

Submissions on the LTCCP by Manu Caddie and 872 other residents and/or ratepayers.

As electors currently registered on the parliamentary electoral roll as residing in the Gisborne District (either Maori or General) and/or as Gisborne District Council Ratepayer, the following people support a change to the Gisborne District Council electoral system from First Past the Post (FPP) to Single Transferable Vote (STV).

The petition is being organised by KaPai Kaiti as we believe the STV system is fairer as it means votes are weighted in favour of the candidate/s a voter most wants to see elected and because STV is the system District Health Boards must use so having the same system for both GDC and the DHB should reduce voter confusion during local body elections.

The petition is continuing to collect signatures as we note no mention of a change in voting system is contained in the 10 Year Plan. We understand that Council have the power to change the voting system by a simple majority vote and thereby avoid the need for a special question at the next election and/or a binding referendum (that could cost up to \$50,000 to administer) once the required threshold of 5% of eligible voters is reached.

There is obvious support for STV in our community and if Council believe STV is not less fair than FPP we recommend the voting system is changed to STV for the 2010 election.

We would like to speak to these submissions as a combined group. We suggest GDC contact each signatory to confirm our submissions have been received and suggest to each submitter that we contact KaPai Kaiti, PO Box 3072, Kaiti, Gisborne or phone 0274202957 to coordinate a joint presentation once a time has been confirmed during the days for hearing oral presentations on the submissions.

Attachments:

- *information on STV voting system from www.stv.govt.nz*
- *article on STV vs FPP by Patrick Barrett, policy studies lecturer in the Department of Political Science and Public Policy at Waikato University*
- *873 signatures of submitters on 40 petition pages*

How to vote using STV

With STV, voting is easy.

Instead of ticking the candidates you want to vote for, with STV you number the candidates in order of preference. Put a "1" beside the candidate you like best, then a "2" beside your second choice, "3" by your third choice, and so on. You can vote for as many or as few candidates as you like.

So what does the numbering do?

By giving the number "1" to a candidate, you are saying that the candidate is your number one choice.

By ranking candidates in your preferred order - 1,2,3,4 and so on - you are also saying which other candidates you prefer:

- If your top choice doesn't have enough support to get in or,
- If your top choice doesn't need all the votes they received to be elected.

What else do I need to know?

The numbers you use must be in sequence. If you make a mistake, your vote will be valid up to when you made the error - for example, if you miss out a "4" and just rank 1, 2, 3 and 5, only your first three preferences will be valid.

How candidates are elected

In an STV election, candidates must reach a certain number of votes to get elected. This is called a quota. The quota is based on the total number of votes and the number of vacant positions.

Here's how candidates are elected:

- The counting process tallies all first preference votes
- If a candidate is elected, they keep only the proportion of the vote they need to reach the quota. The surplus part of each vote is transferred to the voters' second choice.
- The votes are tallied again
- If another candidate gets more votes than they need to be elected, the surplus part of each vote for that candidate will be transferred to the voters' third choice
- If no more candidates have enough support to get elected, the lowest polling candidate is eliminated and all votes for that candidate are transferred to voters' next choices.
- This process is repeated until enough candidates are elected to fill the vacant positions.

The transfer of votes is done in order of voters' preference. This means that surplus votes are not "wasted" but are available to help other candidates to get elected.

For more information see: www.stv.govt.nz

STV vs FPP

By Patrick Barrett, policy studies lecturer in the Department of Political Science and Public Policy at Waikato University

The appearance of Single Transferable Vote (STV) signs around town has given me cause to revisit the textbooks on electoral systems. I needed more information, without which casting a vote would be similar to my experience in previous council elections when, I confess, I have voted with little knowledge about what candidates have stood for and their likely impact if selected.

The First Past the Post (FPP) system is familiar. It gives us a separate vote for each seat to be filled in our electorate or ward – and those with the largest number of votes make it on to council. But how does STV work?

The name of this system of voting, ‘Single Transferable Vote,’ tells us a number of things. We get a single vote and that vote is transferable. Under STV we get to rank all of the candidates in our order of preference – 1, 2, 3, and so on. If the person we rank as the most preferred candidate gains sufficient votes and does not need our vote, our next preference is counted. Similarly, if our preferred candidate has so few votes as to have no chance of being elected, our vote is transferred to our next preference. The STV Taskforce put it this way – under STV, the voter is effectively saying something like:

‘The candidate I most wish to see represent me on the council is Joe Bloggs. If Joe wins so many votes that he doesn’t need my vote to be elected, then my vote is to be transferred to Bill Smith to help him get sufficient votes to be elected. But if Joe has so few votes that he can’t possibly be elected, my vote is to be transferred to Bill’.

STV is known as more a sophisticated system, better suited to the type of multi-member wards we have in city council elections. Its sophistication, though, is both its virtue and shortcoming. Supporters accept it is more complex than FPP, but argue that you do not need to know the detail of how votes are counted and preferences allocated to gain the benefits from it – a bit like not needing to know how the microprocessors in our computers work to get the benefit of using them.

Arguments in favour of STV emphasise its fairness and its potential to effectively represent the preferences of voters. There are fewer wasted votes and those elected are more likely to have the support of a majority of voters - we will be more able to identify someone on council we have contributed to electing. Arguments against STV, though, emphasise its complexity in requiring voters to rank candidates, count votes and allocate preferences.

Arguments in favour of FPP emphasise its simplicity and familiarity. It is well understood and there is a degree of public confidence in it. It has an uncomplicated method of counting votes and results are known speedily. But FPP is more likely to lead to councils that do not have the support of the majority in the community. Those elected may have a relatively small proportion of the vote and it is more likely representation is denied to quite substantial numbers of voters.

In the end, our evaluation of the merits of FPP versus STV comes down to the value we place on things like fairness, the potential of the system to represent the distinctive personality of our community, and our view on the capacity of the system to allow us to elect candidates that best represent our interests.

There are a number of excellent information sources to assist the decision the referendum requires us to make. www.stv.govt.nz has a link to a great animated display which explains vote counting under STV. It is worth checking.