

COALITION GOVERNMENT TAKES LEAF OUT OF THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY, BURMESE MILITARY, RUSSIAN OLIGARCHY AND THE TALIBAN'S DEMOCRACY PRIMER

The single most important similarity between authoritarian governments around the world is their desire to crush their opposition. Some, like the Taliban, the Chinese Communist Party, the Burmese military and the Russian oligarchy, use brute force to crush any opposition. Others, like the Morrison led Liberal National Party federal government, use their majority in Parliament to scuttle any sign of a growing opposition.

The single most important change that has occurred in Australian electoral politics over the past decade has been the breaking down of the two-party system. Both the Liberal National Party and Australian Labor Party governments have had to forge alliances with minor parties and independents, in order to secure a parliamentary majority.

Despite compulsory voting in Australia, an increasing number of Australians are not enrolling to vote, are not voting or are voting informal. At the same time the Australian Electoral Commission is registering an increasing number of new political parties. Under the current Commonwealth Electoral Act, registration as a political party is dependent on the new party having 500 members on the electoral roll.

Over the past two decades a number of Commonwealth Electoral Act changes have raised to financial bar for independents and minor parties to stand as candidates in federal elections. At the same time legislative changes have been introduced to make it exceedingly difficult for independents to be elected.

In the Senate you need two independent candidates to stand as a team to have a box above the line. While candidates from registered political parties have the party's name next to their box, independents are banned from having the word "independent" placed next to their box.

In an era of increasing disillusionment with parliamentary politics, the major political parties, fearing people will vote for independents, have banned the use of the independent label for Senate teams that have a box above the line on the Senate ballot paper.

"PARTY REGISTRATION INTEGRITY BILL"

Fearing the growth of minor parties and concerned about the breakdown of the two-party system, the Coalition government introduced legislation into federal parliament on the 12th August 2021 that attempts to crush the growth of minor parties and decrease the choice electors are able to exercise when they vote at the next federal election.

With the stroke of a pen that have increased the membership requirements from 500 to 1,500 members before a political party can apply for registration as a federal political party. This will mean a significant proportion of the 66 political parties that are currently registered by the Australian Electoral Commission will be deregistered as political parties and any new potential parties will find it almost impossible to register.



At that same time, they have given the political parties that remain registered the ability to veto any new application by a political party that uses any of the words that are currently used in the name of a registered political party – Labor, Liberal, Greens, Socialist, Democratic etc. – in the new parties' names.

These changes are all about destroying a growing opposition in the community to the politics as usual charade that occurs in Australia. Currently the parliamentary agenda is, to a significant degree, determined by that small section of society that owns the means of production, exchange, distribution and communication. Nothing else explains the fact that over a third of Australians live a hand to mouth existence and over 700,000 children live in poverty in a resource rich country with a population of only 25.8 million.

These changes have significant ramifications for parliamentary politics in this country. The lack of choice voters will be able to exercise will increase the disillusionment with parliamentary democracy and will lead to decreased participation in parliamentary politics in Australia. This is an extremely dangerous situation. When people are no longer convinced parliamentary politics will be able to deliver the reforms that are so needed in this country, they will turn to extra parliamentary methods to achieve their goals. The Party Registration Integrity Bill reinforces the growing opinion in Australia that parliamentary politics is nothing more than two minutes of illusory power.

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Thank you.



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