

From: M&G Linden
Sent: Wednesday, 19 February 2014 9:41 AM
To: Committee, EM (REPS)
Subject: Sub059 Gilbert Linden



Dear Committee members,

When I voted for the Federal election last September here in Brisbane, I found the Senate voting form an abuse of the democratic system of government of which we should be justly proud. I voted above the line '1' because I could not be sure that if I attempted to number all the squares my vote would have most likely have been informal. The electoral commission has reported that the informal vote in the Senate is now lower than the House of Representatives because of the above the line voting option.

I was born in the 1930's and up till the 1949 election, the Senate more or less reflected the majority in the lower house held by the government of the day. Cynics would say that the Chifley government introduced proportional voting prior to the 1949 election to frustrate the Menzies government post-1949. The Senate prior to 1949 was described as the 'House of Sleep'! While we may have had constitutional bi-cameral government, the mode of electing the Senate prior to 1949 did not ensure the Senate was a House of Review, and it became a rubber stamp for the government. The notion of the Senate being a states house is no longer tenable. It is now a House of 'Politics'. Proportional voting has saved the Senate from being irrelevant. The revelation after the election last September of 'gaming' by a multitude of small parties fills me with alarm because it effectively 'disenfranchises' the voters in the preference deal for parties above the line. I do not want to be faced with a metre wide voting form again. What are the solutions so that minor parties are not excluded from the governmental process?

The Parliament could introduce a base primary vote for a candidate to be elected eg in Germany the primary vote must be 5%. I think this might be too high..2.5% might be a starter. The idea that someone with a few hundred primary votes can be elected because of preference deals is unacceptable in a real democracy.

The Parliament could introduce an optional preference system for above and below the line to restore the power of preferences to the voter. I prefer to vote for people rather than parties. If eg a voter had to fill in all the squares above the line it would result in a rise in the informal vote. The committee should also consider optional preference voting for the Lower House as a means to lower the informal vote.

In conclusion, I would hope the committee would not revert back to the voting system prior to 1949. The Senate must maintain its role as a brake on executive government. I have advocated for many years for the return of an Upper House to Queensland because both Labor and the Coalition have been guilty of ramming through ill-considered legislation in my lifetime. It is my view that this led to the Fitzgerald Royal Commission in Queensland...Sincerely...Gilbert J.

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