

Please find enclosed my submission to the inquiry into the last federal election.  
Pat Coleman

Committee Secretariat  
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters  
Inquiry into and report on all aspects of the conduct of the 2013 Federal Election  
and matters related thereto.  
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To The Committee

I refer to the committees terms of reference in relation to “matters related thereto” .

It is clear from the controversy (at the very least) surrounding the senate voting system at this election that it has come as a shock to many just how it works. Similarly many do not understand the compulsory preferential system for the House of Representatives and what it means.

As it stands voters are denied a free choice and a free vote because they themselves can't say no to people or parties they don't like by exhausting their votes/preferences.

The result of this is that the major parties who have dominated Australia in one form or another since federation have an unfair advantage. In that no matter how much we disagree with them we are forced to give our personal preferences to them for the reps and below the line in the senate , and allow parties to decide it for us above the line in the senate or our votes will be informal.

As evidence of it being a forced as opposed to a free vote , please consider the words of the deputy leader of the opposition Anthony Albanese prior to the election and quoted in the Australian newspaper (The Australian 23-4 2013 p 18)

“That's why compulsory preferential (voting) is such a winner .It just stops these pricks from grand-standing the way they love to do by just saying ‘vote one’ . They have to make a choice, which is something they hate to do”

That means that if we want the environment and human rights protected from these parties and the people they represent and take donations from, for instance , we then have to suffer the indignity of allowing our votes to go to them in the end or our first preferences wont be counted.

The country has been brought to the point it is at because of the stupidity of its electoral system and the lack of a national positive bill of rights enforceable by the people which would stymie the ability of people or parties to use the abrogation of such rights as an election platform.

I want you all to look at this issue from my perspective. In 2006 I won a United Nations Human Rights Committee decision on freedom of expression under article 19 of the ICCPR <http://cynicismcentral.pvhosting.net/pat-hrc2.pdf> at pp 5-20 and 59-66. I had been convicted, fined, gaoled and bankrupted for reading out the universal declaration, criticising the then Townsville Mayor Tony Mooney's suppression of free speech and the then Howard governments attitude towards native title-WITHOUT A PERMIT.

Australia had signed up to the 1st optional protocol, but both the Howard and subsequent Rudd governments refused to uphold it. I followed the rules. The state didn't hold up its end of the bargain. And after all this they say that we are an example to the world cos we change governments without violence, yet we can't exhaust our votes. This is like being forced to go to

church and worship a god you don't believe in because the representatives of the churches from either side always get forced preferences .

I support, and ask all parliamentarians to support;

(a) All moves to bring about optional above and below the line voting in senate elections;  
and

(b) A full inquiry into a fairer electoral system such as proportional representation for the house of representatives

But in the meantime I want optional preferential voting for the House of Representatives so I may say no to people I neither like nor support.

Pat Coleman