



Submission to Melbourne City Council Elections Process Forum

1. Need to Establish the Council as a proper “Mirror of the Municipality’s Mind”, on Tasmanian model Segregation of “Non-Leadership-Team Councillors” and “Leadership Team Councillors”: Melbourne City Council is presently a markedly distorted “Mirror of the Municipality’s Mind” as 2 of its 9 councillors are elected on a quite different basis from the other 7 councillors. The 7 councillors elected as a group by quota-preferential proportional representation counting are a balanced expression of the overall views of the municipality’s voters. By contrast the other 2 councillors elected as a “team” by winner-take-all majority-preferential counting are elected by a bare majority only of the voters, and are very much the opposite of a balanced expression of the overall views of the municipality’s voters. The effective use of Group Voting Tickets for both concurrent elections enables “double dipping” by the successful “team”.

Any Popular Election of Lord Mayor and Deputy should be by Direct Election: The MCC is alone in Victoria in having its Council deprived of the reasonable and relevant power of electing its Mayor and Deputy from among its councillors. Election of presiding officers and spokespeople by the body involved works well in State and Federal government also. It should be restored for Melbourne. The MCC Web site states that the Lord Mayor and Deputy are both directly elected, but unfortunately that is untrue. Those 2 people are **popularly** elected, concurrently with the election of the other 7 councillors, but they are not **directly elected**, as voters are not permitted to vote directly for a particular individual candidate for either of those positions. Instead, they have no option but to vote for a particular “Leadership Team”, which is a pair of candidates that have nominated jointly for a separate one of those 2 positions. Such joint nomination is the only form of nomination allowed. Voters are not allowed to vote for a particular candidate for Lord Mayor of their choice without also necessarily having to vote for a candidate for Deputy Lord Mayor that might not be of their choice. That same restriction and objection to the lack of distinctly separate votes for the 2 offices also applies to votes for the Deputy Lord Mayor as such. Voters are arbitrarily prevented from having the entire say on who those 2 people will be, and are reduced to choosing between predetermined choices made by pairs of candidates themselves.

Tasmanian Councils’ system: Tasmania’s Local Government Act 1993 has a very much sounder approach to the election of a properly representative Council and, unlike Melbourne, it allows for a concurrent popular and also **direct election** of both the Lord Mayor and the Deputy Lord Mayor. Tasmania does differ from Victoria’s practice in having periodic elections of half the councillors only, rather than all polls being general elections, and PRSAV-T Inc. is not recommending that particular aspect of the Tasmanian system. Rather, PRSAV-T Inc. points to the value of a Council where all councillors are elected on an equal basis. If there is to be a popular election of Lord Mayor and Deputy, voters should have the full opportunity to select the Lord Mayor and Deputy individually. The quota for PR election of 9, not just 7, councillors is 20% lower, which increases the number of citizens able to cast votes that actually contribute to the election of a candidate, and are not just wasted votes that elect nobody.

Why Tasmania’s approach is Much Better: At all of Tasmania’s municipal elections:

- candidates to be elected by voters as Mayor must also stand and be elected as a councillor, thus ensuring that councillors elected have all been compared against each other by the voters, and have gained the same quota for election but, in Melbourne, candidates for Mayor cannot be council candidates and *vice-versa*,
- candidates to be elected by voters as Deputy must stand and be elected as a councillor, which ensures that councillors elected have been compared against each other by the voters, and have gained the same quota for election but, in Melbourne, candidates for Deputy cannot be council candidates and *vice-versa*, and
- candidates for Mayor or Deputy Mayor are not faced with the invidious, arbitrary and entirely unjustifiable position where they cannot also stand for a position on the Council, as it would seem elementary that if one were suitable for consideration as a “Leadership Team Councillor” one should also be suitable for consideration as a “Non-Leadership-Team Councillor”, and voters should not be thus deprived of choice.

2. Need to Introduce Partial Optional Preferential Marking of Ballot-papers

Successful Use of Optional Marking: The November 2006 operation of [quota-preferential counting](#) for the election of the Legislative Council of Victoria was accompanied by a successful use of partial optional preferential marking of the ballot-papers used. That allowed voters that had little interest in some of the more obscure candidates to be freed from being made to feel that they had to be reliant on any group's statement of recommended preference to avoid making a mistake in marking their preferences, and to instead conveniently show their real preferences untrammelled. That partial optional preferential marking *below-the-line* spared the considered voters that tend to use that alternative from being required to:

- mark later preferences for obscure or virtually unknown candidates that they were not able to assess, or
- risk voting informally if they made an accidental mistake in the strict marking of virtually all of a large number of preferences.

Partial optional preferential marking of ballot-papers at quota-preferential proportional representation elections has flourished in Tasmania continuously for 100 years since the passage of Tasmania's *Electoral Act 1907*, which extended the Hare-Clark system for House of Assembly elections on a state-wide basis.

3. Need to Remove the Provision for Group Voting Tickets

Group Voting Tickets distance Voters from Candidates: The *de facto* "Party List" effect of mass use of [Group Voting Tickets](#) by large numbers of voters choosing to vote "*above-the-line*" rather than "*below-the-line*" is a demonstration that voters are becoming more distanced from candidates. Such voters surrender to the superficial appeal of group names and associated incidental aspects of a group rather than examining and judging the true political unit, which is the candidate to be elected. When voters are no longer required to choose individual candidates when voting, it should be no surprise that increasing numbers of citizens question the usefulness of inquiring about the merits of the individual candidates that they are "electing".

Melbourne City Council would better represent its citizens if the Group Voting Ticket aspect of its electoral system were discontinued. Choosing of individual candidates without the imposition of the insidious attempt to influence voters' order of preferences *en masse* that all [other Victorian councils](#) are free of should be restored.

4. Value of Introducing Robson Rotation

Robson Rotation filters out Electoral Weaknesses that facilitate Regimentation of Electors' Votes: The system of [Robson Rotation](#) originated in Tasmania in 1979 for elections to each of the Houses of the Parliament of Tasmania. It was extended to municipal elections at the instigation of State MPs that had formerly been municipal councillors and understood well the fairness and impartiality of the Robson Rotation system of printing ballot-papers so that each candidate's name had an equal chance of appearing in a particular position on the ballot-papers that were received by voters. That system places all candidates on an equal footing by negating the tendency for the use of organized how-to-vote cards to exercise an undue influence on the outcome of municipal elections. It also negates the effect of donkey voting on the electoral outcome.

5. The Number of Councillors, and Issue of Multi-member Wards versus an Undivided Municipality

The undemocratic provision for a casting vote should be removed, but until that occurs there should be an odd number of councillors to avoid tied votes in the full Council. Melbourne is important enough to justify at least nine councillors. The present undivided Council lets proportional representation be optimized. If wards were to be favoured, it is important that a symmetrical arrangement, such as three 3-councillor wards, should apply so that there is parity in electoral conditions and quota size for all positions. The number to be elected as a group should always be an [odd number](#), to ensure that a majority of voters elects a majority of the group elected.

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