



LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Members present:

Mr PS Russo MP (Chair)
Mr JP Lister MP
Mr SSJ Andrew MP
Mr JJ McDonald MP
Mrs MF McMahon MP
Ms CP McMillan MP

Staff present:

Ms M Westcott (Acting Committee Secretary)
Ms K Longworth (Assistant Committee Secretary)

PUBLIC BRIEFING—INQUIRY INTO THE ELECTORAL (VOTER'S CHOICE) AMENDMENT BILL 2019

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

MONDAY, 14 OCTOBER 2019

Brisbane

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The committee met at 8.36 am.

CHAIR: Good morning. I declare open this public briefing for the committee's inquiry into the Electoral (Voter's Choice) Amendment Bill 2019. My name is Peter Russo. I am the member for Toohey and chair of the committee. With me here today are James Lister, member for Southern Downs and deputy chair; Stephen Andrew, member for Mirani; Jim McDonald, member for Lockyer; Melissa McMahon, member for Macalister; and Corrine McMillan, member for Mansfield.

On 18 September 2019 Mr David Janetzki MP, shadow Attorney-General and shadow minister for justice, introduced the Electoral (Voter's Choice) Amendment Bill 2019 into the Legislative Assembly. The parliament has referred the bill to the committee for examination, with a reporting date of 18 March 2020. The purpose of the briefing today is to assist the committee with its examination of the bill.

The committee's proceedings are proceedings of the Queensland parliament and are subject to the standing rules and orders of the parliament. The proceedings are being recorded by Hansard and broadcast live on the parliament's website. Media may be present and will be subject to my direction at all times. The media rules endorsed by the committee are available from the committee staff and can be provided.

All those present today should note that it is possible you may be filmed or photographed during the proceedings. These images may be posted on the parliament's website or social media sites. Only the committee and invited officers may participate in the proceedings. As these are parliamentary proceedings, any person may be excluded from the hearing at my discretion or by order of the committee. I ask everyone present to turn mobile phones off or to silent mode. I now welcome Mr David Janetzki MP, shadow Attorney-General and shadow minister for justice, who has been invited to brief the committee on the bill.

JACKSON, Ms Danika, Policy Adviser, Office of the Leader of the Opposition

JANETZKI, Mr David, Member for Toowoomba South, Parliament of Queensland

CHAIR: Good morning. I invite you to brief the committee, after which committee members will have some questions for you.

Mr Janetzki: I will give a brief opening statement. I thank the chairman and the committee for the opportunity to be here today to discuss the Electoral (Voter's Choice) Amendment Bill 2019. As Queenslanders, we pride ourselves on living in a highly democratised state. There is no process more fundamental to the system of democracy than the way people choose who represents their interests in our parliament. It is through free and fair elections that democratic values thrive and the connection between the people and the government strengthens.

The bill encompasses the words 'voter's choice' for very obvious reasons. The optional preferential voting system will place election outcomes in the hands of voters and will unquestionably restore public confidence in the electoral system. A government is chosen by the people, and it is for these reasons that the people must have confidence in the way in which they vote.

The optional preferential voting system is a longstanding voting system which has been part of Queensland's electoral system since 1992. Importantly, optional preferential voting was reintroduced in 1992 by the Goss Labor government, which decided to act on the recommendations of the post-Fitzgerald body the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission. The body was set up and the decision to use optional preferential voting was made for the purpose of restoring public confidence in the electoral system.

The overriding objective of the bill is to reintroduce the optional preferential voting system for Queensland state elections. I have emphasised the benefits of the bill in the explanatory notes and in the introductory speech, but I will take the opportunity to speak briefly to these again for the committee.

First, as I have already stated this morning, the optional preferential voting system will restore public confidence in the electoral system by reintroducing a voting system recommended by EARC, the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission, which was established upon recommendation of Brisbane

the Fitzgerald inquiry. Second, the optional preferential voting system will give voters more options to express their political opinions while preserving the voting choice available under full preferential voting. This lays the foundation for what is a fundamental democratic right to empower electors to vote for whom they choose rather than compelling electors to vote for candidates that they would not ordinarily vote for.

Third, the optional preferential voting system will increase participation in the electoral system by allowing people to express their true intentions. In doing so, it creates a sense of empowerment for the voter as it captures only those preferences that the people actually hold. Fourth, the optional preferential voting system will reduce the presence of invalid votes. The simplistic nature of the voting system will least likely lead the voter to invalidate his or her vote through numbering error. Finally, reintroducing optional preferential voting will realign Queensland with a number of other Australian jurisdictions including New South Wales.

The policy objectives of the bill will be achieved by making changes to the requirements for the supply of ballot papers and electoral rolls, as well as how an elector may vote in writing on a ballot paper. The amendments require only that voters register a first preference on their ballot papers for their votes to be counted. Voters who wish to register one or more additional preferences among the remaining candidates are able to do so in the normal way using consecutive numbers.

Specifically, clause 5 amends section 122(2) of the Electoral Act which specifies how an elector must vote. Subsection (2), which currently requires the elector to vote by writing the number '1' for their elector's first preference and the numbers '2', '3' and so on to indicate the order of the elector's preferences for them, is omitted and replaced with new instructions on how to vote. Clause 6 is also amended to provide that the ballot paper must contain writing that is in accordance with section 122 or other writing or marks that indicate the voter's intended preference or order of preferences. New subsection (2) (a) provides for the circumstances in which a ballot paper is to be disregarded—that is, when a number is repeated in two or more squares and any higher number or a number that indicates a preference after a break in the order of preferences indicated on the ballot paper. That is the outline of the bill, and I would welcome questions.

Mr LISTER: Thank you, Mr Janetzki and Ms Jackson, for your appearance today. In his inquiry report Commissioner Fitzgerald recommended the creation of the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission to inquire into, among other things, the way voting should be conducted in Queensland. His vision was that that would be a deliberative and independent process. It ultimately led to the recommendation that optional preferential voting be adopted, and it was. Could you characterise the process by which we arrived at the current compulsory preferential voting system and talk about how you see this bill as being good for democracy?

Mr Janetzki: The reason we have reached this stage today was the cynical reintroduction of compulsory preferential voting by the Labor government with 18 minutes notice in April 2016. What we saw there with 18 minutes notice was effectively the overturning, the junking, the removing of a longstanding voting practice that had been in force in Queensland since 1992. To say that there was no consultation is a shocking understatement.

If you look back at the Fitzgerald inquiry and what it aimed for when proposing EARC, you see that it talked about setting up an institution that would oversee and administer elections and provide free and fair opportunity for voters to give their voice. When EARC was set up it consulted extremely widely and drew a wide range of opinions into Queensland's voting system. After all that consultation—months and months, years in fact—EARC made the recommendation that optional preferential voting ought to be adopted in Queensland.

Bearing in mind Queensland actually has a history with a form of contingent voting back to the 1860s which applied for many years—first-past-the-post voting applied in Queensland variously and then compulsory preferential for a time between the 1960s and the 1980s—and all the consultation that EARC had undertaken, they formed the view that optional preferential voting was the best way forward. That applied in Queensland for elections between 1992 and 2015. For it to be cynically cast aside in April 2016, without any consultation and with 18 minutes notice—not a single consultative effort was made—was deeply disturbing for Queensland democracy.

That is the purpose of this bill. It is not to do anything more than reinstate an election system that had been widely consulted on and widely supported in Queensland. The purpose of this bill is to bring back optional preferential voting as was recommended by EARC post the Fitzgerald inquiry.

Ms McMILLAN: One of the disadvantages identified with optional preferential voting is that preferences can be quickly exhausted, particularly where there is a large number of candidates. That would see a small proportion of the vote essentially elect a candidate. How is this in the best interests of democracy?

Mr Janetzki: I would answer that question by going to the nature of optional preferential voting. It allows a voter to express their true intention. They are not forced to preference a party or a candidate they have no interest in or liking for. An optional preferential voting system is extremely democratic in that it is the only electoral system that allows for people to express their disinterest in a candidate perhaps. People are not forced to vote for every single candidate even though they have no liking for a particular candidate. It is the one electoral system that allows a voter to express their choice. That is exactly why we put the words 'voter's choice' into the title of the bill. It allows the expression of that choice in its full meaning of the word. No voter in Queensland should be forced to allocate a preference to a candidate or a party for which they have no interest in doing so. The current system does force that.

In respect of the directness of the question, it is the choice of the voter to vote for as many candidates as he or she wishes. My understanding is that with the first iteration of optional preferential voting it was about 10 or 15 per cent who exercised just voting 1. By 2009 that passed 60 per cent. Obviously in 2001 with the Beattie government's 'Just vote 1' campaign it was equally high. Back in 2001 it kicked that along.

What we have seen over time is that more people understand the electoral system and express their choice. It did increase over time as people understood that. In Queensland I think that sits very well with the expression of every man and woman who votes that they get the choice. There will be some elections where I expect the ratio of just voting 1 will be higher than others, but certainly it is the expression of that choice that is fundamental to the democratic rights and that is fundamental to this bill.

Mr McDONALD: You outlined that you believe optional preferential voting will reduce the number of invalid votes. Could you explain that for us?

Mr Janetzki: One of the arguments put up by the Labor government in April 2016 when they slammed this through with 18 minutes notice was that it would reduce informality rates. What we saw between the 2015 state election—the last under optional preferential—and the 2017 state election was that in 2015 the informality rate was 2.11 per cent and in 2017, the first under compulsory preferential, it was 4.34 per cent. We did see a more than doubling of the informality rate.

The by-election at which I was elected in 2016 was the first test of the compulsory preferential voting system after the changes were made. In the electorate of Toowoomba South the informality rate in 2015 was 2.46 per cent and at the by-election in July 2016 it was 3.24 per cent. The argument that there may be some consistency or there would be less informality on its facts simply fails. That is not true. Informality will be higher and has been higher, as the numbers prove. Informality will be higher under a compulsory preferential voting system. The argument that informality rates will decrease is wrong.

Some of the submissions to EARC back in 1990-91 related to the simplicity involved with optional preferential voting. I have talked about optional preferential voting giving the expression of the voter of absolute choice as to how many candidates they vote for. It is actually simpler for the Electoral Commission of Queensland to educate voters as well. It is a simpler message.

We have probably all scrutineered ballot papers over time and have seen the interesting ways people approach their vote. Anything that makes it simpler for people to express their democratic right should be adopted. Many of the submissions to EARC in the late 1980s and early 1990s did relate to the simplicity of the voting system which would therefore mean informality rates are lower.

Mr ANDREW: What are your thoughts on compulsory voting in Queensland going forward under your new idea?

Mr Janetzki: I am a big fan of compulsory voting. I always say that it is not necessarily compulsory voting; it is merely compulsory registration to vote. People need to go. What I love about our compulsory voting system is that everybody is encouraged or forced to think about their civic duty, even if it is for just one day. We have all been given the great privilege of representing our communities. Even if people are disinterested in politics, it is the one time—either during the election campaign or on polling day—where everyone turns their mind to what kind of candidate they want to support in their local community.

To be honest, I think optional preferential voting feeds into an environment where there is compulsory voting in Queensland. It gives the voter that additional choice that they can go in and express their true wish, and if they have a disinterest in certain candidates they do not even need to put a number beside their names. I think compulsory voting in Queensland is complemented by optional preferential voting because it gives that additional choice.

Mrs McMAHON: Are you aware of any information or research around informal votes? There would be informal votes due to misunderstanding the ballot paper and informal votes for more creative reasons. Do you know if there are any statistics on it being informal because people could not fill out the ballot paper properly versus people who elected not to fill out the ballot paper properly?

Mr Janetzki: I do not have specific information as to the numbers around informality. I am pretty sure the ECQ would have some information in that regard. When reading some of the submissions to EARC it was clear that people get confused in terms of what they are required to do when they go to vote. Some people obviously have no desire to vote, and we have all seen the creative and artistic impressions of people who are not keen to vote. However, it was clear from the EARC submissions that many people did not understand or got confused as to what they were required to do.

One of the things about optional preferential voting is that, on those numbers, it is clearer that there is less confusion. There are more people engaging in the democratic process having their votes counted simply due to the simplicity of the system and that option to vote 1 or vote 1, 2, 3 or simply number all the boxes.

Mrs McMAHON: That leads into my intended question, which was about voter confusion. Given that the Commonwealth and local government voting systems will be full preferential voting and the state system under your proposal will be the single holdout—optional preferential voting—does that lead to increased confusion? Is there a push to move the federal voting requirements as well?

Mr Janetzki: There are many jurisdictions around Australia that have an optional preferential voting system or part thereof. New South Wales operates under an optional preferential voting system. Northern Territory operates under an optional preferential voting system. Tasmania has a form of optional preferential voting. Victoria had optional preferential voting until 1999.

It is a system that has served Queensland well for decades. It is a system that was recommended by EARC post the Fitzgerald inquiry that proved that it was the most democratic way to express a choice. What we have seen already with the adoption of compulsory preferential voting is tens of thousands of people who would have otherwise had their votes counted being cut out of the democratic process simply because of that confusion—because of that higher informality rate associated with compulsory preferential voting.

I believe in Queensland it is our electoral system and it is our democracy. I believe that it is important that as many people who can be included in the democratic system are included. I am strongly of the view that optional preferential voting, as it drives down informality rates, means tens of thousands more people will have their vote counted and therefore will be included in the democratic process.

As for the electoral systems more widely, other jurisdictions in the Commonwealth will manage their elections however they deem fit. In Queensland, off the back of the Fitzgerald inquiry, the recommendations given by EARC and decades of having an optional preferential voting system that did give that democratic effect and that choice to voters, I will be supporting optional preferential voting.

Mr LISTER: I recall seeing the Australian Labor Party submission to the EARC inquiry into the form of voting system that we should have. The then state secretary, Wayne Swan, was at pains to say that he supported a system which enables the intention of a voter to be discerned and provided that intention could be discerned it would be a valid vote. Do you believe that optional preferential voting provides more scope to enable the intention of a voter to be discerned and less scope for informality in that context?

Mr Janetzki: Reading back through some of the submissions to EARC, it was clear that there was support from nearly every corner of the community to give optional preferential voting a very close look during that review process. One of the other submissions to EARC came from the Trades and Labour Council. That submission stated—

... optional preferential voting allows individual electors to prevent their vote going, after the distribution of preferences, to a candidate they do not support.

In a lot of submissions, as you have identified, including from the Trades and Labour Council and even from universities across the board, there was widespread support for optional preferential voting. One of the submissions came from Professor Weller and Dr Wanna in which they said—

While we accept the value of preferential voting, we believe the casting of preferences should be optional. At present voters get the government or coalition that they least object to, not the government that they want the most. Optional preferential voting allows voters in a sense to weight their votes, to decide how much they want their preference and none other. Optional preferential voting allows the voter to make these choices and has the benefit of being a relatively simple system for voters to understand.

It is the tone and tenor of those submissions throughout the EARC process that inform this bill today. It does allow for voters, in the words of Professor Weller and Dr Wanna, 'in a sense to weight their votes, to decide how much they want their preference and none other'. It is that choice for the voter to allocate their preferences to as many or as few as they deem necessary. That is the element of choice in this vote. It gives true expression to Queenslanders' democratic rights.

Mr ANDREW: I had a lot of feedback in my electorate after the last election about using pencils. Would they use permanent ink to mark the ballot papers under your proposal? Will you be putting that forward?

Mr Janetzki: It is not part of this bill, but I am very happy to take that away and have a look at it. I know that the Attorney-General has put out a consultation paper in respect of bunting and its use at polling booths. I am sure if you were to write to the Attorney-General and seek her opinion and guidance on that particular issue she may be able to assist there as well—but, no, it is not part of this bill.

Mrs McMAHON: Going back to the issue of informal voting, in your introductory speech you quoted a number of statistics relating to the number of informal votes and the proportion of voters marking '1' only. Are you able to provide the committee with any details of those statistics?

Mr Janetzki: I can take that on notice and provide you with more information which is publicly available from the Electoral Commission of Queensland. The question of informality rates is a very important one when it comes to the consideration of this bill. The best like for like was from 2015, when we saw an informality rate of 2.11, which is published by the ECQ in their records—to 2017, when we saw an informality rate of 4.34. It is a more than doubling of the informality rate.

Mrs McMAHON: Again, we do not necessarily know the informality rate of those who are confused versus those who intentionally vote informal.

Mr Janetzki: That is true. I would say that it is highly unlikely, though, that given a more than doubling of the informality rate people had just switched off at an election. I think it is quite clear the confusion that arises under a compulsory preferential voting system. I think that is more than a statistical anomaly. I would—

Mrs McMAHON: It could be general unhappiness with every name on the ballot paper.

CHAIR: Member for Macalister, can you let the member for Toowoomba South answer the question.

Mr Janetzki: I think it goes far beyond that. When you have a more than doubling of the informality rate, I think it is quite clear that there was greater confusion with a compulsory preferential voting system. That bears out across elections whether it be, as I said, in my own electorate and the by-election, which was the first to have compulsory preferential voting back in Queensland, or whether it be in the statewide election between 2015 and 2017. The informality rate that we saw in the 2017 state election of 4.34 does mirror compulsory preferential voting informality rates at federal elections. They are there or thereabouts. It is clear on the evidence and the facts before us that informality rates under optional preferential voting are far lower. That is irrefutable. We know because of the simplicity. Because of the opportunity for voters to express their true choice—whether it be just '1' or '1 and 2' or '1, 2 and 3' or whatever it may be—we know that informality rates are lower, and the evidence backs that up.

Mr McDONALD: The Fitzgerald royal commission is one of the most highly regarded inquiries in Australia's history. EARC, the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission, is one of the processes which took Queensland out of the era when politics and public administration were largely unaccountable. That commission had a full inquiry and undertook significant consultations with the community over a couple of years to ensure we had an appropriately conducted organisation here in Queensland. In 18 minutes that was overturned by the Labor government. I think we are being nice saying that it is about choice and that it is about minimising invalid votes. The reality is that this is about trying to ensure Greens' preferences.

CHAIR: Is there a question?

Mr McDONALD: Yes, Mr Chairman. Thank you for your guidance.

CHAIR: Could you get to the question rather than make a broad statement about your belief as to why all of this came about?

Mr McDONALD: Thank you, Mr Chairman. Mr Janetzki, I cannot understand why the EARC process was not continued to be followed. Can you enlighten me?

Mr Janetzki: Yes. It was an appalling abuse of power by the Labor government. At the time there was a bill before the House relating to the expansion of state electorates in Queensland from 89 to 93. That was a worthy discussion to give voice, as we have been discussing this morning, to as many people as possible, to give voice to their true intention. With 18 minutes notice, amendments were introduced to junk that 30 years of optional preferential voting that had gone through that entire process that you have described and, instead, reintroduce compulsory preferential voting. That was undoubtedly done to harvest Greens preferences for the Labor Party in Brisbane. We know that. That was the entire point of it. That a government would amend the electoral system so cynically for its craven political advantage is an affront to our democracy here in Queensland. That is why this bill is so necessary.

Frankly, it was an appalling abuse of the government's numbers in the House. This was a system that had the confidence and the support of a wide range of stakeholders over decades. For it to be so cynically removed in consideration in detail, bearing in mind everything that had gone before, was an affront to our democracy. It was timely that I introduced this private member's bill on the day we were acknowledging 30 years of handing down the Fitzgerald inquiry report. That lunchtime we had Mr Fitzgerald in Parliament House again. It was timely that I introduced this bill on that day because it was a reminder of the need to remain ever vigilant.

When political parties manipulate the electoral system for their electoral gain—that is why we must be ever vigilant. That is what this private member's bill is all about. It is about reverting the electoral system to the system that was in place on the recommendation of EARC that came from the Fitzgerald inquiry. That is why any changes to the electoral system must always be done with a similar process. You cannot do these things with 18 minutes notice and expect the people to have confidence in you. That is why we are so determined with this private member's bill to give effect to the voting system that was recommended by EARC that had arisen from the Fitzgerald inquiry.

Mr LISTER: In his report Commissioner Fitzgerald remarks that governments that attain the treasury bench through means which are fettered lack political legitimacy. How would you characterise the process that the current arrangements were arrived at against the vision of Fitzgerald and of a thoroughly independent, deliberative and consultative process arriving at an electoral system?

Mr Janetzki: The Electoral Commission of Queensland administers and manages elections in Queensland in an independent manner. My view is that if there were going to be electoral system changes of the magnitude that was done with 18 minutes notice in consideration in detail in the darkness of night in April 2016 then it should be done after a full consultative process. The change to compulsory preferential voting did not even have this process. That highlights the lack of consultation.

There was no parliamentary committee process. There was no cabinet deliberation, to the best of our knowledge. It was simply done when the Labor government realised they could maximise their political advantage. There was no cabinet consultation, no parliamentary committee consultation and no external stakeholder consultation. It was done indefensibly, with 18 minutes notice during consideration in detail. Our private member's bill will attract more scrutiny than the government completely rewriting the electoral system of Queensland. That shows what a farce it was and how it cannot stand. That is why I call on the government to support our private member's bill, to reintroduce that confidence into the electoral system of Queensland.

Ms McMILLAN: To the contrary, Mr Janetzki, a study undertaken at the 2001 Queensland state election under the OPV system, as reported in the *Queensland Review Journal*, found that 29 candidates were elected with a majority of the unexhausted vote but less than an absolute majority of the formal vote. How would you counter the argument that this could be considered to be unrepresentative?

Mr Janetzki: Bear in mind that at the 2001 state election that was the Peter Beattie tactic. The Labor government of the day chose to run a 'Just vote 1' campaign. That was nothing to do with the Labor government; that was all to do with sending a message to the various conservative forces just to vote 1, which would therefore make it easier for the Labor government to be re-elected.

As I have said, whether voters vote '1' in one election will change from election to election. It will ebb and flow. What is most valuable about optional preferential voting systems is that they give voice to the true preference. Yes, some elections will have more voting '1' than others but, fundamentally, it is about the right of the Queensland voter to vote '1', '1 and 2' or '1, 2, and 3'. The idea that optional preferential voting gives rise to any undemocratic outcomes is false. The analysis shows that the optional preferential voting system in fact drives down informality and, as we know, gives the opportunity for voters to give their true intent.

Yes, there will be some fluctuations over the generations; however, as has been shown over 30 years, the people of Queensland have the opportunity under optional preferential voting to give voice to the true intent of their democratic wish. It served us extremely successfully in Queensland, and that is why the private member's bill is so necessary—to restore that confidence, to restore that ability for people to truly act in accordance with their democratic wish.

Mr LISTER: I take it that you were in the House for that vote, or was that before you were elected? I take it from the evidence you have given so far that we can confidently accept that the example referred to by the member for Mansfield was not adduced or discussed in the House in the 18 minutes between the proposal of that amendment and the passing of the bill?

Mr Janetzki: My recollection of reading *Hansard* from that time is that many of the arguments from the government, the Attorney-General and Leader of the House related to informality and the consistency, as the honourable member for Macalister raised, with federal elections. The key argument related to informality. As we have shown, informality rates have more than doubled in Queensland under compulsory preferential voting. What we have seen is that the argument that predicated this change, on 18 minutes notice, is flawed.

Mr LISTER: Allowing that what you say is correct, and given that the Australian Labor Party was admirably concerned in its submission in 1991 to EARC that informality needed to be minimised and every opportunity extended to a voter to have their voting intention recognised—and that that was coupled to their support for optional preferential voting at the time—how would you characterise the government's arguments at the time that compulsory preferential voting was in fact superior to optional preferential voting, against their earlier position?

Mr Janetzki: It appears that the political circumstances for the Labor government had changed and that it desperately needed to attract Greens preferences. You can reach no other conclusion except that the political circumstances for the Labor government had changed by April 2016. They saw the opportunity to attract Greens preferences that were previously exhausting. We saw at the last state election that with Greens preferences the Labor government was returned. The powers that be in the Labor government knew that, and that is why they took the opportunity on 18 minutes notice. They were merciless in gaining advantage in the electoral system and, with 18 minutes notice, removed an electoral system that, as we have discussed, has stood the test of time over the decades to maximise their advantage, to gain leverage, to take the Greens preferences and secure political advantage. In answer to the question, they took advantage of the political leverage they had at the time to ensure maximum preferential voting gain.

Mr LISTER: When Fitzgerald refers to lacking political legitimacy if a government is returned through fettered means—I cannot recall his exact words—is he referring to a situation like the one we face now?

Mr Janetzki: We stand at an important crossroads in the democratic history of Queensland. The whole point of Fitzgerald was to take politics out of the electoral system. That is why he recommended the introduction of EARC, to get a free and fairly administered electoral system in Queensland. That was the point. When it can be so cynically manipulated on the circumstances of the moment, we ought to all be concerned. That is why this private member's bill, in reverting to optional preferential voting, is a return to Fitzgerald era reforms—reforms that were widely canvassed and widely consulted, drew on all the experience of the key stakeholders of the day and stood the test of time for decades. This private member's bill returns us to a system that had been tested and that stood the test of time.

Mr LISTER: Is there anything else you would like to say?

Mr Janetzki: No, nothing beyond the request that the private member's bill be brought on for debate and a vote in the House. As I have explained, I think we are at an important crossroads in our electoral history. It is timely that, commemorating 30 years of the Fitzgerald inquiry report being handed down, we have this discussion. I implore the Leader of the House and the government to bring the private member's bill on for debate so that we can go back and look at what was done in April 2016 and seek to address the wrongs.

CHAIR: That concludes this briefing. Thank you, Mr Janetzki and Ms Jackson, for appearing this morning. Thank you to the secretariat staff and to Hansard. A transcript of these proceedings will be available on the committee's parliamentary web page in due course. I declare closed this public briefing for the committee's inquiry into the Electoral (Voter's Choice) Amendment Bill.

The committee adjourned at 9.24 am.