

SUBMISSION 9

SUBMISSION TO THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS
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The following is text of www.mapdot.info/soapbox.htm

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Subject Classification: [mapdot-x96-x2a-7iq-political-rights-and-electoral-reform-\(Tutoring-Iraq-in-democracy\)-\[The-International-Covenant-on-Civil-and-Political-Rights,-Article-25\]](http://www.mapdot.info/soapbox.htm)

DEMOCRACY: EQUAL VOTE EFFECT for CHOICE of GOVERNMENT viewpoint, [mapdot-r73-industrial engineering an electoral system](http://www.mapdot.info/soapbox.htm)

Victoria and Indonesia required government sustained by a majority of parliamentarians. A hiatus continued while those MP's horse-traded.

Surely it would be more democratic to horse-trade first, then offer two programs for the people to choose between at a general ballot where every citizen's vote counts for equal effect -- not only swinging votes in marginal electorates.

[There was a general election in Austria towards the end of 1999. There were three months of major party haggling into 2000, before a coalition working policy could be decided. It wasn't the citizens who decided.]

At present in Australia, the over-all "two-party" preferred vote is a more valid measure of the will of the people than is the way the current electoral system allocates seats to parliament.

If a pure proportional representation electoral system were introduced, we would agonise again and again . Yet it is possible to guarantee a majority of seats for the side preferred by the people, such as by "topping-up" or "topping-down" then enable representation of minority groups to "have a say" -- including the "independents", who actually do become, in effect, a party.

Such a reform is required for basic democracy and would also be needed should we opt for a directly elected political president of a republic. How could a hypothetical John Howard look her in the eye, knowing that a hypothetical Kim Beazley was preferred by the people? She would have the moral authority to veto Howard legislation.

Parliamentarians and the republic will have more moral authority when every citizen feels that everyone's vote has an effect. The duty to vote should be for more than empty ritual.

Is it too late? Governments relinquish public functions and citizen's money to private and transnational corporations. And parliamentarians are losing the people's respect. If I live to see the day of the republic to wag my Aussie flag, perhaps the era of the state, as the British Empire, will be past. We then can cheer our Nike princesses. After Queen Victoria's Jubilee, Kipling wrote:-

Lo, all the pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
Judge of the nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget -- lest we forget!

REPUBLIC

LETTERS (The Age, 3/11/99)

I can't miss my Saturday-arvo The Goon Show on Radio National. Does that make me an Anglophile or a patriotic ABC listener? Maybe I can be both. The British Empire has long been a joke, including on The Goon Show. It's silly to still colour Australia pink on the world map. It's folly to still look to the United Kingdom to supply our nation with a head of state. I will vote "Yes" for the minor but symbolically significant changes to our constitution.

Our constitution is defective yet works because politicians play the game with honour. The proposed method to select or dismiss a president will have less scope for tricks.

A "real republic", where the spectators directly elect the umpire, would be a different game. It might have merit. But we would need to first reform the system of electing the prime minister and government. For example, Kim Beazley, not John Howard, was preferred by the people at the last general election. A popularly elected president would have moral authority to veto Howard legislation. (The Queen, constitutionally, has this power.)

I voted Phil Cleary for the Constitutional Convention, I'm disappointed that he has adopted a spoiler strategy, and panders to an Irish ethnic victim view of history. I could evoke Huguenot ancestors!

Let's not cling to atavistic tribalism and ancient grudges; progressive Ireland and the UK are comfortable with their place in the world; so can be multicultural Australia.

BILL HELEM

Submission to Constitutional Convention

In a genuine republic every citizen's vote should be counted with equal effect for choosing a government. The electoral system of Australia is better than of the UK and most democratic nations. We could improve it with a mechanism to guarantee that the side preferred by the overall majority of the people is allocated a majority in parliament. Such a mechanism is often known as "topping-up".

Topping-up is said to be not possible without constitutional amendment. Now is the time to enable real "one vote one value". Australia could be an example

to the world in implementing the principles of Article 25, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The expressed will of the people is distorted when swinging voters in marginal electorates are more important than all other voters. And an equal number of voters in every electorate cannot cure malapportionment. At present, the overall "two-party-preferred-vote" is a more valid measure of the will of the people than is the method of allocating seats to parliament. Sometimes the winning side is robbed of the ability to form government. Andrew Peacock's team was robbed. A Majority-Side-Guarantee mechanism, triggered only occasionally, would ensure that the flip-flop point of the electoral pendulum would always be at the 50 per cent mark.

Another way, possibly constitutional even now, would be to have an identical algorithm under every seat: it would trigger an "explosion" under several least scoring seats to calibrate the flip-flop point.

I don't think an MSG mechanism would lock out minority parties and independents, or an aboriginal voice. Maybe there could be a device for them built in, which could also cure the excessive "landslide effect".

If Australia opts for a directly elected president it could be a dilemma when the government is not the people's choice. The president would have moral authority to veto government-initiated legislation.

This submission is not to compel such an electoral reform, but to have a constitution which would not prevent it.

BILL HELEM

SHORTER VERSION:

A republic should count every citizen's vote with equal effect for choosing a government. We can improve our electoral system with a mechanism to guarantee that the side preferred by the majority of the people is allocated a majority in parliament.

Such a "topping-up" mechanism is said to be not possible without constitutional amendment. Now is the time to enable real "one-vote-one-value".

At present, the overall "two-party-preferred-vote" is a more valid measure of the will of the people than is the method of allocating seats to parliament.

Sometimes malapportionment robs the winning side of the ability to form government. A Majority-Side-Guarantee mechanism, triggered only occasionally, would ensure that the flip-flop point of the electoral pendulum would always be calibrated to the 50% mark.

Another way, possibly constitutional even now, would be an identical algorithm under every seat triggered "to explode" several least scoring seats. Also, the landslide effect could be reduced with a few representatives of minority parties.

If Australia opts for a popularly elected president, it could be a dilemma when the government is not of the people's choice.

BILL HELEM

I wrote the following letter before the 2000 USA Presidential Polls. My complaint against their system now reads like a prediction of that shameful scandal:-

The method used to elect the US head of government could be more democratic. Every citizen's vote should count for equal effect in the choice between Bush and Gore. A good opinion poll is a more valid measure of the will of the people.

Americans won't vote directly for presidential candidates: they'll vote for electors from their state to an electoral college. These electors will have promised to support a respective candidate. The number of electors for each state, according to size, is the same as the number of congressmen for that state. State-by-state, electors vote on a winner-take-all basis.

It could be that the overall preference of the voting citizens is for Gore yet the college elects Bush. That would not accord with The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 25.

In Australia, the MP's with the majority in the House of Reps are, in effect, an electoral college. Because at the last general election the overall preference was for Beazley, the very existence of the Howard cabinet is a violation of Article 25. Even the better democracies -- and the Commonwealth of Australia is better than the USA -- can reform to show the world.

Submission to Electoral representation review for the MorelandCity Council by Victorian Electoral Commission

as at VEC Web site: www.tinyurl.com/35hls

I respectfully submit that:-

1. You recommend a procedure to avoid drawing a name out of the hat to elect the mayor. (Actually, it is the casting vote for the council majority which would be the significant result)
2. You recommend that each candidate be compelled to publicly allocate preferences for all candidates throughout all wards. (This would inform the public. AND, you imagine, a "flow of proxies" could be used for topping-up the council with (say) three councillors-at-large or for another correcting mechanism)
3. Or, instead of Item 2, you recommend a method of measuring the overall so-called two-party preferred vote. (This would not necessitate "unsubdivision".)

I wrote in soapbox8.htm: "I'm for discussion from diverse viewpoints, for democratic action and for checks and balances....A healthy community needs checks and balances -- responding to moderated scientific change and valid feedback. Governance is cybernetic." Your review is serving good governance.

Best wishes,
Bill Helem,
Pascoe Vale, 3044

[Comment: The electoral system is fundamental to the liberal/pluralist democratic nation. We must struggle to be a better example than USA or UK as a "nation-builder" in Iraq etc.. Maybe you (non-gender-specific)guys could dream up a system for Iraq!!]

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Muse of Convergent Technology Despatches AerogrammeGo to latest update of MapDot Protocol Web-page classification system at www.member.melbpc.org.au/~bhelem

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The following is text of www.mapdot.info/soapbox2.htm
and at http://www.vec.vic.gov.au//WP_MorelandSubmissionHelemB.pdf

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Subject Classification: ~~mapdot-x96-x2a-02c576-political-rights-and-electoral-reform-(City-of-Moreland)-[The-International-Covenant-on-Civil-and-Political-Rights,-Article-25]~~

Submission to Moreland Representation Review Victorian Electoral Commission [the uncensored version]

I'm pleased that your VEC Moreland Review [prelim report.pdf](#) "acknowledges the benefits of having an odd number of councillors. [Because]An odd number of councillors serves to prevent potential council deadlocks and so removes the need to confer on the Mayor the task of casting important deciding votes".

The first item on my preliminary submission was:-

? 1. You recommend a procedure to avoid drawing a name out of the hat to elect the mayor. (Actually, it is the casting vote for the council majority which would be the significant result.)

Your recommendation of an odd number of councillors removes the potential occasion of using a hat! That, in my view, would be a travesty of democracy. It did happen in the days of the Coburg Council. It might have been regarded as "fair" or "sporting" for the alternative political teams; it was not "equitable" in respect of the votes of the citizens of Coburg (the municipality, which joined Brunswick to "reform" as Moreland).

My position is:-

? that there are better instruments for expressing, then validly measuring, then representing the will of citizens individually and overall for equal effect, than the electoral system you appear to be leading us into.

? I believe that the overall "two-party preferred" vote is a valid measure of the will of the citizenry.

I like the proposed "structure" of eleven councillors to be elected from three wards, comprising two four-councillor wards and one three-councillor ward. Yet, the boys in the backroom know equal numbers of citizens per councillor can never prevent malapportionment or gerrymandering.

However, I ask:-

? would it be possible under Victorian legislative requirements to have a notional "overall ward" to elect one councillor for each of the four-councillor wards?

That could go towards a "topping-up" mechanism to guarantee that the "side" chosen by the people could decide the "mayorality", i.e., the government. Even having an odd number of councillors does not guarantee that. Furthermore, three wards means, three separate polls and elections. And even though it might look like equality to the candidate, councillor or electoral bureaucrat, it is not one-vote-one-value for each and every citizen, i.e., equal-effect.

I am not advocating a separate direct election for the mayor, as happens in some cities. But the reality is, there are ideological factions, political parties and caucusing. I approve of these as democratic; your preliminary report does not acknowledge they exist. I note your recognition of our multiplicity of "sub-communities"; I applaud how the ALP candidates represent them.

The majority caucus elects and sustains the "mayorality", the casting vote and allocation of sub-committee / portfolio positions. The majority caucus at municipal, state and national levels is like an electoral college.

I did a tally of some of the words and phrases in your PRELIMINARY REPORT, Electoral Representation Review, Moreland City Council (1184Kb). Ask for a recount, if you like:-

democratic 2; democracy 0; "fair and equitable" 11; "fairness and equity" 1; fair[alone] 0; "equality of representation" 2; equality[alone] 3; political 0; party[as name of submission] 3.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bill Helem, | bhelem@melbpc.org.au | www.mapdot.info/soapbox.htm | www.tinyurl.com/35hls | soapbox2.htm

A PDF version of above Submission to Moreland Representation Review Victorian Electoral Commission can be downloaded from this link. (16Kb)
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I respectfully submit the following idea to you to think through. I plan to put it up later, when I get on-line with a ftp programme to up-load the passionately re-written MapDot Protocol Web-pages. Where you and the cyberspace ideas-exchangers may read at www.mapdot.info/topics.htm
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That-all-candidates-at-a-general-election-constitute-an-"electoral-college"-and-be-compelled-immediately-after-nominations-close-to-publically-give-a-preferential-vote-for-each-and-all-of-the-candidates-and-these-preferences-be-tallied-in-favour-of-four-"nominators"-who-may-be-or-may-not-be-one-of-the-candidates-these-nominators-could-be-called-"west"/radical(?)-"east"/conservative(?)-"north"/tough-minded(?)-"south"/tender-hearted(?)-the-winning-coalition-side-would-be-guaranteed-a-working-majority-of-seats-in-the-lower-house-of-parliament-but-the-"landside-effect"-would-be-prevented.
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I congratulate the sportsmanship of the parties who accepted the change of government under Westminster tradition modus-vivendi, without rancour. I submit that, if there is an issue upon which individual candidates have a "conscience-vote", it be electoral reform. I regret the presidential posturing of our new PM (first-among-equals). It is an unfortunate consequence of the media, sound-bite and electoral-spin-doctors. It's a shame that the brains of back-room boys go into power-change and not electoral-equal-effect for each citizen.

Respectfully Submitted
Bill Helem
Citizen in the Electorate of Wills
(Thanks, I voted in the urology ward at Royal Melbourne Hospital)