

Model Meeting Code Amendments

TO: Office of Local Government

Submission by Dianne McNab, Ratepayer to Bathurst Regional Council, Bathurst NSW 2795

My submission relates most importantly to Section 3 *“Before the Meeting”*, Subsection *“Availability of the agenda and business papers to the public”*.

I note that the new clause 3.20 requires *“copies of the agenda and the associated business papersto be published on the council’s website, and must be made available to the public for inspection, or for taking away by any person free of charge”*

The General Manager (Bathurst Regional Council) in his Report to the Ordinary Council Meeting on 19 February 2025 suggested that the Council *“support the alteration of proposed Clause 3.23 by removing the requirement to produce hard copy agendas for the public.”*

In my speech to the Public Forum of Council on that date, I took issue with this suggestion.

I advised the Council that this *“would be a backward step – in the interests of transparency and good communication”*.

I reminded the Council that many people *“do not have access to computers”* and, even if they do, find it difficult to *“navigate backwards and forwards from Reports to Attachments”* such as in this Report *“which had several Attachments to refer to in order to understand the changes proposed.”*

I reminded the Councillors that people with sight issues *“such as Glaucoma, Macular Degeneration and low vision need access to hard copy papers to have any change to keep informed”*.

I also made the point that the majority of people *“only have access to the internet through a Mobile Phone”* and they would have no chance of being able to read and navigate through Business Papers.

The General Manager, in his Report, stated that *“publication of the business paper on its website is a significantly more efficient method of distributing”* the business paper.

BUT, in the interests of transparency and proper communication, I believe the option should be retained for business papers in hard copy to be provided for members of the public who require it in order to be informed about the matters being considered by the Councillors who they elected to represent them.

I also drew the Councillors attention to the Office of Local Government's brochure which indicates that the aim of the new Model Code includes "PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY, INTEGRITY AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION". I indicated that removing the option for hard copy Business Papers for the public would be the opposite of that stated intention.

To their credit, the Councillors took on board my concerns and passed a Motion removing from their Submission the suggestion that hard copies of the Business Papers would be unavailable to members of the public.

My Submission is that the Model Code of Meeting Practice require Councils to continue to make available hard copy Business Papers to members of the public who wish to obtain them.

This will promote Transparency, Integrity and Public Participation in Councils' activities, which is the cornerstone of good Democracy.

Thank you for reading my Submission.



Ratepayer for 40 years.

Bathurst Regional Council area.