

21 JUL 2010

Law, Justice and Safety
Committee

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Law, Justice and Safety Committee

DIVISIONS

- 1) **Are the procedures for the division of councils adequate?**
Yes, the Act provides fair and equitable rules to allow division to occur.
- 2) **If the procedures for the division of councils are not adequate, what changes are required ?**
None
- 3) **Are the error margins of 10% in local government areas with more than 10,000 electors and 20% in all other cases sufficient?**
Very applicable
- 4) **Should the mix of divided and undivided councils remain? If so, should the decision to divide a local government area remain with individual councils?**
I have served as a Councillor on both divided and undivided councils and now on an amalgamated council, one had 10,300 residents and the amalgamated council has 30,300 residents.
I firmly believe that any council representing ALL of their constituents should NOT be divided no matter what size. It promotes laziness within and does not give people the chance to approach a councillor of their choice. All councillors have an equal vote and all should be informed.
- 5) **Are there any other matters the Committee should consider in regard to local government divisions?**
Yes, in amalgamated councils it is highly undesirable to even contemplate division in these situations. Councillors really need to involve themselves in all areas of the new region.

CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS

- 6) **Should the Electoral Commission of Queensland be responsible for the administration of the quadrennial local government elections or should this responsibility remain with Council CEO's?**
I have now experienced elections conducted by both the ECQ and local government CEO's and at this stage, despite the cost, I believe that elections should be conducted by the ECQ to ensure integrity and impartiality. By-elections should remain with the local government.
- 7) **If the ECQ is to be responsible for local government elections should the new Act allow more flexibility in regard to the conduct of the quadrennial elections than the current Act does? If so, how?**
I think for total impartiality all votes should be posted straight to Brisbane and counted there. I realise the expense but it would put to rest any chance of rumours and speculations.
- 8) **Is the time for the close of the rolls and the date of the elections appropriate?**
The close of the roll on the 31st January is enough time to make sure all names are on the roll but last time there were a lot of people who missed out on their voting forms. We had most of them before the event and I am sure these glitches will be ironed out for the next election.

- 9) **What changes, if any, should be made to the timing of local government elections?**
I really feel that the elections should be held later in the year so that the implementation of the budget is well and truly underway. I believe that sometimes the new Councillors leave too much to guess work as they are still trying to get their feet under the table with their new role and do not have enough time to take in all of the departments. Some are not familiar with money and budgets.
- 10) **Is the nomination process adequate? Why?**
Yes, nomination by 6 electors should be the desired outcome and combined with the range of disqualifications makes sure the right candidates are put forward.
- 11) **Does the current system encourage a diverse range of candidates to stand?**
Yes, and the electors should never be underestimated they sort them out.
- 12) **Should a candidate be required to live in the local government area in which they stand for election?**
Yes absolutely, it really does not work for candidate or elector as once again the electors sort them out and they miss out.
- 13) **Should a councillor be required to live in the local government area for their whole four year term?**
Yes, unless it is in the last year of the term then they could step down without any financial loss to the ratepayer.
- 14) **Should a person be able to stand as a dual candidate for both mayor and councillor?**
No, this would complicate the procedure and confuse electors.
- 15) **Should the new Act allow mayors to be appointed by their fellow Councillors?**
No, the electors should be able to pick their Mayor from candidates who put themselves forward to run for Mayor and who are prepared to stand up and be counted as well as financially backing themselves.
- 16) **Are the requirements for disclosure of campaign funding sufficient?**
Yes, the disclosure requirements are fine but 15 weeks seems a long time.
- 17) **Should candidates make disclosures before, progressively during, and after an election period?**
Yes, before, progressively during and after but not 15 weeks after.
- 18) **Should all disclosure requirements, such as values, disclosure periods and who must comply, be standardised?**
Yes, definitely a level playing field for all candidates.
- 19) **Should particular fundraising activities for local government elections be prohibited?**
Yes, I think all fundraising activities for local government elections, should be prohibited? When standing for election we all spend what we can afford and that denotes the extent of our campaign. The electors do not always vote for the candidate who has spent the most money on their campaign.

- 20) **Should how-to-vote cards be free from promotional content?**
Yes, how-to-vote cards should be free from outside influences.
- 21) **Should how-to-vote cards be standard for all candidates? If so, should these be provided in all polling booths and postal vote packs by the Electoral Commission of Queensland?**
I see how-to-vote cards as being very much individual and after all they are paid for by the candidates. The last election here after amalgamation we had 26 candidates and if we were to put them in the postal packs it would just escalate the cost.
- 22) **What promotional material, such as bunting (continuous signage) and coreflutes, should be allowed during the campaign period and at polling booths on election day?**
We only have postal voting so coreflutes, billboards, inserts into newspapers, letter-drops and media are the usual, and all in accordance with the local by-laws.
- 23) **Should the placement and amount of election campaign material be standard across all local government areas?**
No, we are all different sizes and all individual Regions with different by-laws.
- 24) **Should a 'media blackout' period apply for local government elections? Why? For how long?**
Yes, to give people time to collect their thoughts before they decide and I think two weeks would be fine.
- 25) **Should voting remain compulsory for local government elections in Queensland?**
Yes, it should be compulsory, it is sometimes a long road but most of us consider it a privilege and our democratic right as citizens of Australia.
- 26) **Should the option of a postal vote be extended to all voters in every Area?**
Yes, the option should be extended to all in every area because we all live very busy lives and travel on weekends. A postal vote is very easy to cast before the due date it may even increase on the 80%.
- 27) **Should a full postal ballot be automatic for some local government areas? If so, why and for which areas?**
Yes, post amalgamation we have very large areas and some scattered small villages, some larger towns and a city so postal is logical. I really think the local government regions should decide for themselves. It could even be part of our community consultation and be listed in our community plan.
- 28) **Should the criteria for pre-polling and postal voting be abolished?**
No, this is the way of the future people will not want to stop their lives for an election.
- 29) **Does the restriction on voters to attend only polling booths in a division in which they are enrolled adversely affect voters? If this were altered what impact would that have on the administration of the elections in that local government?**

Yes, I believe that it makes it a chore if they can't vote easily and when they want. Surely if they don't have to man every polling booth it must be a cost saving?

- 30) **Should the new act allow absent voting? If so, should this be restricted to absent voting within a local government area only?**
No, this would further complicate local elections, if we were all postal voting there would not be any reason for voters not to vote.
- 30) **Should the right to vote in Queensland local government elections be**
31) **Extended to non-resident property owners within an area? If so, should this apply to overseas investors?**
No, I don't think non-residents should have a vote or temporary workers and I don't think it would change the % of voters.
- 32) **Should voting rights be extended to non-resident occupiers (e.g. commercial lessees such as business owners who lease premises within an area but live outside of it)?**
No, it would just complicate things and once again I don't think it would change the % of voters.
- 33) **Should multiple persons be able to claim non-resident voter eligibility for one property (e.g. two or more non-resident owners or lessees of a property)?**
No, a lot of property is owned by people overseas and we have not seen them in thirty years.
- 34) **Should people, based on the number of properties they own, be entitled to more than one vote per division?**
No, it goes with the person not the number of properties.
- 35) **Who should be responsible for the creation, verification and maintenance of a non-residents' electoral roll?**
If one was required then it would fall to the CEO as he has access.
- 36) **Which voting system is most appropriate for local government elections – Optional Preferential voting, Compulsory Preferential voting, First-Past-The-Post or Proportional Representation? Why?**
First-Past-The-Post known as Simple Majority has lots of advantages, quick turnaround, can work even in Councils without parties. We had a huge number of candidates last election and it seemed to work but I agree with Mr. Becker there has to be something easier.
- 37) **Would different voting systems work better for different sized local governments? Why?**
Yes, but I don't profess to be able to match them up.
- 38) **Should Proportional Representation be introduced for Queensland Local Government elections?**
No.
- 39) **What other issues should the Committee consider in relation to this inquiry?**
The part "The Press" play in engineering the outcome of Council Elections.

This is an **INDIVIDUAL** submission from
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