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23 February 2015

Mr Stuart Wright
Committee Secretary
Legislative Council
Parliament House
HOBART TAS 7000

Dear Mr Wright

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION
COMMITTEE 'B'**

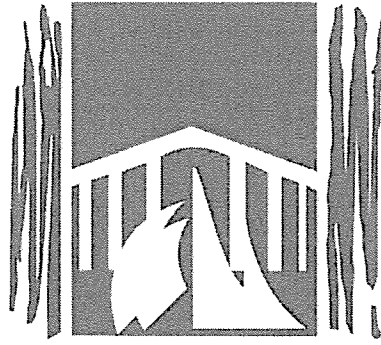
I refer to correspondence dated 24 November 2014 in relation to the Legislative Council Government Administration Committee 'B' inquiry into the operations of the Tasmanian Electoral Commission.

The City of Hobart welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on this matter and has enclosed a copy of its submission with this letter.

Yours sincerely

(N. D. Heath)

GENERAL MANAGER



HOBART
CITY COUNCIL

Sessional Committee Government Administration 'B'

Inquiry into the Operation of the Tasmanian Electoral Commission

The City of Hobart welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Legislative Council's inquiry into the operations of the Tasmanian Electoral Commission.

The Council would like to raise the following points:

1) Candidates for Local Government elections should be required to disclose political donations

Tasmania is the only state in Australia that has no requirement for local government candidates to disclose who funded their campaign.

While regulations under the *Local Government Act 1993* limit political advertising to \$5,000 for candidates for a councillor position or \$8000 for those contesting elections both as councillor and Deputy Mayor or Lord Mayor, there are two large loopholes:

- The first is that the advertising spending limit for the 2014 Local Government elections only applied for expenditure incurred between August 14 and October 28, and:
- The second is that there are no restrictions on who donations can be accepted from and the identity of donors remains a secret no matter how much they contribute.

The only disclosure requirement for candidates is that within 45 days of the declaration of the election results a statement must be submitted from candidates detailing what campaign advertising they paid for. These returns are available for public inspection for 12 months following an election.

Tasmania is inconsistent with the other States in relation to its approach in dealing with electoral donations. In other jurisdictions in Australia the matter of disclosing political donations is addressed by State legislation and requires that candidates provide some form of disclosure to an appropriate body.

The period of time that applies to disclosures in other jurisdictions generally includes the period from immediately after one election until the conclusion of the next – the obligation is therefore continuing.

The most appropriate way to deal with this issue is through State legislation. This would ensure that a consistent approach across all councils is adopted. It would also ensure that no candidate is prejudiced through any measures imposed as they would apply equally across all candidates. Any disclosures that would be made through this process would therefore be dealt with in accordance with that process and retained as appropriate. This would ensure appropriate transparency.

2) **General Manager's Roll**

The Council would like to take the opportunity to raise with the Sessional Committee two matters in relation to the General Manager's Roll, namely that:

- a) A review of the eligibility for inclusion on the General Manager's Roll be undertaken to better capture all citizens, inclusive of refugees and permanent residents living in a local government area.
- b) The administration of the General Manager's Roll be undertaken by the Tasmanian Electoral Commission. Currently, the Tasmanian Electoral Commission manages and maintains the electoral rolls for Federal, State and Local Government elections. Given the knowledge and expertise of the Tasmanian Electoral Commission staff in managing and maintaining electoral rolls, and for the sake of consistency across all levels of government, it is suggested that the Tasmanian Electoral Commission administer the General Manager's Roll.

3) **A review be undertaken on the timeliness of results for those counts which were managed by 'Computer Count' in the recent Local Government elections**

For the 2104 Local Government elections, the Tasmanian Electoral Commission (TEC) developed a computer system (known as Computer Count) to manage the ten most complex councillor/alderman elections.

Ballot papers for these elections were separated at the manual counting centres and then transferred to the University of Tasmania's computer laboratories at Sandy Bay and Newnham where they underwent "double blind" data entry. At the conclusion of this "double blind" data entry Computer Count calculated the result of the elections.

The City of Hobart fully supports the use of a computer system to manage the more complex councillor/aldermen elections but requests that a review be undertaken to, in the future, ensure that there is greater transparency when releasing count information incrementally as well as investigate whether results can be made available sooner.

4) **Compulsory voting at the ballot box**

The City of Hobart has supported the move to compulsory voting by attendance at the ballot box for Local Government elections for some years. It has endeavoured to seek change through regular motions to the Local Government Association of Tasmania General meetings but has not obtained the necessary support for an industry based approach to this reform.

The Council's view is that the underlying principles that support compulsory voting include:

- Increasing participation in local democracy
- Engaging the full electorate
- Building the relevance of Local Government
- Providing consistency across all levels of government