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Tony,

As I won't be able to attend the meeting in Sydney on the 12th of March I like to take the liberty to give you some dot points of my "coalface" experience during the last federal election.

I was a scrutineer for the second count of the senate in a large building at Southern Cross Drive in Sydney.

- The initial "induction" of the scrutineer was well conducted: No entrance into the counting area without the appropriate induction & relevant paperwork, a brief explanation to what was and what wasn't allowed was given and a book was supplied with additional information for reference.
- It was a large hall with voting papers everywhere and I presume some system to it all. It

appeared that they knew what they were doing in regards to moving counted and not yet counted boxes around.

- The main issue of the day was the validation or disputed validity of a completed ballot paper. Personally I would have “disputed” about 30 ballot papers as to their validity or otherwise. The marking of the boxes is often the issue. I would have “won” about 75% of my viewed “disputes” and often had to “argue” it strictly to ensure the vote was placed as I argued. I was surprised at the number of these as I was extrapolating this into numbers with other scrutineers on the day and other days and other second counts. It could be argued that a lot of these ballot papers should not have been passed at the first count (poor training?).

- The whole system is cumbersome, fraud with danger, time consuming, prone for errors and I suspect very expensive. If you are a voter on whatever side of the political field it is easy to sometimes “by accident” put a ballot paper on the “wrong” pile. Remember it is a long, tedious and boring day.

- There has to be a way these days to automate, computerise this system. We must try to take most, if not all, the human involvement with ballot papers and counting & organising out of the process. Money will be saved through this and can be spend on the “electronic voting system” & the education of the voters and other experts involved.

- Some years ago I was a “deputy” at an voting point and “discovered” that whole families/groups have “owned” a particular booth for years (including State & Feral elections). That can’t be a “good” thing, if you get my point. The money is not huge but a nice earner for a weekend for a whole group.

That’s all for the moment. Hope you get a good turnout.

Cheers  
Jerry Bour