



# Amity Point Progress Association Inc.

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Research Director  
Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
Brisbane Qld 4000

## Local Government Electoral (Transparency and Accountability in Local Government) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016

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The Amity Point Progress Association Inc is a community based organisation which advocates for Amity Point and North Stradbroke Island residents on matters concerning facilities, services and amenities of life. Our Association has been in continuous operation since 1948 and has a proud record of achievements for our Island community.

The Electoral Commission has maintained a Polling Booth in Amity Point for Federal, State and Local Government elections for as long as anyone can remember. However, this tradition was suddenly withdrawn at the last moment for the recent 2016 Local Government Election.

This Association wrote to the Electoral Commission in Queensland immediately following this Election expressing our, and the community's extreme disappointment at the cancellation of the Amity Point Polling Booth. We would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our position to your Committee.

The Amity Point Community has always enjoyed the ability to vote at our Polling Booth, not as a matter of convenience, but as a matter of necessity. Our community has a considerably larger (than nationally) proportion of over 65 year olds, many of whom are reliant on community help or the extremely sporadic provision of public transport. Availing of public transport for the 18 kilometre each way trip to an alternate Polling Booth requires considerable walking and waiting at an unattended remote transfer station in the middle of the island for a change of vehicles. This is fine for an 18 year old backpacker, but is quite daunting for an elderly person. Elderly people value the right to vote.

Submission by Amity Point Progress Association Inc to the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee

Additionally, the Community was not advised of the closure until the morning of the Local Government Election. This came as quite a shock to our residents who then had to attempt to somehow arrange travel to either of the other towns on North Stradbroke Island. Further, the small notice on the door of the Public Hall threatened that voters would be fined for failing to vote. Several residents voiced the opinion that they were being actively discriminated against by being denied their right to vote.

We wrote to the Electoral Commission and advised them of our concerns and requesting an assurance that our Polling Booth would be reinstated for all future elections. We also requested that consideration be made for residents who were unable to vote because the facility was suddenly withdrawn. We are happy to advise that we are not aware of any residents being penalised for this.

We continued to seek an explanation from various authorities as to how and why this punitive action had taken place, and finally, after a Question on Notice by our State Member, Dr Mark Robinson, we received the explanation.

Late October we finally received a letter from the Attorney-General and Justice Minister, advising that the QEC had provided a list of potential polling booths to the Redland City Council seeking their advice and feedback. Redland City Council asked the Electoral Commission to close our Polling Booth for this election. This action was taken unilaterally and without any consultation with the residents of Amity Point. This Association is in regular contact with the Redland City Council Mayor, the CEO, the Division 2 Councillor and various other senior Council staff, however we were not consulted or advised of this substantial change to a long existing practice. While we would not suggest anything sinister, we hold the opinion that this action was at the very least, un-caring, inconsiderate and un-Australian. We do note however, that the sitting Division 2 Councillor who enjoyed wide support in the Amity Point community, was defeated in this election.

We trust that the Committee will recommend and that the Amendment Bill 2016 will ensure that this situation could not be repeated immediately prior to any future elections.

Yours Faithfully



Honorary Secretary