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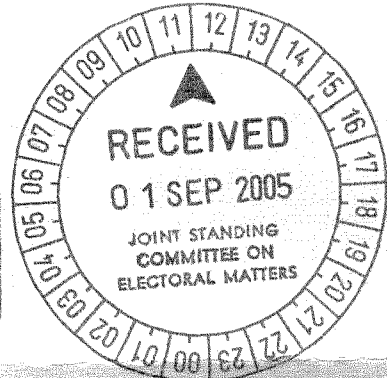
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SUBMISSION 207

29th August 2005

Andrew McGowan, Researcher
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters	
Submission No.	207
Date Received	1/9/05
Secretary	An



Dear Andrew

Thanks for further information about the proposed preferential Senate voting system. I understand that the voting paper would appear similar to the current model, but that there would be compulsory preferential voting either above or below the line; that is all squares above the line would need to be filled in.

The new system would reduce the ability of the parties to arrange "secret" preference exchanges, so that they would be no less transparent than those occurring the House of Representatives contest.

I suspect that this flaw in the current system was not foreseen by its original proponents. Equally, there are likely to be flaws and potential rorts of the proposed system that have not been envisaged.

This does not rid the system of all problems. The anonymity of the Senate candidates is preserved. The parliamentary positions for the major parties will continue to be allocated by the usual backroom deals which often work against the community interest.

My major concern is that the new system is a little more complex than the current model. It will probably increase the number of spoiled ballot papers, particularly when it is first introduced. The system will make voters a little more dependent on how to vote cards. There are often 10 boxes above the line and a compulsory preferential system will be challenging for many without the assistance of a how to vote card.

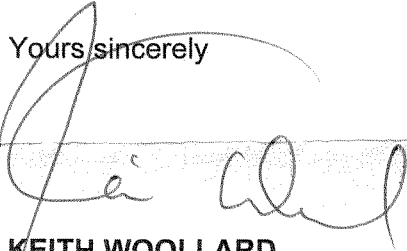
On balance the system has only a modest advantage. It eliminates some but not all the backroom dealing that leads to individuals being elected to the parliament. It increases the reliance on how to vote cards and disadvantages groups with fewer resources to print and distribute the cards.

The preferential voting system by its very nature (as with all other systems) will produce occasional bizarre results. The very few such individuals who are elected do little to challenge the basics of our democracy and on many occasions add a useful addition to the political spectrum.

As I have repeatedly stated, a substantial step forward in improving the conduct of the elections would be the banning of distribution of election material within 200-300 metres of polling booths on election day, and standardised how to vote cards provided within the polling booth in an unmanned display.

Please accept this as a supplementary submission

Yours sincerely



Handwritten signature of Keith Woollard in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'K' followed by 'eith Woollard'.

KEITH WOOLLARD