

- 1) The basic principles of the best quality democratic system are:
  - a. Each electoral district should reflect voters' choices as proportionally as possible in that district to the support those choices receive at elections, with transferable votes ensuring that surplus votes and votes of excluded candidates are not wasted.
  - b. The voters should be able to determine which of the individual candidates within each party group should be elected, without the present [stage-managed electoral system](#), which allows that to be effectively predetermined by others.
- 2) To achieve this, the best system is that in proven use in Tasmania and the ACT with:
  - a. Candidates from parties listed in groups, but their names rotated within each group ([Robson Rotation](#)). That encourages the expression of genuine preferences by voters, and maximizes the correspondence between voters' shades of opinion about candidates within parties, and the party candidates elected. That works against splintering of parties and a proliferation of very small parties, as the different outcome between Tasmania's recent Senate and Assembly elections demonstrates,
  - b. No *above-the-line* voting or [Group Voting Tickets](#), and
  - c. Removal of unreasonable demands on voters when voting *below-the-line*, in other words the introduction of some form of optional preferential voting.
- 3) Those voting systems comply with [Section 7](#) of the Australian Constitution, which requires that senators be '[directly chosen](#) by the people'.

Much public criticism of the Senate electoral system stems from the success of candidates whose quota consists almost entirely of votes transferred from candidates outside their party, such as Senator-elect Muir from the 'Australian Motoring Enthusiast Party' in Victoria. The claimed problem is NOT that Mr Muir received too few [first preference votes](#) – he received many times more than each of the re-elected Senators Collins and Ryan and [the runner-up](#) at the last count, Senator Kroger. What all four of those candidates had in common was that their final progress totals consisted almost entirely of votes transferred via the Group Voting Ticket mechanism, but only one, Mr Muir's, consisted almost entirely of votes transferred from candidates outside his party. Numbers of votes, not party size, is what counts.

Had Mr Muir's quota been made up of *below-the-line* votes that explicitly listed him above all other unsuccessful candidates of the larger parties it would be hard to argue that the result did not accurately reflect the will of the voters. However, it seems likely that, without the stage-managed Group Voting Ticket mechanism used in *above-the-line* voting, he would not have been elected. Instituting an [exclusionary threshold](#) would be undemocratic and crudely manipulative, and ultimately will not solve any problems.

- 4) An increasing percentage of voters are not voting for the candidates of the major parties. If the voting system is amended to unfairly disadvantage smaller groups, the result is likely to be more disenchantment, and possible new manoeuvres arising to circumvent such distortions.
  - a. The special [WA Senate election in 2014](#) showed:
    - i. Votes for Traditional Major Parties' candidates (ALP, Liberal, National) 59.0%
    - ii. Votes for non-major parties' candidates 41.0%
    - iii. Votes for parties with no candidates elected 13.1%
- 5) Exclusionary thresholds led to a most [unreasonable result in Germany](#) in 2013 where conservative parties clearly won the majority support of German voters but, because of the exclusionary threshold, the 'left' (SPD, Greens and Left parties) won a majority of Bundestag seats, and the Government had to contrive a 'Grand Coalition'. That is not desirable.

Our recommendations:

1. Abolish *above-the-line* voting and [Group Voting Tickets](#).
2. Institute [optional preferential voting below-the-line](#) to remove the present unreasonable and discriminatory task for voters wishing to cast a formal ballot not available *above-the-line*.
3. Replace the current crude Unweighted Gregory Transfer value for the transfer of surplus votes with either (i) the [Weighted Inclusive Gregory Transfer](#) method used for the transfer of surplus votes for the Western Australian Legislative Council, or (ii) the very sophisticated computer-oriented [Meek method](#).