

Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters Inquiry into the provisions of the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment Bill 2016

It is a shame that the Government did not commission a white paper on electoral reform chaired by a mathematician or a statistician.

Here are some basic errors and misconceptions about Senate voting.

Six Senators to be elected, therefore a minimum of six preferences are needed to ensure the vote is fully effective.

Wrong.

- a. Any mathematician will know that votes for a winning party will rarely travel beyond the third preference.
- b. Votes for minor parties that failed to reach a quota but are eventually elected anyway never move. A single [1] is all that is required.
- b. Any votes for unsuccessful micro parties would be lucky to find a viable candidate if only six preferences were allocated.

Six preferences are useless in every instance.

Voters must vote for six candidates in a half senate election but twelve in a double dissolution.

This is junk mathematics.

If a voter is twice as likely to find a winning candidate in a double dissolution then surely that voter only needs to vote for half as many candidates. Twice as easy to find a candidate half as many preferences needed.

Voters must give preferences so that the votes given to candidates with over a quota will not exhaust.

Wrong

This concern has been solved by rules in place for both the ACT Legislative Assembly and the NSW Legislative Council. Fewer votes transfer but each vote at a slightly higher transfer value. Every single [1] remains with the original candidate at full value. No votes are informal or exhaust.

Ask Senators Seselja and Gallagher why none of the votes given to them at the last ACT Legislative Assembly, even though these votes included single [1]s, were neither informal nor did they exhaust.

If the Government allows voters just to vote a single [1] then too many voters will take this option

Wrong

A single [1] is formal in ACT Legislative Assembly election but few voters only vote with a single [1]

Senator Zed Seselja for the five-member electorate of Brindabella received 18,566 votes (1.8 quotas) and only 123 of these votes were single [1]s

Senator Katy Gallagher for the seven-member electorate of Molonglo received 23,996 votes (2.1 quotas) and only 124 votes were single [1]s.

Assuming that if too many votes fail to give preferences that the transfer value will rise above 1 is statistical nonsense. Trying to prevent this causes much more harm than this theoretical problem.

Senate Reform is easy.

Treat the voter with respect and count as many of their votes as possible.

The ACT Legislative Assembly model should be followed. No group voting tickets; no above the line voting; candidates listed in party groups; advise voters how many are to be elected and accept any vote with a single [1] as a formal vote.

Informal voting will be down and the exhausted rate will be down. Check past ACT Legislative Assembly elections for proof.

Ask why there is such contempt for the Senate voting system and very little for the ACT Legislative Assembly model.

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