

Dr Leslie Cannold Resigns from The Wikileaks Party

For Immediate Release

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Today I am resigning from my role as the second Victorian Senate candidate for The Wikileaks Party. My understanding is that others will also resign today.

This statement reflects my own reasons for resigning. Because we have different roles in the organisation we all have slightly different reasons why we can no longer stay. However, the core of our concerns are essentially the same and so some of what is in this statement may also appear in others statements.

To keep being a candidate feels like I'm breaking faith with the Australian people, and those in the media who assist me to communicate with the public, many of whom I've had a long and respectful professional relationship with. This is because by being in this role I am implicitly making a statement that The Wikileaks Party is what it claims to be: a democratically run party that both believes in transparency and accountability, and operates in this way.

Over the last few weeks those of us resigning and some others have been struggling to make this true. Over the course of the vigorous debates that have taken place over preferences there have been consistent challenges to the rights of the National Council, the 11 person democratic governing body of The Wikileaks Party, to do it's job: to make democratic, transparent and accountable decisions.

Since June when I joined the campaign, I have been concerned that where disagreement exists with decisions Council makes, these have been white-anted and resisted, forcing Council to re-affirm these decisions and assert their right to make them. At one point, there was a direct challenge to the Council's democratic right to decide and implement decisions about preference and instead proposed that it become a rubber stamp. This was rejected by Council.

The failure in WA and NSW for the National Council's instructions for the Group Voting Tickets to be implemented exposed problems with the capacity of the party to sustain its democratic processes. I joined with many of those who are resigning today and others to get an immediate and independent review of this process, something that was opposed by some National Council members, candidates and staff.

Despite this resistance, and after days of battle, we prevailed. This morning a review and a commitment to make the results transparent was announced.

This victory came at a cost. Those who fought for the review felt tired and disillusioned. We met this morning and after hours of soul-searching decided that we would battle on. How else could we ensure the review had proper terms of reference and that the results were produced expeditiously and released to the public?

But then, the bombshell. A member of the party rang two key volunteers in succession and requested that they join with him in going outside the party's formal structures. In these phone calls, the Council was denigrated and a proposal made to each volunteer in succession that they join with select candidates and Council members in taking direction from other than the National Council. The consequence of the proposal was that the National Council and two of the campaign coordinators - also National Council members who have been actively involved in pushing for the preference review - would be bypassed.

An additional call was made to a campaign staffer. In direct contrast to the public statement The Wikileaks Party put out this morning in which we promised the public that we would have an immediate independent review of the preference outcomes, this person said that the review would be delayed until after the election and that it wouldn't be done independently. The caller would run it.

This is the final straw. As long as I believed there was a chance that democracy, transparency and accountability could prevail in the party I was willing to stay on and fight for it. But where a party member makes a bid to subvert the party's own processes, asking others to join in a secret, alternative power centre that subverts the properly constituted one, nothing makes sense anymore. This is an unacceptable mode of operation for any organization but even more so for an organization explicitly committed to democracy, transparency and accountability.

Even if I stop campaigning this minute, remaining in my role implicitly invites voters to trust The Wikileaks Party. By staying in this role I am implicitly vouching for the worthiness of this party to receive the votes of the Australian people. I can no longer do this because I no longer believe it is true, and so I must resign.

There are some wonderful people in this organisation. People who joined it and have put their heart and soul into making it into what they believed, and I believed, it could be. I have more respect for those people than I can possibly express.

Some are leaving today. Some are considering their position. I have respect for any decision they make - we each have to do what we must to keep faith with ourselves and those who trust us.