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To: Committee, EM (REPS)  
Subject: Sub054 Peter Abetz



To Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters

I am the Member for Southern River in the Western Australian State Parliament .

During my political career, I have met a large number of constituents who are ignorant of our preferential voting system, or at best, only understand it in part.

The major stumbling block does not lie with the preferential voting for the Lower Houses of Parliament (State Assemblies or House of Representatives) but rather with the voting tickets for the Upper Houses of Parliament (State Legislative Councils or Senate)

The average voter is usually unaware that registered voting tickets can be examined on line prior to each election to ascertain how the first party of their choice allocates its preferences. Furthermore, the few voters who are aware that they can scrutinise the contents of registered voting tickets online usually do not do so because they find them too difficult to follow. This is more particularly the case nowadays because of the ever increasing abundance of parties and groups contesting our State and Federal elections.

At the same time, voters are reluctant to vote below-the- line because of the large number of candidates involved and the fear of making a mistake.

Consequently, voters largely rely on the voting tickets of their first party of choice even though they do not really understand them.

The problem could easily be resolved with the introduction of preferential voting above- the- line.

Under this proposal, voters would numerically indicate their preference for the group or party of their choice above- the- line.

Two approaches could be considered:

1. All boxes would need to be numbered in exactly the same fashion as voters vote for candidates to the House of Representatives.

OR

2. A minimum of 3 boxes need to be numbered, creating the possibility that the vote becomes "exhausted"

The preferences would then flow to the parties in the order chosen by the voter and not by the parties themselves.

It would be a much more democratic way of voting and would ensure that the outcome reflects more accurately the wishes of the voters.

At the same time, voters who would like to vote for independent or ungrouped candidates could still do this by voting below- the- line in a numerical sequence indicative of their choice.

Respectfully submitted

Peter Abetz  
Member for Southern River