



Media Release

REFERENDUM COULD LOCK IN MMP FOREVER

The government's referendum process on the voting system risks entrenching MMP forever, according to the anti-MMP lobby, **Put MMP to the Vote**.

Lobby co-leaders Graeme Hunt and Peter Shirtcliffe say the process is drawn out, convoluted and far short of the robust electoral referendum promised by National in the run-up to the 2008 general election.

"If people vote to change the voting system in 2011, the second, binding referendum should be held within 12 months to give Parliament chance to introduce the new voting system in time for the 2014 general election," Graeme Hunt said.

"The process chosen by the government, as it stands, could frustrate the will of the people to give MMP the coup de grace it rightly deserves.

"And as for the government's promised review of MMP, whatever happens in the referendum, don't hold your breath. The 2002 parliamentary select committee review was a farce of the first order. The review promised by Justice Minister Simon Power would be no different."

Peter Shirtcliffe said the referendum process was muddled and designed more as a "tick-the-box" exercise by a government which for now was in love with MMP rather than a process to give New Zealanders the best electoral system.

"There is a real opportunity not only to throw MMP out but to deliver a Parliament of far fewer MPs than we have now. First past the post, preferential voting and the supplementary member systems can all run with 100 MPs. MMP cannot.

"The government should be looking at reducing the size of the House of Representatives — in other words, giving more with less."

Shirtcliffe suggested that people should be allowed to vote preferentially on the alternatives to MMP to ensure that there was a strongly favoured alternative attracting an absolute majority of support.

Hunt and Shirtcliffe said turnouts at MMP elections had been considerably lower than in first-past-the-post elections, reflecting widespread public disdain for MMP.

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