

## How Votes are Counted

### Understanding preferential and proportional voting

The preferential system applies where an electorate is electing a single member.

Under the preferential system, all valid first preference votes are counted and sorted to ascertain the number of first preferences for each candidate.

Where one candidate has a majority - 50% plus one - that candidate is declared elected.

If no candidate has an absolute majority, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated and their votes are allocated to their second preferences. This process is repeated until one candidate obtains an absolute majority and is declared elected.

The proportional representation (PR) method is used for counting election results for un-subdivided local governments and multi-member council wards.

Election of the City of Melbourne's councillors uses a different form of the proportional representation method that is set out in the *City of Melbourne Act 2001*.

Proportional representation is the system of voting designed to elect candidates in proportion to the amount of support each has in the municipality.

Under this system, the candidates are elected in proportion to the number of votes they receive, which does not require a candidate to obtain an absolute majority of votes to be elected.

The returning officer will determine a 'quota'. The quota is obtained by dividing the total number of formal votes by one more than the number of candidates required to be elected, and increasing the result by one. For example, in an unsubdivided ward involving seven councillor positions and 60,000 formal votes, the quota would be  $[60,000 \text{ divided by } (7+1)] + 1 = 7501$ .

Any candidate to receive a number of first preference votes that is equal to or greater than the quota is elected. If all the vacancies have not been filled the surplus votes of each elected candidate will be transferred to the continuing candidates according to a formula for the distribution of surplus votes.

If all the vacancies have not been filled when the surplus votes for all elected candidates have been distributed, exclusion of candidates with the lowest number of votes commences.

These processes continue until all vacancies are filled.

The returning officer is permitted by the Regulations to use electronic voting equipment to assist in the counting of votes.