

Hon. S.N. Dawson, MLC  
Minister for Environment; Disability Services;  
Electoral Affairs  
12<sup>th</sup> Floor, Dumas House  
2 Havelock Street  
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Minister

## **Council Election Feedback**

I am writing as Chairman of the Regional Capitals Alliance of Western Australia (RCAWA); an alliance comprising of 10 Regional Cities and Shires and representing half of the regional population of WA. RCAWA is a peak body, advocating for strategic planning for growth and investment in regional capitals. Each of the capitals are considered to have high capability and business prospects, positioning them as ideal locations in which to focus the attention of the government and industry to grow both the population base and economy of the state.

On behalf of the RCAWA, I would like to provide some feedback regarding the local government elections held in October last year.

Whilst acknowledging that the election process generally ran smoothly, the Alliance members feel that there could be improvements or options available which would improve the process further.

Firstly, the change in Australia Post delivery systems delayed the arrival of some of the voting packages and some candidates did not attend the briefing session and hence distributed non-compliant electoral material that should have been removed.

One suggested solution is that capable local governments, such as those in the Alliance, be able to organise the distribution of voting packages, allowing for quality control, timeliness and delivery cost competition. Another option put forward is the option of electronic voting, and Alliance members would like to know if the Commission is investigating this possibility.

Secondly, given the costs incurred by Capitals for engaging the Electoral Commission services, the local governments are concerned about the level of work they were still required to do. This was expressed in the feedback from councils who advised their front counter and governance staff still needed to contribute significant hours in the lead up to, and after, the elections. Other feedback suggested that one Electoral Commission's appointed Returning Officer had a poor understanding of the process and the local government did not receive value for money as they ended up leading the process and yet had to pay for these services.

The suggested solution is that local governments be given the option to conduct the postal ballots and appoint their own Returning Officer. This would save councils significant amounts of money, usually paid to the Electoral Commission for these services and would allow a better level of quality control across the total process. Local Councils have a good track record of running in-person elections and feel that they could achieve similar results with postal delivery.

The Alliance would like the opportunity to meet with the Minister's Office to discuss their position and a possible way forward for the local governments involved.

Yours faithfully

Dennis Wellington  
Chair RCAWA

10 March 2020