



State government

Understanding preferential voting

In Western Australia, full preferential voting is used to elect a member of the Legislative Assembly. Full preferential voting means that all boxes for each candidate on the ballot paper must be numbered according to the voter's preferences.

The preferential voting system requires a candidate to receive an absolute majority of votes to be elected. This means that a candidate must receive more than half the total formal votes to be elected:

$$\text{Absolute majority} = \frac{\text{total formal votes}}{2} + 1$$

If no candidate receives enough votes to equal the absolute majority on first preferences, the candidate with the least number of votes is excluded and the preferences distributed to the remaining candidates. This process is repeated until a candidate has enough votes to be elected.

Exhausted votes

A ballot paper becomes exhausted when the preferences can no longer be allocated to a candidate, because for example, all the remaining preferences are for candidates that have already been excluded.

Exhausted votes are removed from the count once they become exhausted. As exhausted votes are not considered formal votes, the absolute majority may be affected as the count progresses.