

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

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Thank you for the opportunity to write my submission which is founded from my experience in the 2020 elections when I was a fresh candidate.

Expenditure caps are necessary but need to be transparent which was clearly not the case in the 2020 elections. Interference from third party support groups that were clearly part of a political alliance caused confusion for the voters and frustration for those not in the alliances. It was clear to see but impossible to prove and with no rules or regulations from third party interference and what defines interference, the candidates were powerless to act.

In Redland City we had letter box drops, phone calls, door knockers, surveys, and people requesting signage for candidates that were supported by political association, but campaigning as independents. Publications in the disguise of surveys were leaflet dropped by a political party with clear promotion to their preferred candidate. This promotion continued on Members FB pages with no consequences or questioning. This was not disclosed by any candidates either in financial benefit or in kind donations. This was clear interference and the ECQ and the QPS were apparently powerless to control the situation even though it was clearly political interference.

I strongly support a cap on expenditure and think the amount would be better set at \$1 per voter/per division and the same for the Mayor. The reason being the amount of spending on a wall of signage and trailers across our city was not only embarrassing and uncompetitive for anyone who wanted to see dignity, but was visually polluting and distracting to motorists and has to be distracting when the signage is vandalised, including vulgar sexually explicit graffiti.

It was not uncommon to see a controlled intersection near two schools to have a core flute of a candidate on all corners. One home owner on a busy intersection in Capalaba was not aware a sign had been erected on her fence until it was pointed out to her, whereby she immediately took it down. There were two other reported cases of door knockers (two males) asking to erect signs and the home owner felt intimidated. In many cases the signs were maximum dimensions, requiring professional installations, not a tomato stake and hammer. Installers in utes, using pole drivers with bolts to stabilise the weight was required and the cost of this had to be enormous yet I could not see the install costs in the election declarations and assume it was "donated".

Redland city elections are supposed to be all independents so a cap of \$1/per voter would be in line with true independents and would put a halt to the amount of in kind services that are not disclosed. The current situation of unregulated expenditure on local government elections has created an uneven, unfair disadvantage for true independent candidates who can't compete with political party support who clearly receive higher level funding to promote their candidates. Voters are unable to understand or see where the added support is coming from, including anonymous letter box drops from unidentifiable, so called "concerned citizen groups" that go unchecked and with no

repercussion. The so called citizen groups are clearly nothing of the sought as they have no contact details, no registered address and are delivered unseen.

A cap on the number of posters needs to be looked at seriously because in Redlands we saw a very high percentage of signs disappear without trace, in the dead of night. One candidate had to run a fresh print and they also disappeared. The cost of this political sabotage would run over budget and would impact the expenditure cap, with no positive result for the candidate but a huge bonus to the opposing candidate. Stealing core flutes is an old dirty tricks campaign that can be stopped.

There was a wall of core flutes for some candidates that brought complaints to the local paper for visual pollution, some saying it was degrading to our community. For candidates that are on their second and third election and using the same core flutes, this is effectively double dipping if the cap does not include the number of signs. Each election you can double the signage with no impact to the cap.

Councils, quite rightly, are being forced to re-educate the community with the Reduce, Re-use, Recycle campaign and Councils are expected to be the community leaders on this, not the State or the Federal Government. We are telling constituents that we can no longer create more land fill sites and we all have to change out packaging and marketing material. There is no need for paper how to vote cards being printed by every candidate for every voter. What message are we sending to the public when we are creating the biggest land fill for no good reason? The core flutes go into land fill as there's no recycling material and the paper and cardboard waste is inexcusable.

All our Council reports and documents are in the cloud and we work of tablets for information. Why therefore are we printing and discarding millions of how to vote cards when we can work with a system of a display wall at the voting booth? We did this during Covid and it worked. There were no complaints and some said they found it refreshing not to be spruiked as they came in to vote. Most candidates letter boxed their how to vote instructions with preferred preferences in their promotional material so why duplicate it at the polling booths? It's completely unnecessary. This is an expense that could and should be removed and another reason why we can manage \$1/per voter because the huge volumes of how to vote cards, which is always more than needed, would not only largely reduce costs but would prevent car park spruiking as voters try to get out of their cars.

I have my doubts about how the cap could be regulated or monitored as some candidates have seen the change coming and taken the initiative and started campaigning January with breakfast invites stating clearly and honestly that the invite is a campaign fundraiser. This means the campaign spending has begun and how do you regulate this when we are still talking about cut off dates for declarations?

I thank you for the opportunity to democratically exercise my rights to have my say through the submission process. I offer my opinion based purely on my experience and my views are not that of Redland City Council or my fellow Councillors.

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