

Local Government Electoral and Other Legislation (Expenditure Caps) Amendment Bill 2022

Submission No: 22
Submitted by: Gecko Environment Council Assn Inc.
Publication:
Attachments:
Submitter Comments:



20 January 2023

Committee Secretary
State Development and Regional Industries Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

SDRIC@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Secretary,

**Re: Submission on Local Government Electoral and Other Legislation
(Expenditure Caps) Amendment Bill 2022**

I write on behalf of Gecko Environment Council Association Inc (Gecko) to support the passage of this Bill to place expenditure caps on candidates' spending for local government election. The Bill appears to have effectively addressed all 7 of the recommendations of the Crime and Corruption Commission's Belcarra Report considering the complexity of the issues involved and the differences in local government areas across the state.

The current situation of unfettered expenditure on local government elections has been disadvantageous to candidates of merit who are unable to compete with candidates with substantial funds to promote their policies to the voting public. Such a situation is detrimental to the exercise of democracy as voters may not be fully aware of their choices of candidates. The implementation of the 7 recommendations should improve transparency of expenditure.

The members of Gecko appreciate the efforts to more clearly define what election expenditure is and that it includes gifts, not only of money, but also in-kind goods and services.

The sliding scale of permitted expenditure for local government candidates, other than for Brisbane City Council, seems reasonable and achievable for most candidates, especially in this electronic age where communication can be relatively low cost.

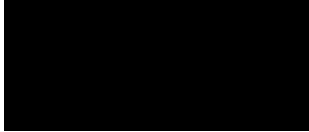
The situation with donations and expenditures by third parties is complex and only experience over a number of elections will determine if it is both workable and effective in controlling election expenditure. This combined with the provision of information and training for prospective candidates as in Recommendation 7 should assist the average voter and candidate in understanding the processes of accountability.

One suggestion we make is that the capped period for election donations should be longer than 7 months as candidates often begin to campaign 12 months or more out from the election day date. We are not entirely confident in the proposal that earlier than 7 month

expenditure will be captured with the provisions of the Bill, particularly in relation to incumbents who are seeking re-election.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this brief submission.

Yours sincerely

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Rose Adams

Secretary

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