



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

18 March 2021

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Redlands2030 submission on COVID-19 Emergency Response and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021

Redlands2030 Inc. (Redlands2030) is a community organisation which advocates for good planning and governance, with a particular focus on matters of interest to people living in Redland City.

Redlands2030 welcomes the opportunity to make a submission about the COVID-19 Emergency Response and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 202. We wish to address just one matter.

Temporary local government and committee meeting provisions in Local Government Regulations

The regulations currently in force, and as proposed to be extended, gives the chairperson of a local government meeting (usually the Mayor) the power to close a meeting for health and safety reasons associated with COVID-19.

We understand that the intention of these regulations was:

- if it is necessary to close the meeting for COVID-19 health and safety reasons; then
- the meeting must be live streamed, provided it is practicable for the Council to do so.

Since the current regulations came into force, all Redland City Council meetings have been closed to the community, but Redland City Council has not implemented live streaming of meetings.

About 24-48 hours after each meeting, video recordings of Council meetings (except for closed sessions) have been posted to the Council's website. This is not live streaming.

Redland City Council has traditionally had community members address councillors at general meetings about matters of concern but this has not been allowed since April 2020 even though it would be practicable for the Council to allow community participation.

At each general meeting since the current regulations were implemented, Redland City Council has had a clergy person join the meeting to provide councillors with religious instruction. This happened via video link initially, but since 10 June 2020 a clergy person joined each general meeting in person.

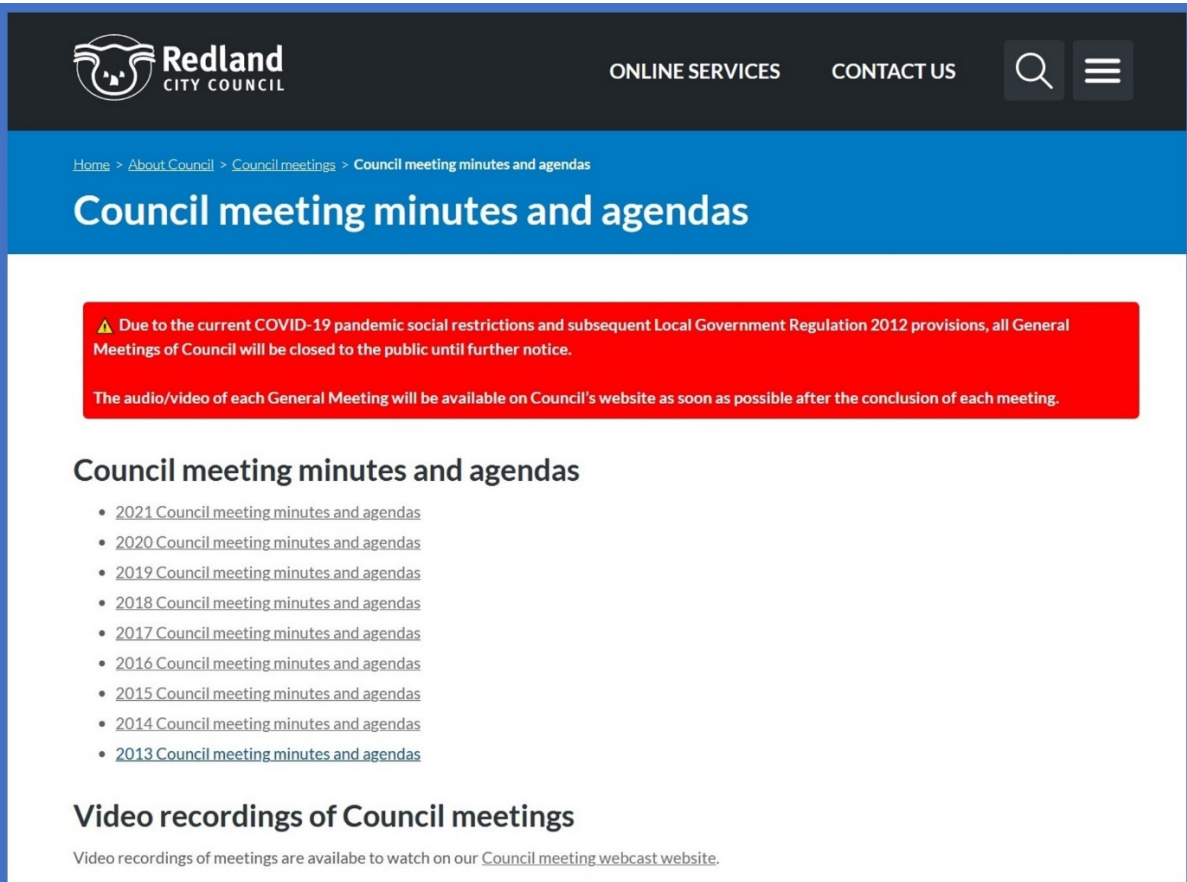
If the Council can manage to have a clergy person join the meeting and speak to councillors, it should be able to have community members also join the meeting for a short period of time to speak to councillors about matters of community concern.

We understand that local government regulations need to be worded flexibly to cater for a wide range of local councils including those councils which are small and may lack resources.

The Redland City local government area is not small. The City's population is about 160,000. Redland City Council is well resourced. The Council forecasts that it will achieve a profit of \$39.3 million for the current financial year, in its annual budget review adopted on 17 February 2021.

We suggest that the current COVID-19 inspired regulations be re-worded to ensure that if a large and well-resourced local council decides to close its meetings to the community then it is compelled to deliver live streaming of its meetings via its website.

We also suggest that large and well-resourced councils (such as Redland City Council) be required to facilitate community participation via video or telephone, if meetings are closed to the public.



The screenshot shows the Redland City Council website. The header includes the council logo, navigation links for 'ONLINE SERVICES' and 'CONTACT US', and search and menu icons. The breadcrumb trail is 'Home > About Council > Council meetings > Council meeting minutes and agendas'. The main heading is 'Council meeting minutes and agendas'. A prominent red warning box contains the following text: 'Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic social restrictions and subsequent Local Government Regulation 2012 provisions, all General Meetings of Council will be closed to the public until further notice. The audio/video of each General Meeting will be available on Council's website as soon as possible after the conclusion of each meeting.' Below this, there is a section titled 'Council meeting minutes and agendas' with a list of links for years from 2013 to 2021. At the bottom, there is a section titled 'Video recordings of Council meetings' with a link to the 'Council meeting webcast website'.

Figure 1 Image captured from Redland City Council website on 17 March 2021

Yours sincerely

Steve MacDonald
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Redlands2030 Inc.