PREFERENCE COUNTING IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS IN NSW

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I have been within the commercial software development world working on large scale software deployments for over 17 years, and specialised in computer security with my university studies in Computer Science. Additionally I have taken a strong interest in open source software for over 20 years and have followed this to more recent efforts in open data coming from government agencies that assist with government transparency and accountability.

In the case of excess votes in the preferential system, I mirror the concerns of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters that the random allocation of votes is significantly problematic in the impact it can have on election outcomes. I believe a more appropriate system would be to utilise the proven systems of equally weighted distribution currently implemented within the Federal Senate, Victoria, and the ACT. I would refer the committee to the AEC website describing the approach for 'Transferring the surplus' http://www.aec.gov.au/Voting/counting/senate_count.htm

I strongly support the preferential vote system for its ability to most accurately represent voter intentions, and strongly discourage the use of a First Past The Post system which I believe reduces the ability for independent candidates to have a chance to impact our society. According to a September 26 2017 article on the Goulburn Post website (http://www.goulburnpost.com.au/story/4948209/voting-for-a-council-poll-change/), I believe my local council of Goulburn Mulwaree has has lodged a submission promoting the use of a FPTP approach for the local elections. I do not believe this serves the best interests of our region or any other region within NSW.

As part of any changes to preferential counting, I would like to re-enforce that the ability for the public to be able to audit election ballot results is crucial for democratic accountability. By allowing interested individuals and researchers to scrutinise ballot data, as is currently possible via the AEC website, we ensure that any preferential system that is implemented, is accurately implemented and representative of the voters intents. Specifically I would refer you to the research of Berj Chilingirian, Zara Perumal, Ronald L. Rivest, Grahame Bowland, Andrew Conway, Philip B. Stark, Michelle Blom, Chris Culnane, and Vanessa Teague, in the paper 'Auditing Australian Senate Ballots' (https://arxiv.org/abs/1610.00127) for efforts being made both within and outside Australia with publicly available Australian election data to ensure that voter intent is being accurately represented in the final election results.

Finally I would like to express that I strongly believe in the importance of the need for NSW electronic voting software to be open source, to ensure whatever approach is decided upon by Parliament is accurately represented and implemented in software. By allowing software to be open sourced, the public that is impacted by electronic voting can scrutinise the accuracy of the implementation. This software should not hold commercial value that is greater than our accurate and verifiable democratic representation.