



Speech By  
**Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe**


**MEMBER FOR SANDGATE**

---

Record of Proceedings, 18 March 2020

## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

### **Local Government Elections**

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (10.28 am): As we all know, local government elections are underway. Extraordinary measures have been put in place to ensure those Queenslanders who have the right to vote are able to safely do so. Our most recent health advice is that it is fine for these elections to continue. In fact, you will encounter far fewer people at the polling booth than you would at a shopping centre or service station. I can report that Queenslanders are rising to the occasion.

The Electoral Commission Queensland is reporting voting figures that we have never seen before—around 540,000 applications for postal votes and more than 170,000 early votes to 5 pm yesterday. That is four times the number who turned out during the same period in 2016. Today and tomorrow 128 of our early polling centres will be open from 9 am to 9 pm. On Friday and Saturday they will be open from 9 am to 5 pm. This is in addition to election day on Saturday, 28 March. Having two consecutive Saturdays to vote in local government elections has never been done before.

I should also mention there will be extended hours next week for early voting. To ensure that the 28 March election day and earlier election day run smoothly, the Electoral Commission has put in place several measures, including: a recommendation that voters bring their own pen or pencil; extra cleaning of polling booth areas; extra staff to help with queue control and monitoring; maximising the distance between voters, vote-issuing tables and screens; being mindful of the distance between voters and the next person in line; and being respectful of voters who may need some space or help, particularly the vulnerable amongst us.

This is not a time for platitudes such as 'business as usual'. This is not, as we have heard from the Premier, business as usual, but it is important business for local government elections. It is important that local governments provide the leadership, confidence and continuity that these elections will provide. The most recent advice from Chief Health Officer, Dr Jeannette Young, is that it is safe for elections to go ahead. Telephone voting is being organised for people in institutions, including nursing homes. Further telephone voting is being organised for people who are in social isolation because of the virus, because of illness or other issues that may make it difficult to get to a polling booth.

The early voting turnout tells us that Queenslanders want to exercise their franchise, and with the latest public health advice we are doing everything in our power to make sure that happens.