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Law, Justice and Safety
Committee

Submission 095



maranoa
REGIONAL COUNCIL

From the Office of the Mayor

30 July 2010

The Research Director
Law, Justice and Safety Committee
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000



To Whom It May Concern:

A New Local Government Electoral Act: Review of the Local Government Electoral System (excluding BCC)

The views I have expressed here reflect my own views and the consensus view of my council are contained in a separate submission. I have not tried to address all the issues presented but would like to personally believe that issues 10 to 13 should all confirm current arrangements as satisfactory, this proposal best addresses issues 14 and 15 as described in the issues paper.

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

October certainly presents the best opportunity to allow incoming councillors to settle into council without the added stresses of wading into a budget process.

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

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

I do not agree with either of these issues being introduced in the context of the current legislation. The concept of councillors appointing the mayor from their number has not been a success in other states and should be utterly rejected in favour of our existing arrangements and popular election.

I understand that many good councillors can be lost to office when they compete for the mayoral position against other councillors but there are better ways to overcome this problem. I am therefore putting to you the option of biennial elections with four year terms.

The current act requires that a councillor cannot stand for both positions and must decide which position to contest. The losing mayoral candidates are then lost to local government usually for the duration of the term. The exception is in the case of a by-election where councillors can nominate and are not required to vacate their positions to do so.

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I am therefore suggesting that elections for councillors should be held in October 2012 with elections for all positions held at that time. Exactly two years later, in October 2014, the mayoral election should again be vacated, allowing any existing councillors as well as outsiders to nominate for the position (this time for a four year term). Ideally this date would coincide with an agreed date for quadrennial state government elections.

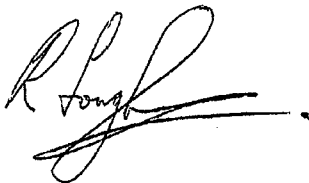
The positives from this move would be allowing a degree of continuity and stability for the council throughout both election periods. The move would certainly overcome the loss of councillors through having to stand aside from councillor elections to contest the mayoralty. The downside may be the potential politicisation of the mayoral election and the complications of running a campaign alongside and around a state election campaign. Another might be the tensions created by a successful mayoral candidate having to work with his or her defeated rivals.

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?

My preference is very much for the first past the post system which I believe is fairer and more transparent. I am concerned that the issues 37 and 38 both appear to push the reader to make positive comment on the Proportional Representation system and that perhaps a decision has already been made on this matter. Certainly this system favours parties and alliances but party politics in local government is entirely undesirable.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 0427 233 776 or email RobertL@maranoa.qld.gov.au.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Loughnan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cr Robert Loughnan
Mayor of Maranoa Regional Council