

**Submission  
No 4**

## **PREFERENCE COUNTING IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS IN NSW**

**Organisation:** Moree Plains Shire Council  
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22 September 2017

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters

Via [electoralmatters@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:electoralmatters@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

To whom it may concern,

### **Inquiry into preference counting in local government elections in NSW**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission into the above Inquiry.

In consideration of your Terms of Reference, we do not believe that 'random selection' in the counting of preferences in local government elections would always deliver fair results for candidates.

Given preferences are distributed by computers in council elections, we believe the full suite of preferences should be allocated to ensure the accurate result is provided at the conclusion of counting.

We noted with concern the comments of Vanessa Teague, a senior lecturer at the University of Melbourne's School of Computing and Information Systems, that the code used to count votes has errors and that when they modelled the elections in a handful of Councils with slightly different random samples it led to different possible outcomes (<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-09-14/computer-algorithms-may-sway-local-council-elections/8944186>). In 2017, this is simply not good enough.

It should also be noted that the traditional approach of manually counting the votes should not be discounted as a sound approach for the allocation of preferences. Whether counted manually or electronically, all votes should be counted, rather than limited to a random selection.

Thank you for taking our comments into consideration. We look forward to seeing the recommendations to come from your Inquiry.

Yours faithfully

[REDACTED]  
Cr Katrina Humphries  
**MAYOR**