

Preferential Voting System

Preferential voting is a system whereby a candidate must poll an absolute majority of the total formal votes (ie in excess of 50%) in order to be elected to the vacancy.

Under a full preferential system, a voter is required to indicate a preference for each candidate on the ballot paper by using the numbers 1, 2, 3 and so on up to the number of candidates. If, after all first preference votes have been counted, no candidate has obtained an absolute majority of all formal votes, then the candidate with the fewest number of first preference votes is excluded from the count. The excluded candidate's second preference votes are then distributed to the remaining candidates at this stage.

If, after that exclusion, no candidate has obtained an absolute majority of formal votes, the next remaining candidate with the fewest votes is excluded and all of his or her votes (second preferences and those received from the previously excluded candidate) are distributed to the remaining candidates.

The above process is continued until one candidate is elected by obtaining an absolute majority of formal votes. The absolute majority is calculated excluding informal and exhausted votes. An example of the above process is shown below for the District of Midland in 2005.

Example: Full Distribution of Preferences

Counts	GRN Hall	CDP Chew	ONP Caine	ALP Roberts	LIB Zannino	Total Valid Votes	Exhausted Votes	Total Votes
First Preference Votes	2,428	837	718	10,614	7,884	22,481		22,481

Step 1

The absolute majority at this stage of the count is 11,241. As no candidate has achieved this on first preference votes, Caine, the candidate with the fewest number of first preference votes is excluded. The excluded candidate's second preference votes are then distributed to the remaining candidates. These votes are then added to the remaining candidates' progressive totals. Exhausted votes are formal; however, these are not added to any candidate's total as no consecutive preference has been indicated for the remaining candidates on the ballot paper (e.g. 1,2,2,2 or 1,2,3,3).

Counts	GRN Hall	CDP Chew	ONP Caine	ALP Roberts	LIB Zannino	Total Valid Votes	Exhausted Votes	Total Votes
			Excluded					
First Distribution	224	145	-718	165	178	712	6	718
Progressive Total	2,652	982		10,779	8,062	22,475	6	22,481

Step 2

At this stage of the count, the absolute majority is now 11,238. As no candidate has yet achieved this, Chew, the candidate with the fewest number of votes following the first distribution (982) is next to be excluded. The excluded candidate's second preference votes from the first preferences (837) are then distributed to the remaining candidates. Her third preference votes from the first distribution (145) are also distributed to the remaining candidates. These votes are then added to their progressive total.

Counts	GRN Hall	CDP Chew	ONP Caine	ALP Roberts	LIB Zannino	Total Valid Votes	Exhausted Votes	Total Votes
		Excluded						
Second Distribution	311	-982		294	374	979	3	982
Progressive Total	2,963			11,073	8,436	22,472	9	22,481

Step 3

After the second distribution, the absolute majority is now 11,237. The process in step 2 is repeated at this stage for the next candidate to be excluded, Hall. His votes (2,963), which include all those transferred to him during the first and second distributions, are distributed to the remaining two candidates, Roberts and Zannino.

Counts	GRN Hall	CDP Chew	ONP Caine	ALP Roberts	LIB Zannino	Total Valid Votes	Exhausted Votes	Total Votes
	Excluded							
Third Distribution	-2,963			2,053	888	2,941	22	2,963
Progressive Total				13,126	9,324	22,450	31	22,481

As there are only two candidates remaining, the candidate with the absolute majority is elected. The absolute majority at this stage of the count is now 11,226, with the 31 exhausted votes having the effect of reducing the absolute majority.

Result

Michelle Roberts (ALP) is elected as the member for Midland with a majority of 1,900 votes.