

LARGEST REMAINDER

(Not quite Quota Notes)

No. 11

April 2011

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Editorial

The recent NSW election gives the lie to the myth that proportional representation (PR) must result in hung parliaments. The Liberal National coalition would have won an absolute majority of seats in the NSW Legislative Assembly under any form of PR. Even the very poor form of PR in place for the Legislative Council resulted in the Liberal/National coalition obtaining a majority of seats being contested (11/21) Of course under PR the ratio and distribution of seats won by the different parties would be more equitably drawn. The Liberals would have more seats in regional areas, at the expense of the Nationals. The approximately 25% of voters who vote Labor in regional NSW would actually be represented in parliament and the Greens would have representation to match their 10% share of the vote.

At the time of writing there is an outside chance that Pauline Hanson could win the final seat in the Legislative Council. She currently has less than 2% of the vote and if she does win a seat it will be another example of the appalling farce of above-the-line voting that plagues this country. One thing is clear though - if she fails to win a seat, it will be because of the independent minded voters who chose to vote below the line. The inability of parties to organise a preference swap, even though it would be in their own interests, demonstrates the naivety of Senator Bob Brown's so-called reform of the Senate voting system.

National President to address AGM

PRSA National President, Bogey Musidlak, will address the Annual General Meeting of the NSW Branch to be held on:

Saturday 16 April 2011

@

2 pm

@

74 Thompson Street
Drummoyne NSW 2047

The AGM will elect a Committee of 9 for 2011/2012. To be eligible to run and/or vote, members will need to have paid their 2011 membership fees. It is only \$20.00 so if you are not already a member please consider joining. Check our website for details www.electoralreformaustralia.org

Following the AGM will be a brief Committee Meeting at which the newly elected committee will elect a President, 2 Vice Presidents, Secretary and Treasurer (which may be a Secretary/Treasurer)

Following the meeting you are invited to join us at a barbecue at which you may speak informally with Bogey. He knows a lot about proportional representation and Australian elections!

If you have any burning questions for Bogey, perhaps you could email them to president@electoralreformaustralia.org before the meeting so that I can forward them to him. He may be interested to know what branch members are interested in, or may need time to prepare an answer to something that may be complex.

Asian Honey Bee (*Apis Cerana*)

Stephen Lesslie

The Australian Government has abandoned attempts to eradicate the recently introduced Asian honey bee (*Apis cerana*)

The Asian honey bee has been described as the cane toad of the insect world and has been found in Far North Queensland around Cairns.

It is extremely aggressive, attacking both people and the hives of the European honey bee (*Apis mellifera*), and if not eradicated will quickly spread across the Eastern states of Australia and destroy the honey bee industry. After all, bees fly much further than a cane toad can hop and the Asian honey bee swarms frequently, rapidly increasing its range.

The Asian honey bee is also the natural host of the *Varroa* mite which is currently destroying European bee colonies around the world. Fortunately, *Varroa* did not arrive with the current incursion but if allowed to remain in Australia the Asian honey bee will provide a natural reservoir for the mite.

So the government's surrender to the Asian honey bee is a bad thing - but what does it have to do with this newsletter, apart from providing an excuse for the author, an amateur apiarist, to write an article?



What does it matter if in future all of our honey comes from Tasmania, or is imported from overseas hives contaminated with miticides?

The fact is that up to \$4 billion worth of Australian food crops rely on local bee pollination. Even if it merely delays the spread of the Asian honey bee, any money spent on its eradication is money well spent.

No member of the Government is sufficiently interested or motivated to persuade the Agriculture Minister to continue the program of eradication of the Asian honey bee. Worse, John Cobb, the National Party member for Calare could not resist making it a political issue. In a press release headed "Labor Party Goes Sour on Asian Honeybee Control" he used emotive terms such as "failed to protect our borders." This sort of attack merely hardens opinions and Cobb couldn't have found wording more likely to turn a Labor minister off the issue. For the record, and not that it really matters, the Asian honey bee was first discovered in Queensland May 2007 when the previous Liberal/National Party Government was in power.

The importation of exotic pests should surely be considered a non partisan issue and not viewed as yet another opportunity to engage in adversarial politics, but the current system of electing the House of Representatives using single member electorates encourages and rewards such behaviour.

If the Parliament had been elected under a system of proportional representation, regional Australia would be represented in the Government and matters such as this would be dealt with constructively and in the national interest. Furthermore, Opposition members would be able to work with the Government members elected from the same electorate to stress the importance and bipartisan nature of the issue.

Solution: Since we can't, at least in the short term, get a parliament elected by proportional representation then John Cobb MP should

apologise to Minister for Agriculture and ask that this matter of national interest be reconsidered.

[P.S. The Asian honey bee does not make enough honey to harvest.]

Grief Syndrome

Stephen Lesslie

Grief syndrome or bereavement syndrome is a little known hazard for politicians and political candidates.

A political candidate lives in an unreal world. With the pre-selection sometimes over twelve months before the election, a campaign can be long and arduous but it is also an exciting time for a candidate with campaign meetings, pamphlets and press releases to be drafted, letters to be written, doorknocking and public appearances, and *the phone never stops*. A candidate is surrounded by friends and supporters who are equally enthusiastic – good news is lapped up and bad news ignored. Most candidates will suffer from “candidate’s disease” where no matter how remote the likelihood of actually winning, the candidate comes to believe that they will.

When the candidate loses the election, suddenly it is all over! *The phone stops ringing*. There is nothing that has to be done and no one to see; the campaign committee disbands and alliances are broken.

If a candidate, or their partner or campaign manager is going to suffer from grief syndrome this is when it will occur. Not everyone will be affected, but if it occurs symptoms can vary from a mild sense of loss to a chronic and debilitating depression.

It is tragic to see talent wasted and a personality disintegrate, but it can happen if the grief syndrome remains untreated. Just look at the post parliamentary career of a recent Leader of the Opposition. After a lifetime of commitment to his cause suddenly it is all thrown away, culminating in bizarre attacks on former allies and alienation of friends and supporters.

Democracies need candidates, but we must look after the ones that don’t win. If you have a friend who has just lost in this election, look

out for them. Explain to them what has happened and why. If you can, encourage them to seek counselling. Most progressive work places will automatically organise counselling after a work place accident; an election loss should be considered in the same way.

Contact Details

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Comments and/or contributions are welcome:

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