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31st. May 2002

The Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Parliament House
CANBERRA 2600
A.C.T.

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Submission No. <u>8</u>
Date Received <u>3/6/02</u>
Secretary <u>[Signature]</u>

Submission into inquiry into the conduct of the 2001 federal election.

This submission may not fall strictly within the stated terms of reference. It refers to elections in general.

I submit that because the federal Senate is in theory at least a States' House, without smaller electorates than the whole State, it is not at all easy to know anything about candidates before an election. Each time I am faced with the ballot paper I am exasperated by the randomness of my selection. It is possible to say, with regard to the House of Representatives, that a satisfactory alternative (if a lazy one) is to vote en bloc above the line. This, however, should not apply to a vote for Senators. Even though Senators do belong to parties, that should not be allowed to become the overriding factor in their deliberations; and it appears to this layman at least, looking on from a distance, that on the whole it does not, and that the Senate fulfils its function as a House of review.

I do not feel qualified to propose answers/solutions; but I trust some can be found. In State elections the same thing applies to a certain extent.

One suggestion I could make which would not I suspect gain any acceptance or even credence, is that thought be given to other forms of selection of members of Upper Houses. The practicalities of great distances in Australia mean more or less full-time politicians. It might be possible to have some members of Upper Houses who can contribute to the processes in a valuable way because of their pre-eminence/success/? in certain fields. I realize that I am leaving a good deal unsaid here -- so I shall add no more.

(Mrs.) D.M. Foster

Deborah Foster