

Inquiry into the conduct of the 2013 Federal Election

Senate voting practices

Bob Day

This submission makes comments on two matters:

1. Senate voting practices
2. Polling places

1. Senate voting practices.

The 2013 federal election saw the election of six new cross-bench senators, five of whom were from parties hitherto not represented in the federal parliament. The six new senators have been variously described in the media as a *“flotsam and jetsam, mishmash, grab bag, liquorice allsorts, barnyard, motley crew of Star Wars aliens”*.

Following the election, a virtual frenzy of indignation erupted with media commentators, academics and political incumbents calling for urgent action to change the Electoral Act to ensure this outrageous result *‘never happens again.’* These calls were made without any evidence that any of the newly elected senators would not, or could not, competently perform the roles for which they had been elected.

The special criticism meted out to Senator-elect for Victoria Rikki Muir representing the Australian Motoring Enthusiast Party (AMEP) was particularly obnoxious. Considering the policies of AMEP – road safety, driver education, vehicle maintenance, better roads, road rule harmony and off-road protocols, one would have thought a parliamentary representative focusing on matters that are of such vital importance to Australians, would be a good thing. Apparently not.

It may also prove to be the case that this group of new senators might actually represent their individual States - as envisaged by the Constitution, rather than political parties.

Whilst it is obvious from comments by political incumbents that the election of these minor party senators is an affront to their own sense of entitlement, the Australian people should be the judges, not political incumbents who see their turf being invaded by these impertinent interlopers.

In short, the newly-elected senators should be afforded the courtesy and respect, as befitting any elected representative, to demonstrate their ability or otherwise in the federal parliament.

Who knows, the Senate may actually be enhanced by their presence.

I submit that no changes to the Electoral Act be made until a demonstrable case, citing clear evidence, has been made to justify any such changes.

2. Polling Places.

Given the mobility of the voting public, the option of postal voting and three weeks of pre-polling, there is no justification for the continuation of polling places in virtually every town and suburb in Australia.

Polling places are expensive to operate.

Significant savings could be made if, for example, any polling place having less than 2,000 voters was eliminated. Polling places of 3,000+ voters have no trouble handling that number on polling day.

I would submit that the number of polling places be drastically reduced.

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