

**Submission
No 11**

PREFERENCE COUNTING IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS IN NSW

Organisation: Electoral Reform Australia
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Electoral Reform Australia

The New South Wales Branch of the Proportional Representation Society of Australia

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29 September 2017

Inquiry into preference counting in local government elections in NSW

Terms of reference

That the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters inquire into and report on:

- a) the current system of 'random selection' in the counting of preferences in local government elections,
- b) whether this system delivers fair results in all cases for candidates,
- c) whether there are any alternative methods of ballot counting which would produce more accurate preference flows, and
- d) any other related matter.

That the Committee report by 14 November 2017.

Dear Committee,

Congratulations; the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters is continuing its pattern of merely tinkering with the electoral system for local government.

The NSW Local Government electoral system is riddled with undemocratic requirements. In this submission we are using point *d) any other related matter* to discuss the matter.

We call on the Committee to recommend amending the Local Government electoral procedures to correct the following -

1. the undemocratic nature of double counting the votes of Mayors who are popularly elected.
2. the use of above the line voting boxes.
3. the unnecessary requirement to number preferences for at least half the number of candidates to be elected.

4. groups standing excessive numbers of candidates despite knowing that there is no reasonable expectation that the extra candidates will be elected.
5. the random allocation of preferences.
6. elimination of donkey voting in single list elections such as for Mayors, and for Councils in which grouping is not the norm.
7. insufficient electoral deposits.
8. elimination of wards.
9. the failure to introduce the world's best proportional representation system - The Meek system.

We see no point in expanding on these issues within this submission as they have been canvassed with former Ministers for Local Government including Mr Paul Toole. If you require further explication we would be happy to provide it.

We call on the JSCEM to undertake an campaign to educate members of the JSCEM on how proportional representation actually works.

To this end we call on the JSCEM to organise a workshop for its own members, complete with white boards, butchers paper and lots of ballot papers which can be numbered, sorted and counted, and resorted and recounted.

We understand that politicians all believe that somehow they are experts in understanding the workings of proportional representation systems. We also know that, in most cases, they are wrong.

We recommend that you ask a mathematician, not a lawyer, judge or politician, to facilitate such a workshop.

Should you decide on such a course of action we, Electoral Reform Australia, would be happy to participate.

Yours sincerely,

Susan Gregory

President

Stephen Lesslie

Vice President