



Speech by

WARREN PITT

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LEGAL, CONSTITUTIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (10.23 a.m.): It is with pleasure that I rise to support the majority report of the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee into the prevention of electoral fraud. The referral of this matter on 20 August 2000 by the House was the appropriate response to a set of circumstances which has brought into question the integrity of the rolls in this State.

For the health of democracy as we know it, it is important to maintain, and if necessary restore, public faith in the electoral process. The submissions and the public hearings confirmed for me the fact that the electoral process in this State is fundamentally sound, notwithstanding obvious breaches both uncovered and potential. It is, however, incumbent on all of us in this place to face up to the challenge before us and to take, in due course, positive steps to establish procedures that will minimise as far as possible electoral fraud. I say "minimise" because there can never be any guarantee of absolute exclusion.

We should ask ourselves: what is the most effective deterrent for persons seeking to break the law? While strict penalties no doubt play an important role, I put it to the House that the fear of detection is our most potent weapon against electoral fraud. That is why I fully endorse the value of the recommendations within the majority report, which will have that very effect.

Continuous roll updating is now well advanced, but it will be enormously enhanced by the development of a State enrolment verification system. Because of the mobility of our population, tools such as data matching and data mining are invaluable in the maintenance of the integrity of the rolls. Negative comments have been made regarding these processes and the fear that they will produce some sort of Australia Card without the plastic. Let me say that I have always been in favour of the Australia Card. People who have nothing to hide have nothing to fear from being called upon to prove their identity at appropriate times. If at the point of enrolment and the point of voting adequate proof had been available through an identity card, then some of the issues subject to current investigation may have actually been averted.
