

Proportional Representation in the Legislative Council

Proportional representation (PR) is the name given to the voting system that is used to elect members to the Legislative Council. This system was introduced in 1987 in time for the 1989 state election. PR is different from the preferential voting system that is used to elect members to the Legislative Assembly.

The proportional representation system was designed to more accurately reflect the intentions of voters. Generally speaking, the number of votes cast for a political party will be mirrored in the number of seats won. This differs from the preferential system used in the Legislative Assembly, which works to create an artificial majority so that one party or coalition can form a government.

Importantly, the operation of PR requires multimember electorates for the distribution of seats to be allocated to the competing parties. For instance, in a six-member electorate if one political party received 50 per cent of the vote it could expect to win 50 per cent of the seats—namely, three seats. If another party received one-third of the votes (33per cent), it could expect to win one-third of the seats—that is, two seats.


To be elected to the Legislative Council, a candidate must achieve a quota, which is based on the number of formal votes and the number of candidates to be elected. The quota required is calculated using the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{Number of formal votes per region} + 1}{\text{Number of MLCs to be elected} + 1} = \text{Quota}$$

$$\text{Number of MLCs to be elected} + 1$$

For example, the quota for the six-seat East Metropolitan Region for the 2008 state election was:

$$\frac{276,591 \text{ (formal votes)} + 1}{7 \text{ (6+1)}} = 39,514$$



Ballot Paper Region of Region 1 Election of 5 members of the Legislative Council

For your vote to count, you must vote in either one of the two ways described below.

EITHER place the number 1 in one, and one only of these squares to indicate your choice.

PARTY ONE ☐ PARTY TWO ☐ GROUP C ☐ PARTY FOUR ☐ GROUP E ☐ PARTY SIX ☐ PARTY SEVEN ☐

OR place the numbers 1 to at least 5 in these squares to indicate your choice.

CANDIDATE ONE ☐ CANDIDATE TWO ☐ CANDIDATE THREE ☐ CANDIDATE FOUR ☐ CANDIDATE FIVE ☐ CANDIDATE SIX ☐ CANDIDATE SEVEN ☐ CANDIDATE EIGHT ☐ CANDIDATE NINE ☐ CANDIDATE TEN ☐ CANDIDATE ELEVEN ☐ CANDIDATE TWELVE ☐ CANDIDATE THIRTEEN ☐ CANDIDATE FOURTEEN ☐ CANDIDATE FIFTEEN ☐ CANDIDATE SIXTEEN ☐ CANDIDATE SEVENTEEN ☐ CANDIDATE EIGHTEEN ☐ CANDIDATE NINETEEN ☐ CANDIDATE TWENTY ☐ CANDIDATE TWENTY ONE ☐ CANDIDATE TWENTY TWO ☐ CANDIDATE TWENTY THREE ☐ CANDIDATE TWENTY FOUR ☐ CANDIDATE TWENTY FIVE ☐ CANDIDATE TWENTY SIX ☐ CANDIDATE TWENTY SEVEN ☐ CANDIDATE TWENTY EIGHT ☐ CANDIDATE TWENTY NINE ☐ CANDIDATE THIRTY ☐ CANDIDATE THIRTY ONE ☐ CANDIDATE THIRTY TWO ☐ CANDIDATE THIRTY THREE ☐ CANDIDATE THIRTY FOUR ☐ CANDIDATE THIRTY FIVE ☐ CANDIDATE THIRTY SIX ☐ CANDIDATE THIRTY SEVEN ☐ CANDIDATE THIRTY EIGHT ☐ CANDIDATE THIRTY NINE ☐ CANDIDATE FORTY ☐ CANDIDATE FORTY ONE ☐ CANDIDATE FORTY TWO ☐ CANDIDATE FORTY THREE ☐ CANDIDATE FORTY FOUR ☐ CANDIDATE FORTY FIVE ☐ CANDIDATE FORTY SIX ☐ CANDIDATE FORTY SEVEN ☐ 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Proportional Representation in the Legislative Council

The count for the East Metropolitan Region for 2013 is tabled below. It shows the correspondence between the percentage of the political party vote and the proportion of seats won by each party. The table shows the percentage of voters who used the so-called 'ticket vote' as 96.61 per cent. The ticket vote is when an elector votes above the line and places the figure 1 beside the political party of their choice.

The preferences of such voters follows a written statement of preferences lodged with the Electoral Commission. The remaining 3.39 per cent of voters cast their preferences between all competing candidates.



As a consequence of legislation passed in 2005, the number of members of the Legislative Council representing each region changed. From 1989-2009, the six electoral regions of the Legislative Council, which returned 34 members, were:

East Metropolitan Region 2017 (Roll 395,451)

Groups/Individual	Ticket Votes	Non-Ticket Votes	Votes Counted	Quotas	Seats
Daylight Saving Party	2,353	289	2,642	0.06	
Independent - LOTTERING, M	667	135	802	0.02	
Micro Business Party	2,257	274	2,531	0.05	
Liberal Party	81,098	2,449	83,547	1.75	1
Independent - DHU, Shawn	627	50	677	0.01	
Liberal Democrats	3,302	162	3,464	0.07	
FLUORIDE FREE WA	1,106	156	1,262	0.03	
Family First	3,193	168	3,361	0.07	
The Greens (WA)	26,044	3,766	29,810	0.62	1
Independent - WILLIAMS, Charday	345	36	381	0.01	
Pauline Hanson's One Nation	25,321	1,553	26,874	0.56	1
Julie Matheson for Western Australia	1,168	232	1,400	0.03	
Animal Justice Party	4,502	372	4,874	0.1	
WA Labor	151,529	4,178	155,707	3.26	3
Shooters, Fishers and Farmers	6,391	445	6,836	0.14	
Independent - HEWITT, Jayme	402	40	442	0.01	
Australian Christians	7,691	601	8,292	0.17	
Flux The System!	1,246	276	1,522	0.03	
Independent - CORNISH, Roger D	306	86	392	0.01	
Total Valid Votes	319,548	15,268	334,816	7	
Informal			10,036		
Total			344,852		

South West Region	7 Members
North Metropolitan Region	7 Members
South Metropolitan Region	5 Members
East Metropolitan Region	5 Members
Agricultural Region	5 Members
Mining and Pastoral Region	5 Members

However, in 2005 the constitutional provisions were changed in the Legislative Council to provide for six members to represent each region. As from 22 May 2009, there are 36 members of the Legislative Council. The four-year fixed term and proportional representation voting were retained.

South West Region	6 Members
North Metropolitan Region	6 Members
South Metropolitan Region	6 Members
East Metropolitan Region	6 Members
Agricultural Region	6 Members
Mining and Pastoral Region	6 Members



Visit the Western Australian Electoral Commission website at www.waec.wa.gov.au for more information on elections, by-elections and referendums. For analysis of elections go to Information Services at www.wa.parliament.gov.au and see Election and Electorate Profiles.

