

From: Stephen Lesslie
To: WA Electoral Reform Submissions
Subject: Ministerial Expert Committee on Electoral Reform
Date: Saturday, 5 June 2021 2:27:00 PM

A further submission to the Ministerial Expert Committee on Electoral Reform

Stephen Lesslie

Compulsory preferencing is a form of voter suppression.

Few intellectual tyrannies can be more recalcitrant than the truths that everybody knows and nearly no one can defend with any decent data (for who needs proof of anything so obvious).

Stephen J Gould

For your vote to be effective you must give preferences to

- a. All other candidates*
- b. Twice the number plus one of candidates to be elected*
- c. As many as there are to be elected*
- d. Half the number to be elected. (NSW Local Government)*
- e. Some arbitrary number, such as 15 (NSW Legislative Council)*

All of these statements are ‘intellectual tyrannies’ and there is no academic study or peer reviewed paper that demonstrates that the imposition of any of these requirements makes the result of any election safer or more representative of the will of the people.

In a proportional representation election compulsory preferencing increases both the number of informal votes and the number of exhausted votes

Compulsory preferencing to any extent results in a decrease in voter participation.

Only in Australia does this compulsory preferencing requirement apply. Not in Ireland nor in Malta who choose their National Governments by the single transferable vote (STV); not in Scotland or New Zealand who use STV in local government elections and not in the few American cities that use STV.

Whilst not advertised a single No.1 in the Australian Capital Territory is a formal vote.

The imposition of any form of compulsory also will increase the informal vote. The more onerous the imposition the greater the informal vote. The informal vote in NSW local government elections is significantly higher than the informal vote in the ACT. This applies across all socio-economic areas in NSW.

The imposition of compulsory preferencing also increases the exhausted vote. Voters will stop numbering when they have reached the required number of preferences required by the relevant jurisdiction. This is especially so if there is an above-the-line preference option.

Ask any Returning Officer in a multi-member election, whether for a social club or national election, and they will tell you that the most commonly asked question is “How many candidates are there to be elected?”

These voters will then vote for at least that number; they want to have their vote count.

Evidence from ACT Legislative Assembly elections indicates that voters actually do understand this, or even if they don't, the system helps them get it right anyway.

To achieve electoral equality for all citizens entitled to vote for the Legislative Council every ballot paper with a clear unambiguous preference should be counted.