



# Joe Ruzzi

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This following are my views on various issues.

## ELECTIONS

1. Signage erected at a Voting Place should only identify the place where a person can cast their vote. The proliferation of party signage has, of late, become an eyesore and has prevented smaller parties & independents from erecting any signage. There has been some anecdotal evidence that signage of smaller parties & independents having been removed or de-faced. Furthermore, party signage should not be allowed within 500 meters of a voting place either.
2. Voting should be optional, not compulsory. Australia is one of a handful of democratic societies were voting is compulsory but what I fail to understand is that if you do not vote, you could be fined. This does not make sense as there's no accountability for those who do turn up but cast a "donkey" vote. Also, the current system has no mechanism in place to chase up eligible voters who are not registered to vote.
3. Technology has made some significant advancements particularly in the area of smart phones. Therefore, why can't Online Voting be a process that could be looked at for future elections? If an appropriately secured app/platform could be devised, we could see a reduction in (i) queues at voting places (ii) absentee/postal votes and (iii) the time it would take to count the votes cast.
4. Further to the above point, I also support the concept of extended voting hours but only for online voting. Attending a voting place can only occur between 8:00am and 6:00pm on Election Day. Why not open the online access from 12:01am to enable those who are unable to attend a voting place to cast their vote? Online voting would close at 6:00pm also.

## TAXATION

5. The payment of income tax has become a sore point over the years. It seems that there are more and more instances of people and businesses "not paying their fair share". Not surprising given that the more one earns, the higher tax percentage is to be paid, e.g. up to 45 cents in the dollar. The incentive then is to reduce your liability through the creation of a tax minimisation, avoidance, sheltering arrangement.

With the Income Tax Assessment Act weighing in at over 4,200 pages and probably the same amount (or more) in enabling Acts, Regulations, Rulings etc, is it any wonder why the above arrangements are popular. Couple this with Court decisions that can take years to resolve and we have a system that is complicated and convoluted.

I feel that to help unravel this mess is to ask "what should be taxed?" In my opinion, a flat rate revenue tax could be considered as a starting point. Put simply, whatever you earn in a financial year, you pay (say) 10%. If you are a person, you'd still be entitled to the \$18,200 tax threshold first. All companies, foreign entities, trusts and non-exempt persons/bodies would not be eligible for the tax free threshold.

When you read that some 600 companies earned \$400Bn and paid NO tax one has to ask why the cost of doing business in a politically stable, economically sound country like Australia is free.

The bottom line is that meaningful tax reform is required. We cannot continue to levy those who can least afford it whilst “rewarding” those who can avoid it. Please note – I’m NOT advocating “wealth distribution” (if you have worked hard to earn it, you should enjoy the fruits of your labour), what I’m in favour of is a system that is fair & equitable.

Furthermore, reform should not be limited at the Commonwealth level. State/Territory taxes, “levies” (e.g. fuel) and other forms of charges, fees etc need to be thrown into the mix.

6. I do not support an increase to the GST Rate. In fact, if tax reform did result in a system that is fair & equitable, I would support applying the GST across everything, including food, but not fines/penalties. If a low revenue tax (see point 5 above) was applied then the extra cost of the weekly shopping could be offset against revenue tax savings. Obviously, one would have to consider the impact of this on welfare recipients and the outcomes from modelling this approach.

#### **LAW & ORDER**

7. I do not and will not support the Death Penalty. In my opinion, if a person’s conviction results in a Life Sentence, then life it will be. I cannot rationalise a life sentence meaning a goal period of 10 years or so.
8. Any person who is convicted of a crime that attracts a non-life sentence may be eligible for Parole, subject to conditions being met, e.g. served two-thirds of his/her sentence, demonstrated remorse etc. However, if a person is paroled but commits a crime during the parole period, is subsequently convicted and the penalty for that crime is a custodial sentence, then that person should serve the parole period in prison first and then serve the subsequent sentence.
9. If a person is appointed a Judge, then s/he would also be required to serve as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly (Lower House) or President of the Legislative Council (Upper House). These 2 positions are required to be (and must be seen to be) independent from the business of either chamber. However, how can a person be independent if the appointment is made from the numbers that constitute the government of the day? Further, how can a Speaker truly represent his/her constituency whilst discharging his/her duties as an independent Speaker? Candidates for these 2 roles should be from the judiciary and not from the elected representatives.
10. Judiciary appointments should not be a “job for life”. All appointees should only be appointed for a fixed term and a contractual extension should only be allowed subject to a performance review.

#### **EDUCATION**

To be completed.

#### **HEALTH**

To be completed.

**AWARD/PENALTY RATES**

To be completed.