

From: Sandra
Sent: Tuesday, 27 July 2010 5:50 PM
To: Law, Justice and Safety Committee
Subject: Law Justice and Safety Committee REVIEW OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Please find my Submission to:- Law, Justice and Safety Committee Parliament House. Brisbane.

I submit this submission from a point of experience, dedication and belief that Local Government is the closest Government to the people. Under the current undivided system representing the people on the council and community expectations regarding local government has changed.

A level of government closest to the people, local Governments are and should be more accessible to their communities, people are looking to councils to provide local solutions to their problems.

Council decisions effect every resident, every Councillor would be aware that they represent the overall public interest of the local government's area. If there is a councillor for a division of the area, they would also represents the public interest of that division would take this into account when making a decision.

I have had the privilege to be a past INDEPENDENT councillor of Thuringowa City Council and have served the community from 1988 to 2008 when amalgamation was implemented. I have campaigned under both systems divisions and recently under undivided council elections

1. Democratically elected councillors are the consultative link between the council and the community. For each division the councillor should be aware and understand issues which are important to that community, information the council and help shape policies and programs that address the needs of that particular division of the community.
2. Effective councillors need to reside in the division, be aware of and understand the issues which are important to the community and bring this information to the council to inform debate to help shape policies and programs that address the community's needs.
3. 'Expectations' of an undivided councillor are unrealistically high if every councillor is expected to become involved in matters of concern and needs of the whole of Council. The efficient and effective representation would be spread to thinly and the community would not be served as efficiently as with one representative being familiar with that divisional community concern and can ensure that community's views and opinions are presented to the council.
4. Divisions allow the community to democratically elect the person they believe will provide leadership and direction and serve their community effectively.
5. Undivided councils have the potential in deciding that facilities, services are implemented in the larger populated areas where most of the votes are located rather than the division where there are less votes or less representatives.
6. Why if divisions are not needed as argued by some mayors and councillors do they proceed to see the need to allocate a councillor to represent certain areas with the council.
7. Democracy is not well served if council appoint a councillor to a certain area to provide representation and accountability to that community as a councillor providing representation.
8. Performance and service to the community are judged at the poll. This cannot be achieved if you have to vote for 12 councillors as it is with an undivided council. As one resident relayed to me "who knows what other councillors do",
9. Elections cost more for an undivided council if there is a by-election as we have seen in Townsville the election has to be taken over 45 Booths an added cost to the election. Where as in divisions the cost of only 6 to 7 at most.
10. A an interested, concerned, public spirited INDEPENDENT candidate will find it impossible to run a campaign in an undivided council area which has 45 polling booths and 200 thousand people to contact and inform.
11. An undivided council is biased to and favours candidates with affiliations with a political party or string interest groups. At the same time disadvantaging public spirited INDEPENDENT who

wishes to contest a council election.

12. The system of undivided councils also disadvantages the community by eliminating the potential of true independent candidates from contesting elections on the financial and logistics grounds of running against big party election machines

1) Are the procedures for the division of councils adequate?

No

2) If the procedures for the division of councils are not adequate, what changes are required?

First past the post voting and elector can only vote within the division booths

3) Are the error margins of 10% in local government areas with more than 10,000 electors and 20% in all other cases sufficient?

20 % error margins

4) Should the mix of divided and undivided councils remain?

No

If so, should the decision to divide a local government area remain with individual councils?

No the decision should NOT remain with the council, the previous Thuringowa City Council polled the community on divisions (3 times) they had (2) multi member divisions and the community consultation resulted in an overwhelming support for more individual divisions and the Council ignored the community and kept the (2) multi member divisions although the community had their say. (The Townsville Bulletin ran stories and the Council ignored this also) If it is not in the best interest of the Council it sometimes becomes convenient to stay the same.

5) Are there other matters the Committee should consider in regard to local government divisions?

Democracy is well served by a divisional council when it allows any responsible person to run a campaign and being elected without it being prohibited either financially or logistically. As an undivided council a person only has the choice of placing their name in the pool and facing teams of political and special interest teams as is unaffordable.

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 CEOs?

The Electoral Commission of Queensland should be responsible for the Local Government Election the State and Federal Government are controlled by the ECQ and what makes Local Government different.

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?

All levels of Government should be conducted the same.

8) Is the time for the close of the rolls and the date of the elections appropriate?

Yes

9) What changes, if any, should be made to the timing of local government elections?

None

10) Is the nomination process adequate? Why?

\$500 and six people to sign electors to sign nomination form

11) Does the current system encourage a diverse range of candidates to stand?

Undivided councils do NOT encourage a diverse range of candidates to stand as a candidate who pays for your own campaign you can door knock a division but it is just impossible to introduce a candidate if it is a undivided council area

12) Should a candidate be required to live in the local government area in which they stand for election?

Yes. I believe if a councillor lives in the area they experience the needs for the area

13) Should a councillor be required to live in the local government area for their whole four year term?

Yes ..A candidate for councillor would be well aware of the commitment they are making to the community when nominating

14) Should a person be able to stand as a dual candidate for both mayor and councillor?

Yes .. This would encourage many good candidates for the mayor at the moment candidates do not challenge the Mayor. But not in more than one division.

15) Should the new Act allow mayors to be appointed by their fellow councillors?

No . The mayor is a respected member of the community and a leader of the community I believe the community have the democratic right to elect their Mayor NOT to be appointed by councillors

16) Are the requirements for disclosure of campaign funding sufficient?

Yes. I believe there are still loopholes by someone not standing for election running a campaign against a certain party

17) Should candidates make disclosures before, progressively during, and after an election period?

Only after elections

18) Should all disclosure requirements, such as values, disclosure periods and who must comply, be standardised?

Yes

19) Should particular fundraising activities for local government elections be prohibited?

Yes.

20) Should how-to-vote cards be free from promotional content?

The How to vote card has to be endorsed by the returning officer

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?

No ..

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?

It would be infringing on candidates rights to dictate what promotional material should be used

23) Should the placement and amount of election campaign material be standard across all local government areas?

No

24) Should a 'media blackout' period apply for local government elections? Why? For how long?

Local Government should have the media blackout period apply the same as other levels of Government Elections

25) Should voting remain compulsory for local government elections in Queensland?

Yes

26) Should the option of a postal vote be extended to all voters in every area?

No

27) Should a full postal ballot be automatic for some local government areas? If so, why and for which areas?

No

28) Should the criteria for pre-polling and postal voting be abolished?

No

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?

Voters should only attend the polling booths in the division in which they are enrolled this encourages multiple voting.

30) Should the new Act allow absent voting? If so, should this be restricted to absent voting within a local government area only?

Postal voting would allow absent voting.

26) Should the option of a postal vote be extended to all voters in every area?

Yes

27) Should a full postal ballot be automatic for some local government areas? If so, why and for which areas?

I do not know enough about all Local Governments to comment

28) Should the criteria for pre-polling and postal voting be abolished?

Pre-polling should only be 3 days before the election date. The other option of Postal vote

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?

No ..If voters could attend outside their division the administration would have to have every division's ballot paper and I believe all the administration staff would have to be able to answer questions on all divisions. (Every booth in the whole council would have to have a box for each division)

30) Should the new Act allow absent voting? If so, should this be restricted to absent voting within a local government area only?

No

31) Should the right to vote in Queensland local government elections be extended to non-resident property owners within an area? If so, should this apply to overseas investors?

No

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

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

34) Should people, based on the number of properties they own, be entitled to more than one vote per division?

35) Who should be responsible for the creation, verification and maintenance of a non-residents' electoral roll?

No

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?

Optional Preferential

37) Would different voting systems work better for different sized local governments? Why?

No..

38) Should Proportional Representation be introduced for Queensland local government elections?

If so, why and

(a) which model/s should be implemented?

(b) how would this be implemented in divided and undivided councils?

(c) should it apply for all councils? If not, which councils should proportional representation apply to?

39) What other issues should the Committee consider in relation to this inquiry?

I have submitted my issues above and thank you in anticipation that you will take them in to consideration.

Many Thanks

Sandra Chesney