

S L Hart

24 June 2008

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Via e mail

Dear Sir/Madam

My partner and I prefer to vote below the line on the Senate ballot paper. I realise that only about 2% of voters complete the ballot paper in this way. However, voting below the line is a legitimate form of voting. Our concern is that where a rural polling place has only two booths; when two below the line voters go to the polling place to vote this causes a queue as it takes longer to vote below the line. This could be easily fixed by having at least three of the cardboard booths at each polling place.

The following is an extract from a letter dated 10/3/'08 sent to the Returning Officer about this matter:

"At the Lavers Hill polling place on 24/11/'07 there were only two polling booths set up. My partner and I each choose to vote below the line in the Senate. It wasn't until we had each commenced to complete our respective ballot papers in the two separate booths that I realised that the effect of having only two polling booths was that we were delaying other voters. Quite a queue formed. The effect of this was to draw attention to the fact that the only explanation for the delay was that we were some of those rare people, approximately 2% of the population, who number all the boxes on the Senate ballot paper."

"Voting below the line is a legitimate form of voting and voters shouldn't feel pressured by the fact that they are delaying other voters. A simple solution for this would be for each polling place to have at least three booths. I doubt that this would be a significant inconvenience for the AEC."

"I would ask that the AEC consider instructing the Office in Charge of each polling place to set up at least three booths in future elections. Perhaps this should be a general AEC policy."

Please note that this is not a criticism of anyone involved with the election. I imagine that it only becomes an issue at some small rural polling places but the solution, having three polling booths, would allow voters to exercise their right to vote below the line without holding up other voters.

Yours sincerely

(Stephen L Hart)