



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY


SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE 2016 ACT ELECTION AND ELECTORAL ACT

Ms Bec Cody MLA (Chair), Mr James Milligan MLA (Deputy Chair)

Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, Ms Caroline Le Couteur MLA, Mr Andrew Wall MLA,

Submission 27

Name –Weston Creek Community Council

| | |
|---|--|
|  | A.C.T. LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE OFFICE |
| SUBMISSION NUMBER | 27 |
| DATE AUTH'D FOR PUBLICATION | 13 July 2017 |

Your local voice



www.wccc.com.au
info@wccc.com.au

PO Box 3701
Weston Creek ACT 2611
Telephone (02) 6288 8975

The Secretary
Select Committee on 2016 ACT Election
and Electoral Act
ACT Legislative Assembly
G.P.O. Box 373
CANBERRA ACT 2600

2 July 2017

EMAIL: Andrew.snedden@parliament.act.gov.au

Submission on the 2016 ACT Election and the Electoral Act

The Weston Creek Community Council would like to offer the following comments on the operation of the 2016 ACT Election and the Electoral Act. Council thanks the Committee for the extension of time to lodge this application.

The Weston Creek Community welcomed the changes to the Electoral Act to bring about the new electorates in the ACT and the new 25 Member Assembly. This provided us with the new Electorate of Murrumbidgee with 5 members of the Legislative Assembly..

Council will now comment about the specific matters raised by the Committee:

1. Lowering of the Voting Age

Council does not support a lowering of the voting age. As indicated in the discussion paper there is little support for this in Australia and specifically in the ACT. In 2007 the ACT Government found there was little support for lowering the age limit and was not convinced that this action would achieve the desired effect. Similarly, the Commonwealth also found that lowering the voting age would not achieve the desired effect. Although both of these findings were 10 years ago, Council considers that the situation remains the same and the voting age should not be lowered.

2. Donation Rules and Time Frames

Council offers the following comments in relation to donation rules. Council has some concerns with the lifting of the cap of \$10,000 in donations though is somewhat comforted by the limit of \$40,000 expenditure by each candidate.

Where Council would like to see a change is in the election funding with the base limit of the number of votes needed to receive public funding for both a Registered party and a non-party candidate reduced from the 4% threshold to 1% of the formal first preference votes. Council believes that this would provide a more even playing field for those smaller parties and candidates who choose to stand and recoup some of the costs of running in the election. A much fairer situation for ALL candidates would eventuate with this proposal.

3. Other Areas for Consideration

a) **Electronic Voting and Pre-Poll Voting:** Council supports the increasing use of electronic voting though stops short of supporting any form of voting through the internet. Council also encourages pre-poll voting without the need for a reason to do so. In this sense Council supports Recommendation No 2 of the Report by the ACT Electoral Commission on the 2016 ACT Election.

b) **Publicity and Corflutes:** In an election that is focused on the community and without a party ticket being able to “dictate” the voting of individuals for Party candidates, corflutes provide an easy way for candidates to become known in their community. Yes, there was some disquiet in the community over these corflutes and the timing of the ACT Election wasn’t helped by the prior Federal Election.

However, it is an easy and convenient way for candidates to get their names in front of the voting public. Candidates have a restricted budget for the election at \$40,000 and this is a way to gain much name recognition. Council therefore does not agree with the Recommendation No 5 in the Report by the ACT Electoral office into the 2016 ACT Election.

The ACT Election is once every 4 years and there is a need for candidates to set out their stall as it were and to heavily restrict where these corflutes and other signs can be placed again penalizes the individual candidates of all parties and individuals where they do not belong to a party. Council is of the opinion though that these signs should not be placed in a location that would cause a traffic hazard or be a major distraction to motorists.

In many ways these corflutes were the making of an interesting election campaign. Some of the signs were enjoyable including several from the “Sex Party”. Please don’t take all the enjoyment out of the election.

- c) **Overseas Voting and Absentee Voting:** Council is aware of several people who were overseas and found that there was no way that they were able to vote. On top of this they were also fined for not voting. This is not right and ways need to be found to allow these people to vote in ACT Elections.
- d) **Penalty for not Voting:** Council sees no merit in increasing the fine for not voting in an ACT Election until steps are taken to make it easier for absentee and overseas voters to cast a vote.
- e) **The 100 Metre Rule:** Council questions the need for this rule as it takes away the possibility of candidates advertising on polling and pre-polling days at several Polling Stations. The rule isn't applied in Federal Elections and those Elections seem to work quite well in the ACT. Election Day, while a very serious day, is also a day to celebrate the way we conduct elections in our country so let's not try to restrict the day too much.

Council has no comment to offer on the other recommendations and points raised.

Council would be happy to discuss these comments at any time with the Authority.

Yours sincerely

Tom Anderson
Chair
Weston Creek Community Council

