

Submission to the Ministerial Expert Committee on Electoral Reform

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(a) which model (whole-of-state electorate or region-based) is preferable to achieve electoral equality

Whole-of-state electorate is preferable to achieve electoral equality.

(b) the strengths and drawbacks of each model

I will consider four goals as desirable in an electoral system:

- Number of members that are needed to form a majority, to be elected by 50% of electors' votes.
- Less vote wastage.
- More choice to electors. This will be measured by how low the candidate quota is, as a percentage of votes in an electorate.
- Ease of filling in ballot paper.

To simplify the calculation, the table presented treats split terms as multiple electorates, effectively weighting the votes for each half election so that they add up to 50% of the total. Australian proportional systems have rounding, but this is treated as negligible and excluded from the calculations below.

For number of members n , number of electorates e , seats per electorate $s = \frac{n}{e}$, number of members required to form majority $m = \frac{n}{2} + 1$ rounded down:

- The quota as percentage of electorate votes is $q = \frac{1}{s+1}$
- The total percentage of votes wasted i.e. not used to elect anyone, is the number of electorates multiplied by the quota as a percentage of total votes i.e. $e \frac{q}{e} = q$
- The number votes required to elect a majority of the house is $m \frac{q}{e}$

Table 1: Comparison of upper house electoral systems existing in other states and systems hypothetical for WA

State	No. of Members	Electorates	Votes to Elect House Majority	Quota per Electorate	Total Wasted Votes
TAS	15	15	26.67%	50.00%	50.00%
VIC	40	8	43.75%	16.67%	16.67%
SA	22	2 (split)	50.00%	8.33%	8.33%
NSW	42	2 (split)	50.00%	4.55%	4.55%
WA	36	6	45.24%	14.29%	14.29%
WA	36	2 (split)	50.00%	5.26%	5.26%
WA	36	1	51.35%	2.70%	2.70%
WA	37	1	50.00%	2.63%	2.63%

For single term, the option of whole-of-state electorate for WA, and preferably with an odd number of members, is best for the first three goals, with a majority in the house requiring 50.00% of all votes, and a quota-per-electorate and vote wastage of about 2.63%, depending on how the number of members is changed to make it odd.

For two rotating terms, the option of whole-of-state electorate for WA is still best for the first three goals, with a majority in the house requiring 50.00% of all votes, and a quota-per-electorate and vote wastage of 5.26%.

The calculations assume that multiple electorates have exactly the same number of voters. Since they generally do not (even if the boundaries are drawn with this goal), this is a further drawback for a region-based model.

I do not have a recommendation for whether single or split terms should be adopted.

The last goal of ease of filling in the ballot paper is considered in section (d).

(c) whether any other electoral model, not covered in this Discussion Paper, is better suited to achieve electoral equality, with reasons

No comment.

(d) what changes (if any) should be made to the distribution of preferences in the Legislative Council's proportional representation system, including group voting tickets.

Group tickets should be abolished and replaced with optional preferences, so that voters must be explicit in giving preferences.

The election of a member of the Daylight Saving Party was fair as they received the quota of votes, but voters may not have realised who they were ultimately voting for when voting above the line for other parties.

If my recommendation of having a whole-of-electorate is taken, this will result in extra candidates to fill the greater number of vacancies, which may make it harder for voters. However NSW has shown that it can be done for elections to fill 21 vacancies, and voters may easily number above the line if they wish. I also suggest:

- Allowing preferences to be given both above the line and below the line. This makes it easier for a voter to indicate a preference of just one or a few candidates in a group, and give the rest of their vote to the remainder of the group by writing their next preference above the line.

Introducing optional preferences will cause votes to exhaust without using their full value, which can result in the last candidate(s) being elected without full quotas. To reduce/prevent this, I suggest the following for consideration:

- Encouraging voters to give multiple/many preferences (while still counting votes as long as one first preference is given), and helping them understand that their vote can elect multiple candidates/parties.
- If a vote exhausts when electing a candidate, then “exclude it” in calculating the transfer value of other votes for that candidate. For example, if a candidate receives 1/2 quotas of votes that would then exhaust, and 1 quota of votes that have a next preference, instead of carrying over the 1 quota of votes with 1/3 value as in the current system, carrying them over with 1/2 value. This could be limited to prevent increasing the value of carry-over votes (such that for example one person’s vote’s value doesn’t go above 1), and the point below applied if such a limit is reached.
- If votes exhaust on an excluded candidate, then restart the count to elect all candidates, keeping excluded candidates excluded, but recalculating the quota minus the value of exhausted votes.