



McGowan, Andrew (REPS)

From: Helen Hutchinson [handsacross@trump.net.au]

Sent: Thursday, 31 March 2005 4:33 PM

To: Joint Standing Committee, EM (REPS)

Subject: Submission to Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters	
Submission No.	112
Date Received	31-3-05
Secretary	[Signature]

Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters.
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Chairperson

Thank you for the opportunity to express my alarm at some aspects of the present voting system and the conduct of elections.

Of most concern is the present system of above the line distribution of preferences. I feel that this is a direct threat to our democratic system of voting because it removes the choice of preference from the voter to a political party's determination of votes. Not only does this lead to a situation where a party is excluded from proper representation in the Parliament, but also to confusion in the minds of the public where people expect that preferences would be allocated according to the alignment of policies. I saw a direct example of this at a polling booth where a voter was told by another member of the public that preferences from the Labour Party would be distributed to the Greens, which was not the case at all.

Surely it is counter to democracy for people to be so confused.

My second concern is the lack of controls on advertising material. There should be some responsibility taken by the media for the information which they publish, whether it is in the form of advertising material, or as journalism. If either advertising or articles contain material which is untrue there should be penalties for doing so, including perhaps not allowing some media outlets to report on future elections. This may persuade some media outlets to discourage blatantly misleading advertising on the very last day of the election period when there is no recourse to rebuttal. A further curb on advertising would be to curtail all mention of the election during the week leading up to the election so that voters could reflect on the information provided to that point.

My final concern is that truly democratic elections would provide the opportunity for ALL candidates to give public presentations of their policies and positions. Since television has become so expensive and pervasive, it is not within the budgets of most individuals to be able to afford television appearances. Local television programs promoting all candidates would allow voters to make a much more balanced judgement of all candidates and not just parties. In a true democracy all points of view should not only be considered but also related to the person holding them. At present this is limited by the budgets of the various interest groups and becomes totally anti-democratic.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to present my views.

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