

DRAFT CABINET SUBMISSION
REFERENDUMS IN THE A.C.T.

The purpose of this submission is to obtain Cabinet approval to the holding of referendums in the A.C.T. on important socially contentious issues.

2. It has long been stated Party policy that the A.C.T. should be used as a "social laboratory" and I feel that what I propose is in accord with this concept.

3. I propose to hold referendums on topics such as introduction of poker machines, 24 hour liquor trading, self government, a government lottery and possible forms of municipal tax. By doing so I can gauge public opinion on these matters in addition to the opinions voiced by the A.C.T. Advisory Council.

4. Of the above two are of immediate concern, namely, poker machines and 24 hour liquor trading.

5. A draft Ordinance has been prepared for the introduction of poker machines, under strict controls, into A.C.T. clubs and approved by the A.C.T. Advisory Council but I feel that since this issue has aroused such local controversy the citizens of Canberra should have a say.

6. A draft Ordinance to completely alter A.C.T. liquor laws has also been prepared. It is far reaching and could be used as a model by the States and among other things provides for 24 hour liquor trading. This provision was inserted into the draft at the insistence of the A.C.T. Advisory Council. Again because of the possible social impact I wish to put this matter to the people.

7. I propose that these two referendums be held at the same time as the holding of the Senate elections.
8. The questions to be asked will be prepared in conjunction with the draftsmen at Attorney-General's Department.
9. So that a referendum can be held in the A.C.T. it is proposed to ask the Attorney-General's Department to draft a Referendums Ordinance to empower the Minister to hold referendums on social matters relating to the peace, order and good government of the A.C.T. The Minister is to be required to publish the for and against case or cases in a newspaper circulating in the Territory. The requirement to publish the cases will be subject to the receipt by the Minister of a petition or petitions presenting either case signed by 5% of eligible voters.
10. Discussions on these proposals have been held with the Chief Australian Electoral Officer who estimates the cost of the two initial referendums to be about \$25,000 and who advises that the Ordinance should be in operation by the middle of April so that he will be able to organise the referendums to be conducted in conjunction with the Senate elections.
11. I feel that what I propose will be a valuable exercise in community involvement - a community that lacks self government and lacks an adequate voice in national polls.
12. I recommend to Cabinet that it approve the holding of referendums in the A.C.T. on the topics mentioned and approve the drafting by Attorney-General's Department of a Referendums Ordinance.

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GORDON B. BRYANT