised “in this day and age” to learn at the ballot draw that only political parties would be considered for the prized first twelve positions on the Senate ballot paper.

Mr McMahon said it was no one other than former army commander and now Australian of the Year, David Morrison, who said, “The standard that you walk by is the standard that you set.”

Mr McMahon said his standard required him to speak out and do something about powerful people who treated others unfairly, and not just walk by.

“I registered my objection with the Australian Electoral Commission at the draw,” Mr McMahon said.

"I then checked the recent decisions of the High Court on the new legislative provisions directing the methods of election, and understood those decisions to be about the treatment of the minor parties, not about the discriminatory treatment of Independents.

"I cannot accept that what our politicians have done is acceptable ... hence my decision to lodge a complaint with the Human Rights Commission."

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