

4 Electoral system, voting and counting processes

1. There have been many allegations about the racist nature of the electoral system embedded in the 1997 Constitution. I have previously pointed out the weaknesses of this system, but also clarified my view that the system was not particularly biased against any ethnic group at all. Rather, the system was biased against small parties who were marginalized from Parliament, while large parties were strengthened and made more confrontational.

[\[https://narseyonfiji.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/coups-and-ethnicity-in-fiji-facts-and-fiction-23-march-jcu1.pdf\]](https://narseyonfiji.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/coups-and-ethnicity-in-fiji-facts-and-fiction-23-march-jcu1.pdf)

2. I have already made known my recommendations to the Commission based on a proportional system which gives equal value to each person's vote, without reference to ethnicity, while ensuring that local constituencies have an identifiable elected person in parliament to refer their local needs to, and whose re-election will depend on their serving their constituencies to the satisfaction of the voters.
3. I have also outlined how the "List" element of my recommended system will have a very high probability of ensuring gender balance in Parliament.

[\[http://narseyonfiji.wordpress.com/2012/05/31/electoral-reform-submission-to-the-yash-ghai-commission-may-31-2012/\]](http://narseyonfiji.wordpress.com/2012/05/31/electoral-reform-submission-to-the-yash-ghai-commission-may-31-2012/)

4. All that is now needed is for the Constituent Assembly to achieve some degree of consensus on the final outlines, and for elections to be held under the agreed system, whether this, or something similar.
5. The system which other submissions have recommended require a small number of large constituencies numbering four or five, with each electing roughly ten representatives (if there is to be a total of around 50). This will lead to thoroughly complicated ballot papers with literally dozens of names and political party symbols which will thoroughly confuse our hundreds of thousands of illiterate voters.
6. *This submission reiterates the recommendation in my earlier electoral reform submission that there be a large number of constituencies from which single candidates are elected to serve all who live in that constituency, and be accountable to them at the next election. This will not only simplify the ballot paper, but also have the other advantages of having clearly identified local representatives, accountable to all the local voters, regardless of ethnicity or gender of the voters or the candidates, while the List element will ensure a greater probability of gender equality.*
7. *This submission recommends that the Commission engage in an "voting and vote counting experiment" where by a few hundred "voters" generally representative of Fiji's voting public, go through an actual exercise of voting according to the*

main systems being recommended and considered by the Commission¹, the votes be counted by the Elections Office, and the results declared. The objective would be to obtain from the voters, the Elections Office and the political parties, the system that they feel most comfortable with in practice, and will achieve the political objectives of ethnic equality in voting and gender balance in outcomes.

8. As it is critically important to leave a "paper trail" which cannot be tampered with by any agent, this submission makes an additional recommendation on the voting and vote counting process.
9. *This submission recommends that voting will be by placing ticks or numbers on pieces of ballot paper and not by any electronic voting mechanism which cannot be monitored with any degree of confidence. This submission therefore also recommends that counting of votes must take place physically, in every constituency, so as to ensure transparency and accountability to voters.*

¹ Of course, actual political parties and names will not be used in the exercise. But, gender should be identifiable as gender balance in Parliament will be an extremely desirable objective for the revised electoral system.