

INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
Report No. 3 on the
Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015

QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

INTRODUCTION

On 27 March 2015 the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 (the Bill) was introduced to Parliament.

The Bill was subsequently referred to the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee (the Committee) on 27 March 2015, with a report back date of 22 May 2015.

On 22 May 2015 the Committee tabled its report (No. 3) in relation to the Bill.

The Queensland Government response to the Committee's recommendations is provided below.

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendation 1:

The majority of the Committee recommends the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 be passed.

Queensland Government response:

The Government thanks the Committee for its expeditious and thorough consideration of the Bill and notes the Committee's recommendation.

Recommendation 2:

The Committee recommends the Bill be amended to include a provision to amend the *Local Government Electoral Act 2011* to require the Electoral Commission of Queensland to consult with local governments with the objective of reducing the cost of conducting local government elections.

Queensland Government response:

The Government does not support the recommendation to legislate for the Electoral Commission of Queensland to consult with local governments as the Government is committed to ongoing genuine consultation with key stakeholders as a fundamental part of the Government's promise to deliver to the people of Queensland an open, transparent and accountable Government.

The Government's commitment to engage in meaningful consultation is evidenced by the ongoing consultation being undertaken by the Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning, the Electoral Commission of Queensland, the Local Government

Association of Queensland and all Queensland local governments with the objective of reducing the costs of local government elections.

It is the Government's view that it is not necessary nor appropriate for an Act of Parliament to require the Electoral Commission of Queensland to undertake consultation with local governments. This is an ongoing administrative process which has already begun.

Recommendation 3:

The Committee recommends the Minister consider the Local Government Association of Queensland's suggestion that the *Local Government Electoral Act 2011* be amended to return the system of voting for mayors in undivided councils to first-past-the-post.


Queensland Government response:

The Government does not support the recommendation for the Minister to consider the Local Government Association of Queensland's suggestion to return to the first-past-the-post (FPTP) voting system for mayors in undivided councils as the Government is satisfied that the optional-preferential voting (OPV) method is appropriate for the election of mayors across all local government areas. The voting system for mayors is consistent with the method of voting for members of the Queensland Parliament, who each represent a single electorate.

Although voting for councillors (FPTP) and mayors (OPV) in undivided local governments is inconsistent, the Government believes that given the significant powers and responsibilities of Queensland mayors it is important that a successful mayoral candidate has the support of at least 50 per cent of the community, which is ensured under OPV.

If FPTP applied to mayoral elections, a successful mayoral candidate may be elected with less than 50 per cent of the vote in elections where there are more than two candidates.

The Electoral Commission of Queensland has indicated to the Committee that each ballot paper contains clear instructions, reducing the prospect of voter confusion in undivided local governments where voting for mayor is OPV and voting for councillors is FPTP. Ultimately, the Government's view is that the different voting systems affect the process of the counting of the votes only and not the way a voter marks the ballot.

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