

Electoral Reform Australia

Electoral Reform Australia is the New South Wales Branch of the Proportional Representation Society of Australia

18 March 2013

Committee Secretary
Legislation Committee
Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration
The Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Re: Inquiry into Citizen Initiated Referendum Bill 2013

Electoral Reform Australia is totally opposed to any form of Citizen Initiated Referendums (CIRs).

We believe that CIRs are contrary to the principle of elected representative government. Australian citizens are given the right – indeed, the obligation – to vote for the representatives of their choice. Those representatives then make decisions on behalf of the electors. The results of elections are ‘the popular expression of the people’s will’. Through the election process, the people give their chosen representatives the authority to make decisions and to act on their behalf and in the best interests of the nation.

Electoral Reform Australia believes that the best way to strengthen Australian democracy is not through the use of CIRs but by instituting electoral reform to give voters real power in electing their representatives.

This can be best achieved having the whole Parliament – the House of Representatives and the Senate – elected by proportional representation and, specifically, by the Single Transferable Vote.

A Parliament elected by this method would have in its ranks all the major elements of a pluralist society, thus ensuring that all important items of public policy can be debated and, if thought beneficial, passed into law.

In Australia it has long been recognised that referendums have little chance of being passed unless the matter under consideration has bipartisan support. By their very nature, the need to go via an extra-parliamentary route, CIRs will not have this bipartisan support.

CIRs give a platform to racists, bigots, populists and shock jock radio announcers and the end result is disruption, confusion, angst and expense. Their main aim is not to pass legislation but to disrupt and de-stabilise legitimately elected governments.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission in reference to this Bill.

Yours sincerely,

Susan Gregory
President
Electoral Reform Australia