




Speech By
Hon. Dr Steven Miles
MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (NO. 2)

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (4.07 pm): I rise to speak briefly in support of the bill. The Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 2) will bring rules for local elections into line with the rules for state elections, remove confusing contradictions and ensure that our election legislation is fair and uniform. It is timely that we deal with these matters now ahead of the local government elections due next year.

I want to focus on a couple of areas this bill seeks to address. The Local Government Electoral Act at section 179 requires accepted how-to-vote cards to be available for public inspection at the place of nomination, the local government's public office and on the Electoral Commission website. The City of Brisbane Act 2010 at section 92D and the Local Government Act 2009 at section 90D both prohibit a local government from publishing or distributing election material during the caretaker period for a local government election. This makes it impossible for local governments to comply with the Local Government Electoral Act. It is important to correct this inconsistency by permitting accepted how-to-vote cards to be available for inspection at the local government's public office during the caretaker period for a local election.

Under the Local Government Electoral Act, the Electoral Commission will only accept how-to-vote cards if they are satisfied that the cards are unlikely to mislead or deceive a voter. Making them available for scrutiny prior to election day provides greater transparency and gives everyone the same opportunity to access information which will help them to exercise their democratic rights come voting day.

How-to-vote cards are an important tool for helping voters to make a formal vote that best reflects their political wishes. Although, after a couple of weeks of pre-polling and a hot election day, many of us might rue the day how-to-vote cards were invented, they are nonetheless a feature of our elections—right up there with sausage sizzles and bunting. We are supporting democracy, making sure local government elections are conducted to the same high standard as our state elections. This is not contentious but it is a necessary step in delivering on that principle. It is crucial that we amend this contradictory law before the caretaker period for councils comes into effect in February, ahead of their elections in March. I congratulate the committee for their work. I commend the Deputy Premier and commend the bill to the House.