

## **INQUIRY INTO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (ELECTIONS) BILL 2025**

**Name:** Cr Mitchell Griffin

**Date Received:** 2 July 2025

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Thank you for taking the time to consider my submission. As a third term councillor for the City of Maitland, I feel that I have the experience of previously running in Local Government Elections to provide feedback and insight in to local government elections in NSW. This includes successfully standing for election as both a member of a party and as an independent. I have also stood at a local government election which was run by the NSW electoral commission, as well as a private company. I do stress that my submission is my feedback only and is not on behalf of Maitland City Council.

Shortened time frames for early voting - I fully support the proposed changes to shorten the timeframes for early voting to five days. As a candidate for local government, resources for candidates are considerably more difficult to obtain in comparison to federal and state elections. By shortening the period this would encourage more diversity for local government by making it easier to maintain volunteers at early voting centres. Furthermore, early voting is meant to be for electors who are unable to vote on election day. Over time we have seen more and more electors who have nothing stopping them from voting on election day, but choose to vote early out of convenience. This is not the purpose of early voting and therefore the Act should reflect this, and take steps to prevent those who can vote on election day from voting early.

Limiting Councils to the NSWEC only for elections - Having run in elections held by both the electoral commission and private company, I am strongly against restricting the choice for electoral companies to one option. This is anti competitive, and resulted in a one size fits all approach by the electoral commission. This has also seen time frames for election results blown out by weeks when a private company focusing on one election can complete this in a matter of days. For this reason, it would be disastrous upon councils to be forced in to a monopoly.

Time taken for preference counting - Although not currently listed as a possible change to the Act, I do want to bring to the committee's attention the ridiculous, and unsafe process currently undertaken by the NSW Electoral Commission of delaying the count of preferences by more than two weeks after election day. In addition to leaving the community without a clear picture of the leadership of their city for an extended period, these delays severely impact on the health and safety of candidates. Over the last two elections (2021 and 2024), I have been in the position where I have been forced to wait the full two week period to find out if I had been re-elected. This unfair period results in significant mental health and stress concerns on the candidate. I am aware of candidates in other local government areas who have had to seek medical treatment and counselling because of this unnecessary delay. The Act needs to be amended to prevent returning officers from forcing these unnecessary delays when a result could be counted within a couple of days.

Should the committee wish to seek any further feedback on local government elections, I would be more than happy to assist.

Kind regards,

Councillor Mitchell Griffin