

## SUBMISSION TO JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL REFORM

### Compulsion

In Australia we have a compulsory roll call at an election, not compulsory voting as the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) keeps calling it. Many people proclaim they are opposed to compulsory voting and it is uncertain whether they are opposed to the roll call, or opposed to the (erroneous) notion that they are being forced to vote. Once your name is crossed off, you can do what you like with the ballot paper.

The danger of not having a roll call is that highly organised groups, particularly when concentrated in an electorate, will all turn up and foist their candidate on to an unsuspecting electorate.

### Informals

Many informals probably arise out of people turned off the political process and the major parties, so don't bother to vote properly. You can express dissatisfaction by deliberately spoiling, but most people don't do anything as positive as that.

How about something completely different?

On each ballot paper the last spot should be reserved for None of the Above with a box which can be marked (that marking ignored if paper is otherwise correct).

This would be used to express general dissatisfaction. It delivers a strong message very clearly, either the parties or their candidates are a turnoff. It would be particularly useful for party faithful who wish to protest against the candidate foisted on them, but cannot bear to vote for the other major party.

In the absence of an ability to directly vote informally it is instructive to look at the informals where there might have been some dissatisfaction with the candidates in the federal election of 2004.

In NSW the average informal rose from 5.4% in 2001 to 6.1% in 2004. There was no redistribution to confuse the issue and there were three seats, one Coalition, two ALP, where candidates were controversial. These were:

- Parramatta, where Ross Cameron, who proclaimed Christian virtues, but confessed to adultery, had a rise in informals from 6.2% to 8.5%.
- Kingsford Smith, where Peter Garrett was parachuted in over local candidates, had a rise in informals from 6.1% to 8.1%.
- Greenway, where Ed Husic, a Muslim, stood against Louise Markus, a Hillsong Christian, had a rise in informals from 5% to 11.8% (note that the background of both candidates excited comment).

None of the Above would have scored highly in those electorates.

Senate

If you have the patience then you should number all boxes, but this is tedious and confusing; so easy to mix up the numbers. The AEC offers you the choice to vote 'above the line', giving a party 1 and letting the party bosses allocate unused transfers as they see fit, usually on the basis of a preference deal. Most voters have no idea where the transfers finish up.

The best solution is to allow the voter to list all the parties above the line on the ballot paper, so they choose where their preferences go. Ungrouped could be treated as a party and their votes could be allocated equally to all the candidates in that category.

Peter Wilkinson,

Editor,

The Independent Australian.

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