

## Changes to Senate Electoral voting system in Australia

Suggest the following:

- Allocate votes normally while candidates are being elected with full quotas. That is, allow parties to cascade votes within the party so candidates with very small primary percentage can be recognised for voters intentions along party lines.

For calculation purposes call this the candidates net primary vote.

- Once this occurs, calculate one third of a quota.

If any candidates receives more than a third of a quota in their net primary vote (basically voter intention to vote for that party or candidate then they receive and control preferences as normal. The exception to this is where this eliminates all candidates from receiving a quota in which case the elimination will be for candidates with less than a sixth of a quota, and a twelfth of a quota and so on until a result is obtained.

If they have less than a third (sixth, etc) of a quota with their net primary vote then they can only receive preferences up to three (six, etc) times their net primary vote, which is then a ceiling to their overall vote.

- These changes should be understood by the electorate but have no effect on what they ordinarily do. That is voters would continue to vote as currently – it is only the counting process which changes. This is a great advantage over proposals to change to optional preferential voting, for example.

It would appear that the current system for House of Representatives voting does not contain the same issues as Senate voting so should be retained.

This proposed system will have the following effects:

- Candidates can only be elected if they receive more than one third of one seventh (assuming six senators) of the net primary vote (that is about 4.76%). This does not seem unreasonable given the nature of the position of Australian Senator on the entire nation's decisions.
- Some may criticise this as meaning that it is hard to build new alternate candidates and establish new parties beyond the traditional parties and this may be true under this new system. The current system allows unknown candidates with potentially unknown policies to gain office of national significance which is a poor outcome. Basically this is a debate between allowing new unknown persons to be elected to national political prominence (which is healthy and to be encouraged) against ensuring that the new candidates attain a level of support that is not unreasonable. This may push candidates to be wealthy and have wealthy backers to ensure media coverage and advertising is adequate to gain this minimum level. To counter this and allow less wealthy candidates to have a voice and possible success against established parties the electoral commission should facilitate more information publishing about candidates and their policies. As the world continues to evolve technologically the access to information should allow minor parties and candidates to have their place in our democratic society.
- The mere act of running even if unsuccessful is a healthy process for democracy and society but only if the policies of the candidates are known and debated by the candidates and community. Having more community debates and information published will protect and enhance this part of the voting process.
- Smaller parties or candidates which receive less than the minimum primary vote may be set up or "harvested" by larger parties to increase their vote. This may be true (as it may be for lower order candidates on parties current tickets) but the clear communication of where their preferences go allows voters to make an informed choice about whether that is their intention.
- Continue with reform of candidate registration procedures so that voters are not swamped with unmanageable ballot papers. The reform above is part of this process as it is unlikely that they will be elected via complex preference swap deals.
- Continue to pursue electronic voting. It is the future.