



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



THE SENATE

BILLS

Commonwealth Electoral Amendment Bill 2016

In Committee

SPEECH

Thursday, 17 March 2016

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

SPEECH

Date Thursday, 17 March 2016	Source Senate
Page 2617	Proof No
Questioner	Responder
Speaker Collins, Sen Jacinta	Question No.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS (Victoria) (09:14): I can indicate that the opposition will support Senator Day's amendments, which have the effect of preserving the current system of preferences being distributed according to group-voting tickets, where an elector votes above the line. I think Senator Leyonhjelm eloquently put the position in relation to a lot of the rhetoric around group-voting tickets. It is indeed in stark contrast to how both the government and the Greens purport to misrepresent the effect of group voting. Related vote-saving provisions and ballot paper provisions will also be preserved. Senator Day's amendments will help to ameliorate some of the worst elements of the bill that is currently before the Senate.

The Australian Labor Party wants to ensure that the composition of the Senate reflects the preferences of Australian voters, that all votes count and that small parties and Independents are not shut out of the system by this deal between the conservatives and the Greens. We support removing incentives for gaming the system. We have said this many times, although our position has often been misrepresented. We have never suggested that there are not issues that need to be addressed and we have suggested that there are other options for dealing with them. The minister said at the outset of this discussion that they had indeed wanted to pursue thresholds, but the Greens were not prepared to cooperate. I think it is important that that issue be on the record. The bill before us is not the only way to manage some of these issues. This is the deal between the government and the Greens.

We support removing incentives for the gaming of the system, but you do not do that by eliminating all small parties and Independents. We need to get the balance right on Senate voting reform. That will not happen by ramming this backroom deal through the parliament. Senator Day's amendments will go some way to addressing the worst aspects of this dodgy Liberal/Greens deal, so Labor will support them.