

Monday 15 December 2025

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters

Parliament House
HOBART TAS 7000



by email only to electoralmatters@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Committee members,

Inquiry into the conduct of the 2025 House of Assembly and Legislative Council elections.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our members' expertise to the Committee. Our members are available to discuss these matters further with the Committee.

Established in the late 19th century, the Proportional Representation Society is Australia's oldest continuing electoral reform coalition. Our founders pioneered the adoption of the single transferable vote and preferential voting in the early days of Australia's federation and for over 100 years our members have worked to defend Australia's democratic traditions and improve our electoral democracy.

The Society wants to make this point very clearly: **this election result reflects the real and genuine will of the voters.**

Nearly 90% of Tasmanians got a local MP who they actually voted for. At a federal election or in the other state parliaments, just 51% get that honour.

Tasmania's Hare-Clark electoral system (also known as Single Transferable Vote), has operated in Tasmania since 1908 and is the fairest electoral system currently operating anywhere in the world.

Tasmania's electoral system delivers results that actually reflect voters' real preferences and prevents "safe seats" where parties get to park politicians they don't want to fight to keep.

Every single seat in Tasmania’s Parliament is a genuine contest. No other Australian State Parliament can claim that.

The two most important messages from the 2025 Tasmanian state election are

- (i) The result is a clear mirror of the voter’s will
- (ii) The election was conducted with complete fairness and impartiality.

It allows voters complete control over their first choice, or first preference, and over all subsequent preferences which can be as many as the voter wishes and as few as the number of candidates that are being elected.

There is no ‘majority government’, because Tasmanian voters did not wish it that way.

The result in the Parliament is exactly what voters wanted:

	% of votes	No. of seats	% of seats
Liberals	39.9%	14	40.0%
Labor	25.9%	10	28.5%
Independents	15.3%	5	14.2%
Greens	14.4%	5	14.2%
Shooters, Fishers and Farmers	2.9%	1	2.8%
Nationals	1.6%	0	0.0%

Elite criticism of Tasmania's world-class electoral system

The Society has collected some quotations from print and broadcast media that demonstrate what some of the supporters of the two largest parties have said about the result:

On the Labor side, the podcast [Socially Democratic](#) ran a discussion led by Stephen Donnelly, a former Labor staffer. It included a former senator for Victoria and MHR for Batman, [Dr David Feeney](#); and [Ms Jessie McCrone](#), a former advisor to a Victorian Premier, Hon. Daniel Andrews AC.

Here are some quotes:

[We should] rewrite the [Tasmanian Constitution](#) so you don't have this [Weimar Republic system](#) of elections. (Dr David Feeney)

[Hare-Clark] shreds party discipline ... In Tasmania, ALP candidates all head into the safe areas and fight with each other for the base vote. (Dr David Feeney)

Whole bunch of numpties that have got into parliament ... [leaving the] Premier ... negotiating with absolute crazies. (Stephen Donnelly)

Let them have four years of insanity ... and then watch the voters come flowing back to Labor and say 'what a disaster ... and then when you get into Government, get rid of Hare-Clark and go back to running it properly. (Stephen Donnelly)

Long-time Tasmanian correspondent for The Australian, Matthew Derholm, wrote an [article](#) on 5 September opposing Hare-Clark, quoting figures from Tasmania's business community:

... Tasmania's Hare Clark system makes it easier for independents and minor parties to get elected. And after non-stop drama, businesses have had enough...

Tasmania's business community wants to scrap the state's electoral system to end entrenched political chaos ...

The Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that after three consecutive early elections it was time to rethink Hare-Clark proportional representation, which makes it easier for independents and minor parties to get elected.

The article also quoted Michael Bailey, CEO of the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce:

I would really question whether Hare-Clark is the right mechanism for us now.

It does make things very difficult and I'm not certain that Hare-Clark has delivered in the last few decades the results that Tasmania wanted when they went to the polls.

More recently, some Tasmanian Liberal branches successfully passed a motion at November's Liberal State Council meeting calling for an "overhaul" or dismantling of Hare-Clark. [The Premier has ruled out any changes](#) and does not support the motion, but nonetheless the cause against Hare Clark holds carriage within senior Liberal ranks.

What has prompted the sudden flurry of opposition to Tasmania's world-class electoral system, a system that far better represents the will of the voters than the single-member districts in the Australian Parliament and Lower Houses of other states? It cannot just be a sense of chaos since the ACT whose electoral system is very similar to Tasmania's has had a single stable government for twenty-four years, in majority, minority and coalition at different times.

One obvious reason is self-interest. The biggest party in this election, the Liberals with 39.8% of the vote, did not win a majority of seats. In stark contrast,

in the last elections in each of Victoria and New South Wales, the governing Labor parties won either a very large majority, as in Victoria, or very close to a majority, as in NSW, each with a significantly lower percentage of the votes.

	Victoria ('22)	NSW ('23)
Winning party	Labor	Labor
Winning party's 1st preference votes (%)	36.7%	37.0%
Winning party's seats (%)	62.5%	48.4%
Winning party's two-party-preferred vote (%)	55.0%	54.3%

By any analysis, the Tasmanian result is a much fairer result than those results above. For respected commentators supporting both major parties to be disparaging the fairest electoral system operating anywhere in the world - just because the result is not to their liking - is a sadly misguided approach for them to take.

Neither major party's candidates won a majority of seats in Tasmania's House of Assembly for the very clear reason that Tasmania's voters did not want that outcome.

Minor party candidates are elected because voters want them to be elected

One of the benefits of the Hare-Clark system is that it allows for diversity of representation and allows for the election of independent candidates if they have the support of the voters.

Several disparaging comments above appear to be based upon an assumption that Independents were elected on a low primary vote.

This assumption is wrong. At the recent election, Independents topped the poll of first preferences in both Franklin (Mr Peter George) and Clark (Ms Kristie Johnston), and independent Craig Garland received more first preferences than either of the successful Labor candidates in Braddon.

While it is true that the successful independent candidate in Bass, Dr George Razay had a smaller proportion of the primary votes than other successful independents, his primary vote still outpolled the second elected Labor member (Ms Jess Green).

Those who disparage the Hare-Clark system in the way laid out in the previous section of our submission generally do so from the vantage point of (a) ignorance of the details of the Hare Clark system and (b) demonstrated self-interest.

Claims that Labor had won the two party preferred vote and thus ought to be able to form a government with barely a quarter of the vote would desecrate Tasmania's proud legacy of electoral innovations and make Tasmania's elections meaningfully less democratic.

Informal voting

While the informal voting fell from 6.31% in the 2024 election to 5.84% in the 2025 election, that level of informal voting in a community as well educated about elections as the Tasmanian voters is disturbing. At present, a voter must express seven preferences at least. That one voter out of every 17 is casting an informal vote is a challenge for any democracy and needs to be investigated.

We are not aware of any study of the details of informality – such as what proportion of the informal votes are ballots that are deliberately informal, with no marking at all, or some kind of message, versus those that indicate the voters intent but do not meet Tasmania's formality requirements.

Ben Raue's blog, The Tally Room, has included [a useful chart](#) showing that informality levels in Tasmania have been steadily over 4% since the 1970s and rose to over 5% when the 7-member electorates were restored in 2024. The blog also shows that informality levels are somewhat lower in Southern Tasmania (Clark and Franklin) than in the rest of the state.

The ACT – whose electoral system is almost the same as Tasmania – has much lower informality rates of 1.9% in the 2024 election. The ACT has the same instructions as in Tasmanian elections, asking voters to cast a preference for at

least as many positions as there are vacancies to be filled. However, the ACT law does not rule a ballot with fewer preferences as being informal.

We request that the Committee consider amending the formality rules to more closely resemble those in the ACT.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Morey, Secretary

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