



SUBMISSION NO. 40

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters	
Submission No.	40
Date Received	17-3-05
Secretary	

Christopher Bayliss
29 McEvoy Ave
Umina
NSW 2257

Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Affairs
Department of House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra

I wish to submit the following matters for consideration by your Committee.

Parliamentary Library research of the 2004 federal election revealed that formal votes were cast by 12,304,826 voters, i.e. 94.8 per cent. Informal votes were cast by 639,851 people or 5.2 per cent. This latter figure is virtually within the range of statistical margin of error.

It would be more germane to find the causes of these informal votes which, in themselves, would not appear to be sufficiently significant to warrant major changes to the present voting format.

Some possible causes of informal voting could be unfamiliarity with the formal style of English language voting instructions or unfamiliarity with the whole concept of free voting.

A more significant cause of voting dissatisfaction, as any polling booth official can attest, is the Commonwealth voting requirement of total ballot paper numbering, rather than optional preferential. Voters with strong, ideological feelings, object to having to preference parties, whose policies they dislike, in some cases intensely. This attitude is often expressed to polling booth officers.

In considering the matter of election voting, one canard is frequently and misleadingly raised. Voters are not forced to vote, either formally or informally. Voters are required to attend a polling place every three years or when the government in power decides.

At the polling booth, after satisfying electoral requirements, voters receive ballot papers, move to a private area and there mark their ballot papers as they wish. At this point as any electoral officer involved in counting votes can attest, the results can range from formal to pornographic. Whatever the result, the voter has fulfilled his/her legal obligation. They have attended a polling place, completed ballot papers as they wished in privacy, then placed them in ballot boxes.

All our voting system requires is for a voter to attend a polling booth and mark some papers as they wish, approximately every three years.

This does not seem to be an insurmountable burden to be part of a democracy. At worst, it provides an opportunity for an outing and a chance to judge our leaders.

I would contend that any proponent of narrowing our voting system does not have the community's best interests in mind. Such advocacy, from a narrow, philosophical outlook, is designed to reduce the voting base to an unrepresentative segment of the total population.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chris Bayliss". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Chris Bayliss