



LOCAL GOVERNMENT

'First past the post' voting back

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A RETURN to the "first past the post" system for local government elections is a winner, says Agricultural Region MLC Brian Ellis.

Parliament last week passed legislation which will abolish the proportional preferential voting system in favour of the former system.

Mr Ellis said the first past the post system was less complicated and reduced the potential for major political parties to influence the outcome of an election.

"More importantly, it deters factionalism and makes it difficult for candidates to run on a single-issue ticket," he said.

"Factionalism is fatal for small councils where everybody has to work together on tight budgets which are often based on small rate bases."

Mr Ellis said he was appalled when the proportional preferential voting system was introduced by the Labor Government two years ago without consulting the WA Local Government Association.

"This was typical of the same city-centric attitude that robbed the bush of a weighted vote in the so-called one vote one value legislation, but ultimately cost them the election," he said.

WALGA president Bill Mitchell applauded Local Government Minister John Castrilli for pushing through the change just in time for it to apply for the October 17 council elections.

"There was very little time and significant resistance from the various government departments to have this change made in time for the elections but the Minister has pushed through all that," Cr Mitchell said.

He said returning to the first past the post system was a significant and welcome achievement by the Minister.

"Under the first past the post system candidates need only to win the support of their local community, whereas under the PPV system there is greater focus on running mates and back-room deals that mostly suit the organised, larger political parties," Cr Mitchell said.