



New Chair elected, Inquiry into Senate voting reform referred

The Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters today elected Mr David Coleman as Chair. Mr Coleman, the Member for Banks, was elected unopposed. The Committee congratulates Mr Coleman on his appointment.

The House of Representatives today referred the provisions of the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment Act 2016 to the Committee for inquiry and report by 2 March 2016. The Bill amends the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* to improve the Senate voting system. It proposes to:

- reduce the complexity of the Senate voting system, by providing for partial optional preferential voting above the line, including the introduction of advice on the Senate ballot paper that voters number, in order of preference, at least six squares;
- provide appropriate vote savings provisions to capture voter intent and reduce the risk of increased vote informality, including by improving vote savings provisions for below the line voting;
- improve transparency around the allocation of preferences in a Senate election, by abolishing group and individual voting tickets, noting that this does not change other provisions relating to candidates nominating to be grouped on the Senate ballot paper;
- introduce a restriction that there be a unique registered officer and deputy registered officer for a federally registered party; and
- reduce the confusion that may arise with political parties with similar names, by allowing party logos to be printed on ballot papers for both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

The Committee encourages all those interested in this inquiry to read the Committee's unanimous May 2014 report into Senate voting reform:

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Electoral_Matters/2013_General_Election/Interim_Report

The Committee welcomes input from individuals and organisations who have knowledge of electoral and Senate voting matters. Submissions can be made to em@aph.gov.au.

Media inquiries: contact Sinclair Prowse on 6277 4188 (*Office of David Coleman MP*).

For information on the inquiry: contact the Secretariat on (02) 6277 4579, email em@aph.gov.au or visit the Committee website at <http://www.aph.gov.au/em>