

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 7 July 2025

Partially
Confidential

Dear Enquiry Members.

Thank you for providing the opportunity to lodge a Submission into this very important issue.

The third tier of Government in Australia is often referred to as that 'which is closest to the community'. This may be true but when it comes to voting it is the election that most people detest. There are a variety of reasons for that and for one who has stood at many voting booths handing out how to votes at all three tiers, I feel I can confidently make this claim.

I am not in favour of by elections, in the event a replacement Councillor is required to fill a vacancy. My first issue is around cost, the last by election Shellharbour Council ran was tipped to cost over \$350k, however due to a Court case over the failure of the iVote (of which I was a Witness) costs were recouped by Council. But costs are prohibitive and must be considered when we are seeing many Councils already struggling to meet current costs. Many are falling into deficit. Ratepayers already bear many extensive cuts to their services due to the impost of ever increasing demands and increases to deliver those services.

Running by elections also places demands on staff both at Council and for the NSW Electoral Commission. But more importantly it places unnecessary demands on voters who must vote again when there is available another mechanism to fill any vacancy. The Countback mechanism is a legislated method to determine a suitable candidate. It is both cost effective and fair as preferential voting is a major piece of Australia's great democracy. A countback ensures the person that voters chose as their next preference can return in the event of a vacancy on Council.

To remove this democratic mechanism of a countback and force by election is surely an attempt to undermine the Governing Bodies of Council self determination. The Councillors currently get to vote on their choice of methodology and it could be argued that this strips away some of the party politics in choosing one or the other method.

Why enforce and expensive and cumbersome by election upon residents, the Council and staff, when a countback is quick, cheap and clean?

To be fair and to be transparent, I was a Councillor who suffered a by election due to the failed iVote. A group of us went to court to challenge the NSW Electoral Commission due to the poor roll out of the iVote and whilst we lost the case, we did ensure that Councils who had to go to a by election did not carry the burden of the cost. That was a win and now I can see from this change it means that what I fought for was a waste of my time. This impacts me significantly as at the time of the Court action and the by election my Father was gravely ill and dying, I was his carer at home. I won and served very diligently, however next time around I lost. In the event of a vacancy at my Council I could return, but I am aware, as they already voted for a by election in event of vacancy that it is not what they want.

ENDS

Thanking you in advance.

Regards