



RSL
Victoria

Hybrid Voting System for State Executive

The current system for electing members of the State Executive is explained in detail in the current rules and in an attached brief. This model seeks to combine two different forms of election processes (Representative and Indirect). Although there are variations that are discussed later, it is possible to conduct individual voting by members and to *also* incorporate the votes of Sub-Branches.

This system is used within many political parties and within peak bodies where the votes of the rank and file (or members) are balanced (or compared) against the votes of organisational officials. It is also comparable to the system of upper and lower houses where one is based upon the equal interests of the individuals and the other is based on the interests of each State. The passing of referendum in Australia is also something of a hybrid, where the majority of the popular vote in the majority of States need to agree in order for the question to pass. It is proposed that each individual member of the Branch (i.e. of the RSL in Victoria) is given the option of exercising a vote and every Sub-Branch is then also able vote.

There are many variations and options of weighting that could be applied to each vote of the membership and Sub-Branch network, and any model would need to define what group, if any, is to have lesser, greater or possibly, equal say in any electoral outcome. An alternative approach would be that for someone to be elected, they need to be elected by both the popular vote as well as the majority of Sub-Branches.

Currently voting is not compulsory and there appears to be at least some apathy within the membership at large when it comes to involving themselves in this process. Further, there are also many Sub-Branches who do not exercise their right to vote, for many different reasons. Therefore, it is difficult to determine a weighting that could address the possibility of poor individual voting turnout and a high Sub-Branch involvement or a high individual turnout and poor Sub-Branch involvement. For example, allocating one vote to each Sub-Branch (approximately 260 constitutional Sub-Branches) would be irrelevant when compared to even a very poor individual voter turnout. Similarly, even if the current allocation of votes were given to the Sub-Branches, there is currently only a maximum of approximately 340 votes that can be cast, and they too would be rendered meaningless given a moderate individual voter turnout.

Additionally, it would need to be determined as to whether Sub-Branches would conduct their vote in accordance with the current rules given that each member is given that right separately. A variation could be that the elected Sub-Branch Committee meet and lodge the Sub-Branch vote. That way, both the wishes of the Sub-Branch as a separate entity could be compared to the wishes of the membership as a whole.

In Victoria, while there is considerable autonomy within Sub-Branches, the State Branch also still exercises quite significant control and oversight over the functioning of each Sub-Branch, including the Licensed and Gaming Sub-Branches (“10A Sub-Branches”). While members are “Members of the League”, they are fundamentally “Members of the XYZ Sub-Branch”.

Strengths

This model allows both the wishes of individual members to be determined as well as the wishes of Sub-Branches as a whole.

It counters the possibility of low individual turnout given that historically, most Sub-Branches have exercised their right to vote. The reverse is also true that if every member is given a vote, there may be lesser Sub-Branch involvement into the future.

It seeks to prevent the predominance of a single cohort, and – further – seeks to mechanically improve regional representation within the vote. Therefore, this hybrid system also attempts to *correct* or *moderate* the city/rural divide.

This model encourages as well as recognises that members are not simply members of the RSL but they are members of the “XYZ Sub-Branch”.

Weaknesses

It is very difficult to determine a weighting for Sub-Branches that could cover the uncertainty and variability of voter turnout and participation.

One vote per Sub-Branch or even the present sliding scale for elections would negate the vote of the Sub-Branches with even minor individual turnout and participation.

It is the most complex to agree upon, design, implement and run as it will involve the logistic effort of individual voting as well as Sub-Branch voting.

It would be very controversial if there was huge divergence between the wishes of members and those of the Sub-Branches.

There are no other Branches of the RSL that have a similar model and therefore, there are no templates to copy nor are we able to ascertain with any certainty, how it would work and how it would be received.

Opportunities

Adherence to the rules, regardless of the model, will give greater confidence in the result.

There is the possibility to retain the system of *representative democracy* and the primacy of Sub-Branches within this approach.

Input to this paper from Sub-Branches may provide a pathway that enables a simpler or better overall design compared to the options presently being considered by ERAG.

Threats

That ERAG or the Branch will ever be able to agree on a weighting or alternative method of comparing the two separate votes.

There is possibly a large number of members who want direct democracy (1M1V) rather than a hybrid model, regardless of how much effort ERAG makes and regardless of how members end up voting at Conference.

That ERAG doesn't provide sufficient information nor time for Sub-Branches to make an informed decision at Conference about a viable design.

That voting at Conference is not timed nor undertaken systematically and correctly and the subsequent discussions are not productive and add to more confusion and complexity of this model.