

ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the Conduct of the 2022 Victorian State Election

Melbourne – Friday 11 August 2023

MEMBERS

Will Fowles – Chair

Evan Mulholland – Deputy Chair

Brad Battin

David Ettershank

Sam Hibbins

Emma Kealy

Nathan Lambert

Lee Tarlamis

Emma Vulin

WITNESS

Ben Raue.

The ACTING CHAIR (Lee Tarlamis): I declare open the public hearings of the Electoral Matters Committee Inquiry into the Conduct of the 2022 Victorian State Election. All mobile phones should now be turned to silent.

I would like to begin this hearing by respectfully acknowledging the Aboriginal peoples, the traditional custodians of the various lands each of us are gathered on today, and pay my respects to their ancestors, elders and families. I particularly welcome any elders or community members who are here today to impart their knowledge of this issue to the committee or who are watching the broadcast of these proceedings.

I am Lee Tarlamis, Member for South-Eastern Metropolitan Region. The other members present here today are

Emma VULIN: Emma Vulin, Member for Pakenham.

Nathan LAMBERT: Nathan Lambert, Member for Preston.

Sam HIBBINS: Sam Hibbins, Member for Prahran.

David ETTERS HANK: David Ettershank, Member for Western Metropolitan Region, online.

Brad BATTIN: Brad Battin, Member for Berwick, online.

The ACTING CHAIR: I welcome Mr Ben Raue today.

All evidence taken by this committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. Therefore you are protected against any action for what you say here today, but if you go outside and repeat the same things, including on social media, those comments may not be protected by this privilege.

The committee does not require witnesses to be sworn, but questions must be answered fully, accurately and truthfully. Witnesses found to be giving false or misleading evidence may be in contempt of Parliament and subject to penalty.

All evidence given today is being recorded by Hansard and is also being broadcast live on the Parliament's website. You will be provided with a proof version of the transcript for you to check as soon as it is available. Verified transcripts, PowerPoint presentations and handouts will be placed on the committee's website as soon as possible.

I now invite you to proceed with a brief 5-minute opening statement to the committee, which will be followed by questions from the committee.

Ben RAUE: Great. Thank you to the committee for having me. I think my submission covered two main points, and I will touch on both of them. One that I think is really the centre point of this committee's conversation is around group voting tickets, but before I get to that I want to touch on proportional representation for the Legislative Assembly.

I do not expect that we are going to see any change on that point, but I wanted to make the point around the last Victorian state election. The lower house was the least proportional when you calculate a Gallagher index of proportionality, the least proportional result in a Victorian state Assembly election since the 1960s. We saw the government re-elected with a majority – a pretty comfortable majority – with 37 per cent of the primary vote. Look, I am not going to go into a lot of depth about this point, but I would say even on two-party preferred, which is often used as an alternative measure to calculate, you know, the fairness of a result, we saw a substantial – I think it was about 2.3 per cent – swing away from the government, and they gained a seat. And we know this happens all the time; that is how the system works. But I will just say I think that disproportionality is getting worse as the party system changes. It is kind of a basic principle of democratic accountability that when voters change how they vote, you should expect to see a change in the seat results, and

an election where a government increases its majority while losing support I think generally does not really reflect an accurate translation of votes into seats.

But I am going to mostly talk about group voting tickets. They distort the will of the people. They push voters into their votes being distributed in ways that do not reflect their actual wishes, and Victoria is now the last jurisdiction in the country to be using this system. I think they incentivise parties prioritising trickery, wheeling and dealing and getting in good position on a ballot, a good name, over going out there and actually convincing people to vote for you. I think election results under group voting tickets can be very disproportionate. Candidates are often elected with much smaller votes than what others who are unsuccessful receive, and that does not really reflect any kind of intention of voters.

I really want to get away from seeing group voting tickets as a tool for specific minor parties. Any electoral system can advantage certain parties in certain contexts and advantage others in others, and I absolutely understand why people always look at what are the short-term effects of these things, but interests change. There have been times when group voting tickets have been helpful to minor parties. They have also been very unhelpful to other minor parties, and at times they have been very helpful to the major parties.

Whoever uses the tool, I think it is something that takes us further away from a fair and democratic result. I would also say, you know, sometimes you hear a bit around group voting tickets about, 'Oh well, that helps parties get a foot in the door.' I would argue it does not actually. It kind of incentivises a certain kind of political party behaviour from minor parties that sort of is more about buying a lottery ticket than actually building sustainable parties that develop voter support and convince voters to vote for them again and again and building up a network. Often MLCs that have been elected under group voting tickets, particularly those with very small votes, get elected once and four years later they do not actually see any increase in their vote – often the vote goes down – and they are not re-elected. And that partly reflects that the chances of re-election are pretty low and are not really that correlated to their own performance. I think it is bad for democratic legitimacy. Being good at your job as a politician, being a party that is effective, should translate into getting more votes and getting elected. When those things are divorced from each other, that is bad for democracy.

That was most of my points, but I am very happy to kind of go wherever the committee wants to go – talk about different models, the experience in other jurisdictions. There are lots of things we can talk about, so I am happy just to leave my opening statement there.

The ACTING CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Raue. I will go to Mr Lambert for a question.

Ben RAUE: Sure.

Nathan LAMBERT: Thank you, Acting Chair. You have obviously touched on two themes there. I might go, if I can, to the first one – this question of proportionality, which we discussed earlier this morning on a number of occasions. I suppose I would put it to you that I am just not sure that optimising the Gallagher index is the only thing we are trying to do in an electoral system. As you know, and we all know and anyone who has read Kenneth Arrow knows, the fundamental problem we are trying to solve with our political system is that people have different opinions and we have to make one decision. That has always been the problem that we are trying to solve.

Now, you have sort of got a useful table in your submission that sets out the parties that would have won, say, under a statewide single electorate in the New South Wales style. I am slightly surprised actually that the Freedom Party were not there, but we would have seen, say, Legalise Cannabis and Family First in there, and we would have seen the Victorian Socialists in there. Those parties have very different world views; I think that is uncontroversial to say. At some point in our political system their different world views have to be reconciled. The election of more Legalise Cannabis people to the lower house in small numbers does not guarantee that cannabis is legalised by any means. All we are doing is shifting the point at which we have to reconcile the difference of opinions and ultimately have one win out over the other. We are moving it from the ballot box into the legislative chamber. And I am interested – you speak negatively, I think with good reason, about group voting tickets and the wheeling and dealing that goes on there and the trickery. I am not sure if you have closely observed some of the machinations in proportional legislative chambers, but they look very similar. Once people are elected, there is a lot of wheeling and dealing that goes on. I am just wondering why is

it that we think it is better to have that collective decision-making resolved with a lot of wheeling and dealing in a highly proportional chamber as opposed to at least doing some of the work at the ballot box.

Ben RAUE: I mean, there is a lot of ideas there. I think, you know, no electoral system is perfect, and I do not think that the objective should be to have perfect proportionality and have a Gallagher index of zero, which is what you would have. I think you can achieve voting systems that do a relatively good job of getting a high level of proportionality while having clarity about who gets elected, voters having a relatively limited number of choices about who are the realistic options. I think there are lots of different proportional systems around the world that I think generally people who are experts on electoral systems and advocate for them do not advocate for. For example – and I mean, Israel has lots of other problems that have nothing to do with its electoral system – Israel or the Netherlands, they are not what people usually advocate. There is often an argument for a kind of low-magnitude proportional system that gets you, you know, four, five, six parties in Parliament, so you have clarity about who you vote for. There are also lots of European countries with PR where you know that if you vote for a particular range of parties, you are going to get a particular prime minister, and if you vote for a different range of parties, you are going to get the other prime minister. There are lots of other systems where you can get a lot more clarity around coalition building, but I think –

Nathan LAMBERT: I mean, if we were to pick Germany as an example, the obvious one, do you think that electors have historically got clarity over the coalition building?

Ben RAUE: I mean, not 100 per cent clarity, but I think if you vote for the Greens –

Nathan LAMBERT: You have got an entire system of flags and ‘Jamaica coalition’ systems that describe it.

Ben RAUE: Well, yes. I think if you vote for the Greens in Germany, for example, you have a pretty good sense of who they are likely to go into government with, and I think there is most of that. There is not 100 per cent, but you can have quite a lot of clarity. I think ultimately those are transparent decisions that politicians have to make. The other thing as well is I think there are different principles that should apply to a lower house and an upper house, to a house that is forming government and a house that is not forming government. I think a lot of these principles you are talking about are legitimate concerns to raise for the Legislative Assembly. You know, if I had my way, the Legislative Assembly would have a PR system that would have a relatively low magnitude and you would not get lots of little parties in it, but for an upper house where you are passing legislation but you are not having to support a government, I think actually having a system that is quite proportional, very proportional, more proportional than a lower house, works quite well, because it means you get a government of a certain flavour in the lower house.

The sweet spot I think we have mostly got around this country is – and I think this is getting a bit away from group voting tickets – you get a majority in the upper house that is not actively and consistently opposed to the government but they are also not of the government. You know, historically upper houses in Australia either were opposition majority or government majority, so they would either be a rubber stamp or they would obstruct everything the government would do. We have now got into this position instead where, I mean, Greens and Labor will disagree in the Senate, but they are not obstructive in the way that a coalition majority would be for a Labor government in the Senate.

I think the experience we have in New South Wales is complicated a little bit by the fact that they have eight-year terms and there is that overlap from 2019, but the MLCs elected in 2023 are not a Labor majority but they are broadly progressive. So I think it does work quite well to say a government should have people who have some sympathy with their cause, are not actively trying to bring the government down but are not of the government, and that achieves that accountability without actually bringing a government down. But I think that is getting a little bit away from the principles around group voting tickets. I think a lot of the issue with group voting tickets is a lack of transparency, is the difficulty of knowing where those votes will end up.

Nathan LAMBERT: No, totally nothing personal. To be clear: the question was about the proportionality of our group voting system. This is a separate discussion.

Ben RAUE: I could talk all day about all those philosophical questions.

The ACTING CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Hibbins.

Sam HIBBINS: Thank you, Chair. Going to your first two recommendations: one, to abolish the group voting tickets; two, to have a new electoral system – so it is a further recommendation in terms of changing the composition of the upper house – obviously one could be done very quickly, next week or in the next couple of weeks if the Parliament decided. The other one may require a referendum, a referendum might fail, might not be able to occur until after the next election. Do you see it as necessary that those two things are seen together?

Ben RAUE: No. I am sorry, have you finished your question?

Sam HIBBINS: No, no. Go on.

Ben RAUE: The short answer is no. It is interesting. I feel like when I first raised that prospect of abolishing the regions before the election I did not hear many people talking about it, and it has been talked a lot more about recently. I think that is one approach. You know, if you genuinely like the idea that there are lots of minor parties in the upper house but you want a system that gets rid of a lot of the problems with group voting tickets, that is your answer. I do not think you necessarily have to do it, though, and I think the urgent need is to get rid of group voting tickets. Even with the current magnitude five regions, it would still be a significant improvement. I would urge actually, and my position might have changed slightly since the submission – not that I disagree with anything I wrote there – that there are two different questions, and we need to resolve getting rid of group voting tickets. That is urgent. Then there is a secondary design question, which comes back to what Mr Lambert was talking about earlier. You can design voting systems. The magnitude of how many people you elect has a direct influence on the number of parties that get elected and how much fragmentation you have, as does the size of the chamber. It is those two things: the size of the chamber over all and the average number of members you elect per region. There is lots of international research that shows those two factors have a direct influence on the size of the chamber and the fragmentation.

If you did go to five-member regions, the regions you have now but without group voting tickets, you probably would reduce the number of parties elected in the upper house, and it would more resemble what any other PR system around the world that used eight five-member regions would look like. You know, when you take a magnitude of five and an assembly size of 40 and you multiply those numbers together, that is what you get. It would have a reduced number. If you were to expand that, then you would get a lot more of those minor parties in, and there are a lot of technical things we can get into about how you would design such a thing. I think that could be quite a good idea, and it is certainly an option if you want to maintain that diversity but in a way that more reflects how people actually vote.

One of the things I would say is that in New South Wales, where we elect 21 at a time, lots of minor parties get elected, but it is very clear: if you get 2 per cent, you get elected; if you get 1 per cent, you do not; if you get 3 or 4, you are pretty safe. There are incentives there for parties to go out and convince people to vote for them, and if they get elected, they have a chance of getting elected again, which gives them an incentive to care about what the voters think. If you get elected and you have no chance of getting re-elected, or very little chance, that reduces your interest in caring what voters think. An option that Victoria could do is to move to statewide elections, but I would say that is a secondary question. You need to get rid of group voting tickets, and then there is a matter of opinion about how you want to design that system and how proportional and how diverse you want that chamber to be and pick a structure. Obviously, you have got the issue of holding a referendum, but you can then pick a structure that reflects that.

Sam HIBBINS: Thank you. Thanks, Chair.

The ACTING CHAIR: Mr Battin.

Brad BATTIN: Thank you very much, Lee. I am in the lower house, so I am probably a little more interested in the lower house and some of the recommendations that you have put forward. But around proportional voting, if I could ask you to just explain a bit more about what you mean by proportional and how it would be structured in the lower house. I am just going to ask it all in one if that is all right with you, Ben. Number two is focused on our preferential system in the lower house, preferences versus optional preferences as used in New South Wales and first past the post in different jurisdictions and your views. We talk about proportional representation, but we could also talk about how if in my electorate 46 per cent of people primary vote for me and the next one is 30 per cent, would it be fair to say that most people would want me in? In the

last election I only won by 0.8 per cent, with preferences going a different way. How would proportional representation assist that? And what are your views on first past the post without preferences?

Ben RAUE: There are many different proportional systems, but the key thing they have in common is you have to elect more than one person in an area; you cannot just elect a single person. I personally would advocate for multimember districts of three, five or seven members. If you do that, you would get more parties and you would get more minor parties elected in the lower house, but you would not make the electorates enormous and you would not get – you know, if a party is polling 2 per cent or 3 per cent statewide, they are not winning seats in the lower house. It depends on whether your vote is concentrated or not, but if you are a statewide party with a relatively similar vote statewide, you would need to be polling 10 per cent plus to really start showing up and winning seats in the lower house. It would allow for a system where, yes, it would be more proportional and you probably would have multiparty governments from time to time, or quite often, but you would not have nine parties in the lower house. You know, you would have a handful. You would probably have three to six. If you count the Nats and the Libs separately, maybe add one to that. I would say that.

On the second point about optional preferential or compulsory preferential, one of the things that certainly comes up when you go from five members to the 21 of New South Wales or the 37 of the new WA upper house or a hypothetical 40 for a Victorian upper house without regions, preferences are really important in a single-member electorate for getting to the quota, which is effectively 50 per cent plus 1, so there can be quite a lot of preferences flowing around. How much you require people to mark preferences, or you do not have preferences at all, like first past the post, really matters. You go to three-member districts, they still matter, but a bit less; five, seven, 21 – you get to 21, and as Antony said earlier, usually there is only one seat in the New South Wales upper house that is changed by the count of the preferences. The other 20 people are exactly who you would have predicted from the primary votes. Quite frankly, I think at the point where WA is electing 37 at a time, they could just not bother preferencing. Preferences I think will barely matter, but they will be an enormous effort for the WA electoral commission to count those preferences and they might only change the result of one or two seats, or maybe even zero. So it does matter a lot more for a single-member electorate.

I think generally I am a supporter – I think it is good when people preference, and I think getting 46 per cent of the primary vote is obviously an impressive number, but it is not a majority. One of the advantages of having multimember districts is you can have more than one person in a constituency – as an example, the seat of Macnamara at the last federal election was basically a three-way tie. I looked at that and I was like, ‘It’s kind of silly we just pick one of these people.’ It is an arbitrary thing that we need an electoral system to pick which of those three people represents the area. It does kind of make more sense that that area would be represented by multiple people with different political agendas and you do not have to have that arbitrariness. There is still a line drawn, but it does not get so much about all or nothing. I support preferential voting.

We have this trade-off that I think we have had for decades about how much you force people to preference and thus have issues around votes being marked informal, because there are a lot more informal votes when you do that, and that becomes more of a problem as the ballot gets bigger, versus giving people the freedom to not mark preferences, which means sometimes candidates are getting elected with less than a quota or less than a majority of the vote. There can be a large number of votes that exhaust and do not contribute to the results. We do not really have a good answer to that, except I think actually probably the solution we have come up with that is the best is what we do in the Senate now, which is we tell people they should preference, and then if they do not preference, we count their votes anyway. I think there is actually a lot of value in that approach, which is having generous savings provisions that do not punish people if they do not fill out the ballot as we instruct, but we still ask them to. Whether you frame it in the way that the Senate does, where it basically tells people, ‘You must preference’ and then gives them an exception, or whether you just strongly urge them, I think there is value in that approach of saying, ‘We’d like you to preference but we’re not going to punish with your vote being taken away if you don’t follow these rules that we’re saying.’ I think it has worked pretty well, and I think that could be applied in other contexts too.

Brad BATTIN: Thanks for that, Ben. It may be something for later on, but the other thing I would not mind looking at at a future date is also the New Zealand model. Obviously they have their list MPs et cetera, and how that impacts with proportional voting, where they have the first vote in each electorate; and then they have their list vote after that for the parties to fill in, what the difference is and how that impacts on having a diverse – because they have obviously only got the one chamber.

Ben RAUE: I could get into a lot of the technicalities about the pluses and minuses of different models, but it does have the similar advantage of not having too much fragmentation, because a party needs 5 per cent of the vote to get elected. You look at the New Zealand Parliament right now and there are five parties in the Parliament, and there is one party that might get elected that is a bit more unpredictable. Coming back to Mr Lambert's point about predictability, if you vote for the New Zealand Greens, you know you are going to help elect a Labor prime minister. If you vote for the ACT Party, you know you are going to help elect a National Party prime minister. The details of the government, the shape of the government and its exact policy agenda is not clear, but there are broad groupings. There is some predictability. That is one of the advantages that you have, again, compared to a model that I do not advocate, and I do not really hear anyone advocating, like an Israeli-style system, where you do not have that 5 per cent threshold and so you do get dozens of – well, maybe not dozens, but a dozen – parties getting elected.

Brad BATTIN: No worries. Thank you for that. Thank you for your time today, too.

The ACTING CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Ettershank.

David ETTERS HANK: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Mr Raue, for your very thoughtful submission and presentation. We had a proposition put to us before which has sort of intrigued me, because I know we live inside the political bubble – psephologists, politicians and our ecosystem. I guess the proposition that was put was that prior to the 2022 election, and specifically with regard to the Legislative Council, there was an enormous amount of publicity in the popular media and across all of the media, I think, with regard to group voting tickets and their possible manipulation. The proposition that was put was: people heard that, people saw that, people understood that, and yet 90 per cent of people chose to vote above the line. I guess I am interested in your thoughts on what that means?

Ben RAUE: I would say, first of all, I think we can exaggerate how much attention there was to that problem. I mean, I do not think I have that many people reading my blog; I got a couple of stories in the mainstream news. I think every single party that ran in the election on their how-to-votes still told people to vote above the line, so I think that can be a bit exaggerated. But it is true; like, it was a thing that got talked about a lot. There had been a big increase in the below-the-line vote prior to the 2018 election, and in 2022 I think it went up slightly but it did not go up very much, so it is sitting at just under 10 per cent, off the top of my head.

What I would say, though, is I do not actually think that is a fair test of whether this is a problem that needs fixing, for two reasons. One is, all of the problems we describe around what incentives it would create for parties exist even if everyone was comfortable with their individual vote and with the way that it changes the way that people campaign and prioritise. I mean, one of the previous speakers talked about party names, and it incentivises a lot of these things around having party names that attract votes and making ballots much bigger and running lots of candidates and all that, that all still applies. But I would also say there is a justice question about how easy it is for someone to cast an informed vote. It still remains the case that it is much easier to vote above the line in Victoria than it is to vote below the line. It is not as much of a stark contrast as we had in the Senate prior to the 2016 reforms, where the chance your vote would be informal if you voted below the line was about one in three because we were asking people, particularly in the big states, to number close to 100 boxes some of the time. It is not as bad as that, obviously, and we have a lot more below-the-line voting in Victoria, but it still remains the fact that it is a lot more effort to cast a vote below the line. It is a lot easier to cast a vote above the line, all the parties are telling you to do it, and it does mean, ultimately, people get lulled into a path that results in odd results that do not really reflect how people preference when they choose their own preferences.

I have been reading a book recently, a bit of a political philosophy book around principles of what makes democracy work for busy people. I think we can often look at these things about, 'Well, this option exists and therefore everything is fine.' But most people – as you said, most people are not in the political bubble, do not have that much time for politics, should not have to devote that much time to politics to have their vote count at its full value. We kind of have this 'out' option for those of us who are very well informed and educated, where we can cast a below the line vote, but most people end up just casting that one above the line. I think having a different above-the-line model which maintains most of the flexibility you get from below-the-line voting but is much easier for someone to vote makes the system work better for people who are busy, who do not have a lot of time, maybe they are in a stage of their lives where they are very busy, or they have a job that does not give

them a lot of capacity, or they just do not want to spend that much time thinking about politics, but they still want to be able to have their vote count.

So I do not think that is the standard we should judge this on as a problem, is how many people have decided to vote below the line. It still remains a problem even if it is only 10 per cent – even though I think 10 per cent of – I mean, I do not think everyone who is voting below the line is doing so as a protest about group voting tickets, but 10 per cent is a pretty substantial part of the population to express that level of concern and mark their ballots in a different, more complex way.

David ETTERS HANK: I mean, it is not that hard to vote below the line. A lot of parties, including our own, provided options for that. If you take your conclusion –

Ben RAUE: It depends if you factor in –

David ETTERS HANK: Hang on, hang on a second.

Ben RAUE: Sorry.

David ETTERS HANK: If you take your conclusion, it sort of lends itself to a hypothesis that the majority of the population are either all lazy or easily fooled. I mean, we were talking about stories on the front page of all of the major dailies, they were the lead, in the top two or three stories on the nightly news. How do you not reach that conclusion, that you think people are lazy or stupid?

Ben RAUE: No, I did not say lazy or stupid, I said busy. I said people have other commitments in their lives. They have other things that are on their agenda. They have other priorities. I do not think any of this relies on people being lazy or stupid. And I would say as well that, you know, it is pretty easy to vote below the line if you do not really care who you vote for. If you just want to number the first five boxes you find, yes, it is easy. If you want to cast an informed vote – if you want to think about who you are voting for and decide how you mark your own preferences – then it is more effort. You say your party provided other options, but most voters are not getting below the line, are not getting how-to-votes that say that. You have got to seek that information out. It is not about people being fooled. It is not about people being stupid. I think generally there are a lot of voters who do not have a lot of time to devote to politics. They are intelligent people, but they either do not have the time or – it is also not a reasonable expectation for people to devote that amount of time. We should have a system that incentivises parties to suggest preferences but does not give them that right to just slip those preferences in and then force the voter to choose the more difficult and more time-consuming option, both in terms of casting the ballot but you have also got to think about all the other time you have got to spend before you go in there to know whether you are voting in a way that actually reflects your intentions. It is not just about the time it takes to actually fill in the numbers on the ballot.

David ETTERS HANK: One more question, Chair, if that is all right. Ben, you said about making the decision to abolish GVTs is the first priority and then it is a question of sort of sorting out what the alternative and the process is. Do you have a thought on what that might look like in terms of: do we need a separate inquiry into the voting system that might be the replacement? How do you imagine we will get a consensus to abolish or reform GVTs if there is not some understanding of what it would be replaced with?

Ben RAUE: Yes. Part of my thinking here is when the upper house was reformed in 2006 it was a design decision to create regions. They could have gone for a statewide election. They made a decision to create a system which at least for its first couple of elections was very dominated by the major parties. Most of the MLCs elected in 2006 and 2010 were Labor, coalition or the Greens. That was a design decision that got made through a democratic process, whereas the way the group voting tickets have evolved was not so much their intention in 2006. Maybe they should have foreseen where it was going to head. New South Wales had already had that experience, but admittedly New South Wales had had that experience in a chamber with a magnitude of 21. I think the framers of that change – well, it was before 2006 – probably thought it would be less of a problem with a lower magnitude than it had been New South Wales, and it was for a while and then eventually that was no longer true.

You are going to need a referendum if you are going to make that change. I would say you need to make sure that the public is informed, that they understand the process. It would be very preferable if it is the kind of thing that would get something close to a consensus amongst the political parties and the politicians and, you know,

you as the kind of representatives of some of those political entities that are in the Parliament right now. Labor has a majority in the lower house. The government obviously needs to be on board, but we know from experience that referendums do not just get passed because a government supports them. I think ideally, if you did want to go to having a chamber elected all at once, the pitch would probably be that this is a way that we restore the diversity that we have in the upper house but with a fairer voting system that does not have the problems we do now and thus we get the best of both worlds, and that is the case. I think there is a theory there where you could get the minor parties to agree with it because it allows them to stay alive and give them a chance of getting elected and the major parties and the Greens to agree with it because it does not involve group voting tickets. I do not know whether that is something that is on the table, but I think probably you need to do the work to get everyone on board to do it. It is not a simple legislative change, so there would be work involved in doing it. Maybe it would involve another inquiry, but it certainly would involve more public education and ensuring that everyone is on the same page and getting as much support for the reform as you can.

David ETTERS HANK: Thank you.

The ACTING CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Ettershank. Also, thank you, Mr Raue, for your submission and for coming along and talking to us today. That concludes this session.

Ben RAUE: Thank you.

Witness withdrew.