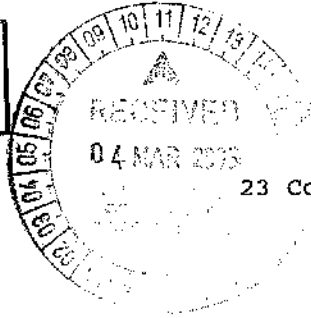


Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Submission No. 18
Date Received 4-3-05
Secretary [Signature]



23 Coral Crescent,
Pearl Beach,
NSW 2256

2005-03-03

Committee Secretariat,
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters,
Suite R2.105 Telelift 10.3,
Parliament house,
Canberra,
ACT 2600

Open submission to the Joint Standing
Committee on Electoral Matters

Re: Optional Preferential Voting

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter of 21 February 2005. I would like my letter to be considered as an open submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters.

As a scrutineer at Pearl Beach in the electorate of Robertson, N.S.W., I observed informal voting. Confusion arises because the state regulations in N.S.W. and Queensland (optional preferential voting) are different to the federal regulations (full preferential voting). The hall had signs to say fill in all squares. The voting booths had signs to read the instructions. Both Liberal and Labour how-to-vote cards stated that you must fill in all squares. Party canvassers were requested to remind voters to fill in all squares.

At the last house of representatives federal election, 9 of the 13 informal votes at Pearl Beach would be formal under an optional preferential voting.

The reasons to change the regulations to optional preferential voting are as follows:

- a) a candidate does not need to work out a preference distribution;
- b) poll workers and party canvassers do not need to tell voters that they must number every square consecutively;
- c) poll workers and party scrutineers do not need to check that every square has been numbered consecutively on every ballot;
- d) voters may save time by not numbering every square; and

e) voters are not forced between an informal vote and a full preferential vote, but have an extra choice of not deciding between two equally acceptable second choices; and
f) the number of formal votes is increased.

"many voters casting one preference only, resulting in a de facto first-past-the-post system." My experience as a scrutineer at the N.S.W. state election indicates that most voters, who choose a minor party also choose further preferences. Therefore, the statement is false.

"elected candidates have the support of the majority of their electorate, ...". At present, a number of eligible voters are not on the roll, a number of eligible voters do not vote, and a number of votes are declared informal. In a close election, the winning candidate would receive less than 50% of the vote. Therefore, the statement is false.

In fact, a change to optional preferential voting would decrease the informal vote significantly so that the elected candidate would have greater support.

Therefore, I recommend that the regulations be changed to optional preferential voting.

Yours sincerely



Peter Bayliss
Professor Emeritus

c.c. Jim Lloyd,
M.P. for Robertson