

(Ms) Estelle Blair

E: [REDACTED]

10 May 2020

Committee Secretary  
Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
Brisbane Qld 4000  
By email: [lacsc@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:lacsc@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Madam/Sir

**Re: *Inquiry into the Electoral Commission of Queensland's online publication of the preliminary and formal counts of the votes cast in the 2020 quadrennial local government election and the Bundamba and Currumbin state by-elections held on 28 March 2020.***

I wish to submit the following comments/observations regarding the Electoral Commission of Queensland's (ECQ) publication of vote tallies via its online database – "Event Data" – provided on a tab on the ECQ website election results page. Some background information on process is required for context.

My specific interest was in the Sunshine Coast Regional Council (SRCR) election results for the Mayoral and Division 8 (where I am enrolled) candidates. Though I obtained some results for Division 9 via one of the candidates, I was not able to obtain other results by individual polling booths during the election counts. Moreover the results even for Division 9 were patchy with long delays between updates. Accordingly, after the final results were announced I attempted to interrogate the 'Event Data' tab on the ECQ website, as I assumed this is where the final raw data would be available.

After several attempts to download the enormous XML dataset (an error message continually appeared) I managed to view it, as a spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel. I am unsure whether the data was meant to be displayed in this program, but it is after all the most common format for spreadsheets in the 'home computer' world. And it did load. Several of my more computer-literate friends also attempted to download the dataset, either unsuccessfully or achieving only a partial download. The dataset for SCRC alone occupied 6,321 rows and 255 columns.

### **Division 8**

About two weeks ago, and after sorting the Qld dataset to isolate SCRC data, I attempted to extract the raw figures for each polling booth and early voting centre for Division 8. With only two candidates the data was relatively easily obtained (see attached Table), but the lack of detail for the Early Voting Centres (two main centres at Coolum and Maroochydore were used, as Division 8 did not have one within its boundary) was concerning. There must have originally been individual tally sheets for these categories before lumping it all under "Absent". Moreover I queried whether a 72.43 % turnout (from the raw figures) was indeed accurate. On approaching ECQ for further information I was told on 28 April:

“The Commission is currently collating information at booth level for publication on our website, this will be published as soon as practicably possible.

The Official First Preference Count advises 74.60% of eligible electors voted.”

Given that the results had been announced and the Councillors sworn in, I fail to understand why the booth level information was not already available.

### **Mayoral results**

Four days ago I again downloaded the dataset and attempted to extract results for the Mayoral candidates for each division, and also booth detail for Division 8 and 9 (Tables attached). For this I only looked at the First Preference results because (at 255 columns wide) I found the spreadsheet far too unwieldy and difficult to understand for the progressive preference tallies.

Again I was concerned by the data extracted, for example, in Divisions 1, 2 and 4 there were more votes allocated than voters enrolled in the Division. In others there is obviously a lack of data recorded, for example, no EVC or telephone/postal votes for Divisions 6, 8 or 9, and missing categories in others.

Because both of these extractions were completed well after the election results had been announced, the dataset should contain accurate and consistent data. Yet it apparently doesn't.

- How can the community have confidence in the election results when data on the official website seems to be missing or incorrectly allocated?
- If the community is not supposed to view this data, then why post it on the ECQ website?
- Why post it in a format so difficult for the wider community to access?
- Why have every election result in one enormous spreadsheet? Could not a separate spreadsheet be created for each local government area? Even the State government by-election data was contained in this dataset.
- Why did it take so long to obtain results, even when there were only two candidates (as in Division 8)?
- Why were the results updated so irregularly, with long delays between updates?

This is not open and transparent governance. The integrity of the dataset, and therefore the results, is of great concern.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Yours sincerely



Estelle Blair

### Division 8 Results – 28 March 2020 Sunshine Coast Regional Council election

Polling Booth	PB/EV	O'Pray No	O'Pray %	Hyman No	Hyman %	Total No.	Informal
Brisbane	PB	2	20	8	80	10	1
Brisbane	EV	9	39.13	14	60.87	23	1
Coolum Beach	PB	300	49.1	311	50.9	611	84
Coolum Beach Nth	PB	184	40.89	266	59.11	450	49
Cotton Tree	PB	106	53	94	47	200	22
Maroochydore	PB	321	57.53	237	42.47	558	53
M'dore East	PB	265	59.15	183	40.85	448	36
Mudjimba	PB	250	32.51	519	67.49	769	48
Pacific Paradise	PB	558	51.24	531	48.76	1089	109
Telephone	PB	26	50	26	50	52	0
Telephone	EV	164	50.31	162	49.69	326	4
*Absent	Absent	5226	53.1	4616	46.9	9842	459
Postal	Postal	874	48.96	911	51.04	1785	31
In person	IP	75	40.76	109	59.24	184	13
		8360	51.14	7987	48.86	16347	910

Enrolment = 23,825

Total vote = 17,257

Voter turnout = 72.43%

- \*Assume this is total from Coolum and Maroochydore pre-polling, possibly also Nambour?
- \*Absent votes are the division 8 votes that were issued by polling booths and early voting centres outside of division 8 excluding Brisbane City Hall. There is no further breakdown available of where they came from (*ECQ comment*).
- The Official First Preference Count advises 74.60% of eligible electors voted (*ECQ comment*).

**Sunshine Coast Regional Council election 28 March 2020 – Mayor - First preference tallies**

Division	Enrolment	Votes – total no and %	MJ No.	MJ %	DI no.	DI %	CT No.	CT %	MB No.	MB %	Comment
1-10	N/A	172,921	79334	49.51	10649	6.65	53783	33.57	16458	10.27	Total vote
1	21,421	38,553 – 180%	18222	49.5	3055	8.3	11544	31.36	3991	10.84	Obviously wrong
2	22,998	23022- 100.1%	11446	53.83	1163	5.47	6580	30.95	2073	9.75	No telephone, postal etc
3	23,559	18,397-78%	9162	54.46	934	5.55	5149	30.61	1577	9.37	No telephone, postal etc
4	23,003	24343-105.8%	11366	49.96	1115	4.9	8329	36.61	1939	8.52	No telephone, postal etc
5	23,655	9,979-42.2%	4287	47.6	687	7.63	2949	32.74	1083	12.03	No telephone, postal etc
6	21,595	4,354-20.16%	2103	54.13	268	6.9	1109	28.55	405	10.42	No EVC, telephone, postal et
7	23,586	16,774-71.1%	8006	51.09	834	5.32	5622	35.88	1209	7.74	No telephone, postal etc
8	23,825	5,002-21.2%	2045	46.17	344	7.77	1489	33.62	551	12.44	No EVC, telephone, postal et
9	23,569	14,545-61.7%	5671	43.07	1952	7.23	4990	37.89	1555	11.81	No telephone, postal etc
10	21,421	17,972-83.9%	7026	42.79	1297	7.9	6022	36.67	2075	12.64	No telephone, postal etc

**Notes:** All data from Event Data tab on ECQ website, downloaded (somehow!) into an Excel spreadsheet

MJ = Mark Jamieson; DI = Don Innes; CT = Chris Thompson; MB = Michael Burgess

Div 1: total votes far exceeds enrolment; 8 polling booths incl Brisbane City Hall, 2EVC, Beerwah (7,458) and Brisbane (415), telephone +EV telephone (2,868), postal (20,949) and in person

Div 3: 23,022 votes taken but only 22,998 enrolled. Only 4 polling booths + Caloundra EVC (19714)

Div 4: 20,567 votes taken at M'dore EVC. 5 polling booths + EVC. This must contain votes from other Divisions as more votes than enrolled.

Div 5: 10 polling booths + Maleny EVC (4,128)

Div 6: Only 4 polling booths listed

Div 7: 7 polling booths + Buderim EVC (12,490)

Div 10: 8 polling booths plus Nambour EVC (11,483)

1. See detail below for Div 8 and 9
2. Incomplete voting figures for most Divisions (eg for Div 8, ECQ confirmed 74.6% voter turnout (though my figures showed 72.43%), yet only 21% indicated in above statistics, Div 9 turnout % appeared similar in candidate's figures during voting).
3. Appears to be mis-allocation of votes in Div1, 2 and 4, due to more votes than enrolment. Enrolment figures are within the required range, so considered accurate
4. Where figures available, it appears EVCs were well patronised.
5. Regardless of missing/incomplete data sets, the trends are similar across all Divisions and no doubt statistically valid.

ECQ inquiry – Estelle Blair comments

**Sunshine Coast Regional Council election 28 March 2020 – Mayor – Division 8 polling booths – First preference tallies**

Booth	formal	informal	MJ No.	MJ %	DI No	DI %	CT No.	CT %	MB No.	MB %	Comment
Coolum Beach			247	41.72	45	7.6	217	36.66	83	14.02	
Coolum North			156	35.21	36	8.13	183	41.31	68	15.35	
Cotton Tree			94	48.96	17	8.85	53	27.6	28	14.58	
M'dore			365	51.41	60	8.45	207	29.15	78	10.99	
M'dore East			289	51.98	42	7.55	159	28.6	66	11.87	
Mudjimba			300	38.31	63	8.05	314	40.1	106	13.54	
Pacific Paradise			594	51.52	81	7.03	356	30.88	122	10.58	

No EVC, telephone, postal or in person votes recorded

**Sunshine Coast Regional Council election 28 March 2020 – Mayor – Division 9 polling booths – First preference tallies**

Booth	formal	informal	MJ No.	MJ %	DI No	DI %	CT No.	CT %	MB No.	MB %	Comment
Coolum Beach			180	49.72	23	6.35	103	28.45	56	15.47	
Coolum North			284	43.29	66	10.06	210	32.01	96	14.63	
Bli Bli			733	54.46	101	17.5	319	23.7	193	14.34	
Eumundi			180	46.15	32	8.21	112	28.72	66	16.92	
Peregian Springs			387	49.68	66	8.47	226	29.01	100	12.84	
Yandina			109	48.23	21	9.29	71	31.42	25	11.06	
Coolum EVC			3798	40.37	643	6.83	3949	41.97	1019	10.83	

No Maroochydore or Nambour EVC, telephone, postal or in-person votes