

# Local Government (Empowering Councils) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

**Submission No:** 020

**Submission By:** Nicole Johnston

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# Cr Nicole Johnston

## Councillor for Tennyson Ward

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Mr James Lister MLA  
Chair  
Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee  
Queensland Parliament  
Online Submission

Dear Mr Lister

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the *Local Government (Empowering Council's) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025*.

I am an independent Councillor representing Tennyson Ward in the Brisbane City Council, having first been elected in 2008 and subsequently in 2012, 2016, 2020 and 2024. I am the only Independent in an otherwise party political Council, the largest in Australia.

I note the following issues for the Committees consideration:

Clause 8 – Councillors should be required to take leave (unpaid) if campaigning for higher office. Disqualification is anti-competitive and may not lead to good candidates putting their names forward in some circumstances. This provision should be standardised for both State and Commonwealth eligibility.

Clause 22 and Clause 23 – all Councillors should be able to request information and review documents in accordance with the current provision of s171 COBA to avoid secrecy, promote transparency and good government. There is no good reason in the public interest to enable further restrictions.

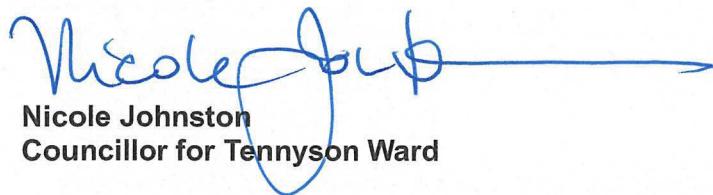
Clause 72 – unfortunately s150 (J) and (K) has been politically weaponised, particularly in divided Councils. Removal of this provision is welcome. I would recommend that a transitional provision is included to cease all ongoing conduct breach matters, whether with the OIA or Council, upon assent or proclamation to save the State, Councils, Councillors and ratepayers further costs. Further investigation or prosecution of these matters would not be in the public interest under s150 (J) and (K) given the Premier's recognition of the impact of these provisions.

I recommend amending s170A (7c) to include a new clause s170A (9c) to enable urgent time sensitive requests for written or verbal briefings to be made by Councillors. For example, for Budget information, major projects and new by-laws. The current 10 and 20 day time limits do not enable information to be provided before voting on major proposals rendering decision making with limited information difficult.

I also suggest an additional clause is added to COBA requiring the Lord Mayor to include actual numbers in the Council Budget for programmes, schedules and projects. It is very hard to interrogate the Budget and vote for it when information is not provided until 20 days after the Budget debate. It's in the public interest that the Budget is transparent and accountable.

I would be happy to speak with the Committee or provide any further information that may assist your decision process.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nicole Johnston".

Nicole Johnston  
Councillor for Tennyson Ward