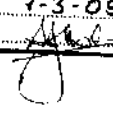


Miskin, Sarah (REPS)

From: Ilona Renwick [imrenwick@hotmail.com]
Sent: Monday, 7 March 2005 6:15 PM
To: Committee, EM (REPS)
Subject: compulsory optional preference voting a better way to go

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Submission No. 22
Date Received 7-3-05
Secretary 

25 Seacourt Ave,
Dudley NSW 2290
email: imrenwick@hotmail .com
7th March 2005

Dear Committee members,

Recently I read that there was a significantly large informal vote (5.2% of voters) in the 2004 Federal elections. In the same article (Sydney Morning Herald, March 2) Senator Minchin stated that he believed that there are thousands of Australians who do not want to vote but are forced to do so. Because of this he believes that we should change to voluntary voting.

I do not feel there is a case for voluntary voting without trying the optional preference system first.

Our existing voting system is quite complicated and optional preference voting will simplify it and yet give every Australian an opportunity to contribute.

I believe it would be easier for people to vote correctly if they did not have to show preferences. If a voter wishes to vote for only one or two people in the House of Representatives or one party or individual in the Senate they should be able to do so.

I feel it is unreasonable to expect voters (as in the 2004 Senate election) to have to choose either to vote above the line (even though you may not know where your vote will end up if it follows a party's preference) or to have to number 62 (I think) boxes to have a vote that counts.

I feel that this compulsion to vote for a party or individual you know nothing about should not happen in a democracy. However, I expect every Australian voter would have some idea about who they were voting for if they were only required to number one box in the House of Reps and one box in the Senate if that's all they wanted to do.

The Senate voting paper should not be structured as it is now. There should be no above the line voting which follows a party line. It seems to me that this is designed to entrench the major political party's influence in the Senate and so limits the opportunities of independents. This is not fair in a democracy. Any vote made should stop at that individual or party if a second number is not written.

Therefore I think people should certainly be expected to vote but if they only want to vote for one person or party that should be considered a valid vote.

With voluntary voting it is possible that a government may be elected with less than 50% of Australian adults voting. There is no way that such a government can claim a mandate for its programs if it has maybe only 25% or less support from the Australian people

Please do not approve voluntary voting. Optional preference voting is a much better choice with no above the line voting on the Senate ballot paper.

Please consider this submission in your deliberations.

Yours sincerely,
Ilona Renwick

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