

Dear Sir,

I would like to raise a number of issues regarding the review of the Local Government Act which I welcome.

The first issue is the use of ratepayers funds by the CEOs of Councils to prosecute personal vendettas. It would appear that CEOs can access Local Government Funds to finance legal cases and do not have to seek authorisation from anyone or be accountable to anyone regarding the expense or the validity of the case. I believe this should be stopped. Use of Ratepayers funds should be subject to scrutiny by the Councillors and the ratepayers and if the case is a personal vendetta or of dubious substance the CEO should be called to account. I can think of several instances where I have seen legal advice and representation being undertaken at ratepayers expense for just such things yet there is nowhere that the legal costs incurred are visible or explained to the ratepayers.

The next issue is the suitability of candidates to nominate as Councillors.

It appears that there are very few restrictions on who may nominate and even less investigation as to their appropriateness even under such lax criteria. I would suggest Police and citizenship checks should be mandatory as a minimum. It would also appear that Local Government Elections attract people with a predisposition to mental health problems. Without wishing to be discriminatory there must be some test to assess a person's suitability and there should be some assurance that if elected the candidate would continue their medication as directed by their medical treatment provider.

Nominations for Local Government should open and close earlier so that all Candidates have time to undertake a compulsory Governance Training Course and pass an examination in order to contest the election. Elected Councillors should undertake a refresher course each year.

When Councillors nominate or are pre-selected to stand for another level of Government they should be suspended, without pay, from Council until the election they are contesting is finalised and then only unsuccessful candidates can return to take up their position on Council.

The Use of "IN Camera" considerations seems to be a great way to hide details from the community by Councillors but is also a great way to avoid having to implement inconvenient resolutions by senior management, there being no written record if no one acts operationally on a resolution passed "in camera" how can it be proven later that the resolution was passed?

There must be a strict criteria established before matters can be taken "in camera for secret discussion.

The Terms of Council CEOs should be limited to a maximum of 10 years or after 10 years it should be that maximum contracts are only 1 year and it should be compulsory for the CEOs position to be advertised at the end of at least every second appointment. Also the recruitment should be managed by an independent body, not the local Council or the office of the CEO

through a consultant they use regularly.

There is a danger in Victoria, in the future, of Municipalities becoming much too large. The maximum size of any Ward and any Municipality should be stipulated in the Act and measures to overcome this situation that can be considered should be included. The City of Casey has already become much too large and some suburbs on the West should be moved into the City of Greater Dandenong to balance things out.

Council Wards that have huge populations cannot be managed properly by multiple Councillors. I would suggest that only single Councillor Wards should be established as Multiple Councillor Wards have obviously not resulted in better Governance in the recent past.

I trust that you will give consideration to these proposals.

Regards
Brian Oates JP