



Committee Secretary  
Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee  
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**Redlands2030 submission to: Inquiry into the Electoral Commission of Queensland's online publication of preliminary and formal counts of the votes cast in the local government elections and state by-elections held on 28 March 2020**

Redlands2030 Inc. (Redlands2030) is a community organisation, based in Redland City, promoting good governance.

Redlands2030 welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to this inquiry into the conduct of recent elections by the Electoral Commission of Queensland (ECQ)..

Before commenting on the on-line publication of voting results, we wish to draw the Committee's attention to another matter which should be investigated.

**Misdirection of voters by ECQ officials**

Several residents of Redland City have reported to Redlands2030 that they were told by ECQ officials at voting booths to "just vote 1" as they were handed their ballot papers.

If this misdirection of voters was widespread, it could have altered the outcome of the Redland City mayoral election.

Voting for the 2020 local government elections was conducted under the Optional Preferential Voting system.

If ECQ officials were to offer any advice to voters while handing out ballot papers it should have been to the effect that voters could vote for one candidate or exercise preference votes for some or all candidates.

Redlands2030 wrote to the Queensland Electoral Commissioner on 16 April 2020 alerting him to this issue. We requested that he conduct his own investigation and if our concerns were substantiated that he take further action by referring any compromised elections to the Court of Disputed Returns.

A copy of this letter is attached.

We have not yet received any response from the Electoral Commissioner.

### **Publication of election results by ECQ**

The ECQ failed to post results from vote counting on its website in a timely fashion on the election night. During the days that followed, the ECQ continued to fail in keeping the community aware of the status of vote counting.

It appears to be the case that ECQ returning officers were advising candidates of the status of vote counting while not keeping the community fully informed.

Some candidates were posting information on their Facebook pages about the progress of counts and this was the only information that was publicly available.

The ECQ's failure to provide information about vote counting in a timely fashion to the public was unacceptable.

The Queensland State Election is due on 31 October this year, less than six months away. The Government should ensure that the public can have confidence that ECQ will be able to do its job properly and publish State Election results in a timely fashion both on Election night and while the vote counting continues through to declaration of polls.

### **ECQ has failed to provide detailed information by division and both**

Many people are interested in understanding the voting results on a division and booth basis.

The ECQ has, to date, failed to provide this information for the 2020 local government elections in a form which can be readily accessed by members of the public.

Instead ECQ has produced an XML file which consolidates all election results for all local government elections. This is not suitable for use by the general public.

The ECQ should ensure that division and booth voting results are made available promptly in a form which can easily be comprehended by all members of the community.

Chris Walker  
Secretary  
Redlands2030 Inc.

11 May 2020



Mr Pat Vidgen  
Electoral Commissioner of Queensland  
GPO Box 1393, Brisbane  
Brisbane QLD 4001

16 April 2020

Dear Mr Vidgen

**Redland City Council 2020 elections  
Complaint that ECQ staff gave misleading advice to voters to just vote '1'**

I wish to raise with you, as a matter of urgency, community concerns about the manner in which the 2020 Redland City Council elections were conducted by ECQ.

Redlands2030 has received information from a number of Redlands voters that, as they were handed their ballot papers, the ECQ staff told them to "just vote '1'".

We have reports of this misleading advice being given by ECQ staff during both pre-polling and on the date of the election. Examples we have documented so far show that misleading advice was not limited to one or two polling booths. It appears to have been a systemic issue.

The Redlands Mayoral election was quite close - we understand that the margin is approximately 1,400 votes. People voting for the third placed candidate (who got more than 12,000 votes) may have brought about a different election outcome if the proportion of people indicating a second preference had been higher. Outcomes in Divisions 2 and 9 could also have been impacted by voters being given advice to just vote '1'.

In addition to the incorrect ECQ "advice" there were influential people adding to the confusion and misleading information. One example was the sign in EC plum and white colouring, that stated "Just vote 1" the example cited was authorised by [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]). The cited example was on the fence at Cleveland State High School (but there may have been other places too). Given the absence of volunteers under the arrangements implemented by ECQ around the booths such signage was less likely to be challenged by other candidates, this put some onus on ECQ staff to ensure polling was as fair as possible. But other examples of misleading information, from incumbent Councillors, is available and it was wrong (by intent or unknowingly is not clear) but they clearly intended to use their position as a means of influencing a "vote 1" outcome.

We request that as a matter of urgency you undertake an investigation into the actions of personnel handing out ballot papers at the Redlands election to ascertain the extent to which they provided Redlands voters with misleading advice to "just vote '1'".

If your investigations reveal that this misdirection of voters was widespread, we request that you exercise your legal right to petition the Court of Disputed Returns to review the



Redland City Mayoral election and any division elections which may also have been compromised.

Evidence of the claims outlined above will be provided promptly should you request this.

I am, however, certain that your investigation will confirm that there was a problem with Redlands voters being misdirected by your staff and people who did or should have known better and who acted with intent to distort the election outcome.

Steve MacDonald  
**President**  
**Redlands2030 Inc.**

[REDACTED]

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