



31 January 2022

David Straface  
President  
Curtin Division  
Via email: [david@straface.com](mailto:david@straface.com)

## CURTIN PRESELECTION REFORM WORKSHOP

Dear David,

I extend my sincere thank you to the Curtin Division for hosting me at your Divisional Council meeting on 1 December 2021.

As you know, State Executive has agreed to a rigorous grassroots consultation process for preselection reform. This letter is to confirm discussions at the workshop you hosted. I would appreciate if you could write back to me with your understanding of the conversations which took place across each of the four principles.

I have attached the results of the exercise your members participated in on the evening. Notably, not one person was of the view we should remain with the status quo – all were in favour of reform across each principle.

I do not believe there has been a time in our recent history where the appetite for reform has been so widespread. In all the workshops I have facilitated, the question is not whether we should have reform, but rather what it should look like.

My understanding of the views expressed during the workshop is summarised below.

### Larger

All workshop attendees agreed the number of preselectors currently entitled to attend preselections is too few, and that preselection committees should comprise a greater number of delegates. You will recall the fact pack showed the average number of entitled delegates for preselections for Legislative Assembly “key seats” was just 35.

Attendees articulated a clear view that selection committees should be around five to ten times larger. Based on the key seat average used in the exercise, this would mean around 175 to 350 people participating in a preselection. This is in keeping with preselection models used in other states. However, based on the size of the Curtin Division, a plebiscite model could mean over 700 people are eligible. This is not without precedent, as you would note in the pack, the NSW Division of the Liberal Party is expecting 500 people to attend a preselection for the seat of Warringah.

The desire for having such large numbers of delegates participating means the only viable model is a plebiscite model – allowing all grassroots members to participate in a preselection. For example, Curtin Division has 16 branches. To continue the delegate system and reach the desired number of preselectors, each branch would need to elect between 10 to 20 delegates, which is unworkable given an average branch typically comprises ~30 members. Instead, the whole membership of the Division should be enfranchised.

### **Local**

All workshop attendees agreed that the current proportion of local delegates attending key seat pre-selections was too low. You will recall the fact pack showed only ~58% of delegates in most key seat preselections were locals who lived and worked in the electorate.

Attendees agreed preselections should comprise at least 80% local delegates, and as high as 100% as is the case in Tasmania. Again, there is a relatively even distribution between these two options.

Further, there was considerable discussion over the definition of what should constitute a “local delegate”. Attendees were largely unanimous in their view that the definition of local should only enfranchise those delegates who are on the electoral roll at a residential address within the electorate where the pre-selection is being conducted.

This view received strong support on the basis that adopting a looser definition of “local” could result in the signing-up of members who live outside the electorate, with those “outside” members having a disproportionate influence over preselections. Attendees viewed this as insidious branch stacking, which should be resisted.

This has implications for those members of the Division who are not on the electoral roll within the boundaries of Curtin Division, namely those who live in:

- The electorate, but by virtue of lacking Australian citizenship, are not on the electoral roll
- Another area, but choose to be members of Curtin Division because they:
  - Wish to contribute where they are a member because of historical links to that community or their support for the candidate or MP
  - Joined Curtin Division or one of its branches because those constituent bodies are particularly active, whereas the bodies where they live are less active
  - Have strong friendships with other members of Curtin Division, and want to associate with them

I would be grateful if you could discuss these issues with your members, and confirm they do not want to include the above members in future Curtin Division preselections.

### **Simpler**

All workshop attendees favored a simpler preselection system that was easy to administer.

To achieve this, attendees expressed support for two methods of selection committee composition:

- Constituting selection committees comprising only local delegates, with no additional delegates from outside the electorate or the centre (e.g. no State Council delegates)

- A mixture of local and central delegates - closer to the current practice of having a mix of local delegates and then layering on central delegates from State Council.

I did not sense that either model would impact any attendee's willingness to support reform, as long as the criteria outlined in the "larger" and "local" sections were met.

### **Better Vetting**

No one at the workshop believed the current arrangements around candidate vetting were adequate. Attendees accepted that the WA Liberal Party needed to codify its vetting processes, and were willing to look to other States for guidance on how to achieve this.

There were three schools of thought on how vetting could be improved:

- One group of workshop participants believed that a vetting committee should exist, and should provide advice to State Executive which could then stop an application from progressing.
- A similar sized group believed the committee itself should be able to stop an application.
- Another, much smaller sized group believe a vetting committee should provide advice directly to the relevant selection committee where the candidate has nominated.

Despite these disparate schools of thought, I did not sense any attendees felt overwhelmingly wedded to their preferred model – they were willing to consider alternative vetting models as reform discussions progressed across the Party.

### **Other matters**

In addition to the above, there have been a range of views put by members in other workshops. These matters were less topical in the Curtin Division. I offer no opinion on these points, but ask that you consider them in the response from your Division given they continue to be a topic of discussion elsewhere.

- That being an office bearer in a Division or local branch is a measure of contribution and that person should be enfranchised with a vote, even if not otherwise eligible. The counterargument has been made that this could skew executive positions to those who are not local.
- That there could be a grandfather or sunset clause on eligibility to vote in local preselections for those who are not local, but once were. For example, the Victorian Liberal Party's constitution makes allowances for those who were a member of a local branch on 12 October 2008 and who lived in the area at some point from 1 July 2007. This could, however, undermine the simpler to administer principle, and create two classes of membership.

### **Next steps**

I am conducting workshops in each Division, after which they will receive a letter just like this, allowing a further opportunity to put their views. Taking those into account, we will then identify and models which deliver against the four principles.

It is anticipated these workshops will be completed by the end of February/early March 2022. Models will be circulated, with another opportunity for consultation and feedback.

Please extend my sincere appreciation to all those who participated on the night. There was a very high level of engagement, with the majority of people in the room expressing their view at some point.

That demonstrates not only the appetite for reform, but that we can have a respectful, sober and mature conversation about the future of selecting candidates to represent our great Party in the community, and ultimately, in Parliament.

I look forward to your response and continuing to work with you and the Curtin Division. Please note I plan on releasing this letter publicly on the reform section of the Party's website, as well as your response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'RW', enclosed within a large, loopy blue oval stroke.

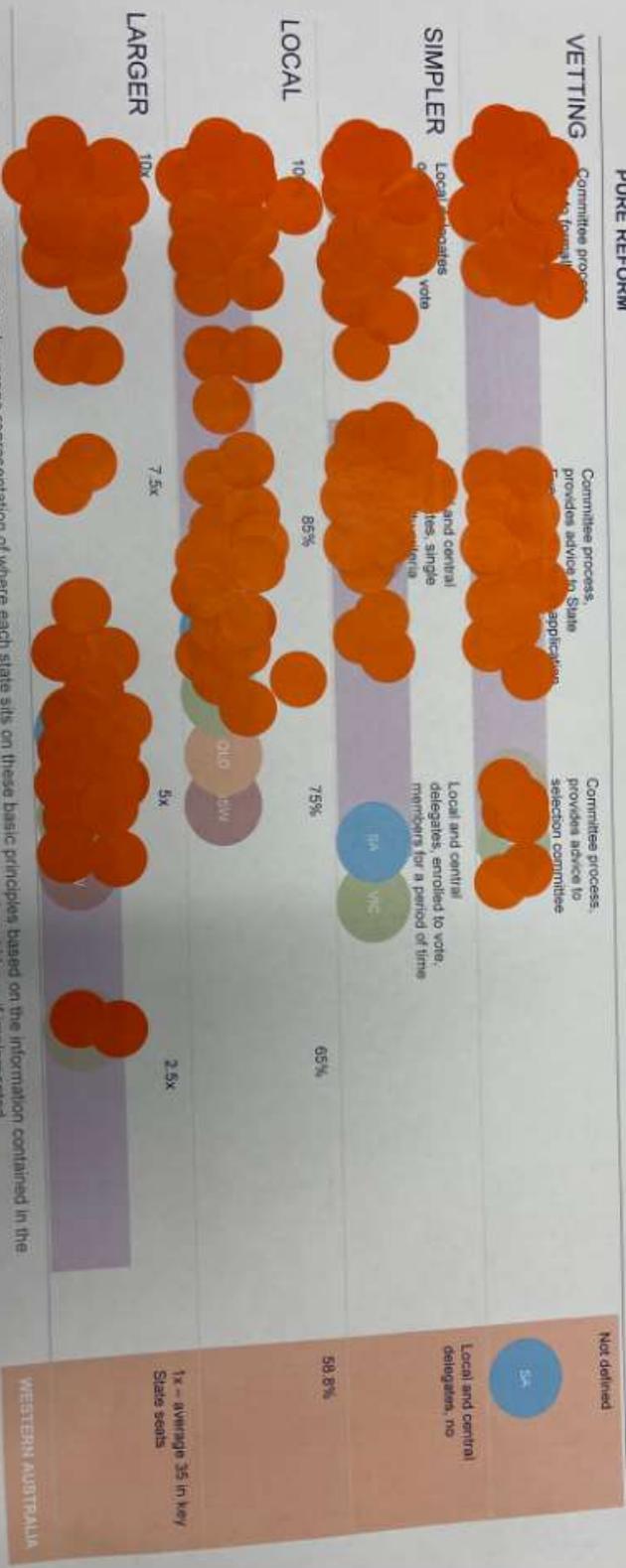
**Richard Wilson**  
State President

# Options | Which states are already where we want to be?



REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

## STATUS QUO



Note: The above table provides a general average representation of where each state sits on these basic principles based on the information contained in the previous slides. The purple box also shows, in a general sense, the Ipsos' recommendations of the review panel could have if implemented.