



MEDIA RELEASE

UNANIMOUS PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE CALL FOR URGENT REFORM OF SENATE ELECTORAL PROCEDURES

(Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters: Interim report on the inquiry into the conduct of
the 2013 Federal Election- Senate voting practices May 2014)

NSWCCL commends this hugely important report into the conduct of the 2013 federal election and
supports its recommendations for urgently needed reform to the Senate electoral process.

The Senate electoral system is in disrepute. In the 2013 elections, fundamental democratic principles
were breached. The Committee is appropriately scathing in its assessment of the 2013 procedures.

*'The 2013 federal election will long be remembered as a time when our system of Senate
voting let voters down.'*

*... 'Combined with pliable and porous party registration rules, the system of voting for a
single party above the line and delegating the distribution of preferences to that party,
delivered, in some cases, outcomes that distorted the will of the voter.'*

*... 'These circumstances demand reform from this Parliament.
That is why for five months this Committee has worked in a bi-partisan way to suggest a
course of action that will restore the will of the voter and ensure more transparency and
confidence in Senate elections.'* (Foreward)

Reform is clearly imperative and the Committee has responded with a strong and sensible set of
recommendations.

Recommendations

Most importantly, it recommends a move to optional preferential above the line voting, partial
optional preferential voting below the line and the abolition of group and individual voting
tickets. Together these two reforms will remove the major distorting factors by making it easier
for voters to cast a vote that reflects their preferences – leading to the election of a Senate that is
more likely to truly reflect the preferences of the electorate – and reducing the opportunities for
gaming of the Senate electoral system.

The Committee also recommends stronger requirements for party registration. These are reasonable
provisions that will establish stronger criteria for 'genuine' parties. Importantly, they are not so
onerous as to materially inhibit the formation of new, small parties. The criteria will apply to
existing as well as new parties.

The Committee leaves it to Government to find an appropriate mechanism to ensure candidates are residents of the state or territory they are seeking to represent.

CCL President Stephen Blanks commented: 'The Committee has done its job well. We now look to the Government and Parliament to do their job and act on these recommendations quickly. The Australian people should not have to go to another election under the existing senate electoral system.'

Dr Lesley Lynch
Secretary NSWCCCL
9 May 2014

Joint Standing Committee Report and NSWCCCL submissions and evidence to the Committee of Inquiry. <http://www.nswccl.org.au/>

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