



22 November 2017

MEDIA RELEASE

Remove chance from local government elections

A key aspect of the democratic process is that all votes are treated equally. However, the use of random sampling in local government elections means that some votes count more than others. The NSW Electoral Matters Committee has made recommendations to rectify this.

“The Committee found that random sampling can have a significant impact on the results of a local government election,” said the Hon Dr Peter Phelps MLC, Committee Chairman.

“As such, the Committee has recommended that random sampling be removed from the counting process for these elections and replaced with a much more robust system.”

The Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters has today tabled its Report on Preference Counting in Local Government Elections in NSW.

“The use of random sampling means that some candidates have been elected purely by chance. If a different random sample was used, a different candidate may be successful,” Dr Phelps said.

“The Committee heard that this is causing confusion amongst voters and candidates and is threatening public confidence in the electoral system. The new model recommended by the Committee will ensure that more voters will have their voices heard.”

There was near unanimous support from stakeholders, including local councils, for removing random sampling from local government elections. The Committee hopes that the changes will be implemented ahead of the local government elections in 2020.

The Committee has also made recommendations to improve the scrutineering process in local government elections and to make more information available following an election.

“The transparency of elections is a central part of maintaining public confidence in the process, and the work of scrutineers in this area is vital,” said Dr Phelps. “As more technology is being used in the counting process, it is becoming more challenging for scrutiny to take place. We have recommended that changes be made to make sure that scrutineers can continue their work.”

The New South Wales Government has six months in which to respond to the Committee’s recommendations.

Further information about the report can be found on the Committee’s website at: <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/electoral matters>

MEDIA: The Hon Dr Peter Phelps MLC – (02) 9230 3462