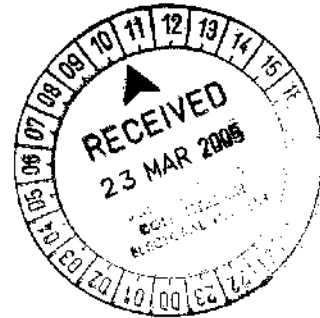


Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters	
Submission No	42
Date Received	23-3-05
Secretary	<i>[Signature]</i>

Brian McKrae

15 William St
Bunbury WA 6230



The Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Suite R2.105 Telelift 10.3
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT 2600.

Dear Sir/Madam,

As a candidate who stood in the 2004 Federal election, and also as Vice President of ONE NATION WA, I am forwarding this submission to your committee to be considered in the enquiry into that election.

I have answered a questionnaire from the AEC sent to me soon after that election, and have forwarded with that paper a response to my thoughts on both that election, and the recently held WA State election, both which reflect the same views expressed in this submission. (See appendix A)

INFORMAL VOTING:

The ever increasing trend for voters to deface their cards and knowingly not support our election process is slowly bringing our system towards becoming a farce. This trend is the result of several factors, all of which need to be addressed in order to bring our voting system, and consequently our parliamentary representation back into line with its intended purpose.

1. Voter apathy.
This is I believe the main issue in need of consideration, as most of the following problems ultimately stem from this cause.
2. Formal voting.
Most voters do not understand the preference system, and many not wishing to have to give their preferences to a person or a party often completely opposite to their own beliefs will simply either deliberately deface the card, or leave boxes blank in order to achieve their wish, only to have their cards discarded as informal.
3. Parliamentary accountability.
This issue is too broad to discuss here, however one of the main causes of voter apathy, and being out of the scope of this enquiry needs to be addressed at some other forum.

The above considerations although only part of the overall problem would I believe eventually solve themselves if "ALL" voters made a true effort to have their say at elections.



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WHAT TO DO?

1. To entice voters to make a formal vote, the option needs to be open to leave a number of boxes empty on the (Lower House) voting paper, the Senate paper already having the option of the voter only filling one box for the Party. This option would allow the voter to record his/her primary vote, and even a couple of preferences to other candidates known to him/her without feeling foolish about not understanding the barrage of HTV cards that are offered. I believe that the number of boxes to be filled to be valid needs to be (3). This would allow for both major parties to be selected in the order of the voter's choice, with a third party to keep the other two honest. The remaining gaggle of smaller parties who attach themselves to either of the major parties then need not be given a preference by the discerning voter while the option is still open to those voters wishing to preference all participants to do so. This above method would automatically bring about accountability by all of the parties contesting the election.
2. The television advertisements shown before the previous election encouraging all voters to have their say is a good idea. This however needs to be continued on a semi permanent basis with an emphasis on how the system works, and the basic philosophy behind the preferential system of voting.
3. Many voters feel intimidated at election time for a number of reasons, not the least being their ignorance of the process which can be improved by the above, however this is also compounded by the following, and these issues are also in need of attention;
 - (a) The last Federal election was a blatant example of both waste and extravagance on the part of the major parties, where every vestige of fence, tree, wall etc was plastered with party propaganda. Many voters were openly disgusted with this, and measures need to be put in place to limit this practice. A limit of (1) placard of a set area (approx 1 sq/m) per booth should be adequate for any party to advertise their position at the polling place. There were also cases where "Polling Place" notices were unable to be seen and in some cases even erected because of this practice.
 - (b) Numbers of party polling workers also needs to be restricted, as in many cases voters were also intimidated where in single entrances there was difficulty in even entering the polling place. There is an obvious need for more than one worker per party when multiple entrances are necessary, so it would be beneficial if either only one entrance was accessible, or in turn only one worker allowed per party for each entrance.

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4. (c) A re-cycle box for cards outside of the booth would encourage voters to use this facility, and in turn eliminate this visible waste of resources, as well as provide parties with a reasonable guideline for the amount of cards to be provided.
Many voters comment on this waste, and in turn doubt the integrity of a government allowing this waste to take place while at the same time espousing environmental and fiscal responsibility.

Toilet facilities:

With the high number of voters now working more than one job, and with both working and supporting sporting activities on Saturdays, many voters attend the polling places early in order to get their voting completed. This practice often leads to long lines and waits to enter the booth, and in many cases toilets are not open in polling places for these voters waiting often for some time.

I have seen voters actually return home before voting for this reason, and in some cases not return for whatever reason.

Having toilets as well as drinking taps available at booths would be a further encouragement for voters to exercise their right to both vote, and also do it with some conviction.

As many polling places are at schools where these facilities are available, a little forward planning could easily rectify this problem. Eg; a notice pointing to the (single) toilet in use, as it is obviously not prudent to have all toilets open and subject to vandalism and extra cleaning.

These above observations and suggestions have been made over a number of elections and it is hoped that they will be of some benefit for our voting system to provide an outcome more representative of our total voter roll.

Kind Regards,

Brian McRae.

21st March 2005.



Brian McRae

ONE NATION *candidate for* **O'CONNOR**

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JENNY GZIK
AUSTRALIAN ELECTORAL OFFICER
FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

Dear Jenny,
Thank you for the information sent regarding the outcome of the 2004 Federal Election, and also for the opportunity to comment on my own impression of the running of that election.

I have left this reply until after the State Election, mainly because of the time factor, and also to include observations made on that event also.

On both a personal and also on a party basis, I found the Electoral Commission and their staff to be very good, and without exception willing to assist on all occasions.

As a supplement to the form provided, I would like to make some further comments here which may help to provide some discussion on further ways to improve the system, and to hopefully help address the worsening problem of informal votes.

Comments from voters and polling booth assistants:

1. Toilets should be open at all polling places for both polling workers and voters alike.
2. The colour used on voting papers in the State Election were too light, and those voters with poor eyesight had difficulty in distinguishing between the white paper and the pink and the white and the green.
This above comment also fits with my comment on the questionnaire provided where I believe that some effort needs to be made to help voters to better understand the voting system.
3. A re-cycle box could be provided outside of the polling place door to encourage voters to re-cycle HTV cards.
This would be both environmentally sound, as well as giving parties a more precise method of calculating the amount of cards to be printed for the particular booth.

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ONE NATION *candidate for* **O'CONNOR**

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4. A definite limit to signage needs to be set for polling places. This election was a glaring example where the major parties covered almost entirely every vestige of fences etc with banners and such to an extent that many voters were both intimidated by it, and openly disgusted at the extravagance and waste shown by the major parties.

In-formal votes:

This is a problem that I have noticed is increasing at an alarming rate, and is compromising the intention of the legislation being that of providing representative government.

Apart from the problem of voters not understanding the voting system, which is to a large degree due to voter apathy, there is also the dilemma for the voter in filling out his or her card that the preferences ultimately end up with someone often totally opposite to the intention of that voter.

While I accept the thrust of the legislation that preferential voting provides for a balanced outcome, in reality this has been manipulated by the major parties so that either one will eventually end up with all of the preferences. This is one of the main reasons behind informal voting.

What to do?

The "Langer method" while being an easy way out for many voters, if not properly understood undermines the preferential intention, but at least sends a message to the major parties.

Our own party's solution of putting the sitting member last, which we do not apply to the letter, also has the effect of discriminating against some sitting members who deserve to be re-elected regardless of which party they represent. For this reason, some ONE NATION candidates including myself ran with an "open card" in the State Election.

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My own observations would suggest that if voters were only required to fill in a certain number of boxes to qualify for a formal vote, then this would encourage those informal voters to at least have some input, while at the same time give them the option of not giving a preference to someone they are totally opposed to. The question is; how many boxes to fill in, and I would suggest (3).

I thank you for the opportunity to comment, and as a candidate for our party for two elections look forward to continued contact.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'B. McRae'.

Brian McRae.