


27/02/2025



To whom it may concern,

Upon announcement of candidates for the last Council elections in our area, voters were encouraged by the number of candidates from which to choose. I believe introducing additional formality to council meetings which are already distinctly formal and respectful, as well as somewhat intimidating due to the live streaming requirement, will be discouraging to future candidates. Being asked to stand for the mayor or when addressing the meeting I believe will add unnecessary formality that will discourage meaningful debate and sharing of opinions. Community members may perceive these actions as opportunities for grandstanding and ceremony rather than having meaningful debate. In rural areas, where the pool of potential candidates is already limited, we must avoid introducing further intimidating procedures.

With regards to the pre-meeting briefing session, they are an integral part of ensuring all Councillors have a good understanding of the topic. 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.

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 hybrid employment arrangements are common in regional and rural areas, as they help attract quality staff.

The current clause 3.12 ensures that reports are prepared in advance, allowing Councillors to make informed decisions on proposed Councillor requested motions, which include legal and financial implications. The current clause ensures relevant information is brought to Council meeting and there is meaningful debate rather than wasting time on motions that would need further information before Council could make an informed 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.



Edward River Council