

Parliament of Victoria

Electoral Amendment (Miscellaneous Matters) Bill 2026

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Bill Brief

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Bill information

Introduced: 28 July 2026

House: Legislative Assembly

Second Reading: 29 July 2026

Commencement: This Act comes into operation on the day after the day on which this Act receives the Royal Assent.

Links to key documents including the Bill, Explanatory Memorandum, Statement of Compatibility and Second reading Speech can be found at the [Library's Infolink page for this Bill](#).

For further information on the progress of this Bill, please visit the [Victorian Legislation and Parliamentary documents website](#).

Executive Summary

The Electoral Amendment (Miscellaneous Matters) Bill 2026 primarily abolishes group voting tickets (GVTs) for Victorian Legislative Council elections and brings Victoria into line with the other Australian jurisdictions which adopted and subsequently abolished their use.

GVTs were introduced in Victoria in 2003 to simplify voting and reduce informal ballots by allowing voters to cast a single above-the-line vote, with preferences distributed according to party-registered tickets. Concerns grew that preference deals between parties enabled candidates with very low primary votes to be elected through preference-harvesting arrangements, often organised by so-called 'preference whisperers'.

Following reviews by the Parliament of Victoria's Electoral Matters Committee (EMC) of the 2018 and 2022 Victorian elections, and an inquiry specifically focused on the Upper House electoral system in 2024–25, the EMC recommended abolishing GVTs. Evidence highlighted voter confusion, a lack of transparency, and public concerns that election outcomes did not always reflect voter intentions.

The Bill repeals the provisions that allow GVTs and introduces a new system requiring voters to number at least five groups above the line in order of preference. Voters will directly allocate preferences rather than having them set by political parties and candidates (although parties still determine the order of preferences for above-the-line votes within each group). Below-the-line voting remains unchanged. There is ongoing debate about other aspects of upper house reform and the potential impact of changes on minor party representation.

The Bill also includes measures to reduce informal voting and to strengthen political finance transparency through new disclosure requirements and the publication of information about newly registered parties and candidates.

Introduction

The main focus of the Electoral Amendment (Miscellaneous Matters) Bill 2026 is the abolition of group voting tickets (GVTs) from Victoria's Legislative Council (LC) electoral process. GVTs were a relatively recent innovation in Australia that simplified voting in elections for both the federal Senate and most of the mainland state upper houses of parliament.

This paper provides a discussion of the Bill's context and meaning, focusing on GVTs and their abolition.

Section 1 outlines the history and development of GVTs and the emergence of controversy over their operation in various jurisdictions. GVTs emerged in the 1980s as a means of simplifying and reducing the high levels of informality in upper house voting.

As section 2 notes, however, controversy grew over how GVTs distributed preferences, with the Senate and all states that had them (except Victoria) abolishing them. GVTs became a major focus of debate in the Parliament of Victoria's Electoral Matters Committee (EMC). The EMC conducted an inquiry that eventually recommended their abolition in December 2025.

Sections 3 and 4 outline the contents of the Bill and the second reading speech. They focus primarily on GVTs, though there are some additional amendments to the *Electoral Act 2002*.

Section 5 summarises the responses from some of the main stakeholders in regard to the Bill. There is ongoing debate about other aspects of upper house reform and the potential impact of changes on minor party representation, especially while retaining the current region-based structure and the comparatively high percentage of votes needed to obtain the quota required for election. This is currently 16.7 per cent and would remain so in each region. A 40-member LC would have a statewide quota of around 2.4 per cent.

This paper is not intended to provide legal advice or legislative interpretation, nor is it an exhaustive account of the Bill.

1 | Group voting ticket origins and purpose

GVTs emerged in the 1980s as a solution to high levels of informality in federal-level Senate elections. Victoria implemented GVTs as part of a series of extensive reforms to the state's Upper House in 2003.

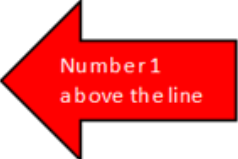
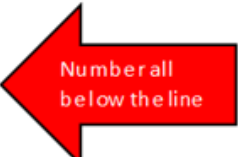
What are group voting tickets?

In most upper house elections, voters can vote either above or below the line, with those voting below the line allocating their preferences directly to individual candidates by numbering their preferred candidates (Figure 1). Under a GVT system, however, when voters vote above the line, they select one party or group, which allocates preferences according to registered lists made by the party or group.¹ These lists are GVTs.

While the GVT system still permits voters to view these preference agreements (online or at voting centres) and decide whether they wish to follow them, in practice they are often unknown to voters.

¹ ABC News (2013) 'Group Voting Tickets', 19 September.

Figure 1: Post-1983 proportional representation, single transferable vote-style ballot paper

☐ Party 1	☐ Party 3	☐ Party 4	☐ Party 5	☐ Ungrouped	
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	
☐ Candidate 1	☐ Candidate 1	☐ Candidate 1	☐ Candidate 1	☐ Candidate 1	
☐ Candidate 2	☐ Candidate 2	☐ Candidate 2	☐ Candidate 2	☐ Candidate 2	OR 
	☐ Candidate 3	☐ Candidate 3		☐ Candidate 3	
	☐ Candidate 4	☐ Candidate 4		☐ Candidate 4	
	☐ Candidate 5	☐ Candidate 5			

Source: the authors.

The origins of GVTs

Upper houses tend to be elected by different electoral systems than lower houses. The latter usually have single-member constituencies elected via a system of single transferable or 'preferential' voting. Upper houses overwhelmingly use proportional representation.² A combined system of proportional representation and single transferable voting emerged historically in Australia.

One downside to preferential and single transferable voting is that it can result in complicated ballot papers. Long lists of candidate names on ballot papers can make voting complex.³ The use of combined proportional representation and single transferable voting in Australia's Senate often featured high levels of informal voting (averaging over 9 per cent).⁴

As a result, the Hawke Labor government reformed the Senate's voting system in 1983 to simplify it.⁵ The reforms introduced a new style of 'above and below the line' ballot paper, along with GVTs. The rate of informal voting declined significantly, and around 95 per cent of voters opted for above-the-line voting.⁶

GVTs in Victoria

Various state-based upper houses adopted similar measures, including in Victoria. The introduction of GVTs corresponded with a suite of reforms.

Victoria was a latecomer to upper house and electoral reform. The Victorian LC had functioned for much of its time as a provincial-based system. From 1904 until 2006 there were 22 provinces with two Members each. The Bracks government implemented extensive

² The exception is Tasmania, where the Hare-Clark system means that the LA is elected via PR, while the LC has 15 single-member divisions. Hare-Clark is used in some upper houses elsewhere. Tasmanian Electoral Commission (date unknown) '[Legislative Council elections](#)', TEC website.

³ A. Reynolds et al. (2005) *Electoral System Design: The New International IDEA Handbook*, Stockholm, International IDEA.

⁴ A. Green (2015) '[The Origin of Senate Group Ticket Voting, and It Didn't Come from the Major Parties](#)', ABC News, 23 September.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Australian Broadcasting Commission (date unknown) '[Glossary of Election Terms - Federal Election 2007](#)', ABC website.

reforms after convening a Constitutional Commission in 2002.⁷ Subsequent legislation established the LC electoral system, which has operated since 2003.⁸ This comprises the following structure:

- The current system consists of eight LC regions, each with five Members, all elected for four-year terms. Electoral boundaries change according to regular redistributions of LA districts.
- Each LC region comprises 11 LA electoral districts. Concurrent elections with the LA take place using a mix of preferential voting (LA) and proportional representation (LC).
- Using the ‘Droop system’, each candidate is required to obtain a quota of 16.67 per cent of the total votes (based on five candidates plus one). The surplus votes of elected candidates are distributed as preferences until all five quotas are allocated.
- Finally, the allocation of these preferences occurs via the ‘inclusive Gregory method’. The surplus votes for elected candidates are allocated at a reduced value according to the number of ballot papers, rather than the number of votes.⁹

GVTs were the fifth and final element of reforms. Despite the identification of already existing problems associated with GVTs in other jurisdictions which adopted them (see section 2), Victoria allowed their operation for above-the-line voting. Voters could opt for a single 1 vote above the line, and preferences would be allocated via existing registered GVTs.

2 | Controversy and the decline of GVTs

GVTs eventually became the source of considerable controversy. The Senate and all mainland states that adopted them have abolished their use, except Victoria. There was, however, considerable debate over their use within the Parliament of Victoria Electoral Matters Committee (EMC) and elsewhere.

Mounting problems

Three main difficulties arose over GVTs. First, the number of Senate and state-based legislative council candidates and parties contesting elections was increasing. Larger ballot papers made completing below-the-line options even more time-consuming and unlikely.¹⁰

Second, the heightened use of intricate preference agreements generated increasing consternation amongst election observers and participants. GVTs allowed parties with minimal support to ‘swap’ preferences to accumulate enough support to (in some cases) obtain a necessary quota of votes to win seats.¹¹

Glenn Druery—the so-called ‘preference whisperer’—became a major player in these processes. At first targeting the New South Wales Legislative Council, Druery helped one candidate get elected with just 7,264 initial votes (0.20 per cent) and nowhere near the 4.5 per cent required quota.¹² Druery also established a ‘minor party alliance’ and a consultancy service to facilitate similar agreements in other jurisdictions, eventually becoming an influential national figure.¹³

Third, the Senate eventually became the focus of controversy in 2013 when five minor candidates were elected. The most contentious were Ricky Muir of the Australian Motoring Enthusiast Party in Victoria (0.504 per cent primary vote) and Wayne Dropulich of the

⁷ Constitution Commission of Victoria (2002) *A House for Our Future: A Report*, Melbourne, Constitution Commission Victoria.

⁸ *Constitution (Parliamentary Reform) Act 2003*

⁹ For details on the Gregory method, see Proportional Representation Society of Australia (date unknown) ‘[The Gregory Fractional Transfer](#)’, PRSA website.

¹⁰ A. Wood (2015) ‘Above the Line is their Preference’, *Daily Telegraph*, 22 March.

¹¹ A. Green (2009) ‘[NSW Legislative Council and its new electoral system](#)’, *ABC News*, 16 June.

¹² A. Green (1999) *New South Wales Elections 1999* (No. 4/99), Sydney, Parliament of New South Wales, p. 58.

¹³ S. Nicholls (2013) ‘Micro-Manager behind Independents’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 September.

Australian Sports Party in Western Australia (0.217 per cent). The last most notable case at the state level of GVT-linked anomalies occurred in 2021. Wilson Tucker of the Daylight Savings party was elected to the WA parliament despite gaining just 98 first-preference votes.¹⁴

Reform in other jurisdictions

These controversies led to GVTs being abolished in the Senate and all state parliaments that used them, except Victoria. Table 1 outlines these changes. Table 2 displays the voting systems adopted by each jurisdiction. They vary slightly.

Table 1: Legislation abolishing the use of GVTs (various jurisdictions)

Jurisdiction	Abolished	Legislation
New South Wales Legislative Council	1999	<i>Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Amendment Act 1999</i>
Australian Senate (Federal)	2016	<i>Commonwealth Electoral Amendment Act 2016</i>
South Australian Legislative Council	2017	<i>Electoral (Miscellaneous) Amendment Act 2017</i>
Western Australian Legislative Council	2021	<i>Constitutional and Electoral Legislation Amendment (Electoral Equality) Act 2021</i>

Table 2: Above and below-the-line voting by jurisdiction¹⁵

Jurisdiction	Voting process
New South Wales Legislative Council	At least one or more votes above the line for groups At least 15 votes below the line
Australian Senate (Federal)	At least six votes above the line for groups At least 12 votes below the line
South Australian Legislative Council	At least one or more votes above the line for groups At least 12 votes below the line
Western Australian Legislative Council	At least one or more votes above the line for groups At least 20 votes below the line

Debate in Victoria

There was already considerable criticism of GVTs within Victoria at the time of the Upper House reforms of 2003. Initially, election results for the LC did not cause many concerns, although GVTs were criticised for allegedly allowing ‘political parties to potentially corrupt and manipulate votes through preference deals’.¹⁶ These issues were raised multiple times by the EMC in various reports on the conduct of elections.

The 2018 election

Debate in Victoria over GVTs has increased following recent electoral results in the LC. The 2018 Victorian election outcome was of particular interest, with the Transport Matters

¹⁴ C. Wahlquist (2021) ‘WA candidate elected to parliament with less than 100 votes prompts calls for electoral reform’, *The Guardian*, 7 April.

¹⁵ Australian Electoral Commission (date unknown) ‘Voting in the Senate’, AEC website, Electoral Commission South Australia (date unknown) ‘Legislative Council’, Electoral Commission South Australia website., NSW Electoral Commission (date unknown) ‘Legislative Council voting’, NSW Electoral Commission website., Western Australian Electoral Commission (date unknown) ‘Voting Systems in WA’, WAEC website.

¹⁶ M. Murphy (2006) “Backroom” Preferences Condemned: Party’s Ascent Sparks Call for Reform’, *The Age*, 14 December, p. 7.

Party's Rod Barton winning a seat with a 0.62 per cent (2,508) primary vote. Sustainable Australia's Clifford Hayes also obtained a seat with 1.32 per cent (5,407 votes).¹⁷

GVTs subsequently received considerable attention in the EMC's *Inquiry into the Conduct of the 2018 Victorian State Election*.¹⁸ The report devoted a chapter to the LC, and many submissions heavily criticised GVTs. However, 'no consensus about what (if anything) should be changed' emerged.¹⁹ The EMC recommended that 'the Parliament refer an inquiry into possible reforms of the Upper House electoral system to the Electoral Matters Committee'.²⁰ The Greens' representation in the chamber had been reduced from five to one, despite the party obtaining 12.9 per cent and 8.4 per cent in two regions. However, no further electoral reform measures took place during the term of the 59th Parliament.

Debates after 2022

As with the 2018 election, the EMC devoted considerable attention to GVTs after 2022. Considerable debate and controversy occurred in the lead-up to the election, with many stakeholders urging electors to vote 'below the line'. News reports explained how to correctly vote below the line, and *The Age* newspaper editorialised on the need to abolish GVTs.²¹

Below-the-line voting for the 2022 state election increased marginally from 7.05 to 9.4 per cent of total ballots cast.²² It is plausible that public discussion around the issues contributed to this trend. The extent to which these changes impacted on results is unclear. Although no parties with less than 1 per cent primary vote succeeded in the 2022 election, the Animal Justice Party won a seat in the Northern Victoria Region with a low 1.55 per cent primary vote.²³

The EMC's 2022 election report

Consequently, the EMC devoted considerable attention to GVTs and their repercussions for LC voting in the 2022 election. The EMC's overall election report was presented in two volumes. Volume 1 contained a recommendation that 'the Government reform the Upper House voting system by introducing legislation amending the Electoral Act to: eliminate group voting tickets'.²⁴

Chapter 11 of its 2024 report, *The Conduct of the 2022 Victorian State Election: Volume 2: Detailed analysis*, examined the evidence that formed the basis of three of the report's 122 findings.²⁵

Submissions and other materials suggested that widespread confusion existed over GVTs and that this threatened to increase distrust in elections and their outcomes.²⁶ Voters did not understand the preference process and often expressed surprise and concern about how their votes may have contributed to the election of candidates that they felt did not

¹⁷ Electoral Matters Committee (2020) *Inquiry into the Conduct of the 2018 Victorian State Election: Final report*, August, Melbourne, The Committee, p. 11; Victorian Electoral Commission (2018) '2018 state election results', VEC. (These results differ from those candidates' parties' statewide percentage vote.)

¹⁸ Electoral Matters Committee (2020) op. cit.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 223.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 222.

²¹ Field & Game Australia (2022) 'Parties That Support Hunting and Shooting beyond 2022', FGA; M. Johnston & M. Warner (2022) 'Seats on Sale for Just \$55K', *Herald Sun*, 17 November; M. Johnston & M. Warner (2022) "'I Had Clive Eating Out of My Palmer'", *Herald Sun*, 18 November; Editorial (2022) 'A Voting System in Dire Need of Reform', *The Age*, 18 November.

²² Victorian Electoral Commission (date unknown) '2022 State election results', VEC website.

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ Electoral Matters Committee (2024) *The Conduct of the 2022 Victorian State Election Volume 1: Key reforms*, July, Melbourne, The Committee.

²⁵ Electoral Matters Committee (2024) *The Conduct of the 2022 Victorian State Election Volume 2: Detailed analysis*, July, Melbourne, The Committee.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 236.

represent them. Widespread dismay existed over ‘backroom’ deals with little scrutiny or accountability.²⁷

Some of the most trenchant criticisms focused on Druery’s role as a so-called ‘preference whisperer’ arranging agreements for a fee. A video featured Druery claiming that a set fee of \$5,000 allowed participation in a set of preference agreements, with \$55,000 charged for any candidate that wins a seat.²⁸ Druery would ‘game’ the preference flow to allow candidates with very low primary votes to harvest preferences and ultimately obtain the required quota of votes needed to win.

Apart from the integrity issues posed by such arrangements, it appeared that an additional consequence of GVTs was a proliferation of both parties and election candidates standing for seats. Parties would be incentivised to run in LA districts in order to obtain preference bargaining power in the LC.²⁹

Findings 96–99 of the EMC report dealt with these issues, noting that ‘Some people’s above-the-line votes were distributed to parties and candidates that they may not have expected’ and that ‘some group voting tickets were particularly difficult for voters to interpret ... Some appeared to support a party to which preferences were unlikely to flow in practice’.³⁰ Most notably, finding 98 stated:

The practice of coordinating preference deals between parties for a fee (‘preference whispering’) is seen as unethical by many people. It has also led to negative consequences, including giving an advantage to parties that are willing to pay for the service, pressuring parties to give preferences that they otherwise would not (creating group voting tickets that are less aligned with a party’s ideology) and creating an incentive for parties to run candidates that have little chance of being elected, adding to the size and complexity of ballot papers.³¹

One dissenting report by three lower-house Coalition committee members (Brad Battin, Liberal Member for Berwick, Emma Kealy, National Member for Lowan, and Wayne Farnham, Liberal Member for Narracan) offered stronger criticisms of GVTs and other findings and recommendations.³² David Ettershank MLC—while recognising the need to reform GVTs—argued that any changes needed to occur in conjunction with changes to the LC’s regional structure. Ettershank’s rationale was that smaller parties, while gaining in some ways from GVTs, are disadvantaged by the high quota (16.7 per cent) needed for election.³³ Changing the regional structure would enable the quota to be reduced.

The government responded with ‘further consideration required’ to volume 1’s recommendation 17, noting that the LA had called for an inquiry into the LC election process.³⁴ The Victorian Electoral Commission agreed ‘in principle’ with proposals to abolish GVTs.³⁵

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 237.

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 242.

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 243; B. Reid (2026) *Election candidate proliferation in Victoria*, Melbourne, Parliamentary Library & Information Service.

³⁰ Electoral Matters Committee (2024) *The Conduct of the 2022 Victorian State Election Volume 2: Detailed analysis*, op. cit., p. xxxviii.

³¹ *ibid.*

³² *ibid.*

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ Victorian Government (2025) *Victorian Government Response Recommendations Made by the Electoral Matters Committee in its report on its Inquiry into the conduct of the 2022 Victorian state election*, January, Melbourne, Victorian Government.

³⁵ Victorian Electoral Commission (2024) *Victorian Electoral Commission Response to Electoral Matters Committee Report on its Inquiry Into The Conduct Of The 2022 Victorian State Election*, Victorian Electoral Commission, p. 19.

The 2025 Inquiry

On 27 August 2024, the LA agreed to a motion calling for ‘an inquiry into possible reforms to the composition of, and voting systems for, the Legislative Council to the Electoral Matters Committee for consideration and report no later than 8 December 2025’.³⁶

The EMC first issued a discussion paper inviting discussion on a wide range of potential approaches to reforming the LC structure and election processes.³⁷ The final report tabled in December 2025 suggested a ‘two-stage’ reform process. The first stage (before the 2026 election) involved ‘making various amendments to the Electoral Act to: eliminate group voting tickets; introduce the weighted inclusive Gregory method for surplus vote transfers; and review and improve the legislated referendum process’.³⁸

The report also presented a wide-ranging discussion and proposal for a second stage of reform after the 2026 election, focused on possible changes to the electoral structure. It involved building ‘agreement about what the electoral system should be’, which ‘could involve an expert panel, a citizens’ assembly or a constitutional convention’ with a potential future referendum.³⁹

The Victorian Electoral Commission supported most recommendations. While it supported ‘in principle’ a shift to a weighted inclusive Gregory system of preference distribution, it stated ‘it is too late for this recommendation to be implemented in time for the 2026 state election without introducing substantial risks to the delivery of the election’.⁴⁰

The government did not explicitly resolve to abolish GVTs with the tabling of the inquiry report. Greens Member Aiv Puglielli introduced a private member's Bill along these lines to the LC in February 2026, but it has not progressed beyond the second reading stage.⁴¹ There were reports as early as September 2025 that the government was considering abolishing GVTs, and in July 2026 *The Age* and the *Herald Sun* reported that then-Premier Jacinta Allan was working on a Bill to that effect to introduce when Parliament returned from the winter break.⁴² On 28 July 2026 a Bill was introduced to the Legislative Assembly, and the reform was among Ben Carroll’s first round of announcements after becoming Premier.⁴³

³⁶ M.-A. Thomas, (2024) ‘Committees: Electoral Matters Committee’, *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 27 August.

³⁷ Electoral Matters Committee (2024) *Victoria’s Upper House electoral system: Discussion paper*, October, Melbourne, Electoral Matters Committee.

³⁸ Electoral Matters Committee (2025) *Victoria’s Upper House electoral system: Final report*, December, Melbourne, The Committee. p. xi.

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. xii.

⁴⁰ Victorian Electoral Commission (2024) *Victorian Electoral Commission Response to Electoral Matters Committee Report on its Inquiry Into The Conduct Of The 2022 Victorian State Election*, op. cit.

⁴¹ Electoral Amendment (Group Voting and Vote Counting) Bill 2026

⁴² R. Bourke & C. Douglas (2026) ‘Party’s over for ‘little players’: Vic vote reform to axe MPs’, *Sunday Herald Sun*, 12 July, p. 13; K. Rooney & P. Hatch (2026) ‘Election law overhaul set to hurt crossbenchers – and help One Nation’, *The Age*, 11 July; K. Rooney & R. Eddie (2025) ‘Victoria’s balancing act between abolishing preference harvesting and getting things done’, *The Age*, 16 September.

⁴³ B. Carroll, Premier (2026) *Making Victoria’s elections fairer and more transparent*, media release, 29 July.

3 | The Bill

The Electoral Amendment (Miscellaneous Matters) Bill 2026 was introduced into the Legislative Assembly by Minister for Police Anthony Carbines on 28 July 2026.⁴⁴ After being deemed urgent, the Bill was second read and passed the House on 29 July with no amendments. The Bill was introduced and second read in the Legislative Council on 30 July by Special Minister of State Ingrid Stitt, and was adjourned for debate until the following sitting week, beginning 11 August.⁴⁵ The Bill will commence the day after it receives Royal Assent.⁴⁶

Second reading speech

The second reading speech—delivered by Minister Carbines in the Legislative Assembly and by Minister Stitt in the Legislative Council—demonstrated how the Bill acquits the recommendations of the two inquiries from the EMC in 2024 and 2025 by removing GVTs and allowing voters to indicate multiple preferences above the line.⁴⁷

The ministers also acknowledged that GVTs had ‘become controversial’ in Victoria, as noted by the EMC’s inquiry into the 2022 election, because the GVT system ‘is widely perceived as unethical, is not transparent and leads to distrust in the electoral system’.⁴⁸ They said the system has had two major concerns: that ‘voters do not understand how their votes will be distributed when they vote above the line; and the results do not reflect voters’ preferences’.⁴⁹ The ministers highlighted the 2018 election, in which two candidates received less than 1 per cent of first-preference votes, and the risk of ‘preference whispering’ raised by GVTs.⁵⁰ The ministers also pointed out that all other Australian jurisdictions had abolished GVTs in their upper houses, and that the Bill would bring Victoria in line with the rest of Australia.⁵¹

The ministers argued that the Bill was not designed to make it more difficult for smaller parties or independents to be elected to the Upper House. Instead, they argued, the removal of GVTs will ‘require all candidates to convince electors to give their party voting preference’ and will mean those parties elected to the Council will ‘justify their presence in the parliamentary chamber’, rather than relying on third-party preference whisperers.⁵²

The ministers said the financial reporting reforms contained in the Bill would also make the electoral process fairer, and that the requirements for parties to report their repayment of political funding would ‘promote greater transparency and strengthen oversight within Victoria’s political finance system’.⁵³

⁴⁴ A. Carbines, Minister for Police (2026) ‘[Second reading speech: Electoral Amendment \(Miscellaneous Matters\) Bill 2026](#)’, *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 29 July, pp. 2797–99.

⁴⁵ I. Stitt, Special Minister of State (2026) ‘[Second reading speech: Electoral Amendment \(Miscellaneous Matters\) Bill 2026](#)’, *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Council, 30 July, pp. 2803–05.

⁴⁶ [Electoral Amendment \(Miscellaneous Matters\) Bill 2026](#), cl 2.

⁴⁷ Carbines (2026) op. cit.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 2798.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁰ *ibid.*; Only one candidate was elected to the Legislative Council with less than 1 per cent of the first preferences: Rod Barton from the Transport Matters Party. Another Member, Sustainable Australia’s Clifford Hayes, won a seat with 1.32 per cent of the primary vote. Victorian Electoral Commission (2018) ‘[Eastern Metropolitan Region - Elected members](#)’, VEC website; Victorian Electoral Commission (2018) ‘[Southern Metropolitan Region - Elected members](#)’, VEC website.

⁵¹ Carbines (2026) op. cit.

⁵² *ibid.*, p. 2798.

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 2799.

Removing GVTs

The Bill amends the Electoral Act to make several changes to the voting process to remove GVTs from Legislative Council elections. The provisions outlined in this section apply only to Legislative Council elections. This section is intended to provide a broad overview of the changes proposed by the Bill, and does not constitute legislative interpretation or expert or legal advice.

Distributing preferences above the line

The Bill removes GVTs by changing how above-the-line votes are interpreted. Voters will be able to indicate multiple preferences above the line, and the Bill changes how these above-the-line votes are interpreted without GVTs.⁵⁴

Clause 15 substitutes section 93A(1), (2) and (3) of the Act to now outline how above-the-line votes are to be recorded and how the preferences are to be distributed. New subsection (3A) states that when an elector marks a square above the line corresponding to a group with a '1', their first preference will be for the first candidate in that group, and their subsequent preferences will be for the remaining members of that group (in the order in which they are listed on the ballot paper).⁵⁵ The same process applies with the groups corresponding to the squares the elector marks with the numbers '2' to at least '5' (voters can go beyond five if they wish); preferences are allocated to each of the candidates in the group they marked '2', in the order they appear on the ballot paper, then those in the group they marked '3', and so on.

Clause 15 also states that below-the-line voting remains the same in that voters must consecutively number at least five candidates '1' to '5' and preferences will follow this order.⁵⁶

The Bill also outlines the information required on how-to-vote cards, which includes a statement directing voters on how to vote above or below the line.⁵⁷ There are also consequential amendments relating to voting instructions on ballot papers.⁵⁸

Removing references to GVTs

Subsequent to the method of distributing preferences without GVTs outlined in clauses 15 and 17 (among others), references to GVTs in the Electoral Act are removed by several clauses. Clause 7 repeals section 69B of the Electoral Act, which allowed candidates to register GVTs and specify the flow of preferences to candidates in that group if a voter voted above the line.⁵⁹

The Bill also provides requirements for the type of parties that can request to group their names together on an LC ballot and the information they must provide the VEC, including the order in which they wish to be listed on a ballot paper and other matters.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Carbines (2026) op. cit.; Electoral Amendment (Miscellaneous Matters) Bill 2026, cl 15.

⁵⁵ Electoral Amendment (Miscellaneous Matters) Bill 2026, cl 15.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, cl 8.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, cl 3.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, cl 29, 30.

⁵⁹ Electoral Amendment (Miscellaneous Matters) Bill 2026; [Electoral Act 2002](#).

⁶⁰ Electoral Amendment (Miscellaneous Matters) Bill 2026

Informal votes

The Bill ensures the Act contains a savings provision that allows for some informal votes—that is, where electors have not followed instructions—to still be counted as votes. The Bill provides for the following possible informal votes:

- If a voter attempts to vote above the line but does not complete at least five numbers in sequence, the vote is considered formal until there is a break in the sequence.⁶¹
- If a voter marks a square with a cross or a tick, that square is considered to have been marked with a ‘1’.⁶²
- If a voter marks boxes both above and below the line, the vote is taken as a below-the-line vote only.⁶³
- However, if the voter has marked both above and below the line but has only *validly* voted on one side of the line, the vote is considered to be a valid vote on whichever side of the line the vote has been completed validly.⁶⁴

These provisions mean that votes with fewer than five boxes numbered will not automatically be considered informal.

Minor amendments

Financial disclosures

The Bill also includes amendments consequential to changes made by the *Electoral Amendment Act 2025* and the *Electoral Further Amendment Act 2026*, relating to the funding of political parties. Most notably, the Bill requires parties to publicly disclose—via the VEC—the repayment of funds received by their nominated entities between 25 November 2018 and 14 April 2026, as required by the *Electoral Further Amendment Act 2026*.⁶⁵ The Bill details how and when parties and individuals must repay these funds, the time periods in which the new Acts apply, and the information the parties must provide to the VEC when making the repayments.⁶⁶

Publishing information from the Register of New Entrants

The Bill also requires the VEC to publish information on newly registered candidates or parties to the Register of New Entrants. The Register of New Entrants is maintained by the VEC and allows new parties or candidates to receive donations from a single donor that are twice the cap placed on all other candidates or parties.⁶⁷

The Bill sets out the information the VEC must publish on its website, including their names, whether they’re a party or an independent, and when and how long they have been on the register.⁶⁸ These provisions mean the amount and source of funding for new political parties or independent candidates will be more public, making political funding more transparent.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, cl 16.

⁶² *ibid.*, cl 16.

⁶³ *ibid.*, cl 17.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, cl 17.

⁶⁵ Carbines (2026) *op. cit.*

⁶⁶ Electoral Amendment (Miscellaneous Matters) Bill 2026, cl 24, 25, 27, 28.

⁶⁷ Victorian Electoral Commission (date unknown) ‘[New entrants](#)’, VEC website.

⁶⁸ Electoral Amendment (Miscellaneous Matters) Bill 2026, cl. 20.

4 | Stakeholder responses

Political parties

The Coalition and the Victorian Greens support the abolition of GVTs. During the second reading debate, Coalition Members described the Bill as an overdue reform that addresses longstanding concerns with the Upper House voting system.⁶⁹ The Victorian Greens similarly welcomed the change, noting that the party has advocated for the abolition of GVTs for many years.⁷⁰ In a media release issued on 20 November 2025, the Victorian Greens described GVTs as ‘dodgy’, arguing that the system is neither fair nor democratic and warning that it risks enabling extremist candidates, including Neo-Nazis, to gain parliamentary representation through preference deals.⁷¹

Several independent Members and minor party Members, while supporting the abolition of GVTs, argued that the Bill should be accompanied by broader electoral reform. Will Fowles, a former Labor member who now sits as an independent in the LA, advocated replacing Victoria’s eight Legislative Council electoral regions with a single statewide electorate. He argued that it would reduce the electoral quota ‘from circa 15 per cent to more like 2.5 per cent’,⁷² making it possible for candidates from smaller parties to be elected, thus preserving the diversity of the Legislative Council.⁷³

Animal Justice Party MLC Georgie Purcell also argued that abolishing GVTs alone would be insufficient. She contended that, without broader reform, the proposed changes would only disproportionately benefit some minor parties, including One Nation. Ms Purcell advocated for ‘a proportional statewide model’ similar to those used in New South Wales and Western Australia, arguing that such a model would avoid ‘undemocratic outcomes’ without being a ‘death knell for minor parties’.⁷⁴ Libertarian MLC David Limbrick shared the view, arguing that the Bill would significantly alter the composition of the crossbench in the Upper House, leaving it largely dominated by the Greens and One Nation.⁷⁵

Other stakeholders

The proposed reforms have attracted considerable attention from electoral commentators and the media. Commentary has generally focused on the likelihood that micro-party representation in the LC would decline if parties could no longer rely on preference harvesting through GVTs to secure election.⁷⁶

Among electoral commentators, Antony Green has expressed strong support for the reform. He argued that ‘It is simply wrong to maintain GVTs for Victorian elections, to throw away the preferences that voters can give at Senate elections and replace them with pre-arranged

⁶⁹ J. Newbury, Member for Brighton (2026) ‘[Electoral Amendment \(Miscellaneous Matters\) Bill 2026](#)’, *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 29 July, pp. 2826–28; E. Kealy, Member for Lowan (2026) ‘[Electoral Amendment \(Miscellaneous Matters\) Bill 2026](#)’, *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 29 July, pp. 2829–30.

⁷⁰ T. Read, Member for Brunswick (2026) ‘[Electoral Amendment \(Miscellaneous Matters\) Bill 2026](#)’, *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 29 July, pp. 2832–33.

⁷¹ The Victorian Greens, (2025) [Greens warn of Neo-Nazis joining Victorian Parliament if dodgy group voting tickets aren’t abolished](#), media release, 20 November 2025.

⁷² The more precise statewide electorate quota, as calculated by the Electoral Matter Committee, is 2.4 per cent. Electoral Matters Committee (2024) *Victoria’s Upper House electoral system: Discussion paper*, op. cit., p. 46.

⁷³ W. Fowles, Ringwood (2026) ‘[Electoral Amendment \(Miscellaneous Matters\) Bill 2026](#)’, *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 29 July 2026.

⁷⁴ (2026) ‘[Victorian MP Georgie Purcell says proposed voting reforms will benefit One Nation](#)’, *The Guardian*, 12 July 2026.

⁷⁵ R. Bourke & C. Douglas (2026) ‘[Micro-party MPs to be booted under Allan government voting shake-up](#)’, *Herald Sun*, 11 July 2026.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*; Rooney & Hatch (2026) op. cit.

party deals’.⁷⁷ In his view, the experience of four Senate elections and nine Legislative Council elections in other Australian jurisdictions conducted in similar systems without GVTs provides a strong case for Victoria adopting the proposed reforms. Green also suggests that, because Victorians elect members from eight regions, it would be preferable to adopt the federal Senate election model, which instructs voters to indicate a minimum number of above-the-line preferences, rather than the fully optional preferential voting model used in New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ A. Green (2026) ‘[Why does NSW have a 12-month Delay on Registered Parties being granted the Benefits of Registration?](#)’, Antony Green’s Election Blog, 28 August.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

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