
Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters

I would submit that the recent election demonstrated that the Electoral Act is in need of reform. While it is a democratic right for any citizen to stand for public office, it is also undemocratic for ballot papers to be so large as to be confusing and delay people at polling booths. A prime example of this was the recent Senate ticket and the House of Representatives ticket at my own electorate of Deakin, in which twelve candidates stood. It has been suggested to me that twelve candidates should not be the cause of unnecessary delays. I would have probably agreed had I not been faced with the reality of the situation. To discourage the nomination of fringe candidates with no hope of election or making any contribution to the business of government, I therefore submit the following recommendations for your consideration:

1. The deposits of \$2000 for the Senate and \$1000 for the House of Representatives should be at least doubled.
2. The amount of first preference votes required for refund of deposit should be increased from 4% to 10%. Any candidate not confident of securing one vote from every ten electors has no business in complicating the ballot paper.
3. The minimum number of fully paid up members of a party be increased from five hundred to at least two thousand before the party can be registered with the Electoral Commission. In a population of over twenty million people, the present minimum appears to be ridiculously small.

I feel that all major parties would see the merit in such changes and there would be no problems in getting the changes through the Senate. There would be some resistance from vested interests in fringe minority parties but I am confident that these moves would enjoy popular support because of the perceived results of these changes which are:

1. People with no hope of election would be discouraged from standing.
2. Ballot papers would be easier to manage, resulting in shorter queues at polling booths and fewer unintentional informal votes.
3. Younger people, particularly first time voters, may become less disenchanted with the Democratic Process.

(George Simpson)
3 January 2014.