



COUNCILLOR  
JENNY HILL

**RECEIVED**

30 JUL 2010

Law, Justice and Safety  
Committee

City of  
Townsville

Date >> 30 July 2010

Submission 082

The Research Director  
Law, Justice and Safety Committee  
Parliament House  
Brisbane Qld 4000

MOBILE >> 0418 886 992  
EMAIL >> jenny.hill@townsville.qld.gov.au

TOWNSVILLE CITY COUNCIL

PO BOX 1288, TOWNSVILLE  
QUEENSLAND 4810

TELEPHONE >> 07 4779 9033  
FACSIMILE >> 07 4727 9050

enquiries@townsville.qld.gov.au  
www.townsville.qld.gov.au

To the Research Director,

I have attached a submission to the Law, Justice and Safety Committee on the Review of the Local Government Electoral System.

I make this submission in my capacity as a local councillor with Townsville City Council.

While the council has made a submission to this committee on behalf of Townsville City, I believe that areas of this submission is not in keeping with the political wishes of the majority of residents and do not support it.

Only one member of the community responded to public consultation by the time the council closed its submission deadline. Responses in the media and petitions set up in the last two weeks indicate a different feeling in the community than the view put forward by this council.

I have made this submission based on my contact with local residents and on discussions in media and on line forums. I hope to present this submission to the committee in person.

Yours sincerely

**Jenny Hill**

Councillor Townsville City Council

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

**The current procedures set down under the act are adequate for council divisions**

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

3) Are the error margins of 10% in local government areas with more than 10 000 electors and 20% in all other cases sufficient? **This is adequate in my opinion**

4) Should the mix of divided and undivided councils remain? **One size does not fit all. There is a strong argument to support undivided councils in sparsely populated areas where divisional representation would not work on a practical basis**

If so, should the decision to divide a local government area remain with individual councils? **The decision to divide a local government area should not remain with local councils. The problem with undivided councils operating in a large urban centre or a large regional city is:**

- a) It is far more costly for an individual to run a city wide campaign against the cost of running a campaign in a division
- b) A strong team will dominate more readily in a undivided council locking out small community based candidates from local areas
- c) Undivided councils suffer huge costs if a by-election is required as the whole city must vote
- d) Divisions foster a healthy debate for budget resources as local divisional representatives understand the needs for their local area.
- e) Lazy councillors can be carried by a team as part of the undivided council. As a divisional representative, voters have the opportunity to vote for a different candidate.

Townsville City Council should be a divisional council like its counterparts in Queensland. Promises to conduct community consultation on this have been ignored and the will of the councillors rather than the view of the residents have taken precedence. Media reports and a local petition support my statement.

That is why I believe that the new Act must ensure that once a certain size is reached that local councils should move from undivided to divided areas.

5) Are there other matters the Committee should consider in regard to local government divisions? **No**

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 ECQ should continue to be responsible for the conduct of local government elections**

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?

**The requirements for local government elections should mirror the same procedures as for state and federal elections.**

8) Is the time for the close of the rolls and the date of the elections appropriate? **The closing of the rolls should mirror the state and federal elections, while the date of the election should be move.**

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

**Quadrennial elections are supported by most in the community but due to the wet season in North Queensland, I would support moving the local government elections to the end of April.**

10) Is the nomination process adequate? Why?

**The current nomination process is adequate.**

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

**It does allow for a diverse range of candidates**

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

**Yes**

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

**Yes**

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

**No**

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

**No, voters seem to want to vote for the Mayor rather than the councillors elect the Mayor.**

16) Are the requirements for disclosure of campaign funding sufficient? **The requirements for disclosure should be similar to that for candidates in federal elections.**

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

**No, this would be difficult for candidates.**

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

**Yes, and the federal requirements I feel are a good example, especially the penalties for failure to disclose.**

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

**Again I refer to the legislation around federal elections, that this is a benchmark.**

20) Should how-to-vote cards be free from promotional content? The HTV card should comply with the same rules as that for federal elections

21) Should how-to-vote cards be standard for all candidates? **Yes**

If so, should these be provided in all polling booths and postal vote packs by the Electoral Commission of Queensland? **In a divided council election I would say yes, but in an undivided council election it would be impossible to display htv cards in polling booths as there would be too many. In the last Townsville Council election you would need an area in the polling booth large enough to display at least 20 htv cards for the 50 candidates.**

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?

**The standard should be the same as that for the federal elections**

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

**Yes but the standard should be the same as federal elections.**

24) Should a media blackout period apply for local government elections? Why? If so, how long?

**For consistency, the media blackout period should apply to local government elections and the standard set should be the same as the federal 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?

**Postal voting should only occur under the same requirements as that for the federal elections.**

27) Should a full postal ballot be automatic for some local government areas? If so, why and for which areas? **Full postal ballots should be optional in areas with sparse populations and polling booths may be more than an one hour drive away.**

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

**No the criteria should be the same as federal elections.**

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?

**The restriction on voters to attend booths within their division does adversely affect some voters. It would not be difficult for voters to cast a vote for**

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

**There is no doubt that absentee voting is difficult in the case of local government. Townsville has a high number of defence personnel who are on overseas deployment who should have the opportunity to absentee vote. If the ECQ did take over the local government elections, some sort of provision to included absentee voting outside the local government area.**

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?

**The right to vote should be the same for local government elections as it is for federal and state elections.**

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?

**No**

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

This is only applicable if you were to accept the premise that non residents with property should be allowed to vote. If you do then the ECQ should be responsible for the maintenance and verification of the electoral roll.

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 voting is the system that suits local government voting. It does not create confusion for voters as it gives them the opportunity to pass on a preference if they wish and it is a system of voting used at State Elections that residents are use to**

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

**Not necessarily, there is a need to keep the system simple to reduce so people feel they are a part of the process. Either optional preferential or first past the post suit most voters and allows for maximum voting compliance.**

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?

I do not believe that Queensland voters would support proportional representation as it is a difficult concept to understand. Obviously this is the same as the senate voting for the federal election and many people feel that the senate is sometimes unrepresentative of the community.

The election of local government representatives in this manner would not provided for divisional representation, but would suit undivided representation and prevent the dominance of a team in that instance.

Hence this system would suit large regional councils that were undivided.

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

I would like the committee to consider the situation were a local government such as the newly amalgamated city of Townsville has chosen not to consult with residents on the preferred system of local government and instead wishes to keep the status quo.

It is obvious in local media reports, previous surveys undertaken by the then City of Thuringowa that found residents their support one councillor per division arrangement, and from approaches to me as a local councillor, that the Tyrell/Crisafulli team have choosen not to engage residents on this issue.

If the local council had engaged residents in a professional manner I believe that the responses to the type of local government representation for this city would be for divisions. Allowing a local government to decide on what representation the community should have only allows for self preservation as is the case in Townsville.