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To: The Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters

I note that recent problems regarding the election of new members to the Australian Senate has prompted the Prime Minister to ask your Committee to review the situation and come up with recommendations.

Here are a few basic ideas that may help in your deliberations:

1. All Senate elections could be conducted using Approval Voting. Thus, with six to be elected from (say) a list of 25, each voter may indicate YES for any number from zero to 25 and NO for the remainder. In each State, the six candidates with the highest number of Yes votes are elected. This will avert the current situation where candidates are elected with 0.22% of the primary vote. Note that the introduction of this type of voting means that there will no longer be the opportunity for preference deals of any kind.

2. The ballot papers could have YES in a column ahead of the candidate's name and NO in a column after the name. For example,

YES	Smith, John (Pink Party)	NO
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This will make it easier to count the YES votes, but electronic voting will eventually help when it comes in. For electronic voting all candidates will have NO next to their name and this can be changed to YES by the voter. This reduces the effort required by the voter to mark against every candidate.

3. There are a number of web sites and academic papers on Approval Voting. The United Nations uses it to elect the Secretary-General. There is no perceivable problem in using it to elect multiple numbers of candidates.

4. It is the FAIREST system to use.

Yours faithfully,  
Neville de Mestre