

Vigorous Democracy

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*Outline of oral presentation**

Having been elected to the Tasmanian House of Assembly as an independent, then progressing to the development of a party and then party status under both minority and majority governments, it is clear that the current interpretation of the Westminster System as a two party system or as a forum for bi-partisanship is outdated and un-democratic.

Serving now as a Senator on a federal cross bench comprising the Green party and two independents it is even more apparent that Australian politics is moving towards a more European multi-party modus operandi — in the federal Senate at least. The key to a more robust representative democracy is the adoption of a proportional representation model. New possibilities for multi-party government need to be explored by opening up the cabinet system to others, not just Government members.

Furthermore, parliamentarians need to guard against the executive taking more and more power and devolving it to Government apparatchiks and an increasingly partisan public service.

* There was no written paper as the Senator talks from her notes. In the interests of having as complete a record of the Conference as possible I have included her outline from which she spoke.