

JE:JB

28 February 2025

Attn: Council Governance Team
Office of Local Government
Email: olg@olg.nsw.gov.au

To whom it may concern,

Model Meeting Code amendments

On behalf of Edward River Council elected body, Edward River Council would like to take the opportunity to provide feedback from our elected representatives in relation to the proposed reforms to the Model Code of Meeting Practice.

Councillor Introduction

As elected representatives from rural communities, we put our hands up to serve not for financial gain, but to give back and help ensure our community thrives and grows. We are deeply concerned that many of the proposed amendments could have unintended consequences, particularly in reducing the number of candidates who are willing to run for these roles in the future—especially if simply nominating guarantees election. When a community loses trust in its Councillors, it can lead to dysfunction. As a Council, we cannot support amendments that would discourage community members from standing for election.

Pre-Meeting Briefing Sessions

Council meetings and the topics they cover are vastly different from the community meetings Councillors may have previously been involved in. The business papers presented are complex, and often cover areas that not all Councillors are familiar with. A briefing session allows Councillors to ask questions and ensure they have a proper understanding of the issues, in a relaxed and supportive environment. This ensures that they can make well-informed decisions, and that staff have an opportunity to provide any necessary clarifications. Our community expects its leaders to make informed decisions, which is best achieved through these briefing sessions before Council meetings. We note the critical importance that planning discussions are not for closed doors.



Attendance by Audio-Visual Link

Restricting the ability of Councillors to participate remotely in meetings will disadvantage those with work or caregiving commitments, potentially discouraging them from running for office. Similarly, denying staff the option to attend meetings remotely as technical experts on specific matters could slow down decision-making and become inefficient, particularly for Councils with hybrid employment arrangements. These arrangements are common in regional and rural areas, as they help attract quality staff.

Our Council area is over 9,000km² and can take hours to drive across the Council area. So for a Councillor who represents a rural area, they may spend more time driving than completing Council business.

Deletion of Clause 3.12 – Notices of Motion

The current clause ensures that reports are prepared in advance, allowing Councillors to make informed decisions on proposed motions, which include legal and financial implications. The current clause ensures information is brought forward to meeting and meaningful debate rather than wasting time on motions that would need further information before Council had sufficient information to make a decision.

Council meetings already have multiple measures in place to ensure transparency with agendas made public, the community is invited to attend, and meetings are livestreamed. Communities elect their Councillors to represent them, and we must not introduce procedures that could dissuade community members from putting themselves forward. When communities have a real choice, they also have faith in their elected representatives.

Ultimately, is there a need for one set of rules across the entire state?

Yours faithfully,

