



MEDIA RELEASE

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CHANGES MAKE COUNCIL ELECTIONS FAIRER

The outcome of council elections will be fairer and the need to hold costly by-elections removed under new regulations to be introduced by the NSW Government.

Minister for Local Government Gabrielle Upton yesterday tabled the Government's response to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters which would align practices at council elections with State elections.

Ms Upton said the Government accepted all 10 recommendations in the committee's report which would increase transparency and accuracy of council elections and improve public confidence in the system.

She said changes to the way candidate preferences are distributed will ensure the outcome of a local government election is transparent, fair and accurate.

"When a candidate reaches the quota and is elected, their surplus votes are transferred to other candidates according to the numbered preferences on a ballot paper," Ms Upton said.

"Currently these surplus votes are distributed based on a random sample which could potentially introduce an element of luck into the outcome of elections.

"Under the changes, random samples will no longer be used. Instead a new fractional transfer system called the 'weighted inclusive Gregory method' will be adopted to ensure that all votes are counted which will improve the fairness and accuracy of the election outcome."

The changes will also allow the implementation of reforms to give councils the option of filling a councillor vacancy without holding a costly by-election.

"Currently if a councillor resigns within 18 months of being elected, a by-election must be held to fill the vacancy," Ms Upton said.

"The local community bears the cost and residents have to put up with the inconvenience of having to vote again just to replace one councillor.

"Under these changes, by-elections will no longer need to be held and the vacancy can be filled by a vote countback process where the next candidate in line will be elected."

The changes will be introduced for the next local government elections in 2020.

“Councillors have a wide range of responsibilities and make important decisions that affect the lives of local residents.

“The community must have faith in the electoral system and these changes will improve council elections to the benefit of both candidates and voters,” Ms Upton said.

MEDIA:

Alan Gale 0418 892 778