



**STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
Legislation Committee**

**Report on the inquiry into the
Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Above the Line Voting) Bill 2013**

On 14 November 2013, the Senate, on the recommendation of the Selection of Bills Committee, referred the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Above the Line Voting) Bill 2013 (Bill) to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee (committee) for inquiry and report by the first sitting Wednesday in March 2014.

The Bill is a private senator's bill introduced into the Senate by Senator Nick Xenophon on 13 November 2013.¹ The Bill provides for the amendment of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* to reform the current system for electing Senators to the Australian Parliament by introducing an optional preferential system above and below the line. According to the Explanatory Memorandum the aim of the Bill is to 'make it easier for voters to determine their own preferences, rather than through the current system of group and independent voting tickets, and to increase transparency in the voting process'.²

Following consultation with Senator Xenophon, the committee has concluded that issues raised by the Bill would be best considered by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters. The role of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters is to inquire into and report on such matters relating to electoral laws and practices and their administration as may be referred to it by either House of the Parliament or a Minister. In addition, it has also been the practice of the committee to examine the conduct of each federal election and related matters since 1983. The committee resolved to make the following recommendations to the Senate.

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the Senate refer the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Above the Line Voting) Bill 2013 to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters for inquiry and report.

In addition, the committee considers that it would be useful for the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters to have the power to consider and use any evidence received by the committee.

1 *Journals of the Senate*, 13 November 2013, No. 2, p. 101.

2 Explanatory Memorandum, p. 2.

Recommendation 2

The committee recommends that in conducting any inquiry, the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters have the power to consider and use any evidence submitted to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee in relation to the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Above the Line Voting) Bill 2013.

**Senator Cory Bernardi
Chair**