

**Report on**  
**Optional Preferential Voting**  
**2003 – 2004**

RESEARCH SERIES



**STATE ELECTORAL OFFICE**  
*South Australia*

## STATE ELECTORAL OFFICE

### Disclaimer

Material for this report was collated in 2004. Every effort has been made to check the accuracy of the data and references. The State Electoral Office would appreciate advice of any necessary corrections.

John Alderman  
Assistant Elections Officer  
September 2004

Copies of this document are available from:  
State Electoral Office

134 Fullarton Rd  
ROSE PARK SA 5067  
(GPO BOX 646, ADELAIDE SA 5001)

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| Telephone      | 61 8 8401 4300   |
| Facsimile      | 61 8 8401 4333   |
| DX Number      | DX 442, Adelaide   |
| Internet       | <a href="http://www.seo.sa.gov.au">www.seo.sa.gov.au</a> |
| Teletype (TTY) | 61 8 8332 9454   |

**ISSN 1443 3621**

# Contents

|  | Page<br>Number |
|--|----------------|
| <b>Introduction</b> .....  | 1              |
| South Australia's current Lower House voting system.....             | 1              |
| The argument for Optional Preferential Voting (OPV).....             | 2              |
| <br>   |                |
| <b>South Australian local government elections</b> .....             | 3              |
| Background .....   | 3              |
| Findings.....  | 4              |
| Comments .....   | 6              |
| <br>   |                |
| <b>South Australian industrial ballots</b> .....                     | 6              |
| Background .....   | 6              |
| South Australian Superannuation Board election 2003 (Super SA) ..... | 6              |
| Repatriation General Hospital election 2004 .....                    | 6              |
| Findings.....  | 7              |
| Comments .....   | 7              |
| <br>   |                |
| <b>Conclusion</b> .....  | 8              |
| <br>   |                |
| <b>References</b> .....  | 9              |
| <br>   |                |
| <b>Appendix 1</b>  |                |
| Queensland State parliamentary elections .....                       | 10             |
| Background .....   | 10             |
| What changed between 1995 – 2001?.....                               | 11             |
| <br>   |                |
| <b>Appendix 2</b> .....  | 12             |
| Analysis of ballot papers from five mayoral elections in 2003        |                |
| <br>   |                |
| <b>Appendix 3</b> .....  | 14             |
| South Australian Superannuation Board Election 2003                  |                |

# Tables

|   | <b>Page<br/>Number</b> |
|---|------------------------|
| <b>Table 1: Election year with number of HA ticket votes.....</b>                           | <b>2</b>               |
| <b>Table 2: Summary of South Australian Mayoral ballot paper responses .....</b>            | <b>4</b>               |
| <b>Table 3: Results of Super SA survey.....</b>   | <b>7</b>               |
| <b>Table 4: Super SA ballot paper markings.....</b>   | <b>7</b>               |
| <b>Table 5: Repatriation General Hospital ballot paper markings .....</b>                   | <b>7</b>               |
| <b>Table 6: Comparison of ballot paper markings under OPV .....</b>                         | <b>8</b>               |
| <b>Table 7: Example of OPV compared with full preferential voting .....</b>                 | <b>8</b>               |
| <b>Table 8: Queensland ballot paper markings 1992-2001 .....</b>                            | <b>10</b>              |
| <b>Table 9: First Preferences votes by party in Queensland<br/>elections 1995–2001.....</b> | <b>11</b>              |

# Introduction

The office thanks Ms Jenni Newton, Director Research in the South Australian Parliamentary Library for commenting on a draft of this paper. It also acknowledges recent ballot paper analysis undertaken by the Electoral Commission Queensland (ECQ) - see Appendix 1.

The paper was produced in response to a number of queries about the impact and incidence of optional preferential voting in recent elections conducted by the South Australian State Electoral Office. The intention of the office is not to participate in any policy decisions concerning the appropriate vote marking and counting methods but to respond in a factual manner to requests for information.

Through the Constitutional Convention held between 8 – 10 August 2003, a representative sample of South Australian citizens were exposed to a range of competing perspectives regarding parliamentary reform. The final report from the Convention identified several issues of importance to the representatives who attended. Optional preferential voting (OPV) for members of the House of Assembly (HA) was consistently identified as a priority for future reform (Summary Report:2003:10).

## South Australia's current Lower House voting system

The House of Assembly is composed of forty-seven single member electorates. Under the *Constitution Act 1934*, the Electoral Districts Boundaries Commission determines the geographical borders of each of the electorates. House of Assembly members are currently elected by secret ballot under a compulsory, full preferential, alternative vote counting method.

The full preferential, alternative vote system requires the elector to mark each candidate on the ballot paper with a number in order of preference. This system is a form of majoritarian voting which requires a candidate to obtain an absolute majority, (at least 50%+1) of formal votes cast in order to win a seat in parliament (IDEA:2004:1). If, at the first count, no candidate has gained more than 50% of the votes, the candidate with the least number of first preference votes is excluded with his/her ballot papers then distributed to remaining candidates according to the second preferences marked on those ballot papers. This process of excluding the candidate with the least number of votes and distributing to the next available preference continues until one candidate is elected by gaining more than 50% of the vote.

Another name for the South Australian alternative vote counting method is bottoms up voting. Advocates of the current full preferential system argue that;

1. A full preferential system elects the candidate preferred by most voters.
2. Allied parties can stand against each other eg Liberal and National party candidates without necessarily resulting in a win to their common opponent.
3. Minor parties can influence the election result through the allocation of preferences.

This current voting method requires voters to mark preferences for all candidates (except one, which would automatically be taken as the last preference). There is a saving provision in the South Australian legislation for ballot papers that are not fully completed. Candidates have the option of lodging a voting ticket with the Electoral Commissioner within 72 hours of nominations closing. The advantage of lodging a voting ticket is that ballot papers which are only partially complete but are in accordance with the nominated ticket are not informal, but may be re-included into the count with preferences following the ticket. This provision was introduced before the 1985 State election with the intention of reducing the informal vote.

**Table1: Election year with number of HA ticket votes**

| Election Year | Number of HA Ticket Votes | %   |
|---------------|---------------------------|-----|
| 1985          | 33216                     | 4.1 |
| 1989          | 51784                     | 6.0 |
| 1993          | 53738                     | 5.9 |
| 1997          | 43531                     | 4.9 |
| 2002          | 37897                     | 4.0 |

Source: The SEO Statistical Return 2002, pg 20

As the figures above demonstrate, the amount of votes remaining in the count through this provision are significant in number. Under the *Electoral Act 1985 (SA)*, this saving provision is not and cannot be publicised (Newton-Farrelly:2003:1). Effectively then, the South Australian voting system is full preferential.

## **The argument for Optional Preferential Voting (OPV)**

Critics of compulsory, full preferential voting argue that this system is not democratic due to its compulsory nature and generation of 'insincere voting'. The full preferential system makes voters choose between candidates that they may have no preference for, or knowledge about (Orr:2004:18).

The OPV system on the other hand gives electors more options in casting a formal vote. The elector has the choice of expressing;

1. A single first preference and leaving all other squares blank (plumping),
2. A partial distribution of preferences or
3. A full distribution of preferences, that is, completing the ballot paper as is required today.

Optional preferential voting allows voters to restrict their votes to candidates whom they do support and refrain from voting for candidates they oppose. Under this voting system, voters who mark only one preference or 'plump' for a candidate who finishes third or lower, simply exhaust their ballot.

# South Australian local government elections

## Background

The South Australian *Constitution Act* s64(a) provides for a system of local government in the State with the State Parliament determining the powers of the governing bodies (SEO:2000:9). South Australian local government elections are run in accordance with the *City of Adelaide Act 1998*, *Local Government Act 1999*, *Local Government (Elections) Act 1999* and accompanying regulations. Under this legislation, the State Electoral Commissioner, the Chief Executive Officer of the State Electoral Office, is appointed the returning officer for all local government council elections.

The legislation also provides for proportional representation (PR) to be the universal counting system for South Australian local government ballots. Under this form of PR, a ballot paper must have preference marks for at least the number of vacancies in order to be accepted as formal.

The State Electoral Office has examined the formal ballot papers from five mayoral elections in 2003 with three or more candidates. As these elections were for only one vacancy (the mayor), a ballot paper needed to have a first preference mark to meet the requirements for formality. In these elections for one vacancy, formality requirements are the same as would be seen under an OPV system. That is, preferences past 1 are optional.

South Australian local government elections are conducted by non-compulsory postal ballot. Postal elections, as opposed to static booth elections, have the effect of reducing the influence of how to vote material as it is more difficult for candidates to get their preferred preference message to the voting public. Candidate support and candidate campaigns are, in most cases, not high profile or high impact. Another feature of SA local government ballots is that they are not influenced by party politics to the same degree as parliamentary state and federal elections or local government elections in states such as Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria.

The second general local government elections conducted in South Australia under the 1998/1999 legislation were held 12 May 2003. Mayoral ballot papers examined comprised Adelaide City Council, the District Council of Mt Barker, City of Playford, City of Pt Adelaide Enfield and the City of Tea Tree Gully.

The ballot papers were sorted and counted according to candidates' first preferences and allocated to one of seven categories:

### First Preference Marks

1. 1 Only - the ballot paper contained only a single number one (termed 'plumping').
2.  or  - the ballot paper contained only a single tick or cross.

## Other Preferences

3. 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> preference - the ballot paper was marked with a single one, tick or cross and a 2.
4. Partially complete - a partial distribution of preferences but not for all candidates.
5. Exhausted or duplicated numbers - the ballot paper has duplicated numbers at some point and consequently exhausts.
6. Not in sequence - the ballot paper is missing a number other than the first or last preference eg. 1\2\4\5\6 & 7.
7. Expressing a full distribution of preferences, that is all preferences marked.

## Findings

(See Appendix 2 on page 12, for detailed breakdown of results by council election.)

**Table 2: Summary of South Australian Mayoral ballot paper responses**

| VOTING RESPONSE       | Ballot Paper Markings |                          |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
|                       | 1 Only*<br>%          | Partial Preferences<br>% | Full Preferences<br>% |
| <b>2003 Total Ave</b> | 46                    | 10                       | 44                    |

\* 1 Preference Only is the combination of  or  and 1 Only (Plumping).

For the five Mayoral ballots most voters chose to mark either just one preference or a full list of preferences. The tables below show that there was some variation between council areas.

### First Preference Marks

#### 1) 1 Only ('plumping')

| Election            | Number of Candidates | Number of B/Ps | %           |
|---------------------|----------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Adelaide            | 3                    | 2841           | 38.1        |
| Mt Barker           | 4                    | 2175           | 44.0        |
| City of Playford    | 4                    | 5355           | 44.4        |
| Pt Adelaide Enfield | 4                    | 9550           | 44.8        |
| Tea Tree Gully      | 5                    | 9559           | 49.5        |
| <b>% Ave</b>        |                      |                | <b>44.2</b> |

#### Observations

Plumping was the second highest category in this analysis, only 0.2% behind 'All preferences'.

#### 2) or

| Election            | Number of Candidates | Number of B/Ps | %          |
|---------------------|----------------------|----------------|------------|
| Adelaide            | 3                    | 62             | 0.8        |
| Mt Barker           | 4                    | 71             | 1.4        |
| City of Playford    | 4                    | 345            | 2.9        |
| Pt Adelaide Enfield | 4                    | 528            | 2.5        |
| Tea Tree Gully      | 5                    | 379            | 2.0        |
| <b>% Ave</b>        |                      |                | <b>1.9</b> |

or  accounts for only 1.9% of responses

The **combined total** of the above categories 1,  or ; is 46.1%.

## Other Preferences

### 3. 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Preference

| Election            | Number of Candidates | Number of B/Ps | %          |
|---------------------|----------------------|----------------|------------|
| Adelaide            | 3                    | 407            | 5.5        |
| Mt Barker           | 4                    | 354            | 7.2        |
| City of Playford    | 4                    | 750            | 6.2        |
| Pt Adelaide Enfield | 4                    | 1437           | 6.7        |
| Tea Tree Gully      | 5                    | 3000           | 15.5       |
| <b>% Ave</b>        |                      |                | <b>8.2</b> |

Tea Tree Gully had the highest rate 15.5% – more than twice that of Mt Barker, second highest with 7.2%.

### 4) Partially Complete

| Election            | Number of Candidates | Number of B/Ps | %          |
|---------------------|----------------------|----------------|------------|
| Adelaide            | 3                    | N/A            | 0.0        |
| Mt Barker           | 4                    | 32             | 0.6        |
| City of Playford    | 4                    | 216            | 1.8        |
| Pt Adelaide Enfield | 4                    | 323            | 1.5        |
| Tea Tree Gully      | 5                    | 456            | 2.4        |
| <b>% Ave</b>        |                      |                | <b>1.6</b> |

### Observations

Adelaide had only three candidates; ballot papers fell in 1<sup>st</sup> preferences, '1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Pref' or All preferences. Consequently the Adelaide figure is disregarded. If Adelaide's '1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Pref' (5.5%) is included the average rises to 2.4%

### 5) Exhausted

| Election            | Number of Candidates | Number of B/Ps | %              |
|---------------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Adelaide            | 3                    | 0              | 0.0            |
| Mt Barker           | 4                    | 0              | 0.0            |
| City of Playford    | 4                    | 1              | <0.1           |
| Pt Adelaide Enfield | 4                    | 8              | <0.1           |
| Tea Tree Gully      | 5                    | 2              | <0.1           |
| <b>% Ave</b>        |                      |                | <b>&lt;0.1</b> |

Of the 65078 ballot papers examined only 11 (<0.1%) came into this category.

### 6) Not in sequence

| Election            | Number of Candidates | Number of B/Ps | %              |
|---------------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Adelaide            | 3                    | 2              | <0.1           |
| Mt Barker           | 4                    | 0              | 0.0            |
| City of Playford    | 4                    | 4              | <0.1           |
| Pt Adelaide Enfield | 4                    | 8              | <0.1           |
| Tea Tree Gully      | 5                    | 4              | <0.1           |
| <b>% Ave</b>        |                      |                | <b>&lt;0.1</b> |

Again, not common. Of the 65078 ballot papers examined only 18 (again <0.1%) were not in sequence.

### 7) All Preferences

| Election            | Number of Candidates | Number of B/Ps | %           |
|---------------------|----------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Adelaide            | 3                    | 4144           | 55.6        |
| Mt Barker           | 4                    | 2312           | 46.8        |
| City of Playford    | 4                    | 5377           | 44.6        |
| Pt Adelaide Enfield | 4                    | 9445           | 44.3        |
| Tea Tree Gully      | 5                    | 5915           | 30.6        |
| <b>% Ave</b>        |                      |                | <b>44.4</b> |

Electors when filling in their ballot papers for the elections sampled were most likely to mark all preferences. (0.2% more than plumping). The council with the highest rate was Adelaide 55.6% (3 candidates), the lowest Tea Tree Gully 30.6% (5 candidates). Electors in Tea Tree Gully were much more likely to vote for 1 candidate or 1st Pref + 1.

## Comments

In the analysis, 46% of voters completed a 1<sup>st</sup> preference only. Electors completing full or all preferences (44%) closely followed this figure. Only 10% of voters gave partial preferences. From the data it would appear that there is a correlation between number of candidates and incidence of 'plumping'. The more candidates, the more likely electors were to provide just one preference. Plumping was more likely in Tea Tree Gully (1 Preference Only **51.5%**), a council where there was a Mayoral contest between five candidates, the greatest number of candidates for one position sampled. Plumping was least likely to occur in the City of Adelaide (1 Preference Only **38.9%**), a contest which had the fewest contesting candidates (3). Interestingly however, plumping was very high in the case of M Harbison (1 Preference Only **58.8%**).

# South Australian Industrial Ballots

## Background

With the approval of the South Australian Attorney-General, the State Electoral Office conducts a number of ballots for statutory and non-government organisations.

### South Australian Superannuation Board Election 2003 (Super SA)

The Super SA election was a contest between six candidates for two vacancies. This election was conducted by post with a total return of 19858 ballot papers. The fact that there were two vacancies set this ballot apart from all the others examined. The instruction sheet supplied to all eligible electors in their ballot pack read;

'Marking the ballot paper

The method of voting in the elections is Optional Preferential. For your vote to count you must record a first preference vote on the ballot paper by placing the number 1 in the square opposite the name of the candidate who is your first preference. You may express preferences for other candidates by placing consecutive numbers, commencing with the number 2, in the squares opposite the names of those other candidates. Do not use ticks or crosses to mark your vote otherwise the ballot paper will be informal. Voting is not compulsory.'

Although this election was to elect two representatives, like the other OPV ballots sampled, a ballot paper only needed a number 1 in order to be considered formal. The ballot papers were sorted and counted according to candidate first preferences and allocated to one of six categories mentioned on pages 3 - 4 of this paper. Note:  or  were not accepted as formal marks in this election.

### Repatriation General Hospital Election 2004

The Repatriation General Hospital election was a contest for one non-medical staff representative to the Board of Directors. The election was a contest between three candidates for one vacancy. This election was, again, conducted by post with a total return of 489 ballot papers.

Electors in this ballot were instructed to mark the ballot paper by placing the number 1 in the square opposite the name of the most preferred candidate, then they 'may continue to express preferences for other candidates by placing consecutive numbers, commencing with the number 2 in the squares opposite the names of those other candidates.'

## Findings

### Super SA 2003

**Table 3: Results of Super SA survey**

|   | Preference Category                          | Number of B/Ps | %          |
|---|--|----------------|------------|
| 1 | 1 Only                                       | 4033           | 20.3       |
| 2 | 1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup> Preference | 5290           | 26.6       |
| 3 | Partially Complete                           | 912            | 4.6        |
| 4 | Exhaust eg 1,2,2                             | 18             | 0.1        |
| 5 | Not in Sequence                              | 7              | <0.1       |
| 6 | Full Preferences                             | 9598           | 48.3       |
|   | <b>TOTAL</b>                                 | <b>19858</b>   | <b>100</b> |

See Appendix 3 for a detailed breakdown of the results by candidate.

**Table 4: Super SA ballot paper markings**

| RESPONSE       | Ballot Paper Markings |                       |                    |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
|                | 1 Preference Only %   | Partial Preferences % | Full Preferences % |
| 2003 Total Ave | 20.3                  | 31.4                  | 48.3               |

### Repatriation General Hospital Election 2004

**Table 5: Repatriation General Hospital ballot paper markings**

| RESPONSE       | Ballot Paper Markings |                       |                    |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
|                | 1 Preference Only %   | Partial Preferences % | Full Preferences % |
| 2004 Total Ave | 51.7                  | 5.9                   | 42.3               |

## Comments

### South Australian Superannuation Board Election 2003

The fact that this election was for two vacancies clearly has influenced the number of preferences that electors have opted to complete. Electors in South Australian local government elections, which are also postal, are asked to express preferences for up to at least the number of vacancies in order for the ballot to be accepted formal. This requirement may possibly have contributed to a trained response by electors to express preferences for up to at least the number of vacancies.

### Repatriation General Hospital Election 2004

These results are not dissimilar to those seen in the South Australian local government ballot paper analysis described earlier in this paper.

# Conclusion

The findings indicate that in elections for one vacancy, where electors have the option of preference distribution, electors are far more likely to vote for either one or all candidates.

**Table 6: Comparison of ballot paper markings under OPV**

|   | Ballot Paper Markings |                       |                    |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| RESPONSE  | 1 Preference Only %   | Partial Preferences % | Full Preferences % |
| SOUTH AUSTRALIAN Mayoral ballots 2003             |                       |                       |                    |
| 2003 Total Ave                                    | 46                    | 10                    | 44                 |
| SOUTH AUSTRALIA Repatriation Hospital 2004        |                       |                       |                    |
| 2004 Total Ave                                    | 52                    | 6                     | 42                 |
| QUEENSLAND State Parliament 2001 (see Appendix 1) |                       |                       |                    |
| 2001 Total Ave                                    | 60                    | 8                     | 32                 |

Many variables can influence an elector's decision in the area of preference allocation or decision to 'plump'. Our results indicate that these can include the number of candidates contesting the election, but it is likely to also include the elector's knowledge of the voting system, the profile of candidates contesting and local issues. The influence of How to Vote cards issued by parties would also play a part in determining the rate of 'plumping' or preference allocation. As already stated, in Queensland the electoral authority has commissioned several studies of Queensland's elector preferences and the incidence of 'plumping'. The studies, from 1992–2001, demonstrate the influential power of a political campaign (see Appendix 1).

Optional preferential voting according to the Electoral Commission of Queensland,

'gives voters more options to express their political opinions, while at the same time preserving the voting choice available under full preferential voting' (ECQ:2004:2).

Although OPV empowers voters with more choice, this choice does come at a price. If the incidence of 'plumping' is high then the ballot can be reduced to little more than a de-facto 'first past the post' system (Wanna:2004:3). In these situations, candidates can potentially be elected with significantly less than a clear majority of formal votes as illustrated in the following hypothetical example.

**Table 7: Example of OPV compared with full preferential voting**

|                      | Optional Preferential Voting (1) |                |     |         |       |  | Full Preferential (2) |    |                |       |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|-----|---------|-------|--|-----------------------|----|----------------|-------|
|                      | A                                | B              | C   | Exhaust | Total |  | A                     | B  | C              | Total |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Pref | 32                               | 33             | 35  |         | 100   |  | 32                    | 33 | 35             | 100   |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Pref | Excluded                         | 3              | Nil | 29      | 32    |  | Excluded              | 16 | 16             | 32    |
| Final                |                                  | 36             | 35  |         | 100   |  |                       | 49 | 51             | 100   |
|                      |                                  | <b>Elected</b> |     |         |       |  |                       |    | <b>Elected</b> |       |

Under a full preferential counting system (2), a candidate will always gain an absolute majority in order to be elected. In the above cases it can be seen that under OPV (1), with a high incidence of plumping, a candidate can be elected with comparatively little support.

# References

Electoral Commission of Queensland (2004) Optional Preferential Voting fact sheet

Newton – Farrelly, Jenni: (2003): Possible Changes to the South Australian Electoral System: Parliamentary Library of South Australia. Information Paper 20.

Orr, Graeme: (2004): Australian Electoral Systems – How Well do They Serve Political Equality? Law Faculty Griffith University, Brisbane. Report No. 2.

Reynolds, Paul: (2002): Queensland Election 2001. Ballot Paper Survey. Research Report, Electoral Commission Queensland.

State Electoral Office: (2000): Local Government Elections Report May 2000. Report produced by the South Australian State Electoral Office.

Summary Report: (2004): South Australia Deliberates: The Future of Our Parliament at [www.ida.org.au](http://www.ida.org.au) Accessed 3 June 2004.

Wallace & Taylor: “The Preference Game”, in Rosenblum, N: Just Vote 1, Beattie’s Landslide in the Queensland 2001 Election: School of Politics and Public Policy, Griffith University.

Wanna, John: (2004): Democratic and Electoral Shifts in Queensland: Back to First Past the Post Voting. Griffith University Queensland. Accessed via [http:// democratic.audit.anu.edu.au/wannadiscuss.pdf](http://democratic.audit.anu.edu.au/wannadiscuss.pdf) on the 3 June 2004.

## Appendix 1

# Queensland State Parliamentary Elections

### Background

Since Queensland's first election in 1860, numerous vote counting methods have been trialed. Colonial Queensland initially ran elections under the British 'First Past the Post' system. From 1892 until 1942 a form of optional preferential voting, the 'Contingent Vote' was utilised. From 1942 until 1962 there was a return to 'First Past the Post' and from 1962 until 1991 Queensland members were elected through full preferential voting.

The optional preferential system operating today was introduced after a recommendation from the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission (EARC). The EARC conducted a wide ranging inquiry into the Queensland electoral system. The Commission believed,

'...it is inappropriate for the electoral system to corral votes on behalf of candidates or parties who electors do not wish to support but merely consider less objectionable than the other on the ballot paper.' (EARC Report:1991:para 6.24)

Optional preferential voting was recommended by the Commission and assented to by the Queensland parliament on 11 April 1991. The first Queensland State election using optional preferential voting was held in 1992.

**Table 8: Queensland ballot paper markings 1992-2001**

| Voting Responses      | Ballot Paper Markings             |                       |                    |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
|                       | 1 <sup>st</sup> Preference Only % | Partial Preferences % | Full Preferences % |
| <b>1992 Total Ave</b> | 23                                | 4                     | 73                 |
| <b>1995 Total Ave</b> | 20                                | 4                     | 76                 |
| <b>1998 Total Ave</b> | <i>Not Available</i>              |                       |                    |
| <b>2001 Total Ave</b> | <b>60</b>                         | <b>8</b>              | <b>32</b>          |
| 2001 Metro            | 57                                | 9                     | 34                 |
| 2001 Provincial       | 67                                | 6                     | 27                 |
| 2001 Rural            | 54                                | 12                    | 34                 |

Source: ECQ Ballot Paper Surveys 1992, 1995, 2001.  
Data for the 2004 election was not available at the time this paper was written.

The ratios of the three categories, 1<sup>st</sup> Preference Only, Partial Preferences and Full Preferences remained fairly consistent from the 1992 to the 1995 state elections. From 1995 to 2001 however, there was a significant change in voting behaviour with 'plumping' becoming the preferred option by 60% of electors.

## What Changed Between 1995 – 2001?

There are many factors influencing the way an elector allocates their preferences on a ballot paper. The increase in Queensland electors' willingness to 'plump' in the 2001 State election has been mainly attributed to the Australian Labor Party's 'Just Vote One' campaign.

The 'Just Vote One' election campaign was designed to influence ALP and non ALP supporters alike. It was not clearly an ALP message, indeed some even thought that it was a message from the Queensland Electoral Commission due to design similarity. The advantage gained by the ALP in increasing the incidence of 'plumping' was to split the conservative vote. Around 53% of One Nation voters and a third of Liberal voters also 'plumped'. Secondly, with ALP supporters plumping (77%), their preferences were not electing One Nation members. The 2001 Queensland State election was a landslide victory to the Australian Labor Party. Although they only won only 49% of first preference votes, this converted into 66 (74%) of the total 89 seats.

The other notable change in Queensland elector behaviour from 1995-2001 has been the significant decrease in primary support for the major parties (see Table 9 below). In 1995, the ALP, Liberal and National Parties shared 92% of the primary vote. 1998 saw the rise of the One Nation Party, resulting in a significant decrease in support for the traditional conservative parties. The 2001 election result saw the ALP increase their primary vote, however the Liberal and National Parties continued their downward trend. In 2001 the traditional parties shared 77% of the primary vote, still 15% down from 1995.

**Table 9: First Preferences votes by party in Queensland elections 1995 – 2001**

| Year             | 1995        | 1998        | 2001       |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| ALP              | 43          | 39          | 49         |
| LIB              | 23          | 16          | 14         |
| NAT              | 26          | 15          | 14         |
| <b>SUB TOTAL</b> | <b>92%</b>  | <b>70%</b>  | <b>77%</b> |
| One Nation       |             | 23          | 9          |
| Other Parties    | 3           | 2           | 4          |
| Others           | 4           | 3           | 9          |
| <b>SUB TOTAL</b> | <b>8%</b>   | <b>30%</b>  | <b>22%</b> |
| <b>TOTAL</b>     | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>99%</b> |

Source: ECQ Statistical Returns 1995-2001. Note 2001 total is 99%. 1% lost through fractional remainder.

The increased popularity of 'minor' parties and increased incidence of plumping lends advantage to the party with the biggest primary vote. In the 2001 State Queensland election the party that gained the biggest advantage was the Australian Labor Party.

## Appendix 2

# Analysis of ballot papers from five mayoral elections in 2003

Note: Where candidate's first preference figures are in *italics*, it indicates an alteration because informal ballot papers were found or an administrative miss-sort. These are noted in the Comments column.

|             |
|-------------|
| % of 1 Only |
| 13%         |
| 28%         |
| 58%         |

| ELECTION: ADELAIDE CITY COUNCIL  |                                |                             |               | Total formal ballot papers 7456        |                    |                  |                 |           |                 |                                |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|--|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| CANDIDATES<br>Ballot Paper Order | Number of 1 <sup>st</sup> pref | 1 <sup>ST</sup> PREFERENCES |               | OTHER PREFERENCES                      |                    |                  |                 |           | Informals found | Comments                       |
|                                  |                                | 1 Only                      | Tick or Cross | 1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup> Pref | Partially Complete | Exhaust eg 1,2,2 | Not in sequence | All Pref' |                 |                                |
| <b>MACKIE</b>                    | 2017                           | 274                         | 8             | 223                                    | 0                  | 0                | 0               | 1512      | 0               |                                |
| <b>HUANG</b>                     | 1987                           | 567                         | 23            | 100                                    | 0                  | 0                | 2               | 1295      | 0               |                                |
| <b>HARBISON</b>                  | 3452                           | 2000                        | 31            | 84                                     | 0                  | 0                | 0               | 1337      | 0               | High number of 1 Only B/Ps 58% |
| <b>Total B/Ps checked</b>        | <b>7456</b>                    | 2841                        | 62            | 407                                    | 0                  | 0                | 2               | 4144      | 0               |                                |
| <b>% Total B/Ps checked</b>      | <b>100</b>                     | 38.1                        | 0.8           | 5.5                                    | 0.0                | 0.0              | <0.1            | 55.6      | 0.0             |                                |

| ELECTION: DC MOUNT BARKER        |                                |                             |               | Total formal ballot papers 4944        |                    |                  |                 |           |                 |          |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|--|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|----------|
| CANDIDATES<br>Ballot Paper Order | Number of 1 <sup>st</sup> pref | 1 <sup>ST</sup> PREFERENCES |               | OTHER PREFERENCES                      |                    |                  |                 |           | Informals found | Comments |
|                                  |                                | 1 Only                      | Tick or Cross | 1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup> Pref | Partially Complete | Exhaust eg 1,2,2 | Not in sequence | All Pref' |                 |          |
| <b>WALES</b>                     | 1464                           | 576                         | 18            | 100                                    | 11                 | 0                | 0               | 759       | 0               | *        |
| <b>BAMPTON</b>                   | 1205                           | 529                         | 27            | 100                                    | 10                 | 0                | 0               | 539       | 0               | *        |
| <b>McCARTY</b>                   | 987                            | 446                         | 13            | 76                                     | 4                  | 0                | 0               | 448       | 0               |          |
| <b>IRVINE</b>                    | 1288                           | 624                         | 13            | 78                                     | 7                  | 0                | 0               | 566       | 0               |          |
| <b>Total B/Ps checked</b>        | <b>4944</b>                    | 2175                        | 71            | 354                                    | 32                 | 0                | 0               | 2312      | 0               |          |
| <b>% Total B/Ps checked</b>      | <b>100</b>                     | 44.0                        | 1.4           | 7.2                                    | 0.6                | 0.0              | 0.0             | 46.8      | 0.0             |          |

| ELECTION: CITY OF PLAYFORD       |                                |                             |               | Total formal ballot papers 12048       |                    |                  |                 |           |                 |          |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|--|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|----------|
| CANDIDATES<br>Ballot Paper Order | Number of 1 <sup>st</sup> pref | 1 <sup>ST</sup> PREFERENCES |               | OTHER PREFERENCES                      |                    |                  |                 |           | Informals found | Comments |
|                                  |                                | 1 Only                      | Tick or Cross | 1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup> Pref | Partially Complete | Exhaust eg 1,2,2 | Not in sequence | All Pref' |                 |          |
| <b>EYNDHOVEN</b>                 | 738                            | 240                         | 26            | 62                                     | 30                 | 0                | 0               | 380       | 0               |          |
| <b>LINSELL</b>                   | 4480                           | 1865                        | 132           | 265                                    | 101                | 0                | 1               | 2116      | 0               |          |
| <b>BAKER</b>                     | 5760                           | 2907                        | 155           | 355                                    | 62                 | 1                | 1               | 2279      | 0               |          |
| <b>WEBB</b>                      | 1070                           | 343                         | 32            | 68                                     | 23                 | 0                | 2               | 602       | 0               |          |
| <b>Total B/Ps checked</b>        | <b>12048</b>                   | 5355                        | 345           | 750                                    | 216                | 1                | 4               | 5377      | 0               |          |
| <b>% Total B/Ps checked</b>      | <b>100</b>                     | 44.4                        | 2.9           | 6.2                                    | 1.8                | <0.1             | <0.1            | 44.6      | 0.0             |          |

| ELECTION: PT ADELAIDE ENFIELD    |                                |                             |               |  |                    |                  |                 |           |                 | Total formal ballot papers 21299     |  |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|--|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| CANDIDATES<br>Ballot Paper Order | Number of 1 <sup>st</sup> pref | 1 <sup>ST</sup> PREFERENCES |               | OTHER PREFERENCES                      |                    |                  |                 |           | Informals found | Comments                             |  |
|                                  |                                | 1 Only                      | Tick or Cross | 1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup> Pref | Partially Complete | Exhaust eg 1,2,2 | Not in sequence | All Pref' |                 |                                      |  |
| PIETERS                          | 3597                           | 1489                        | 73            | 399                                    | 61                 | 1                | 3               | 1571      | 0               |                                      |  |
| BARR                             | 9077                           | 3722                        | 285           | 292                                    | 124                | 6                | 1               | 4647      | 6               | Determination on informals up to DRO |  |
| JOHANSEN                         | 6458                           | 3586                        | 126           | 516                                    | 90                 | 1                | 2               | 2137      | 2               |                                      |  |
| BEILBY                           | 2167                           | 753                         | 44            | 230                                    | 48                 | 0                | 2               | 1090      | 0               |                                      |  |
| Total B/Ps checked               | 21307                          | 9550                        | 528           | 1437                                   | 323                | 8                | 8               | 9445      | 8               |                                      |  |
| % Total B/Ps checked             | 100                            | 44.8                        | 2.5           | 6.7                                    | 1.5                | <0.1             | <0.1            | 44.3      | <0.1            |                                      |  |

| ELECTION: CITY OF TEA TREE GULLY |                                |                             |               |  |                    |                  |                 |           |                 | Total formal ballot papers 19317     |  |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|--|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| CANDIDATES<br>Ballot Paper Order | Number of 1 <sup>st</sup> pref | 1 <sup>ST</sup> PREFERENCES |               | OTHER PREFERENCES                      |                    |                  |                 |           | Informals found | Comments                             |  |
|                                  |                                | 1 Only                      | Tick or Cross | 1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup> Pref | Partially Complete | Exhaust eg 1,2,2 | Not in sequence | All Pref' |                 |                                      |  |
| LEWINSOHN                        | 413                            | 122                         | 12            | 91                                     | 14                 | 0                | 0               | 174       | 0               |                                      |  |
| PANAGARIS                        | 4649                           | 2039                        | 110           | 767                                    | 102                | 1                | 1               | 1629      | 0               |                                      |  |
| NASIG                            | 1391                           | 617                         | 22            | 200                                    | 48                 | 1                | 0               | 503       | 1               | Determination on informals up to DRO |  |
| PURDOM                           | 7365                           | 4112                        | 136           | 1080                                   | 155                | 0                | 3               | 1878      | 4               |                                      |  |
| KEANE                            | 5499                           | 2669                        | 99            | 862                                    | 137                | 0                | 0               | 1731      | 1               |                                      |  |
| Total B/Ps checked               | 19323                          | 9559                        | 379           | 3000                                   | 456                | 2                | 4               | 5915      | 6               |                                      |  |
| % Total B/Ps checked             | 100                            | 49.5                        | 2.0           | 15.5                                   | 2.4                | <0.1             | <0.1            | 30.6      | <0.1            |                                      |  |

\* Minor discrepancies in ballot paper totals are predominantly due to DRO interpretation of formality criteria and are immaterial to the results.

## Appendix 3

# South Australian Superannuation Board Election 2003

| ELECTION: SUPER SA               |                                   | Total formal ballot papers 19858 |                  |   |                       |                     |                    |              |                    |          |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|---|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|
| CANDIDATES<br>Ballot Paper Order | Number of<br>1 <sup>st</sup> pref | 1 <sup>st</sup><br>PREFERENCES   |                  | OTHER<br>PREFERENCES                      |                       |                     |                    |              | Informals<br>found | Comments |
|                                  |                                   | 1 Only                           | Tick or<br>Cross | 1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup><br>Pref | Partially<br>Complete | Exhaust<br>eg 1,2,2 | Not in<br>sequence | All<br>Pref' |                    |          |
| <b>SUMNER</b>                    | 5920                              | 1123                             | 0                | 1382                                      | 273                   | 4                   | 1                  | 3137         | 0                  |          |
| <b>HANNAFORD</b>                 | 1898                              | 406                              | 0                | 446                                       | 126                   | 2                   | 1                  | 917          | 0                  |          |
| <b>McMAHON</b>                   | 6433                              | 1427                             | 0                | 1936                                      | 253                   | 6                   | 3                  | 2808         | 0                  |          |
| <b>MORONY</b>                    | 1743                              | 306                              | 0                | 467                                       | 89                    | 1                   | 1                  | 879          | 0                  |          |
| <b>HARRISON</b>                  | 1484                              | 422                              | 0                | 308                                       | 45                    | 2                   | 1                  | 706          | 0                  |          |
| <b>HILL</b>                      | 2380                              | 349                              | 0                | 751                                       | 126                   | 3                   | 0                  | 1151         | 0                  |          |
| <b>Total B/Ps checked</b>        | <b>19858</b>                      | 4033                             | 0                | 5290                                      | 912                   | 18                  | 7                  | 9598         | 0                  |          |
| <b>% Total B/Ps checked</b>      | <b>100</b>                        | 20.3                             | 0.0              | 26.6                                      | 4.6                   | 0.1                 | <0.1               | 48.3         | 0.0                |          |

NB. ☑ or ☒ were considered informal for the 2003 Super SA election.



