

**From:** webmaster@parliament.qld.gov.au  
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**To:** Law, Justice and Safety Committee  
**Subject:** ONLINE SUBMISSION - Inquiry into a new Local Government Electoral Act  
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**Divisions (Question 1 to 5):**

- 1) No - there is no divisional system for Townsville City Council.
- 2) No - individual member divisions should be introduced at Townsville City Council
- 3) For individual divisions - yes
- 4) I would prefer divisions for all local governments but for some rural and small local authorities divisions may be impractical. Larger Councils, particularly urban Councils, should be on an individual member divisional basis. The State Government should decide the issues of divisions, not individual local authorities. Individual authorities have too much vested interest in the status quo to make unbiased decisions. For example the current administration of townsville City Council oppose divisions as it is in their political interests to do so but then go through the charade of allocating Councillors to represent specific geographic areas (essentially what would be divisions) in recognition of public demand for a councillor to be accountable for their area. City wide election of Councillors leads to poor accountability for performance, poor representation of local interests, a breakdown in responsibility for representation and alienation of local people. It is a recipe for one size fits all outcomes. As well, local government-wide elections lead to votes following the Mayors vote, with the danger of "yes" teams supporting a Mayor being elected. Divisions mean that Councillors work for their local areas, can respond on a personal basis to constituents, have a better grasp of local issues and are more accessible. They are better placed to judge city wide decisions of their merits.
- 5) Voting in individual divisions should be preferential voting. (In Qld optional preferential voting is the norm....I'm not a supporter but accept it is hard to change),

**Conduct of elections (Question 6 and 7):**

- 6) It should be run by the Electoral Commission but, from experience, the electoral commission needs to have clear cost guidelines as experience to date is that the commission treats it as a gold plated revenue raising exercise with costs double what local government can normally run an election on.
- 7) No - elections should remain on a fixed date. Conduct of local government elections should be clearly specified in legislation (maybe not necessarily the local government Act) to guide the Electoral Commission.

**Conduct of elections (Question 8 and 9):**

- 8) Yes
- 9) There is a strong argument for elections to be in the 1st half of a financial year to allow budgets to be settled to avoid a new Council being elected and immediately having to bring down a budget. If this was to be considered it would be better to have the next election early to change fixed election date timing instead of extending the current terms. Like me, I think that people would prefer an opportunity to endorse or otherwise, the actions of merged council's to date. The "amalgamation" election was conducted against a background of uncertainty (and in some cases, irrational fear) and local government service delivery and planning issues were put in the background by petty rivalries, political point scoring and lack of impartial information. A new early election based on a new divisional structure would be an excellent opportunity for a fresh start for merged local government communities.

**Candidates - requirements and conduct (Questions 10 to 15):**

- 10) No - once divisions are introduced candidates should live in their divisions.
- 11) Yes
- 12) Yes - at the very least - See 10 above

13) Yes

14) No. But Councillors should be allowed to stand for State Parliament with being disenfranchised as Councillors.

15) No. City wide election is the fairest and most representative approach for the mayor's election.

**Candidates - requirements and conduct (Questions 16 to 19):**

16) No - nobody seriously investigates the accuracy of declarations, the use of "sham candidates or external parties who run or supplement campaigns by proxy. The penalties are inadequate, not just for councillors but for individuals providing funding or in kind support.

17) It would be desirable.

18) Definately - it needs to be as open and transparent as possible for the community and presented in clear, understandable format.

19) yes - funding by "proxy" should be banned or included in the disclosures made by candidates. There is also a need to define the governance considerations that arise when Councillors are elected and make decisions in relation to matters that have a material personal impact on the interests of donors.

**Candidates - requirements and conduct (Questions 20 to 24):**

20) No - makes little difference unless they contain private advertising to offset costs. This should then be a funding disclosure.

21) Probably a good idea to standardise. Undecided re the Electoral commissions role - sounds like a recipe to shift costs to the Electoral Commission which would normally be borne by candidates...would level the field between those well funded and those not....

22) It doesn't really matter but what does matter is that there are standard rules across the State. Police need the powers to deal with enforcement in this area as such rules, if left to local government, will only be enforced by those councils in favour.

23) Yes...but who standardises ability to pay? Is it fair to do this? How would you set the rules ie 1 sign per 1000 people in an area??? Sounds difficult to design and enforce.

24) No - people need to be well informed. However what is definately needed is a media bias monitor to prevent media outlets "backing favourites" for whatever reason against the interests of other candidates or teams. The media will immediatley jump on the high moral ground re publics right to know and freedom of the press, but democracy is corrupted to the extent that bias exists in election campaign reporting. This needs to be stamped out as it is a real problem.

**Voting (Question 25):**

25) Yes - it is the responsibility of every citizen to participate in chosing their governement at any level.

**Voting (Questions 26 to 30):**

26) No - end up duplicating costs and adding administrative costs.

27) In some local govrednemnt areas it might be the most efficient and cost effective approach. It should not be completely rulled out but clear definitions put on its use.

28) Yes - if it is more convenient that should be reason enough but it is the voters choice not enforced on them.

29) it is fair enough if people understand that and have the option of a pre-polling vote. I don't think the costs of remote voting outside elctorates are justifiable in the circumstances.

30) No firm view.

**Voting (Questions 31 to 35):**

31) No.

32) No

33) No

34) No

35) Nobody.

**Voting systems (Questions 36 to 38):**

36) Optional preferential is the best and fairest.

37) No.

38) Definatly not - recipe for unstable local councils.

**Other (Question 39):**

**Other)**