

# LARGEST REMAINDER

(Not quite Quota Notes)

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## Editorial

Another Federal election. Our House of Representatives is still based on single member electorates and our Senate is still elected using a bastardised form of PR.

The PRSA (NSW) has resolved to campaign for the removal of Above-the-line voting and Registered Group Voting Tickets.

Is a High Court challenge the only way forward?

The political parties are very happy with the stasiocratic nature of our system, so there is no political will to change it.

Perhaps we need to engage with activist groups such as GetUp! to get real PR on the social and political agenda.

If you do not wish to receive *Largest Remainder* please let us know at [president@electoralreformaustralia.org](mailto:president@electoralreformaustralia.org).

## How Democratic is our Democracy?

*Author: Stephen Lesslie*

Are all voters equal in our democracy?

Since 1972, a citizen living at Eden in the electorate of Eden Monaro, will always have had their local member on the Government side of the Parliament. But a citizen living either at Bellevue Hill or Bankstown will, at different times, have had their local member on the Government side of the Parliament for only nineteen of those thirty eight years.

Are the citizens of Bellevue Hill or Bankstown only half as important?

Or in fact are they not important at all? The citizens of Bellevue Hill and of Bankstown live in the safe electorates of Wentworth and Blaxland respectively; these electorates have only ever returned the endorsed Liberal or Labor candidate. Different candidates have won and lost party pre-selections for the seats but the voters have had no say in those decisions, merely endorsing the actions of the political power brokers at the subsequent election.

If individual voters in these electorates find themselves critical of Government policy or their local member and subsequently change their votes will it make any difference? No, it won't! The seat of Blaxland has always returned the ALP and will do so again at this election; the seat of Wentworth has always returned the endorsed Liberal candidate and will do so again at this election.

Wouldn't it be better if we could all live in an electorate like Eden Monaro where the local member has been on the Government side of politics for every one of the last thirty eight years?

Wouldn't it be better if on election day every voter could cast a vote knowing that it would have as much influence on the result as the vote of anyone else in Australia, regardless of whether they lived in Bankstown, Bellevue Hill or Eden?

In safe seats such as Blaxland and Wentworth voters tromp out meaninglessly to elect the candidate endorsed by the party. It may be that most voters are happy to accept the party's choice of candidate, but wouldn't it be better if all parties were required to offer a choice of candidates?

After this election it is certain that a majority of voters will have cast their first preference for a candidate who will not be elected. Neither is there any guarantee that the

elected Government will have even the two-party-preferred majority support of the Australian people.

Wouldn't it be better if, after the election, a majority and probably as many as eighty percent of voters were represented in Parliament by the person to whom they gave their first preference?

These "wouldn't it be better" are not a pipe dream. They cannot be achieved under the current system of electing our Parliament from single member electorates but can and would be achieved from an election conducted according to the principles of proportional representation.

### **The Proportional Representation Society of Australia (NSW)'s fearless prediction of the results in two thirds of the House of Representatives seats.**

#### **New South Wales**

<b>Electorate</b>	<b>Winner</b>
Banks	ALP
Barton	ALP
Bennelong	ALP
Berowra	Liberal
Blaxland	ALP
Bradfield	Liberal
Charlton	ALP
Chifley	ALP
Cook	Liberal
Cunningham	ALP
Farrer	Liberal
Fowler	ALP
Hume	Liberal
Hunter	ALP
Kingsford Smith	ALP
Lyne	Independent
Mackellar	Liberal
McMahon	ALP
Mitchell	Liberal
New England	Independent
Newcastle	ALP
North Sydney	Liberal
Parkes	National
Parramatta	ALP
Reid	ALP
Richmond	ALP
Shortland	ALP

Throsby	ALP
Warringah	Liberal
Watson	ALP
Wentworth	Liberal
Werriwa	ALP

#### **Victoria**

<b>Electorate</b>	<b>Winner</b>
Ballarat	ALP
Batman	ALP
Bendigo	ALP
Bruce	ALP
Calwell	ALP
Casey	Liberal
Chisholm	ALP
Corio	ALP
Flinders	Liberal
Gellibrand	ALP
Gippsland	National
Goldstein	Liberal
Gorton	ALP
Higgins	Liberal
Holt	ALP
Hotham	ALP
Indi	Liberal
Isaacs	ALP
Jagajaga	ALP
Kooyong	Liberal
Lalor	ALP
Mallee	National
Maribyrnong	ALP
Melbourne Ports	ALP
Menzies	Liberal
Murray	Liberal
Scullin	ALP
Wannon	ALP
Wills	ALP

#### **Queensland**

<b>Electorate</b>	<b>Winner</b>
Blair	ALP
Capricornia	ALP
Fadden	Liberal
Griffith	ALP
Groom	Liberal
Kennedy	Independent
Lilley	ALP
Maranoa	National
McPherson	Liberal
Moncrieff	Liberal
Moreton	ALP
Oxley	ALP

Rankin	ALP
Wide Bay	Liberal

### Western Australia

Electorate	Winner
Canning	Liberal
Curtin	Liberal
Durack	Liberal
Forrest	Liberal
Fremantle	ALP
Moore	Liberal
Pearce	Liberal
Perth	ALP
Tangney	Liberal

### South Australia

Electorate	Winner
Adelaide	ALP
Barker	Liberal
Grey	Liberal
Hindmarsh	ALP
Kingston	ALP
Makin	ALP
Mayo	Liberal
Port Adelaide	ALP
Wakefield	ALP

### Tasmania

Electorate	Winner
Denison	ALP
Franklin	ALP
Lyons	ALP

### Australian Capital Territory

Electorate	Winner
Canberra	ALP
Fraser	ALP

### Northern Territory

Electorate	Winner
Lingiari	ALP

## Above-the-Line Voting and Registered Group Voting tickets (GVT)

*Author: Stephen Lesslie*

Despite the presence of eighty four candidates standing for the Senate in 2010 the voters of NSW will, in reality, only have a choice of seven candidates to fill the six positions.

The only real contest is between Steve Hutchins (Labor), Fiona Nash (National) and Lee Rhiannon (Greens) for the last two positions.

The other 77 candidates, comprising 28 groups and five ungrouped candidates, are as irrelevant to the outcome as are the nine minor party candidates in the eleven candidate contest for the seat of Bennelong. Their preferences may determine the outcome but they cannot win the seat themselves.

Why do these groups run for the Senate?

They run because they believe they can influence the outcome. It is the ability to direct up to 97% of their preferences that gives them this belief; the Registered Group Voting Tickets (GVTs) give them this ability. Some groups such as B,L,P and AF even go to the length of hiding and confusing their preferences so that it appears that they are supporting one group whilst in fact supporting another.

Above-the-line voting is abhorrent to the principles of democracy.

Voters who put a 1 above-the-line will have their preferences allocated according to the wishes of that party or group. For eleven groups this will be two people who have merely paid a \$1000 each so they can form a group on the Senate ballot paper; these eleven groups are not parties and they represent no-one but themselves.

Does it matter? Yes! It makes the ballot paper virtually unworkable and increases the likelihood that genuine voters trying to cast a meaningful vote by voting below-the-line will make enough errors to cause their vote to become informal.

With 84 candidates running, the minimum number of squares to be filled in for a formal vote below-the-line is 76. Without the extra 22 joke candidates the minimum would be 56. The \$22,000 collected in forfeited electoral deposits would not even pay for the extra cost in producing the oversize ballot papers.

Why do these 22, and other groups as well, run? There are two obvious reasons –

1. \$2,000 is a very cheap way of directing preferences to their preferred party;
2. Ego, or as Gareth Evans once remarked

“Relevance Deprivation Syndrome.”

Why are voters allowed to vote with a 1 above-the-line and have their vote allocated according to the wishes of nameless party officials or two people who have merely paid a \$1000 each so they can form a group on the Senate ballot paper, when if they vote below-the-line for even as many as 75 candidates according to their own preference, their vote will be not counted.

Can you trust your party?

In 2004 the Victorian ALP gave preferences to Family First (not this time, I note). Does anyone believe that a majority of ALP voters preferred Family First to the Greens?

Are NSW Democratic Labor Party (DLP) voters aware that their party has effectively given their preferences to the ALP? How many DLP voters will check the Group Voting Ticket, either on-line or at the polling booth, and then work out that although the Liberal Party’s Ferranti-Wells and Heffernan have preferences 26 and 27, well ahead of the first and second ALP candidates (Faulkner and Thistlewaite) on 59 and 60 respectively, what really matters is that the third ALP candidate (Hutchins) on 25 beats them all and therefore gets the preferences.

Do supporters of the Socialist Equality Party realize that a third of their party’s preferences will go to the Liberal Party?

Former Democrat Leader and ALP Government Minister Cheryl Kernot is standing for election in an unnamed group of two. She is directing preferences in both of her GVTs to the Greens. Will she get more votes than the increase in the informal vote caused by increasing the minimum vote below the line from 74 to 76? In the next edition we will give you her vote and the informal vote!

Why are voters who wish to make their own choices penalized? Why is it not just as easy to vote below-the-line as above?

To return the decision making to the voters we must abolish above-the-line voting and allow voters to cast a fully optional preferential vote. Any vote with a unique No.1 should be counted.

Voters can then make their own choices

as to where their preferences go.

Ah, but too many votes will exhaust and distort the result! will be the cry.

It is true that some votes will exhaust, but that will be compensated for by:

1. A decrease in the informal vote;
2. A reduction in the number of candidates and groups standing. This will happen because the reason for standing - to direct preferences - will vanish, concentrating the vote on more genuine candidates.

If coupled with the Robson rotation, any single vote for a major party candidate, which in this instance includes the Greens, will remain in the count, contributing to the quota, not be distributed and therefore not become exhausted. Voters who choose micro parties or ungrouped candidates realize that their vote is a protest vote and will continue their preferences automatically.

As for the ego trippers, an electoral deposit of \$1,000 per candidate seems to be far too small.

## Analysis of the effect of the GVTs of all 31 groups

For the table of analysis, please see page 5.

## Future Meetings

The following date in 2010 has been set for a Committee Meeting at 7.30pm: Monday 15 November.

Anyone is welcome to attend. For details, please contact Susan Gregory at [president@electoralreformaustralia.org](mailto:president@electoralreformaustralia.org) or on 9181 5185 for the relevant information.

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Comments and/or contributions are welcome:

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### PRSA NSW Branch officers

Susan Gregory – President

Stephen Lesslie – Vice President

Mark Rodowicz – Vice President

Patrick Lesslie – Secretary/Treasurer

**Analysis of the effect of the GVTs of all 31 groups**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Name of Party</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> pref.</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> pref.</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> pref.</b>	<b>Deceptive?*</b>
<b>A</b>	Socialist Alliance	Green	ALP	Lib/Nat	
<b>B</b>		ALP	Lib/Nat	Green	Deceptive
<b>C</b>		Green	Lib/Nat	ALP	
<b>D</b>		Lib/Nat	ALP	Green	
<b>E</b>	Building Australia	ALP	Lib/Nat	Green	
<b>F</b>	Senator on Line	Green	Lib/Nat	ALP	
<b>G</b>	Communist	Green	ALP	Lib/Nat	
<b>H</b>		ALP	Lib/Nat	Green	
<b>I</b>	Citizens Electoral Council	Lib/Nat	ALP	Green	
<b>J (1)</b>	Australian Democrats	Green	ALP	Lib/Nat	
<b>J (2)</b>		Green	Lib/Nat	ALP	
<b>K (1)</b>		Lib/Nat	Green	ALP	
<b>K (2)</b>		Green	Lib/Nat	ALP	
<b>K (3)</b>		ALP	Green	Lib/Nat	
<b>L</b>		ALP	Lib/Nat	Green	Deceptive
<b>M</b>	The Climate Sceptics	Lib/Nat	ALP	Green	
<b>N</b>	Secular Party of Australia	Green	ALP	Lib/Nat	
<b>O</b>	Shooters and Fishers	Lib/Nat	ALP	Green	
<b>P</b>	Democratic Labor Party	ALP	Lib/Nat	Green	Deceptive
<b>Q</b>	Australian Sex Party	Green	ALP	Lib/Nat	
<b>R</b>		ALP	Lib/Nat	Green	
<b>S (1)</b>	Socialist Equality Party	ALP	Lib/Nat	Green	
<b>S (2)</b>		Lib/Nat	Green	ALP	
<b>S (3)</b>		Green	ALP	Lib/Nat	
<b>T (1)</b>		Green	Lib/Nat	ALP	
<b>T (2)</b>		Green	ALP	Lib/Nat	
<b>U (1)</b>	Non-Custodial Parents Party	Lib/Nat	ALP	Green	Both tickets the same
<b>U (2)</b>		Lib/Nat	ALP	Green	
<b>V</b>	Family First	Lib/Nat	ALP	Green	
<b>W</b>	ALP	ALP	Green	Lib/Nat	
<b>X</b>		ALP	Green	Lib/Nat	
<b>Y (1)</b>	Carers Alliance	ALP	Lib/Nat	Green	
<b>Y (2)</b>		Lib/Nat	ALP	Green	
<b>Z</b>	Christian Democratic Party	Lib/Nat	ALP	Green	
<b>AA</b>	Liberal/National	Lib/Nat	Green	ALP	
<b>AB</b>		Green	ALP	Lib/Nat	
<b>AC</b>	One Nation	Lib/Nat	ALP	Green	
<b>AD</b>	The Greens	Green	Lib/Nat	ALP	
<b>AE (1)</b>		Green	Lib/Nat	ALP	
<b>AE (2)</b>		Green	ALP	Lib/Nat	
<b>AF</b>	Liberal Democrats	ALP	Lib/Nat	Green	Deceptive
<b>Ungrouped</b>					

\*Deceptive: The preference flow shown here for groups B, L, P and AF is what will actually happen. Superficial examination of their GVTs could make you think otherwise.