

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (VICTORIA-TASMANIA) INC.



Tel. +61395891802
Mobile +61429176725
Fax +61395891680
A0048538N Victoria
ABN 31 010 090 247

18 Anita Street
BEAUMARIS VIC 3193
ggd@netspace.net.au
www.prsa.org.au
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The Editor
Whitehorse Leader
whitehorseleader@leadernewspapers.com.au

Dear Editor,

The recent article on Mr Ben Stennett's election at the recount to replace Cr Pauline Richards headlined his 2.7% of **FIRST PREFERENCE VOTES** at the 2005 general election. However, those votes were completely irrelevant to the 2007 countback election. Countback elections have worked successfully in Tasmania since 1918. They are confined to examining the ballot-papers that entitled the vacating councillor - Cr Richards in this case - to her Springfield Ward seat, to determine which of the next available candidates received over 50% of those ballot-papers, after distribution of preferences if needed. Ben's **FIRST PREFERENCE VOTES** were obviously not votes that formed part of Pauline's quota.

Only the quota of 5,933 votes (33.3% of the whole vote in the Ward) are included in the countback. Those 5,933 votes included the 3,377 FIRST PREFERENCE VOTES for Pauline, a very large number of which presumably became available, by transfer, to Ben. Unfortunately, unlike Tasmania's Electoral Commission, the VEC does not publish the details of countback transfers on its Web site. Under the law, Ben needed to gain 2,967 votes, an absolute majority of Pauline's quota. If many of her voters had given their next available preference to Ben, he would easily get that majority.

In any preferential election, FIRST PREFERENCE VOTES are not the end of the story. Of the twelve senators for Victoria elected at the last two elections, seven each received less than 2% of the FIRST PREFERENCE VOTE.

Yours sincerely,

Geoffrey Goode
President
PRSAV-T Inc.