

ACT Voting - Where does your vote go?

The great thing with preferential voting is that you, the voter, gets to help choose who might be elected even if your first choice doesn't get up.

But where do your preferences go if the person you want is elected? Or, is not elected?

In the ACT Hare Clark system there are five ways your votes can go. This is a bit different to federal lower house elections and most other states (not Tasmania) and the NT because we have multi-member electorates. It is similar to but not the same as the Senate elections.

If your most preferred (first preference) candidate gets enough first preference votes (a quota) on the first round of voting, they are elected. All of their second preference votes are transferred to the candidates who were preferenced second on their ballot papers. So your vote goes to your second preference candidate. (this happens at a reduced value, but that's not important here and is explained [here](#)). If your votes brings your second preference candidate up to a quota, they are elected and your vote stops there.

If on the other hand the candidate who you preferenced first received the least number of first preference votes, they are eliminated and their second preference votes are distributed to those candidates. So your vote is passed on to your second preferenced candidate. If this candidate is eliminated, your vote is passed along to your third preferential candidate. This keeps happening until one of five things happen.

1. Your vote helps elect someone, that is brings their vote count up to a quota, in which case you have elected a candidate. Your vote stops there.
2. If that candidate is elected while your vote is being transferred to them and before your vote is counted, your vote is transferred to the candidate who you preferenced next. The process flows along as described above until your vote helps elect someone.
3. You run out of preferences. This will only happen if you didn't number every box. The fewer boxes you number, the sooner it will happen. The vote counters can only pass your vote along while there are preferences to send you vote to. If there are no more preferences, you stop being able to influence the outcome of the election. Your vote is said to be exhausted.
4. You have missed a number out of the sequence (skipped a number) or put the same number in two boxes. In this case the vote counters cannot accurately tell what your intentions are and so cannot pass your preferences along further. Again, your vote is exhausted. This can't happen with the electronic voting system. If you do make a mistake, the Elections ACT workers are happy to give you another ballot paper.
5. Once five candidates are elected, vote counting stops. If your vote is still in the flow, then it won't be counted.

So as long as you have continued numbering boxes you continue to influence the outcome of the election and your vote will help elect someone to the Legislative Assembly.