



The Research Director,
Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee,
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Re: "Inquiry into Issues of Electoral Reform Raised in the Mansfield Decision"

Dear Sir/Madam,

This inquiry into electoral reform has an important opportunity to make recommendations concerning the use of how-to-vote cards in state elections. Over the years there have been constant calls from thinking members of the public for an end to the harassment suffered by voters from political party workers at the entrance to polling places. These calls have been ignored, mainly one must suppose due to pressure from the major parties who can afford the cost of massive advertising and saturation of voters at the booths with how-to-vote cards. Some minor parties have supported the calls for a change in the system on the grounds of discrimination and environmental conservation.

The most-often recommended change in practice is to ban the use of how-to-vote cards outside the booths and to replace this with the placement of one copy of each approved and properly endorsed how-to-vote card inside every booth, with penalties for their removal. This would require the submission of the how-to-vote cards to the electoral commission for approval before election day, allowing the opportunity for their perusal for conformity with guidelines and the avoidance of post-election court action. I do not see that the political parties could not make their preference decisions in time for this process. The Electoral Commission could make a reasonable charge to the political parties for this service.

Given the ingenuity and persistence of political party workers however, the placement of how-to-vote cards inside the booths alone would not prevent the harassment of voters at the booths, which must be seen as a major objective of the inquiry. Another provision should be the banning of public political party advertising, including vocal, within 100 metres of a polling place, whether within private property or not. The objective is to make the polling place a peaceful and pleasant place to attend on polling day.

Yours faithfully,

 18/10/98

(Eric Walker)