

Submission

1. Overseas voters.

It is not surprising that so few Australians who happen to be overseas on election day actually vote, as the current provisions are obviously inadequate.

One simple, inexpensive way of assisting them to vote would be to allow their attorney to vote on their behalf. The attorney would have to produce the actual Power of Attorney, in the same way as if he were voting at a shareholders meeting, and complete an appropriate declaration. This procedure would be particularly useful for businessmen who have already given someone their Power of Attorney for various purposes, who often make last minute trips overseas, and are not in one place long enough to complete the current postal arrangements.

2. Informal voting.

There are several inexpensive ways that informal voting can be reduced.

- (a) Some electors find that they do not approve of any of the candidates, and would prefer the seat be left vacant. At present they have no other option but to vote informal. If an additional candidate "Vacant" were added to the list, so that people could vote for "Vacant" in the same way as any other candidate, this would allow these electors to express their preference. "Vacant" would have preferences like any other candidate, and if "Vacant" won the election, the seat would remain vacant until the next general election.
- (b) Another way of reducing both informal voting as well as non-attendance at the polling booth would be to have a voluntary system where electors could be registered as supporters of a particular party. As a considerable number of electors always vote for the same party, widespread adoption of this system could materially reduce the cost of elections. Such a registration could be countermanded at any time up to the close of the poll, but otherwise it would not be necessary for the elector to attend at a polling booth and a vote for his registered party would be automatically entered on his behalf. Such a list would need to be public, and other parties would be prohibited from bothering him about the election, as he had made up his mind.

Similar provisions could be made in respect of referendums, where electors could register for "Yes" or "No" without having seen the referendum question. If in three States the number of registered "No" electors exceeded half the number of enrolled electors, there would seem to be little point in holding the referendum.