

# QUOTA NOTES

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## Two Greek National Elections a Month Apart

Greece attracted world attention for the inconclusive outcome of elections for its unicameral 300-member Parliament in May 2012, as that outcome augured badly for European and possibly global financial stability. The seven different parties that won seats, including some on the far right and far left, could not agree on forming a majority coalition government.

Like most [party list systems](#), Greece's system of so-called "*re-inforced proportional representation*" has changing features designed to achieve additional political effects. A 3% national qualification threshold for parties started at the 1990 elections, and a bonus of 50 seats (up from 40 at the two previous polls) goes to the single party with the most votes nationally.

The qualifying parties each receive at least the integer part of their proportion of the total represented votes out of the 250 available seats. As many of the highest fractional parts are then converted into an extra seat as are needed to obtain a total of exactly 250. The party with the most votes is awarded a further 50 seats.

A number of rules then govern exactly how each party's seats are apportioned into available seats at the individual electorate level largely following prefecture boundaries except around Athens and Thessalonika.

Nearly 19% of the formal vote was wasted on parties failing to achieve the threshold, including more than 2.9% for two different parties. Turnout was a good ten percentage points lower than usual at just above 65% (those aged under 70 are obliged to enrol and to vote), with 1.8% of votes invalid and 0.6% blank.

All the new Parliament's MPs except those of the previously dominant New Democracy and PASOK parties – amounting to a narrow majority – opposed in varying degrees the second austerity agreement made by the outgoing non-party government. As successive negotiations to form a government proved fruitless, the Greek President called a [new election for 17 June](#).

Fast-rising Syriza on the radical left ceased being a coalition of ten parties and therefore became a serious candidate for the 50-seat bonus. Some small parties chose not to stand, or formed alliances in the hope of achieving the 3% threshold. Late in the campaign, representatives of several countries insisted that Greece's remaining in the eurozone was incompatible with rejection of austerity measures agreed upon at the time of extensive bailouts.

PARTY	May 2012			June 2012		
	% vote	% PR seats	% all seats	% vote	% PR seats	% all seats
<a href="#">New Democracy</a>	18.9	23.2	36.0	29.7	31.6	43.0
<a href="#">Syriza</a>	16.8	20.8	17.3	26.9	28.4	23.7
<a href="#">PASOK</a>	13.2	16.4	13.7	12.3	13.2	11.0
<a href="#">ANEL</a>	10.6	13.2	11.0	7.5	8.0	6.7
<a href="#">Golden Dawn</a>	7.0	8.4	7.0	6.9	7.2	6.0
<a href="#">Democratic Left</a>	6.1	7.6	6.3	6.3	6.8	5.7
<a href="#">Communists</a>	8.5	10.4	8.7	4.5	4.8	4.0
<a href="#">Others</a>	18.9	-	-	6.0	-	-
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100

Turnout fell slightly to 62.5%: 0.6% of voters cast an invalid vote and 0.4% a blank one. The Democratic Left party took up a changed role as part of Greece's new three-party coalition government, as it supported remaining on the euro while seeking to ease the severity of some of the austerity measures. Neither it nor PASOK accepted ministerial responsibilities.

The four parties elected that still opposed the austerity agreements gained 45.8% support and 48.4% of the seats allocated proportionally, so New Democracy did not need the statutory 50 bonus seats to claim a democratic mandate for [the new government](#).

## PR for Two-councillor Wards in NSW

The O'Farrell Government's [Local Government Amendment Act 2012](#) largely came into effect on 11 April 2012. Most pleasingly, Section 7 amended [Section 285](#) of the NSW [Local Government Act 1993](#) so that the voting system in wards with **two** or more councillors to be elected

is proportional representation. An earlier [attempt by Greens MLC David Shoebridge](#) to set three as the minimum ward size was [defeated](#).

Most of the 152 NSW councils have long had elections by [quota-preferential proportional representation](#) in electoral districts in which the (same, if there are wards) number of positions to be filled ranges from three to fifteen. At the 2008 general elections, all but twelve councils reflected, in varying degrees, the diverse range of opinions in their municipality that way.

In the Sydney metropolitan area, two councils, Botany Bay and Ku-ring-gai, long elected their councillors from two-councillor wards under what was a [multiple majority-preferential system](#), as was used for Senate polls from 1919-48. With that system, once one councillor was elected – after distribution of preferences if needed – all the ballot-papers cast for the ward were re-counted, including ballot-papers with a first preference for the first councillor just elected deemed at the second count to be a first preference vote for the candidate marked as second preference.

The second count then proceeded until an unelected candidate gained an absolute majority of all the votes after any required distribution of preferences bypassing the name of the candidate already elected. Both councillors were usually elected from the same party, group or background. Monopoly of representation by a group can, and does, lead to the broader exclusion of all dissenting opinions.

In 2008, none of Botany Bay's 3 wards was contested. [The Mayor](#), first elected 31 years ago, was the [only unopposed directly-elected NSW Mayor](#). One ward was uncontested in 2004. Labor won all seats in both years. Only via an ALP councillor can electors raise issues in Council. The first election of [6 of the 7 present councillors](#) was at least 15 years ago. A [winner-take-all](#) system will remain, as Council will be elected from [six single-councillor wards](#) in 2012.

In 2008, one Ku-ring-gai Council ward was uncontested. In all the other wards, both elected candidates came from the same group. In the [St Ives Ward](#), the highest-polling group gained **both** places with only a 27.5% share of the first preference vote: the second-highest-polling among the four two-candidate groups and the single ungrouped candidate had 25.9% first-preference support, but to no avail.

The former [Wollongong](#) and [Shellharbour](#) Councils, replaced by administrators before the 2008 polls, had also used multiple majority-preferential voting with two-councillor wards. That is not unconnected to abuses that led to the [dismissal of those councils](#). Those reconstituted municipalities' 2011 polls for five-year terms, in four-councillor and undivided districts respectively, used proportional representation.

In 2008, the eight other municipalities with two-councillor wards were [Cabonne](#), [Carrathool](#), [Conargo](#), [Guyra](#), [Tenterfield](#), [Wakool](#), [Walcha](#) and [Weddin](#) Shires. Most of those rural wards were uncontested (Wakool alone had each ward contested), and the rest had either three or four candidates. Although the two candidates with most first preferences tended to get elected, that did not always happen. The counting system for those eight councils will

be proportional representation in 2012, in some cases without wards.

The PRSA President, Bogey Musidlak, has written to the NSW Minister for Local Government to applaud this substantial electoral improvement, to urge that single-councillor wards be no longer permitted, and to suggest either the immediate foreshadowing of [countback](#) to fill casual vacancies wherever possible, or a commitment to its introduction following the 2016 local government elections.

## Tasmanian Assembly Supports Return to 35 MHAs

Moves reported in [QN2012A](#) about a [possible return to 35 MHAs](#) went further in the light of [Professor Peter Boyce's 2011 report](#) on the history and merits of the proposal tabled in Tasmania's House of Assembly following an opportunity for public submissions. The House passed, on 18 April, by 13 votes to 9, both a Greens amendment "... *House supports restoring the number of members in the House of Assembly to 35 at an appropriate time*" to replace the Opposition motion "*That the House agrees that the next State election for the House of Assembly be conducted on the current 25-seat model*", and also the amended motion itself.

In May 2012, Launceston's [The Examiner](#) reported Tasmania's 1982-89 Liberal Premier, Robin Gray, as saying that the Hare-Clark system is not appropriate for the 21st Century. PRSA's Victoria-Tasmania Branch contacted Tasmania's 40 State MPs to point out that changing to a [winner-take-all](#) system would not be reverting to the 20th Century, but to the 19th, and that the next Liberal Premier, Ray Groom, had praised Hare-Clark in a [media statement](#) addressed to all ACT voters before the 1992 advisory poll at which there was 65% support for adopting Hare-Clark.

## Passing of Two Long-serving Proportionalists

[Maurice Fabrikant](#), who was a member of the Council of the PRSA's Victoria-Tasmania Branch, and served as the Branch's Treasurer from 2004 to 2011, died on 16 May 2012 after a short illness. A [friendly man](#), Maurie was popular with Branch members. His thorough and reliable work as Treasurer matched his good work as a [PR Accredited Vote-counting Officer](#).

Major Henry Kitchener, the third [Earl Kitchener of Khartoum](#), a former member of the UK [Electoral Reform Society's](#) Council, died on 16 December 2011. He and [Dr David Hill](#) worked to promote the [Meek system](#) under which all papers with a next preference are transferred after a candidate's election and the quota adjusted downwards if necessary. Lord Kitchener - [in Canberra in 1995](#) - helped in the PRSA's campaign to entrench Hare-Clark in the ACT. He followed Earl Russell in an important 1998 [House of Lords debate](#) for an open rather a closed PR list for electing Members of the European Parliament.

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