



## State government

# Understanding proportional representation

Proportional Representation is a voting system for multi member electorates, or big electorates where more than one person is elected to represent the people who live there.

This system ensures that the elected members represent, as closely as possible, the number of valid votes they received in an election. Simply, if a party or group receives 40% of the formal votes, they will gain approximately 40% of the seats.

To be elected, a candidate must receive enough votes to equal the quota. The quota is calculated by:

$$Quota = \left( \frac{\text{Number of formal votes}}{\text{number of members to be elected} + 1} \right) + 1$$

For example, at the 2013 State election, for the Agricultural Region, 79 678 formal votes were counted, and six candidates were elected. The quota was calculated to be 11 383 votes:

$$\frac{79\,678}{(6 + 1)} + 1 = 11\,383$$

If the quota is not reached, the candidate with the least number of votes is excluded and their preferences distributed to the remaining candidates. The process is repeated until a candidate reaches the quota and is elected, and again until all vacancies are filled (in this example, six).

If a candidate receives more votes than the quota, they are elected immediately, and the surplus votes distributed to the remaining candidates with a lesser 'transfer value'.

Proportional representation is used for Western Australia's six Legislative Council regions, where six members are elected for each region:

- Agricultural Region
- East Metropolitan Region
- Mining and Pastoral Region
- North Metropolitan Region
- South Metropolitan Region
- South West Region