



**SUBMISSION NO. 118**



Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Submission No. <u>118</u>
Date Received <u>1/4/05</u>
Secretary <u>[Signature]</u>

**DANNA VALE MP  
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR HUGHES**

1 April 2005

The Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Secretary

As in previous elections, a matter that has caused some concern to me and to those that acted as my scrutineers, was the notable number of House of Representatives ballot papers that were simply marked with a "1", and therefore were informal as no other numbers were filled in the remaining positions.

While I am informed that the majority of these informal votes were marked against my name, there were also others that were similarly marked for other candidates.

There is obviously considerable confusion amongst voters resulting from the different methods of voting, not only viz-a-viz NSW State and Federal elections, but also between the House of Representatives and the Senate.

In NSW State elections, optional preferential voting is allowed. In the Senate a "1" may be used "above the line". Yet, in completing the Federal House of Representatives ballot papers, compulsory preferential is the rule, and all spaces must be allocated a number in order of preference.

The number of informal votes in the last election in my electorate was significantly high, over 4,000. I also understand in areas of Western Sydney where we have voters of many diverse ethnic backgrounds, that the informal votes where "1" was used as in State and Senate ballot papers, was also significantly high. For example in Greenway and Chifley there were over 10,000 and 8,000 informal votes respectively.

Apart from the fact I am concerned for those of my voters who clearly intended to vote for me, and indeed, thought they had done so, this confusion is serious when its ultimate result is to disenfranchise voters. Clearly, the requirement of compulsory preferential voting for the House of Representatives serves to actually disenfranchise those people who are confused about the differences in the voting requirements.

Respectfully, I ask the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters to give consideration to this matter in the course of the inquiry, and recommend a voting method that is clear and consistent in Federal / State elections and is easily understood and free from confusion, in this case, the optional preferential method.

Thank you for this opportunity to express my concerns and that of many others, in regard to the voting requirements of the 2004 Federal election.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Danna Vale". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

**DANNA VALE MP**  
**FEDERAL MEMBER FOR HUGHES**