



21 May 2019

Your Ref:  
Contact: Group Manager Corporate Governance

Committee Secretary  
Economics and Governance Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
BRISBANE Qld 4000

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Dear Committee Secretary

**Local Government Electoral (Implementing Stage 2 of Belcara) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019**

I refer to the call for submissions on the Local Government Electoral (Implementing Stage 2 of Belcara) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 and provide the following comments as part of Redland City Council's submission to the Economics and Governance Committee.

The Redland City Council serves a community of approximately 150,000 coastal residents, across six islands and the mainland about 35 minutes from Brisbane. Council supports and commends the Government's introduction of the Bill to strengthen local government transparency and integrity.

**Submission**

The Redland City Council acknowledges and supports the objectives and intent of the Local Government Electoral (Implementing Stage 2 of Belcara) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 and would like to provide feedback and recommendations on the following matters:-

1. Compulsory Preferential Voting  
Redland City Council opposes the introduction of a system of compulsory preferential voting at local government elections.

The Crime and Corruption Commission's October 2017 report "Operation Belcara: A blueprint for integrity and addressing corruption risk in local government" ("the Belcara Report") did not make any recommendation about changing the method of voting at Queensland local government elections. Similarly the March 2017 "Inquiry Report: A review of the conduct of the 2016 local government elections, the referendum and the Toowoomba South by election" ("the Soorley Report") commissioned by the Queensland Government specifically recommended "That Queensland should retain the current optional preferential voting system for local government elections until after the next election. (Recommendation 21).

The proposed recommendation to introduce Compulsory Preferential Voting goes against the recommendations commissioned in the Soorley Report and also the

Belcara Report, both Reports which are the cornerstones on which the proposed legislation is based.

2. Dedicated campaign bank accounts

The proposed legislation prohibits the use of credit cards. Redland City Council advises that it is supportive of candidates being permitted to utilise a credit card for election expenditure purposes. The Government in supporting Recommendation 14 of the Belcara Report in principle notes "that allowing use of a debit card linked to a campaign account should overcome difficulties that could arise from prohibiting use of credit cards and that it appears the CCC's underlying concerns relate to the reconciliation of individual purchases made by a credit card against expenditure from the campaign account.

Redland City Council believes that individual purchases from a credit card can be very easily reconciled and the reconciliation of expenditure can be easily managed if the correct processes are enacted.

It is also felt that the use of a credit card for election expenses can aid and assist candidates who are motivated to stand for election but are unable to fully fund the campaign at a particular point in time. The use of a credit card in today's society allows for immediate and urgent purchases.

3. Office of the Independent Assessor

Redland City Council on 27 February 2018 previously provided a submission to this Committee on the "Referral of conduct to local government".

In that submission the Council recommended that –"all complaints are dealt with independently (except in meetings) by the independent assessor and no complaints are referred to the local government to be dealt with".

Redland City Council is still firmly of the view that this still should be the practice. The current scenario of the Office of the Independent Assessor undertaking the investigation into a Councillor complaint and then referring it back to the Council to undertake further investigation and subsequently making a decision on the "penalty" has massive repercussions. The mere title of the Office of Independent Assessor evokes independence and transparency. Redland City Council is of the strong belief that complaints against a Councillor should be fully dealt with by the OIA to ensure independence, transparency and integrity.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on the Local Government Electoral (Implementing Stage 2 of Belcara) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. Redland City Council looks forward to the proposed amendments being passed and working with the State Government in partnership to continue to uphold the transparency and accountability of local government in Queensland.

Yours sincerely



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**REDLAND CITY COUNCIL**