

Dear Christine

Please thank the Committee for its invitation to make a submission, but the timeline is too short for me to examine the material, consult and then respond fully.

I note that your website says that “The Electoral and Referendum Amendment (How-to-Vote Cards and Other Measures) Bill 2010 proposes to regulate the authorisation of how-to-vote cards to make it clear who will benefit from the preference flow suggested on the how-to-vote card; and prohibits a person from causing to be printed, published or distributed including by 'radio, television, internet or telephone' anything that may mislead or deceive (sic) an elector (sic) in relation to how to cast a vote.” I have also read the Minister’s second reading speech.

On the face of these statements, these appear desirable objectives, although as you will recognise, they do add to the regulatory burden somewhat.

Two passing remarks:

If Australia is to continue with HTVs, standardisation is an essential efficiency measure. The election cycle encompasses nine governments, and I have complained/campaigned many times for how-to-vote regulations to be standardised across all Australian governments; (naturally bearing in mind that HTVs are irrelevant where the Robson rotation system applies). The Committee should make a recommendation to ‘cover off’ this standardisation point.

Secondly, the bill should be amended to require HTVs to be registered with the AEC. It is a relatively simple measure for them to scan these and place them on their website, so allowing postal voters and others who use the internet access to HTV guidance. I have said elsewhere [SUBMISSION In response to the Australian Government’s September 2009 Electoral Reform Green Paper STRENGTHENING AUSTRALIA’S DEMOCRACY Andrew Murray November 2009]: “The internet is insufficiently used as an official aid to elections and to voter information. COAG should agree standard items on official electoral commission websites. Among those that might be considered is for all candidates to be offered the facility of a current photograph and (say) 250 word accompaniment; and, all how-to-vote cards must be placed on the website.”

My regards to the Committee.

Andrew Murray