

Tuesday, October 14, 2008
The Letters Editor
Mr S Bevilacqua
The Mercury
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Dear Sir,

The Tasmanian Liberal Party has called for nominations from those who wish to represent the party at the next Federal Senate Election. Senator Abetz, currently a Liberal member of the Senate has declined to state publicly, despite my personal requests and letters to the Clerk and President of the Senate, when he became a citizen of Australia and secondly the date when he formally renounced his dual citizenship and his allegiance to the Federal Republic of Germany. As a result of a refusal to table these documents I am taking the matter to the High Court of Australia.

The voting members of the Liberal Party preselection committee may ask why is this of interest to them? The qualifications for persons wishing to be nominated for election to Federal Parliament are set out in the Commonwealth Electoral Act and the Australian Constitution. In addition, Senator Abetz, if preselected, will have to be nominated by fifty electors or the Registered Officer of the Registered Political Party which has endorsed the candidate. No organisation should knowingly nominate a person who has not proved they are eligible to stand for the position prior to preselection.

Following preselection the Australian Electoral Commission will call for nominations and the Liberal party will nominate its chosen candidates, state their position on the ballot paper, and declare that their candidates are qualified.

It should be noted that the AEC is not responsible for determining if a candidate is qualified to stand, the candidate states that they are qualified. It is essential therefore as a matter of natural justice that those who are to be considered comply with the requirements for nomination. It is important that those taking part in the preselection are fully conversant with these obligations, that when selecting the candidates they can prove they are qualified to nominate and if successful take their seat.

There is no evidence on the public record that Senator Abetz has renounced his dual citizenship and the German authorities have declined to say on grounds of privacy. The only surviving records of Abetz four previous nominations are two nomination forms, which have different dates as to when he became a citizen of Australia, these are signed in his own hand and therefore, one at least must be incorrect.

It is not enough for the Liberal Party to say we preselected him before, therefore we do not have to ask. Political parties are funded from the public purse, transparency and ethical behaviour start with the Party, not with its potential candidates!

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