

The Big Picture

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“News to use & bemuse”

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Across the news

After weeks of reading the fawning media treating the federal political party leaders as celebrity entertainment, it's worth reviewing how different observers see it. Here's NSW independent MP Ted Mack, known for being brutally honest on our voting system...

Most "above the line" voters for the Senate have no idea where their votes can go. The system invites dummy parties and electoral fraud. If you vote "below the line" it is practically impossible to grade 84 candidates in order of preference. If you attempt to do so there is a better than even chance your vote will be informal, due to omitted or repeated numbers and the mindless requirement to vote for every candidate.

In the lower house, you can vote only for a local member. Party leaders and prime ministers come and go without reference to the voters. There is no mechanism to ensure promises are kept. Your vote is limited to the choice of who might represent your electorate- after the faceless party people and branch stackers have chosen the bulk of the candidates.

In truth, our electoral system is an illusion of democracy. In the deluge of words in recent weeks there is virtually no mention of these issues. Instead we are mostly treated to breathless reports of a political horse race...

...The biggest elephant of them all is the shocking fact that improving democracy has few champions - certainly not political parties or their partisan supporters; their only interest is in winning and preserving the political duopoly. Not big business; it spends vast quantities of money and lobbyists to subvert democracy. Not the media, dominated by journalists who have become celebrities, interviewing each other and seeking to become irresponsible players in the political game; they report from on high with godlike pronouncements on the personality and behaviour of politicians - all as a form of entertainment. [SMH](#)

By contrast, here's the editorial from the Daily Telegraph...

Australia is the fortunate inheritor of a democratic system refined over many centuries and drawing from any number of positive historic influences. The process we will undergo on Saturday, from voting through to victory speech, is a testament to the human capacity for good.

The best part is that just three years from now even Saturday's losers will have another chance of winning.

When it comes to democracy, Australia always makes the finals. [Telegraph](#)

I feel so much better now – except when I read about the competence of our governments...

The past half-century has witnessed an enormous – and officially sanctioned – over-extraction of water. The MD river system, which straddles four states and one territory, has been badly mismanaged. [Independent](#)

Is it drought? Could it be climate?

But in the *Four Corners* interview, Mr Abbott maintained his previous position that warming may have stopped, based on the views of geologist and climate sceptic Ian Plimer. [TheAge](#)

Instead of a theory of action to lower our emissions and learn to live with less consumption of scarce and expensive fossil fuels,

Tony Abbott still espouses a theory of inaction. Gillard also admits that Labor State governments are a problem.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard has conceded the performance of state Labor governments has damaged the party's standing in some parts of the country, but urged voters to put state issues aside when they enter polling booths next weekend.

"I think as we look around the country, there are clearly some regional and state-based factors in play," she said. "I understand that in some parts of the nation there is disappointment with the performance of state Labor governments." [TheAge](#)

Hasn't anyone considered changing the constitution to force State government to do their jobs...or just get rid of them altogether?

Whatever, it's clear that we're not impressing our young people who are preferring to join gangs or carry weapons to protect themselves from those same gangs.

UP TO three-quarters of teenagers who live in Melbourne's west believe gangs are a presence in their neighbourhoods and a third have had an encounter with them, according to a two-year study on community safety

Dislodged supermarket trolley poles, bats, knives, machetes and sometimes guns were identified as weapons chosen by their peers. The participants said the desire to carry such weapons was linked primarily to the need to feel safe, protected or for self-defence [TheAge](#)

Happy Election Day!

That Was The Week That Was

Governance + spins

Pay the rates or lose your home [Telegraph](#)
Time to stop the waste: Johns [Australian](#)
Electoral system only provides illusion of democracy [SMH](#)
States have damaged Labor brand: Gillard [TheAge](#)1 [Age2](#)

Food/forestry

Humour? Gay felled by invidious Green plot [SMH](#)
Scottsdale mill fate uncertain [Mercury](#)
NSW Forestry investigated over logging breaches [SMH](#)

Climate/water/energy/resources/environment

On the front line of climate change [Independent](#)
Warming may have stopped: Abbott [TheAge](#)
Water muddle leaves Labor high and dry [TheAge](#)

Health & education revolutions/communication/defence

Heavy price for homes to access superfast NBN [Australian](#)
Troops' gear failing in war zones [TheAge](#)
Toxic epidural ravages mother [TheAge](#)
Is health a Labor priority? [Telegraph](#)

Economy/social/shelter/transport/free speech/World

Raided group funded by taxpayers [Australian](#)
Unions bankroll GetUp! [SMH](#)
Costings reforms not 'in government's interest' [TheAge](#)
Gulf oil spill is not disappearing [WashingtonPost](#)