

QUOTA NOTES

Newsletter of the Proportional Representation Society of Australia

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Starting with this issue, *Quota Notes* becomes the national newsletter of the Proportional Representation Society of Australia, following a decision made at the National Conference in Melbourne in April. The intention is to issue it in September, December, March and June.

Office-Bearers

Only one nomination was received for each of the four positions to be filled for the two-year period starting on 1 January 1984. Those nominated, and **declared elected** unopposed, are

President	Mr Jack Wright, New South Wales
Vice-President	Mr Geoffrey Goode, Victoria
Secretary	Mr Peter Paterson, New South Wales
Treasurer	Dr Peter Fleming, Victoria

Electoral 'Reform'

On Tuesday 13 September, the report of the Joint Select Committee on Electoral Reform was tabled in both Houses of the Federal Parliament, with dissenting reports by Senator The Hon. Sir John Carrick, Mr R. Steele Hall, Hon. Ralph Hunt and Senator Michael Macklin. The report includes 132 recommendations, including a substantial number of proposals for desirable changes. For example, the exact procedure for the transfer of surplus votes of elected Senate candidates, as proposed by the Society, is recommended, as are changes to improve procedures for the maintenance of rolls and recording of votes.

Although the Committee has noted that 'PR may result in the party composition of the House reflecting more closely the pattern of party support in the State', it has chosen to do nothing likely to reduce the distortions of representation that have occurred regularly with the present system. It has dismissed our contention that large numbers of voters are inevitably left without effective representation by saying that 'a successful candidate is no less a representative of an elector in the House simply because the elector did not direct a vote to that candidate'. In response to the contention that a member cannot effectively represent people with political views opposed to his own, the Committee suggests that 'a constituent may seek access to a Senate representative', failing, of course, to record that it is only because of PR that both government and opposition Senators are accessible to all voters.

Senator Macklin's dissenting report putting a strong case for the use of a quota-preferential system for the House has had very little attention so far, the media having dealt mostly with the proposed increase in the number of members. The government is proposing to introduce legislation to implement most of the recommendations of the Committee in October, with the intention of having it passed in the present session of Parliament. Those interested in genuine electoral reform must do everything possible to convince the politicians that the recommendations of the Committee are not good enough. Letters to Ministers and members of Parliament and to the press, contributions to talk-back programs, and, where possible, personal contact with members could help to prevent the voters being fobbed off with trivial changes in the name of electoral reform, while the basic defects of the electoral system remain unchanged.

Finance

The ballot on branch contributions to national funds, following the decision at the April Conference, resulted in a clear majority for a contribution of 40% of branch subscription income each year.

Our Image

At the National Conference, it was decided that members should be invited to submit ideas for a 'logo' and a slogan for the Society. The Concise Oxford says that a logo is a 'non-heraldic device chosen as a badge . . . on notepaper etc.' Send your ideas to the Secretary. A sub-committee, consisting of Mr Don Powell and [Mr Ted Goode](#), was set up by the Conference to evaluate and develop ideas submitted.

After the Federal Election

The final figures for the House of Representatives election, held on 5 March, show that 3,764,091 people, 43.3% of all who voted formally, recorded votes which had no effect at all on the outcome. With a practicable arrangement of multi-member districts, the parties would probably have won seats as follows (seats actually won in brackets):

ALP 67 (75), Liberal 46 (33), National 12 (17).

Electoral Reform, WA Style

A Bill introduced in [Western Australia](#) in August provides for a Legislative Council of 22 members, with 11 elected at a time from the whole State by a quota-preferential method similar to that used for the Senate and the NSW and SA Legislative Councils. Although the Minister for Transport missed a vital division, leaving the government short of a 'constitutional majority', the decision was rescinded and the Bill is likely to be passed by the Legislative Assembly.

Briefly

An analysis of the November 1982 South Australian election is available from Deane Crabb, Secretary of the [Electoral Reform Society of South Australia](#). During a visit to the UK in May, Deane had discussions with Seamus Burke, Enid Lakeman and others at the [Electoral Reform Society](#), London.

The Queensland Branch is planning to work on the new parliament after the State election next month, with the aim of getting some progress towards the real electoral reform needed so badly in Queensland.

NSW member, Mr Bernie Donohue, has prepared an interesting paper on the basic needs for democracy, including sound electoral methods. Contact him at 12 Paisley Road, Croydon, NSW 2132 for a copy.

The orderly election to the Tasmanian House of Assembly of Dr Bob Brown after re-examination of the ballot papers in the [quota that had elected Dr Norm Sanders](#) contrasts with events elsewhere, with many Victorian by-elections, loss of local representation in NSW while the party machine sorts out some problems, and Federally, government distracted by Lowe, Flinders, Bruce and Moreton sideshows.

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