

ELECTION AND REFERENDUM 2011

In a democracy it is everyone's right not to vote. I hear a lot of people saying that why would anyone bother to vote but surely every responsible adult who is eligible to vote should do so. Especially when one has regard to the battles which women fought to get the vote.

It is disturbing to hear too, many young folk taking a totally apathetic and lethargic attitude to the upcoming referendum on the voting system. The future of the voting system is as important as future governments will be elected on how we vote in the referendum

I would be first to say that the choices under the referendum have not been pressed home with good advertising and information and one would have to ask why that is so.

The former Labour Government and the present National Government both seemed to like the MMP system. It really gave them the final say on who would be elected. The party lists are stacked so that if the voters reject a candidate, that candidate can get into Parliament by being high on the Party List. It also rewards a party which wins an electoral seat but is unfair to a party which does not win an electoral seat but perhaps gets more votes than the party winning an electoral seat. If the voters vote to retain MMP there is to be a review of the system by the Electoral Commission. Could the Electoral Commission be trusted to recommend that these matters be appropriately amended? Probably not.

Before making any decision on which voting system you believe is the best choice take time to look back at how the MMP system has worked so far. In almost all MMP systems there is a coalition government. Coalition governments do not produce strong government and there have been numerous instances where the stronger party has promoted a disastrous enactment at the instigation of a coalition partner which has cost them dearly in credibility.

It is true that MMP provides representation for all social strata, but some of the alternatives also provide for wide representation and are better voting systems.

So give some very careful thought to the future of our democracy and select what you believe provides the best voting system for future Parliaments of our country.

This article has been prepared by Bessie Paterson, a Partner with Ronald Angland & Son Solicitors, who may be contacted on Tel: 03 349-4708 or e-mail bessie@anglands.co.nz.