



State government

Formality of votes

What is an informal ballot paper?

An informal ballot paper is a ballot paper that has been completed incorrectly and placed in the ballot box.

Ballot papers are informal if they:

- are blank
- do not show preferences according to instructions of legislative requirements
- do not make the voter's intention clear or
- are marked in a way that identifies the voter.

Informal ballot papers are removed from the count. This means that they do not:

- count towards the election of a candidate
- get included in the calculation of the absolute majority or the quota needed for a candidate to win.

If a ballot paper is not marked correctly, but clearly shows how the voter wanted to vote, the ballot paper may still be formal. The Returning Officer is responsible for deciding whether or not a ballot paper is formal or informal.

Legislative Assembly ballot papers with two candidates

If one square is marked with a number '1' or has otherwise been marked in a way that clearly shows the voter's first preference, the ballot paper is considered formal.

This is because the voter's intent regarding their second preference is clear.



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Legislative Assembly ballot papers with more than two candidates

The ballot paper is formal if **all** squares have been numbered consecutively starting with the number '1', clearly indicating the voter's order of preference.

A ballot paper may still be considered formal if it has been completed in a way that clearly shows the voter's most preferred candidate. The vote is distributed as normal up to where the error has occurred. This process is somewhat similar to the operation of optional preferential voting. For example, if a ballot paper is numbered 1, 2, 3, 3, 3, the voter's preferences are counted up to the second preference and then becomes exhausted.

Legislative Council ballot papers

On the coloured Legislative Council ballot paper, an elector can choose to vote either above the line, called a 'ticket vote' or below the line, called a 'candidate preference vote'.

Ticket vote

A ticket vote is formal when only one square is marked with the number '1'. A tick or a cross may also be accepted.

Candidate preference vote

A candidate preference vote is formal if **all** squares have been numbered consecutively starting with the number '1', clearly indicating the voter's order of preference.

If both parts of the ballot paper have been completed, the candidate preference vote is counted.

If the candidate preference vote is informal, the ticket vote will be counted.

For more information on voting correctly, see 'How to make your vote count'.