

**Submission
No 1**

PREFERENCE COUNTING IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS IN NSW

Name: Mr Luke Diggins

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Dear committee members,

I am writing in support of abolishing the current system of 'random selection' in the counting of preferences in local government elections in NSW. I do not believe the current system delivers fair results in all cases and better systems exist that produce more accurate preference flows.

The principle of fractional transfers, most notably used in the Australian Senate, should be adopted for all future local government elections. Under these systems, all voter preferences continue to have (diminished) effect throughout the count, not only the preferences of a randomly selected group of individuals. In the age of computer-assisted vote counting, it is absurd that chance plays a larger factor in election outcomes than the marked subsequent preferences of all voters. Please refer to this highly detailed explanation from Antony Green:

<http://blogs.abc.net.au/antonygreen/2016/01/nsw-electoral-law-and-the-problem-of-randomly-elected-candidates.html>

However, the Senate uses an inferior implementation of this principle known as the (Unweighted) Inclusive Gregory Method. I recommend to the committee that NSW adopt a superior implementation known as the Weighted Inclusive Gregory Method, already used in Western Australian Legislative Council elections from 2006. In short, the weighted method better distinguishes between votes (some with fractional transferred values) and raw ballot papers. This produces fairer outcomes for all parties. Compared to the unweighted method, the weighted method requires only a one-line code change in the computer formula used to conduct the count.

I refer you to the following resources regarding the Weighted Inclusive Gregory Method:

* Electoral Legislation Amendment Act 2006 (WA): http://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdoc/au/legis/wa/num_act/elaa200664o2006341/s52.html

* Distortions in the Queensland Senate Count: <http://blogs.abc.net.au/antonygreen/2010/09/distortions-in-the-queensland-senate-count.html>

* Transfer Values in Northern Victoria Region: <http://blogs.abc.net.au/antonygreen/2014/12/transfer-values-in-northern-victoria-region.html>

Ideally, these changes could be legislated for local government elections, trialled and then considered for a referendum so they may likewise be applied to the NSW Legislative Council. I note that this inquiry has already gained prominent media attention from the Sydney Morning Herald, who alongside the ABC would be likely to provide favourable coverage of any such change. The article to which I refer is available online here: <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/wrong-candidate-expert-lashes-nsw-electoral-commissions-votecounting-method-20170913-gygjuf.html>

Thank you for your consideration.

Kind regards,

Luke Diggins