Run your own election

You can have your own election using the Hare-Clark system.

Templates for running a school election are available on the Elections ACT website at http://www.elections.act.gov.au/education/electoral_education_resources. These will provide you with the ballot paper, count cards and the scrutiny sheet. You can choose a scrutiny sheet where you enter the results of the election and it will calculate the result.

Choose your own election topic or use resources available on the website for a mock election (Electorate of Waterworld). Alternatively you could actually elect school captains, house captains, a class parliament or Student Representative Council (SRC) using the Hare-Clark system (see also factsheet on School Elections).

Step 1: Topic and nominations

- Decide what/who you would like to elect.
- Call for nominations if you are going to elect people to certain positions.
- If you are having a mock election, decide on the topic and nominate appropriate 'candidates'. You might choose famous Australians, entertainers, television and radio personalities or sports people or even food.

Step 2: Ballot paper

- If you are electing people, decide which candidates will be part of a 'party' and which will stand as independent candidates.
- Decide how many candidates are to be elected.
- Create and make copies of your ballot paper. Party names go across the top of the columns on the ballot paper. The candidates are listed in the columns below their party name in a random order. You can draw the names out of a hat to get the random order.

Step 3: Setting dates

- Allow time for the election campaign if you are electing people.
- Set a date and time for the election.
- Work out where the election could be held. A hall is good because you will need space to set up the polling place (an area where people can vote) and the tally room (an area where the votes are counted). Even if you are having a mock election it is fun to set up an area where people can vote and count the votes.

Step 4: Develop an electoral roll.

- This is a list of names of people who are eligible to vote in your election. It is usually written up in alphabetical order using surnames first.

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Step 5: Set up your polling place

- You will need a ballot box. This is a box with a slit in the top where votes can be placed. The box should also be secured in some way so people cannot take out any votes before it is officially opened.
- You will also need some tables where names can be marked off the electoral roll. You might get students from another class to do this job.
- Provide voting screens. This allows people to have a secret vote. No-one is allowed to look at anyone else's ballot paper. Only one person is allowed in a voting screen at any one time. You could make your own using cardboard boxes.
- Save voting screens from an ACT or federal election if your school is used as a polling place.

Step 6: Tally room

- You will need a couple of large tables where all the votes can be placed and counted. It makes it easier if you have every candidate's name on a piece of paper so when the votes are counted they can be quickly placed in the correct piles.
- You will also need a wall or some screens to display the tally sheets. These are pieces of paper where you write down how many votes each candidate gets.

Step 7: Counting the votes

- After everyone has voted and placed their ballot papers in the ballot box you can begin to count the votes.
- The first thing to do is to open the ballot box and empty all the ballot papers onto a table. You will need quite a few people to help with the counting.
- You now need to look at every ballot paper and decide if it is a formal one (see "Notes for teachers" section). If it is a formal ballot paper, find where the number 1 is and place that ballot paper on the table next to the name of the candidate with the number 1.
- Keep doing this until all the ballot papers have been sorted. If you have any informal ballot papers put them to one side and keep them separate from the formal votes.

Step 8: Quota, surplus votes and excluding candidates.

- Work out the quota (the number of votes needed to be elected).
- Work out a method for distributing surplus votes (those extra votes not needed to elect a candidate).
- Work out a method for excluding candidates. This is usually based on who has the fewest votes.

Step 9: Declaration of the poll

- The tallied votes can be entered into the template scrutiny sheet available in the education resources section of the website.
- After all the votes have been counted and you have elected the right number of candidates you can declare the poll (that means announcing the winning candidates).

1. An informal vote is one which:

- does not use numbers but uses ticks, crosses or other marks;
- has more than one number 1 on the ballot paper (it becomes exhausted later if it duplicates a later preference);
- has no numbers shown at all; or
- has the voter's name on it.

2. To work out the quota you first of all have to count the **formal votes.** You can then use the following formula to calculate the quota.

$$\frac{\text{total number of formal votes}}{\text{number of vacancies} + 1} + 1$$

eg: formal votes = 125 (you need about 120 votes to make the election work)
       vacancies   = 7

$$\frac{125}{7+1} + 1 \rightarrow \frac{125}{8} + 1 \rightarrow 15.6 + 1 = 16.6 = 16^*$$

(* The final number is rounded down if there is a decimal remainder).

So the quota would be 16 That is, 16 votes are needed to be elected.

3. A candidate is elected once the quota is reached. If a candidate:

- gets 16 votes after all the first preference votes are counted then they are elected straight away.

- gets more than the quota of 16 votes, say 20 votes, then they have a **surplus.** These surplus votes are not needed to elect a candidate so they can be distributed to other candidates according to the second preferences. In a real election all the surplus votes would be counted. They are given what is called a 'fractional transfer value' which is calculated using another formula. But in a school election there is no need to do this. Rather, the number of surplus votes, 4 in this example, is selected at random from the elected candidate's votes and these are then sorted according to second preferences.

- does not reach the quota, even after all the surplus votes have been distributed, the candidate with the fewest number of votes has to **be excluded.** This candidate's votes are then distributed to the next preference on the ballot paper.

- has the same number of votes as another candidate and one needs to be excluded, decide which candidate to exclude first using a random choice method such as flipping a coin. Explain to students that in a real election this would be unusual because such

large numbers of votes are involved. The excluded candidate's second preferences are then allocated to the next preference on the ballot paper.

- receives surplus votes later in the count these votes must be distributed according to the next preference before excluding the next candidate.

4. When distributing the ballot papers as outlined, if there are no further preferences shown on a ballot paper, set it aside as an 'exhausted' ballot paper that cannot be counted any further.

5. The process of counting, distributing surplus votes and excluding candidates, continues until all vacancies have been filled.