



Women's Equality Party Conference

26 November 2022

Title: **Chief Returning Officer**

Proposed by: **The WE Steering Committee**

Proposer: **Annie Rickard, SC Chair**

Type of motion: **Business motion**

(**Bold** text is new.)

Motion text:

1 The WE Party Conference:

- 2 • notes that following the formalisation of caucuses, which elect representatives to the Steering
3 Committee (SC), the number of SC elections has increased, and their timings will be varied;
4 • acknowledges that elections to the SC, the party's governing decision-making body between
5 conferences, have previously always been and should continue to be overseen by a returning
6 officer to ensure confidence in the election processes; and
7 • resolves to introduce the role of Chief Returning Officer for the Women's Equality Party to
8 oversee internal elections.

9 Conference resolves to add a new article to the constitution:

10 '7.3.3 Chief Returning Officer

11 The Steering Committee shall appoint a Chief Returning Officer who will be responsible for
12 overseeing internal elections and ensuring their fairness, openness and integrity. The Chief
13 Returning Officer:

- 14 (i) shall be a member or affiliate member of the party;
15 (ii) will act as the returning officer for elections to the Steering and Policy Committees, for the party
16 leader and for internal candidate elections;
17 (iii) may not be a candidate in any of the elections they oversee, nor support any candidate publicly;
18 (iv) may delegate their role to another member or affiliate member, providing training and support to
19 them to oversee a specific election, and their delegate must also comply with article 7.3.3(iii);
20 (v) will provide advice, support and dispute resolution for other internal selection processes,
21 including branch officer and election candidate selections.'
-

22 Conference resolves to make the following Constitutional **additions**:

23 7.1.3 ...leadership election **and will be overseen by the Chief Returning Officer**

24 7.5.12(iv) (and deputies), **overseen by the Chief Returning Officer**

25 7.5.12(v) with Article 4.11), **overseen by the Chief Returning Officer**,

Motion rationale:

26 At the last conference a motion was passed to formalise caucuses within the party including the
27 addition of caucus representatives to the Steering Committee (SC). There are now a greater number
28 of elections to the SC and they no longer mainly take place at conference. For previous elections the
29 SC has appointed a returning officer to oversee elections to the SC, Policy Committee, for the party
30 leader and for candidate elections.

31 The change for SC elections has provided impetus to formalise the role within the party's constitution,
32 including covering all relevant internal elections (not just the SC). This is an opportunity to invest in
33 and develop our people, and will ensure members can continue to feel confident in the fair running
34 and results of our internal elections.

35 Benefits of introducing a Chief Returning Officer (CRO) for the party include:

- 36 • A returning officer who takes an independent position and oversees the running of an election is
37 vital to holding fair, open elections that members can feel confident in. Whilst these elections
38 have always been run by a returning officer, the role has never been formalised in the constitution
39 before.
- 40 • Party democracy is incredibly important and introducing a CRO role will make sure fair elections
41 always have a champion in the party who has this as a focus.
- 42 • Previously SC elections were mainly held at conferences; caucus SC elections are more flexible
43 and varied in timing, and new caucuses may form at unspecified times. Introducing this role will
44 make the process of running these elections more efficient as a returning officer to run or support
45 the running of the elections will already be in place. This is also advantageous for future internal
46 elections to other positions.

47 Allowing the CRO to delegate their role offers the following advantages:

- 48 • Delegating the role allows the party to develop talent in the wider movement and support and
49 train members to take on this vital responsibility for our elections. This will help to avoid
50 consolidating the skills of this role into one person, makes space for a diverse group of members
51 to be returning officers and will create a pipeline for future appointments.
- 52 • Caucuses formed within the party as self-organised groups, and organise their own elections for
53 their SC representatives. This motion does not seek to restrict that, but to ensure we meet good
54 standards of fair elections by introducing a returning officer. Allowing the CRO to delegate means
55 caucuses can continue to have a returning officer from within their caucus; one who is supported
56 by the CRO to deliver a fair election.
-

57 Formalising the returning officer role will enshrine fair and open elections in the party's constitution
58 for the future.
