

The Chair,
Ministerial Expert Committee on Electoral Reform.
Please find enclosed my submission to the Committee.
Yours Sincerely, Bruce Keay

Bruce R Keay

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SUBMISSION TO THE MINISTERIAL EXPERT COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL REFORM

1. Summary of submission;

i) Any changes must achieve effective representation for electors.

ii) Preferential voting be abolished.

iii) Compulsory voting should be replaced with voluntary electronic voting combined with pre polling.

2. Effective Electoral representation; The terms of reference for this Committee focus on some recent voting outcomes which largely relate to a perceived inequality in representation by quoting different electorate outcome ratios. I strongly support the principal of one vote one value as this will give the greatest strength to our democracy. This is also true for the forthcoming changes resulting from the Statement From The Heart which will affect both state and federal elections.

It must also give effective representation for Western Australians who have several large electorates to cover the less populated areas extending from the south coast to the Kimberley's. It is unreasonable to expect one elected representative to cover this spread out and diverse electorate, and, equally unreasonable to expect a citizen to have to travel such distances and at personal cost to see their representative.

To define a large electorate I propose that it be an area where the representative, and citizens, can meet each other within one days drive in a reasonable vehicle. This electorate is then considered a region for both lower and upper houses.

3. Preferential Voting; Preferential voting is system intended to assess the wishes of the voters when a single candidate is not able to achieve the 50%+ requirement. It has worked in way until the growth in technology and changed requirements for candidate support numbers has led to a proliferation of minor interest groups. The management of preferences has become a practice so that one minor single issue party gets elected, and this is not compatible with the original intention. I live in the State seat of Bassendean and Federal seat of Perth and generally considered Labour seats but in the last 30 years I don't remember Labour getting a majority of votes in many years. The Labour candidate being elected with other preferences. This has led to conflicted actions by the representative.

To abolish preferential voting should remove any need for the printing of how to vote, handouts and banners for polling and this would be a positive environmental outcome.

I support the deletion of Preferential Voting

4. Compulsory Voting: Compulsory voting is basically undemocratic, as electors should be free to vote or not. This was introduced when turnouts at some elections in the 1940's was so low that the major parties became worried about the stability of our government and introduced compulsory voting. When you examine voting outcomes in most seats today there are 10% to 15% informal votes indicating how a proportion of the electorate thinks. These arise from deliberate voter actions, errors or as a result of forced attendance at a polling place.

I propose that a system for electronic voting be derived so that all voters will be able to easily access the system, similar to most modern banking and purchasing systems, and cast their vote. If preferential voting is abolished this would be a very simple process for citizens.. It may be that a parallel personal voting method be maintained for those not connected to an electronic system, on a much reduced scale to what we currently do, possibly closer to pre polling.

Bruce R. Keay NM, AM, TFIEAust.