

REVIEW

OF THE

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

CONDUCTED IN MAY 2000

Prodirections Pty Ltd

February 2001

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS	i
1 INTRODUCTION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE	1
2 METHODOLOGY	3
2.1 Process	3
2.2 Discussion Groups	3
2.3 Written Submissions.....	5
2.4 Analysis.....	5
2.5 Reporting.....	5
3 ISSUES OF CONTEXT.....	6
4 MAJOR FINDINGS - ADMINISTRATIVE & TECHNICAL MATTERS.....	8
4.1 Preamble.....	8
4.2 Roll Preparation.....	8
4.3 Nomination Process	11
4.4 Election Campaigning	15
4.5 Issue and Return of Postal Ballot Packs	16
4.6 Conduct of the Count	18
4.7 Post–Election Matters	21
4.8 Election Support Matters	22
5 MAJOR FINDINGS – OTHER MATTERS.....	25
5.1 Proportional Representation.....	26
5.2 Postal Voting	27
5.3 The Voting Franchise	28
5.4 Timing of the Election.....	28
5.5 Supplementary Elections.....	29
5.6 Primary and Ordinary Returns.....	29
5.7 City of Adelaide	30

6	PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE FROM INDIVIDUALS.....	31
7	DISCUSSION SESSIONS – SUMMARY OF COMMENTS NOT INCLUDED IN FINDINGS.....	34
	ATTACHMENTS.....	37
	Attachment A1 – Project Brief	38
	Attachment A2 – Discussion Group Details.....	44
	Attachment A3 – Summary of Written Submissions.....	45
	Attachment B1 – Briefing Note - Officers.....	58
	Attachment B2 – Briefing Note - Candidates.....	61
	Attachment B3 – Notes for Discussion Groups	64
	Attachment B4 – Interview Guide - Officers.....	69
	Attachment B5 – Interview Guide - Candidates.....	74
	Attachment B6 – List of Abbreviations.....	78

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

BACKGROUND

The May 2000 local government election in South Australia was the first to be conducted under the Local Government (Elections) Act 1999, which introduced a number of significant changes, for example to voter entitlements, the method of voting and the management of the electoral process.

Notwithstanding these major changes introduced and tested for the first time for the May 2000 election, the election process was successfully managed overall, with a significant increase in voter turnout (compared with previous elections) and a very low rate of formal complaint.

The Minister for Local Government and the President of the Local Government Association decided that a review of the impact of the new provisions on candidates and staff involved in the election process was desirable. The review was commissioned by a Steering Committee comprised of representatives of the Local Government Association, the Office of Local Government and the State Electoral Commissioner. The review was required to focus on the technical and administrative aspects of the conduct of the election although comments on other matters were to be recorded.

In particular, it should be noted that the review was deliberately restricted to canvassing the views of candidates who stood for election and the officers who managed the administration of the electoral process. The review did not include any active examination of the experience or views of electors, the general population or organisations and groups with an interest in local government electoral matters.

METHODOLOGY

Twenty-seven discussion groups were conducted across the State between November 2000 and January 2001. Discussion groups were organised with randomly selected candidates at the May 2000 election (successful and unsuccessful). Separate discussion groups were conducted with council officers and other officials involved in the conduct of the elections. Each group was asked to comment on a series of questions, which had been developed with the Steering Committee, about the administrative conduct of the election. In almost all groups participants also chose to comment on other matters which were recorded and reported separately.

The review also included the collation of comments from written submissions by councils, correspondence with the Electoral Commissioner and other written material provided by councils and others.

Attendance at discussion groups was less than had been projected due to the time of year and several other factors. However, regardless of this and some other constraints, the consulting team believes that the major findings were so consistent across most groups that they constitute a reasonably representative set of views from the target groups on the conduct of the elections.

MAJOR FINDINGS – ADMINISTRATIVE AND TECHNICAL ASPECTS

Roll Preparation

1. There was widespread consensus from all officers groups that the preparation of the Voters Roll to meet the new requirements of the Act was the single most problematic issue for councils in preparation for the May 2000 election especially in relation to the treatment of duplicates and the inclusion of automatic entitlements.
2. The automatic entitlement for groups, corporate bodies and sole occupiers of non-residential property created enormous problems especially for larger councils (metropolitan and provincial cities). There was almost universal agreement that eligible corporate bodies, groups and sole occupiers of non residential property should be required to register to vote and to nominate a natural person to exercise that vote prior to the close of the roll.
3. The majority opinion was that the preparation of the roll had a significant to extreme impact on council resources with many (but not all) believing that similar impacts would occur in future elections.
4. In relation to the resolution of duplicates a post-election initiative of the SEO to provide unique elector numbers was welcomed but there was a significant majority view that an “industry wide” approach should be taken to developing standards and software solutions that would facilitate roll preparation prior to the next election. This would require coordinated effort between the SEO, councils and software vendors.
5. For the reasons outlined above a small number of participants believed that the responsibility for the preparation of the Voters Roll should be transferred to the SEO.

Nomination Process

6. The majority of officers and candidates believed that the time period allowed for candidate nominations could be reduced from twenty one to fourteen days. This would allow additional time to be allocated in the election timetable for voting pack preparation.
7. Candidates had no difficulty obtaining information about the nomination process and no difficulty in the completion of legal forms.

Candidates Profile

8. All candidates and officer groups agreed that the candidates profile was the “single most important piece of literature” impinging on the electoral prospects of the candidate.
9. A majority of officers and candidates expressed satisfaction with the 150 word count limit for the candidates profile, but others (mostly candidates) proposed an increase to 200 or 250 words. Some suggested that mayoral candidates should have a larger word limit than councillor candidates.
10. There was a diversity of opinion on the content restrictions imposed on candidates profiles (ie the prohibition on commenting on specific decisions or actions of the council). A significant proportion of candidates and some officers believe that the current restrictions unfairly inhibit the candidates ability to present their “platform” to the electors and believe that the restrictions should be relaxed or completely abolished. However, most persons acknowledge the need for some form of control on contents.
11. Candidates and officers agree that the development of a proforma to assist candidates with the preparation of an acceptable candidates profile would be desirable.
12. Some participants stated that problems with content restrictions would be alleviated if candidates could place some campaign material in the postal ballot pack and/or through council sponsored advertising in the local media.
13. All agree with the removal of the guideline for photographs, if supplied for the candidates profile, to be black and white – noting that it is not a requirement that a photograph be included.

Nomination Process – Other Issues

14. The vast majority of participants supported the public display of nominations with many commenting that public display helped avoid “unnecessary contests”.
15. There was a general consensus that the timing of the draw for position on ballot papers should be deferred until at least one hour after the close of nominations.

Election Campaigning

16. Most candidates believed that the rules and procedures for election campaigning were fair and reasonable although issues were raised about elections signs (council policy), capacity to respond to complaints during the election period and bulk mailout of campaign material.

Postal Ballot Packs

17. There was general consensus that a minimum of fourteen days is an adequate period of time for the mailout and return of postal ballot packs, although the impact of longer mail delivery times in some country areas should be recognised.
18. A number of individual issues or problems reported by electors with the postal ballot packs were identified but there were no widespread problems that were of a serious nature. Issues reported in several groups included electors not understanding why they had more than one entitlement and candidates concerned about timing of delivery so they could plan campaigning.
19. The rate of rejection of returned postal voting packs was not “significant” in the opinion of most officers with some (who had experienced postal voting before) reported much lower rejection rates than the previous election.
20. The majority of candidates and officers believed facilities for the hand delivery of votes by electors should be retained, even though the rate of usage was not high in some councils.
21. There was general satisfaction with the contents of the postal voting pack with the most frequently cited improvement being different coloured ballot papers for different wards.

Conduct of the Count

22. Most participants believed that the close of voting at 12 noon on the Tuesday after a long weekend was “a good idea” with a small number suggesting that close of voting should be at 5 pm.
23. It was generally agreed that an estimated count starting time should be nominated and advised to candidates and scrutineers taking into account the practical realities of preparing for the count in each council.
24. Candidates are generally unhappy with the time taken to obtain the results of the count, especially where the result was not known for more than 24 hours. Generally speaking, candidates did not have a good understanding of the reasons for longer processing and counting times compared with previous voting systems.
25. There was general consensus that the first preference count should be done locally compared with the option of centralised computer counting in Adelaide. However there was an almost universal view that it would be preferable for computer counting to be made available locally or at least at regional centres.

Post Election Matters

26. There was general dissatisfaction with the procedures and requirements surrounding the campaign donations returns by both officers and candidates with a range of views on improvements including abolition for all, abolition for unsuccessful candidates, clarification of dates etc. Most agreed that the six-week time for return could be reduced and a number proposed that the SEO should be responsible for collection of returns.

Election Support Matters

27. In general, councils experienced an excellent relationship with the Electoral Commissioner and the SEO and any problems were relatively minor in the context of the significant change to the electoral system.
28. The general view of officers was that the training and supporting documentation provided by the SEO was excellent and the documentation provided for candidates was also very good, with some suggestions that the *Candidates Handbook* could be simplified.
29. There was a general view that the Candidates briefing sessions were also very good but should be held as early as possible in the nomination process.

MAJOR FINDINGS – OTHER MATTERS

A number of issues were raised frequently in discussion groups and written submissions which were clearly outside of the technical and administrative aspects of the election. As required by the terms of reference for the review these matters were to be reported separately.

Proportional Representation

30. There was a fairly widespread (but not universal) objection to the mandatory use of proportional representation in local government elections, especially from candidates. However, this needs to be qualified as there appears to be a significant level of misunderstanding or lack of knowledge of the system and, in particular, its application to multi member electorates.

Postal Voting

31. There is majority support for the continuation of mandatory postal voting for normal periodic elections although there is a significant minority (of mainly candidates) who oppose postal voting “in principle” or believe it should be left to the decision of each council.

The Franchise

32. A small number of participants/contributors proposed that the property franchise should be removed from local government elections.
33. Similarly a small number believed that voting in local government elections should be compulsory.

Timing of the Elections

34. The timing of local government elections in May is generally not supported for a range of different reasons, but particularly based on consideration of budget matters by the “old” and the “newly elected” councils. While there were different views about alternate times, a small majority supported the holding of the election earlier in the calendar year, say, March.

Supplementary Elections

35. Councils which had experienced casual vacancies raised concern about the cost and inconvenience of conducting supplementary elections by way of postal ballot – it was suggested that councils with wards should not be required to conduct a supplementary election for a single casual vacancy (similar to the exemption for area councillors); it was also suggested that postal voting should not be mandatory for the conduct of a supplementary election.

Primary and Ordinary Return

36. For officers and successful candidates there was widespread concern about the scope, design and lodgement procedures for the Primary and Ordinary Return required of elected members pursuant to the Local Government Act 1999, and there was a general view that they should be thoroughly reviewed and modified.

City of Adelaide

37. The City of Adelaide Act 1998 has a number of provisions which are different to the requirements of the Local Government (Elections) Act 1999 applying to all other councils. These differences include the single voting entitlement, the provision for public inspection of the roll prior to closure and the timing of the roll closure. The City recommends that the key election timetable dates be aligned in both Acts and that other differences be promoted in generic advertising campaigns associated with local government elections.
38. The provision for campaign donation returns should be amended to be consistent with the Local Government (Elections) Act 1999.

SPECIFIC PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE AND OTHER COMMENTS

Contributors to the review (members of discussion groups and written submissions) made many comments, observations and suggestions for change which are not recorded in major findings. However, significant comments, observations and suggestions by one or more individual contributors are briefly noted in the final sections of the report, but are not elaborated upon because the issue raised was not canvassed extensively. In these sections, in particular, there may be assertions that are factually incorrect but are, nonetheless recorded as they were perceptions by one or more of the contributors. On the other hand, it is probable that many of the observations and suggestions, even though they were only made by one or more individuals, may warrant further research and consideration.

ATTACHMENTS

A detailed set of Attachments is provided as background material to the conduct of the review. Attachments with the prefix (A) contain the project brief, the listing of discussion groups and the summary of written submissions. Attachments with the prefix (B) contain the tools used by the consulting team in the conduct of the discussion groups and a list of abbreviations.

1 INTRODUCTION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

In May 2000 local government elections were held in South Australia for the first time subject to the provisions of the Local Government (Elections) Act 1999. The Act introduced a number of reforms including certain automatic voting entitlements, the mandatory use of postal voting, the mandatory use of Proportional Representation (PR) as the voting method and the automatic appointment of the State Electoral Commissioner as Returning Officer for all council elections.

These and other new requirements of the Local Government (Elections) Act 1999 represented a significant change in electoral arrangements for candidates for election (especially those who had been candidates in previous elections), for council officers and for the Electoral Commissioner and the staff of his office.

The Minister for Local Government and the President of the Local Government Association decided that an independent review of the conduct of the elections should be undertaken to study the impact of the changes and to report on the experience of candidates and officers involved in the process. In particular, it should be noted that the review was deliberately restricted to canvassing the views of candidates who stood for election and the officers who managed the administration of the electoral process. The review did not include any active examination of the experience or views of electors, the general population or organisations and groups with an interest in local government electoral matters, unless such views were relayed by candidates or officers or in written correspondence to the Electoral Commissioner or the Minister.

A Steering Committee was established to manage the conduct of the review. Members of the Committee were Ms Linda Graham (Office of Local Government), Mr Brian Clancey (Local Government Association of SA) and Mr Steve Tully (State Electoral Commissioner). Mr Joe Haslam (Office of Local Government) provided executive support to the committee. The project was jointly funded by the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Office of Local Government.

The Steering Committee prepared detailed terms of reference for the review (Refer Attachment A1) and ultimately appointed Prodirections Pty Ltd to conduct the review in four stages in late 2000 and early 2001. A team of three consultants was responsible for the review – Michael Barry (Principal), Bill Furse and Janet Binder.

Key requirements of the terms of reference were:

- The review was to focus primarily on the administrative and technical aspects of the election process;
- The review should seek the views of a broad range of successful and unsuccessful candidates for the election and a broad range of officers who had some responsibility in the conduct of the election;

- The review should seek to summarise and record the views, comments and suggestions of participants, and should not attempt detailed analysis or the making of recommendations.

Therefore, it is important for readers of this report to understand that some of the comments recorded may reflect the perceptions of one or more individuals and are not necessarily based on fact. For this reason, a disclaimer to this effect is printed on the pages in Sections 6 and 7 of the report. However, the consulting team believes that it is important for the Steering Committee to consider those perceptions that were not necessarily based on fact or understanding of the topic, especially where those perceptions were widely held.

Finally, the major findings and other comments contained in this report need to be placed in their proper context. Notwithstanding the dramatic changes introduced under the Local Government (Elections) Act 1999, and tested for the first time for the May 2000 election, the overwhelming evidence is that the election process was successfully managed overall, with a significant increase in voter turnout (compared with previous elections) and a very low rate of formal complaint.

The consultants wish to place on record their appreciation for the contributions of those who attended the discussion groups, or conveyed their views either in writing or by telephone and for the guidance and other inputs provided by the Steering Committee.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Process

The approach taken to the project followed the Project Outline as set out in the Project Brief dated 11 September 2000 and the consultants' proposal dated 3 October 2000, and was discussed with the project steering committee on 24 October 2000.

Both the steering committee and the consulting team recognised the project's tight timetable. In order to ensure that the project progressed according to this timetable all members of the consulting team were involved in all stages of the project.

The consulting team met regularly with the steering committee and provided progress reports on the project's operation and emerging themes, and sought input on any specific issues that may have been raised.

The Electoral Commissioner made available all the relevant materials associated with the conduct of the election including handbooks, guidelines and circulars. In addition, he supplied a copy of his report to the Minister on the conduct of the election which included detailed statistical analysis of voter turnout and results.

2.2 Discussion Groups

The main information gathering process for the project was via discussion groups held at various locations across the State.

In total, 27 discussion groups were held. Fourteen groups comprised officers who were involved in the conduct of the May 2000 election while 13 comprised candidates who stood for election. Groups were conducted in both metropolitan and country areas (9 metropolitan and 18 country). Attachment A2 sets out the date, location, composition and attendance numbers for each of the discussion groups.

In general the groups were conducted in a council office meeting room or a meeting room in Local Government House. Generally the officers groups were held in the afternoon and candidates groups in the evening.

The project timetable scheduled all groups for completion by the end of 2000. However due to factors outside of the project's control (eg participant unavailability due to farming responsibilities etc.), two group sessions scheduled for Wudinna and Port Augusta in December 2000 were cancelled and replacement sessions were held in Whyalla in late January 2001.

The officers groups comprised the Deputy Returning Officers (DRO) or Election Officers, council Chief Executive Officers¹ or other appropriate staff and representatives of the State Electoral Office (SEO) or Australian Electoral Commission (AEC). Councils were invited, and in many cases chose, to have more than one person attend the officers groups.

Candidates groups comprised both successful and unsuccessful candidates at the May 2000 election. One successful candidate and one unsuccessful candidate were invited from each council.

In total, across all groups, 32 successful and 31 unsuccessful candidates participated in the discussion groups.

The invited candidates were selected at random from a list of candidates who stood at the May 2000 election. Where a selected candidate declined the invitation, or was unable to attend, a discussion group, he/she was replaced by a second (or third if necessary) random selection. Not all invited candidates actually attended the discussion group and where this occurred most forwarded late apologies. In these cases it was not possible to select another participant as replacement. In some cases the number of participants in the groups was lower than originally intended because of this.

One separate group of council rate administrators was conducted and comprised nominees of the South Australian Institute of Rate Administrators (SAIRA).

Candidates, who were invited but advised that they were unable to attend a discussion group, were asked to provide written comment if they wished. Some also chose to express their views by telephone.

Participants in all groups were provided two pieces of background information. A briefing note was sent to all participants prior to their attendance at the group while a second 'Notes for Discussion Groups' paper was distributed at the discussion group. Different versions of the briefing note were used for the officers and candidates groups. A copy of the officers briefing note is at Attachment B1, the candidates briefing note at Attachment B2 and the Notes for Discussion Groups at Attachment B3.

Each group was conducted as a structured discussion with the consultants guiding the participants according to an Interview Guide. Different Interview Guides were used for the officers and candidates groups. The Interview Guides received input from, and were approved by, the steering committee prior to the commencement of the discussion groups. A copy of the Interview Guide for the officers groups is at Attachment B4 and for the candidates groups at Attachment B5.

¹ In some councils (especially country councils), the CEO or other senior council officer was also appointed as the DRO

Although each discussion was facilitated in a structured manner, participants were encouraged to raise any issue that they wished. This occurred either as each discussion progressed or at the end of the structured questions. The consultants noted all relevant views presented.

There were two consultants for each of the country groups and some of the metropolitan groups to ensure that the flow of the discussion group was maintained at the same time that the various views were being noted. The other metropolitan officers groups were facilitated by one consultant only.

2.3 Written Submissions

Written submissions relating to the conduct of the May 2000 election were received by the Office of Local Government prior to and during the course of the elections review project. These written submissions along with the other written material received (as described in Attachment A3 of this report), were provided to the consultants.

2.4 Analysis

All information recorded at the discussion groups, along with information derived from written submissions, was collated in detailed summary sheets according to major project issues.

Common or recurring themes constituted major findings of the review and are documented in Sections 4 and 5 of this report. The contents of the written submissions are incorporated in these Major Findings.

A summary of individual proposals for change and other comments, either through the discussion groups or in the written submissions, is provided in Sections 6 and 7 of this report.

2.5 Reporting

This report plus attachments constitutes the final project report.

During the course of the project individual written progress reports and verbal updates were provided to the steering committee.

At the conclusion of the project, and on the presentation of the draft final report, the consultants provided a project debriefing for the steering committee.

3 ISSUES OF CONTEXT

In considering the major themes arising from this project it is important to understand the context within which the project was conducted and in particular under which the information was gathered. This section documents some of these operational constraints which should be borne in mind.

However, notwithstanding these constraints, the consulting team believes that the findings, which follow, constitute a reasonably comprehensive set of views from the target groups on the conduct of the May 2000 election.

This review was conducted predominantly during November and December 2000, some six months after the May 2000 election. In some cases councils were not able to send the appropriate officer to attend the discussion group because this person was no longer employed by council. In other groups participants (both officers and candidates) reported difficulties in remembering detail about the conduct of the election in May. The combination of these two effects, arising from the long lag between the election and the review, may have resulted in some loss in the information gathered through the discussion groups.

As mentioned earlier in this report, this project was undertaken to a fairly tight timetable which may have had an impact on officers and candidates participation in the discussion groups for the following reasons:

- the consultants were only able to give participants fairly short notice of the date and time of their discussion group;
- there was little opportunity to re-schedule to take account of local conditions. In particular in farming areas the timing of the groups coincided with harvest and many candidates who are farmers by occupation indicated that they were unable to attend for this reason. It should be noted, on this point, that the consultants, with the concurrence of the steering committee, chose to reschedule one officers and one candidates group to late January 2001 in an endeavour to accommodate this problem;
- the scheduling of the groups was constrained by the Christmas/New Year period.

It is important to note here however that while the project's tight time frame may have impacted on some participants, there were many attending the groups who had prepared notes or brought along reference material to assist. In some cases it was apparent that successful candidates had sought the views of council staff and / or other elected members prior to the session. The level of preparation of these participants greatly assisted the flow of the discussions and can be attributed in part to the usefulness of the briefing notes that were sent prior to each participant's attendance.

The timing of the discussion groups also coincided with some very hot weather throughout South Australia and it is possible that the heat may have,

at the last minute, discouraged some participants from attending discussion groups. Furthermore, although every attempt was made to schedule sessions in locations to promote maximum access, in some country areas participants still encountered significant travelling time.

In the candidates groups only one successful and one unsuccessful candidate was randomly selected to attend. Whilst this process served to eliminate bias in the selection of participants it also meant that a person who may hold particularly strong views on some issue or who may have had something very significant to contribute to the review may not have been selected to attend.

In order to go part way to addressing this issue, the LGA nominated some candidates who were known to that organisation as having strong views about some aspect of the conduct of the May 2000 election. These LGA nominated candidates were invited to participate in addition to the randomly selected candidates.

The outcome of the discussion groups was not intended to be a consensus of views among participants. The views presented were therefore individual views.

Although the discussion groups followed a structured interview guide, later groups benefited from the fact that some points had been raised in earlier groups. In particular in the later groups the consultants were able to 'tease out' more detail on a particular point, which may have been raised in an earlier group, if this was considered useful.

4 MAJOR FINDINGS - ADMINISTRATIVE & TECHNICAL MATTERS

4.1 Preamble

The major findings of the Review of the May 2000 Local Government Elections are based on the consultants' analysis of the outcomes of discussion groups with candidates and officers, formal written submissions to the Office of Local Government and other written material provided during the course of the review.

The Findings are set out in two parts:

(Section 4) The Administrative and Technical Matters in relation to the conduct of the election which was the primary term of reference for the consulting team in the conduct of the review.

(Section 5) Other Matters – this section contains a summary of views and opinions on matters related to the electoral process (directly or indirectly), beyond the administrative and technical aspects of the election and the electoral process.

The Findings are inevitably vulnerable to some subjective interpretation by the consulting team but considerable effort has been taken to ensure that the broad range of views has been acknowledged. Therefore, the findings will record the degree of consensus found and any marked differences between classes of councils, candidates and officers, wherever that was discernible.

4.2 Roll Preparation

By way of introduction, two comments need to be made in relation to the findings on this topic. First, while there was occasional reference to this topic in candidates groups, the major comments came from officers' groups and written submissions. Second, in the view of the consultants, **the findings on this topic constitute by far the strongest and most widespread consensus on problems for councils with the conduct of the May 2000 election.**

The key issues surrounding the preparation of the roll were summarised as follows:

4.2.1 Merging of the House of Assembly Roll and the 'Supplementary Roll'

All councils reported significant problems merging the House of Assembly Roll provided by the SEO and the council records necessary to produce the Voters Roll to comply with Local Government (Elections) Act 1999. The basis of the problem appears to be that the data source for council records is property based information requiring full 'legal names and addresses' and the House of Assembly Roll is based on natural persons and preferred names.

The problem of matching records and merging the rolls was reported as problematic by all councils but was acute to critical in large metropolitan councils. Many councils (mostly larger metropolitan) expressed the opinion that this problem when combined with automatic entitlements (see below) could increase the risk of inaccurate issuing of ballot packs at the last election. Councils agreed that the problem would be significantly alleviated by the recent initiative of the SEO to provide a 'unique elector number identifier' but that there were significant resource and technology implications (especially for larger councils) in seeking modifications to computer databases to accommodate the identifier and the matching function.

Majority Opinion

There should be an 'industry wide' approach to negotiation between the SEO, councils and local government software vendors to develop acceptable standards and software solutions to facilitating the merging of rolls prior to the next election. This approach could build on the satisfactory and cost effective integration of the 'unique identifier' into council systems and the resolution of a number of practical and procedural issues between the SEO and councils e.g. address and name change procedures, voters with suppressed addresses etc.

Some councils believe that the responsibility for the preparation of the local government Voters Roll should be transferred to the Electoral Commissioner on the basis that this would be more efficient and effective and a consistent standard would be applied. This view was more often expressed by metropolitan councils. Other councils believe that such a transfer of responsibility would not be desirable because the SEO would still rely on councils to supply data in an appropriate form for 'non Assembly' entities. In addition, country councils (in particular) believe 'local knowledge' is vital in the accurate preparation of the merged roll.

4.2.2 Automatic Entitlements – Corporate Bodies and Groups

The Local Government (Elections) Act 1999 created an automatic entitlement to vote for certain classes of groups and corporate bodies, whereas, under the former Act (Local Government Act 1934) such entities were required to nominate a natural person to exercise its vote, prior to the closure of the roll. Even allowing for transitional problems in implementing the *automatic* entitlement for these entities, a significant majority of councils expressed concern about the practical application of this reform. This was especially the case in larger councils (both metropolitan and rural cities) where intimate 'local knowledge' could not assist with clarification of single or multiple entitlements.

Furthermore, and perhaps of more serious concern from a **potential** electoral integrity point of view, electoral staff have no means of identifying that any returned ballot papers have been completed by the 'correct' person on behalf of the entity, other than relying on the declaration on the envelope.

Finally, most if not all councils reported a very poor return rate for voting by groups and corporate bodies and believe that the significant time and effort associated with the automatic entitlement (let alone questions of inaccuracy) are not justified.

Majority Opinion

Councils believe that Groups and Corporate bodies entitled to vote at council elections should be required to register to vote and nominate a natural person to exercise that vote prior to the close of the roll.

Minority Opinion

A very small number of councils (generally rural councils with small towns) believe that the automatic entitlement is 'manageable' and that some affected electors would resent having to register to vote after having been provided automatic entitlement in May 2000.

4.2.3 Identification of Sole Occupiers of Non Residential Property

The problems associated with identifying sole occupiers of non-residential property were magnified several fold compared with the problems experienced with groups and corporate bodies. Councils indicated that the high turnover in occupiers made it difficult to maintain accurate records for this group of electors even with more comprehensive door knocking. Most councils reported simply advertising or contacting the larger land agents or shopping centre administrators with poor participation rates.

Apart from the City of Adelaide (which conducts a comprehensive door knocking campaign for the Voters Roll and other reasons), only the City of West Torrens attempted a 'comprehensive' district wide campaign to identify these non-residential occupiers. Even after this considerable effort and expense, West Torrens reported very low voter participation by this class of electors. Most councils indicated that comprehensive door knocking is not feasible because of the resources required.

Majority Opinion

Councils believe that sole occupiers of non residential property entitled to vote at council elections should be required to register to vote and nominate a natural person to exercise that vote prior to the close of the roll. Comprehensive door knocking is not feasible.

4.2.4 Impact on Council Resources

All councils reported a serious to extreme impact on council resources arising from roll preparation. Many noted that the impact was more serious because of the coincidence of timing with the new Local Government Act 1999 coming into operation, and preparations for the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax. Typically, larger metropolitan councils employed additional staff for extended periods of time as well as longer hours for existing staff, and many country councils reported working longer hours and postponing other important administrative work eg budget preparation. As stated above councils indicated that extensive door knocking was not feasible. Unless some of the matters identified in the review are addressed, most (larger) councils believe this increased workload will be similar at future elections.

Majority Opinion

The impact of council resource from roll preparation was significant to extreme, with many believing that similar impacts would occur in the future.

Minority Opinion

While the impact on resource for the 2000 election was significant it would be less severe in future elections especially if council maintain their rolls on an ongoing basis.

Other

Some councils commented on the importance of roll maintenance including the statutory expectations but stated that it tended to be left to 'times of necessity'.

4.3 Nomination Process

4.3.1 Time Period Allowed for Nominations

A significant majority of both officers and candidates indicated that the time period allowed for nominations (21 days) was 'more than enough'. A similarly significant majority of both groups believed that a reduction in the period allowed for nominations to 14 days would be desirable. An often repeated comment was (words to the effect of) '*...it does not matter how long you allow – some people will always leave it to the last minute*'.

In addition, a number of officers observed that a reduction in the nomination period would provide more time for other time intensive activities in the election timetable such as preparation of postal voting packs.

Majority Opinion

Both officers and candidates groups believe that a reduction in the period allowed for nominations could be reduced to fourteen days.

Minority Opinion

A reduction in the time allowed may not allow sufficient time for candidates who rely on postal services to receive and lodge nominations in some country areas with extended postal delivery times.

Other

Some officers commented that a reduction in the time period allowed for nominations may allow additional time to be allocated in the election timetable for voting pack preparation.

4.3.2 Candidates Ease of Compliance with Nomination Requirements

Apart from the Candidates Profile (dealt with separately below) both candidates and officers reported that candidates experienced little difficulty obtaining information required to lodge a nomination or complete the legal forms.

Majority Opinion

Candidates had no difficulty obtaining information about lodging a nomination and no difficulty in completing the legal forms.

4.3.3 Candidates Profile – Length, Content, Photographic Requirements

As might be expected there was a considerable range of views on the issues associated with the candidates profile. However, it was a unanimous view, that in a postal voting election the candidates profile was the 'single most important piece of literature' impinging on the electoral prospects of the candidate. Some of the strong and divergent views on the length and content restrictions are best understood in this context.

Word Count Limit

Generally speaking, officers believed that the length limit of 150 words was 'about right' although some expressed frustration about 'counting rules'. However, most believed that this should now be resolved and clear before the next election. The views of candidates was more varied. Many believed 150 words was sufficient, while a significant number of others argued for an increase, generally to 200 words, but in some cases 250 words. A variant on this latter theme was that mayoral candidates should be allowed a greater number of words than councillor candidates.

Majority Opinion

While a majority of officers and many candidates expressed satisfaction with the 150 word limit, many other candidates proposed an extension to the word limit, at least to 200 words.

Minority Opinion

Mayoral candidates should have a larger word limit than councillor candidates.

It should not be compulsory to submit a candidate's profile.

Content Restrictions

The content restrictions placed on the candidates was the most 'controversial' aspect of the nomination process, especially for candidates. However, a number of officers commented that they believed some of the editing was pedantic and confusing for all concerned. There were two distinct schools of thought both in officer groups and candidates, one supporting the current content restrictions, the other proposing that they be abolished altogether or relaxed. However, it should be noted that participants' views sometimes changed when the consultants provided the rationale for content restrictions based on the postal ballot pack being perceived as an "officially sanctioned" set of documents by the elector.

No Majority Opinion

A number of candidates and some officers believe that the current content restrictions unfairly inhibit candidates' ability to present to electors the candidates' 'platform' in relation to council decisions and actions and that the restrictions should be relaxed (majority) or completely abolished (minority). Most persons objecting to the current level of restriction acknowledge the need for some form of control on contents.

Other

If the current level of restriction (or some modified form) is maintained, most candidates and officers agree candidates would benefit from some form of 'proforma' to assist in the completion of an 'acceptable' candidates profile. The proforma could also provide guidance on word counting.

Some candidates and officers commented that concerns with the content of the Candidates Profile could be alleviated if candidates had the opportunity to present their campaign material in the postal ballot packs, or by some other means e.g. timely council sponsored 'advertising' in the local media. In particular some candidates suggested that "how to vote" cards could be included in the postal ballot packs.

Photographs

There is absolute consensus about abolition of the guideline for a black and white photograph to be supplied for the candidates profile, although it may be prudent for information packs for candidates to advise that a black and white photograph may provide a higher quality reproduction for printing purposes.

An additional consideration raised by some candidates was the 'age' of the photograph provided. A small number of candidates alleged that some candidates had provided photographs that were taken when the candidate was at a much younger age and expressed concern about compliance procedures.

Majority Opinion

The guideline for black and white photographs for candidates profiles should be removed.

Other

The age restriction for photographs (i.e. taken within twelve months of the election) should be relaxed to say, 3 years, but that any age restrictions should be monitored/enforced.

4.3.4 Public Display of Nominations / 'Last Minute' Nominations

Generally speaking, the vast majority of officers and candidates believed that the public display of nominations should be continued and that the potential consequences of this (last minute withdrawal and substitution of nominations) was manageable. The reasons advanced in favour of public display included that this was '*...the legitimate theatre of local government*', it obviated the need for 'unnecessary' elections (through allowing candidates to see where vacancies / perceived 'un-winnable' contests existed and changing nomination accordingly), and it was a transparent process. However, in some cases, suggested limitations to the nomination process were proposed. Problems created by last minute nominations are considered to be manageable by officers.

Majority Opinion

That the public display of nominations should continue. Issues arising from the management of last minute nominations can be adequately addressed by a change to the timing of the draw.

Minority Opinions

Candidates should not be able to nominate for more than one concurrent vacancy at one time (e.g. only one ward).

Candidates may not change nomination to another vacancy after withdrawing.

Candidates should only be eligible to nominate in areas (wards) where they reside.

4.3.5 Timing of the Draw for Position on Ballot Papers

Because of the issues arising out of the checking of 'last minute' nominations there was generally wide-spread agreement across both officer and candidate groups that the timing of the draw for positions on the ballot paper should be delayed to a specified time after the close of nominations.

Majority Opinion

The time for the draw of positions on the ballot paper should be deferred until at least one hour after the close of nominations (1:00 pm if the nomination closure time for the May 2000 election is maintained).

4.4 Election Campaigning

This question was primarily presented to the discussion groups for candidates, although some officer groups provided comment on election campaigning issues.

As previously stated, candidates believe that the introduction of universal postal voting has resulted in electors relying heavily on the material contained in postal ballot packs (candidates profiles) for assistance in deciding their voting preference.

Some candidates expressed concern about the capacity of Australia Post to deliver candidates' unaddressed bulk election material in the campaign period.

However, candidates, in general, stated that the rules and procedures for election campaigning were fair and reasonable, with some minority exceptions to this view listed below.

Majority Opinion

The vast majority of candidates believed that the rules and procedures for election campaigning were fair and reasonable.

Minority Opinions

Concern about the application of council policy in relation to election signs.

Concern about procedure for dealing with allegations of breaches of campaign requirements during the election period – capacity to respond to complaints in time.

Australia Post places a limit on the number of (unaddressed) bulk mailouts it will process possibly disadvantaging some candidates seeking to have their own mailout at the time of the ballot package mailout (country candidate comment).

4.5 Issue and Return of Postal Ballot Packs

4.5.1 Timing Allowed for Return of Ballot Materials

The May 2000 election period provided for a minimum period of fourteen days for the posting out of ballot packs and return by electors. It should be noted that many candidates in particular did not know that posting of packs was staggered, but appreciated the need for this when provided with an explanation. The only significant concern about the time allowed related to the extended postal delivery times in some country areas.

Majority Opinion

A minimum of fourteen days is an adequate period of time for the mailout and return of postal packs although the impact of extended postal delivery times in some country areas should be recognised.

4.5.2 Problems / Issues with Postal Voting Packs (Candidates and Electors)

The consulting team observed a marked difference in comments in relation to 'difficulties' reported with postal voting packs between councils using postal voting for the first time and councils which had opted to use postal voting previously. In general, more problems were reported by the former group, and once again in general, problems were more likely to be reported by candidates than officers. Problems² that were regularly reported included the following:

- Candidates concerned about the timing of delivery in order to plan campaign strategy eg despatch of election material, door knocking;
- Electors did not understand why they had to vote for the number of candidates at least equal to the number of vacancies often expressed as '...why do I have to vote for a candidate I do not want?';
- Electors thought voting was compulsory because they automatically received ballot packs;
- Electors had difficulty understanding the instructions on how to complete the voting pack – exacerbated for older people and people from non English speaking backgrounds;
- Electors believing that their vote was not secret because of the declaration slip;

² Common errors in returned postal votes are separately listed below

- Electors not understanding why they were eligible for multiple votes or votes outside their area or ward;
- Electors claiming not to have received ballot packs; claims of mis-delivered packs etc.

Majority Opinion

Although a number of individual issues/problems were reported, there were no widespread expressed problems that were of a 'serious' nature in the opinion of the consultants. However, it is clear that postal voting despatches (including staggered delivery) poses particular problems for candidates' campaigning. Most candidates believe that voters make their voting choice soon after the receipt of the pack.

Minority Opinion

Some candidates expressed very strong negative opinions about a number of aspects of postal voting which went beyond individual problems or issues e.g. potential for fraud etc.

4.5.3 Main Faults on Returned Voting Packs (Officers)

A number of officers (who had experienced postal voting previously) observed that the removal of the requirement for the voter's signature to be witnessed had resulted in a major reduction in the level of invalid voting packs. However, officers reported that the most common reasons for returned postal packs to be rejected from the ballot were:

- Multiple elector votes in the same envelope (eg husband and wife);
- Declaration slip unsigned, removed or placed inside envelope;
- Votes for another council area.

Majority Opinion

The rate of rejection of returned postal voting packs was not 'significant' in the opinion of most officers and had certainly improved (i.e. rejection rate reduced) since the last election.

No Majority Opinion

In relation to the question of whether the rejection rate was likely to reduce over time as people get used to postal voting there was a range of views, with some officers believing the rate was likely to remain at current levels, while others thought it would improve.

4.5.4 Hand Delivery of Votes (Officers)

Officers reported different rates of hand delivery of votes to council offices with many citing the preference of older voters to simulate the 'ballot box' experience, wishing to save the council money and routine for country voters 'coming to town' to conduct a range of business. However, other officers reported a very low rate of hand delivered votes.

Majority Opinion

Regardless of the rate of usage of hand delivered voting at the last election, hand delivered voting facilities should be retained.

4.5.5 Material in the Postal Voting Pack (Officers and Candidates)

There was a general sense of satisfaction with equipment and materials contained in the postal voting packs from officers and candidates but a number of individual suggestions were made:

- The most frequently mentioned improvement was the provision of different coloured or different sized voting papers for different wards;
- A 'warning message' adjacent to the signature box warning that the vote will not be admitted unless the declaration is signed;
- 'Simplified' voting instructions (not specified);
- Including in the voting instructions the 'common mistakes' which invalidate the vote;
- Inclusion of 'how to vote' material and/or candidates election material in the postal ballot pack.

Majority Opinion

There is general satisfaction with the contents of the postal voting pack with the most frequently cited improvement being the provision of different coloured/sized voting papers for each ward.

4.6 Conduct of the Count

4.6.1 Time of Close of Voting (Officers and Candidates)

There were two schools of thought on the timing of the close of counting at 12 noon Tuesday (after the long weekend). The majority view was that this worked well. However there was a significant minority view that a close of voting at 5pm would be preferable for two reasons:

- It would alleviate problems in country areas in mail from post offices not being available by 12 noon;

- It would enable the count to be conducted in two distinct phases with the opening of envelopes (extremely time consuming) to be conducted in the evening and counting to commence next morning.

Majority Opinion

The close of voting at 12noon on the Tuesday after the long weekend was a good idea.

Minority Opinion

Close of voting at the close of business (5pm) would be preferable.

Other

There appears to be a widespread expectation amongst candidates to receive results (progress or final) 'on the day' of the closure of voting. Obviously, if the voting close was later (e.g. close of business) there would be greater pressure on counting staff to produce a 'result' on that day.

In contradiction of the above some (metropolitan) officers' groups recommended that vote counting should start at a pre-defined time later in the afternoon after the 12 noon close.

4.6.2 Timing of the Start of the Count

Most candidates and officers believed that it would be desirable to set a nominated time for the expected start of the count for the convenience of candidates, scrutineers and counting staff, to avoid unnecessary 'waiting around'. Some larger metropolitan council officers believed that it would be desirable to set a 'count start time' later in the afternoon (say 4pm) so that the large number of counting staff required could be most efficiently deployed.

Majority Opinion

An estimated start count time should be nominated and advised to candidates and scrutineers taking into account the practical realities of preparing for the count in each council.

4.6.3 Timing of the Results of the Count

Leaving aside the combined impact of mandatory postal voting and mandatory use of PR (both changes were new to many councils), it is self evident that all participants in the electoral process (especially candidates) are keen to see the results of the election as soon as possible. In this context many candidates were unhappy with the timing of the results of the election where the result was not known for one, two or in some cases three days after the close of voting. Most officers understood the reasons for the delay and several commented on, for example, the unprecedented time in the opening of envelopes if they had not experienced postal voting before. Those councils

which had counts finalised in Adelaide by computer commented on the efficiency of the process, but expressed concern at the time and cost implications of finalising counts in Adelaide (see also below). Many officers believed that the timing of results could be improved in future elections, especially if there was more widespread use of computer counting (see below).

In relation to candidates however, the understanding of the reasons for the longer time to declare results was much less clear. Many candidates (especially those who had previously been members of councils) referred to the 'good old days' when you knew the result 'on the night or at least the next day.

Majority Opinion (Candidates)

Candidates are, generally speaking, dissatisfied with the length of time it took to obtain the results of the count, especially for those councils where results were not announced until late on the Wednesday after the count or later. Further, generally speaking, candidates do not have a good understanding of the reasons for longer processing and counting times compared to previous electoral systems used.

Majority Opinion (Officers)

While officers were not 'happy' with the longer times necessary to conduct the count, they generally understood the reasons for this and believe that more widespread use of computer counting would assist in the future.

4.6.4 Centralised Counting (Officers and Candidates)

The majority of both officers and candidates prefer that the first preference count be conducted locally compared with universal centralised computer counting. Many commented on the inconvenience for scrutineers and council staff travelling to Adelaide to view the count. However, a small but significant number of participants stated that they 'did not care where and how the count was conducted so long as the result was obtained quickly'. However, the preference for localised counting became almost universal if computer counts could be conducted locally (a number of councils had 'local' computer counts where the local branch of the AEC was appointed as DRO).

Majority Opinion

The first preference count should continue to be conducted locally compared to the option of universal computer counting in Adelaide. However there is an almost universal view that it would be preferable for computer counting to be conducted locally, or at least in major regional centres.

4.7 Post–Election Matters

4.7.1 Campaign Donation Returns (Officers and Candidates)

Officers expressed extreme frustration with the process for collecting campaign donation returns, especially from unsuccessful candidates. The following views were regularly expressed:

- Most returns were ‘nil returns’;
- The six week time period for completion was too long – too easy for candidates to forget;
- Confusion about the calculation of the date from which the six weeks is counted;
- Many doubted the rationale for requirement for completion especially by unsuccessful candidates;
- Suggestions that the form (for Campaign Donations) be provided to the candidate with the nomination form;
- Responsibility for follow up of returns should rest with the Electoral Commissioner as Returning Officer;
- Opportunities to rationalise (for successful candidates) with Primary and Ordinary Return.

In relation to candidates, there were mixed views from abolition for all candidates, compulsory for all candidates or compulsory only for successful candidates. Most agreed that the six-week completion time was too long. Successful candidates agreed that it was easier for them to comply because of reminders through regular contact with council staff after the election. However, many successful candidates used the opportunity for discussion of the Campaign Donation Return to express their concern about the **Primary** and **Ordinary Returns** required under the register of interests provisions of the Local Government Act 1999. This issue is canvassed in more detail in the ‘Other Matters’ section of these findings.

Majority Opinion

The period for completion of the Campaign Donation Return is too long and could be reduced from six weeks, and, if a return is required at all, it should only be required of successful candidates (majority not universal).

Other

Responsibility for collection of the return should be transferred to the Electoral Commissioner.

Consideration should be given to amalgamating the Campaign Donation Return and the Primary and Ordinary Returns for successful candidates.

Campaign Donation Returns (if retained) should be provided to the candidate with the nomination form. Return date requirements should be simplified.

4.8 Election Support Matters

4.8.1 Relationship with the State Electoral Office (Officers)

There was overwhelming recognition and support for the work of the Electoral Commissioner and his staff in supporting councils in the conduct of the election in almost every respect. Particular attention was drawn to the pressures on the SEO given the new electoral arrangements, but even given this, appreciation was expressed for the availability and helpfulness of the SEO. Many officers commented on the benefits of the Electoral Commissioner being the Returning Officer removing 'politically sensitive' decision making from the local level. Reported problems were few, and generally localised, but the following were recorded:

- For many councils the costs recovery of the SEO for conduct of the election was a significant issue and some facing imminent supplementary elections were particularly concerned;
- Different advice received from different SEO officers on the same topic;
- Some (mostly country) councils where a staff member was appointed DRO believed SEO requirements for faxing of all candidates profiles etc were excessive and unnecessary;
- 'Pedantic and inconsistent' editing of candidate profiles;
- Lack of telephone access to DRO during the counting period;
- Councils (country) concerned about the cost of monitoring of mailing house activities and monitoring of Adelaide computer counts;
- Desirability of 'service agreement' arrangements especially where the Electoral Commissioner appoints a 'third party' as DRO (eg a regional office of the AEC).

Majority Opinion

In general councils enjoyed an excellent relationship with the Electoral Commissioner and the SEO and problems were relatively minor in the context of the significant change to the electoral system required under the Local Government (Elections) Act 1999.

Other

A number of specific suggestions for change to procedures and processes are included in Section 8 below, generally, individual 'good ideas' identified by council staff or SEO staff who were represented at all metropolitan officer sessions. Furthermore, officers commented that many areas of problem were resolved over time prior to the election and 'things would be clearer next time round'.

4.8.2 Training, Documentation, Briefing Sessions etc (Officers and Candidates)

The quality and usefulness of the training and supporting documentation provided by the SEO (and the LGA) was universally applauded by officers. In particular, the DRO Manual was often mentioned as an excellent reference providing all necessary information, forms and proforma correspondence 'in one spot'. The only significant enhancement was the recommendation for the development of a 'proforma' guide for completion of the candidate's profile based on the experience of the last election, as referred to elsewhere in these findings. Finally some country officers suggested that consideration be given to regionally based training and information sessions.

In relation to candidates briefing sessions and documentation, the following comments were provided:

- Candidates briefing sessions were excellent but should be held earlier rather than later either just prior to or just after the opening of the nomination period. This may become even more important if the time period for nominations is reduced as canvassed elsewhere in the Findings). Some believed that attendance at a briefing session should be 'compulsory';
- The Candidates Handbook was generally seen as very good by candidates, but some commented that they would prefer to see it simplified. Officers often commented that the Candidates Handbook was 'very good' but that did not help if the candidate did not read it;
- Many candidates claimed they did not understand the PR system of voting and counting even after reading the material in the Candidates Handbook.

Majority Opinion

The quality of training and documentation provided by the SEO for officers is excellent and only minor enhancements are required for the next electoral cycle. Documentation for candidates was also very good. Candidates Briefing Sessions should be held as early as possible in the nomination process.

Minority Opinion

Some believe that the Candidates Handbook could be 'simplified'.

5 MAJOR FINDINGS – OTHER MATTERS

The terms of reference for this review were clear. The review was required to focus on the ‘technical and administrative aspects’ of the conduct of the May 2000 election. However, the consultants were invited to record comments from officers and candidates on other aspects of the electoral process if they chose to comment on them.

All participants were advised of the primary focus of the review through briefing notes forwarded prior to the discussion group meetings and verbal introductions to the discussion group meetings. The general nature of this advice to the discussion groups can be summarised by this extract from the ‘Candidates Briefing Note’:

‘...the primary focus of the current review is the technical and administrative aspects of the election process. It is acknowledged that the new Act introduced significant fundamental changes such as proportional representation as the single voting system and the mandatory use of postal voting. (However, in the case of postal voting it should be acknowledged that several councils had previously used this method on a voluntary basis to increase voter participation). It is also acknowledged that there are strongly held views amongst candidates and in the community generally on these fundamental issues.

These matters were canvassed extensively through a process of consultation and in the Parliament prior to their inclusion in the new Act and the Minister for Local Government has made it clear that it is not intended to contemplate changes to these basic aspects of the voting system until at least two election cycles are completed under the new system.³

While these background notes referred specifically to the issues of PR and postal voting (known to be issues of some considerable debate at least within the local government ‘community’), it could be reasonably inferred that any matter raised in the course of this review which ‘required’ legislative amendment could expose the whole of the Local Government (Elections) Act 1999, for fresh parliamentary scrutiny and debate.

However, some of the matters identified in the findings in relation to administrative and technical matters, if accepted by the Steering Committee and the Government would require some amendment to the Act. Nevertheless, the comments which follow in this section are related to the more fundamental aspects of the electoral system well beyond ‘administrative and technical’ and are therefore reported separately.

³ Extract from ‘Candidates Briefing Note’ - refer Attachment B3 for full text

5.1 Proportional Representation

Leaving aside administrative issues of count complexity under the PR system of voting, a large number of discussion groups used the opportunity to express objection to the mandatory adoption of PR as the voting system for all local government elections. The objections were predominantly, but not exclusively, expressed in candidates discussion groups. It should be emphasised that the objections were not universal (i.e. some candidates either supported or did not object to PR) but every candidate discussion group recorded one or more candidates (and sometimes a clear majority) who objected to PR.

However, it is important to attempt to analyse the basis for the objections, which requires some subjective interpretation by the consulting team. Subject to this qualification, the consultants believe, the objections fell into the following categories:

Philosophical Difference

Some participants indicated at least a basic understanding of the 'democratic principles' underpinning PR and objected to it on strict philosophical/political grounds, preferring first past the post (FPP) or optional preferential (OP) voting systems. Nevertheless, even many of the group did not grasp the significance of local government elections having many 'multiple member electorates' (multiple member wards, area councillors). For example, reference was made to the fact that PR was not used in State House of Assembly or Federal House of Representatives elections (all single member electorates). Objectors generally did not draw or accept the connection between the use of PR in the Legislative Council and the Senate and local government.

Pragmatic Objectors

The pragmatist objectors could be categorised as objecting on the basis of the characteristics and consequences of PR rather than necessarily its democratic principles. The objectors from this group would cite such things as:

- It is too complex;
- The electors don't understand it and never will;
- It takes too long to count;
- It encourages 'ticketing' by groups of candidates.

Misunderstanding

In the opinion of the consultants, there was also a significant group of the objectors who did not understand or misunderstood the basis for PR and/or some of its technical characteristics. Objectors categorised in this group would cite things such as:

- Why did electors have to vote for someone they did not want;
- Blatantly incorrect assertions about one or more of the mathematical rules for the counting of votes.

Majority Opinion

The consultants are duty bound to report a fairly widespread (but not universal) objection to the mandatory use of PR in local government elections, especially from candidates. However, this finding needs to be qualified by the following:

- **May 2000 was for many the first experience of the use of PR in local government elections;**
- **In the view of the consultants, a significant number of the objections were based on lack of understanding or knowledge of the PR and its application;**
- **The particular arguments for the application of PR in 'multi member electorates' is not well recognised.**

Other

The Electoral Reform Society of SA⁴ has recommended that full optional voting be introduced under PR and it can be inferred from many participants' comments that they would support optional voting i.e. being able to vote for a lesser number of candidates than there are vacancies.

5.2 Postal Voting

The mandatory use of postal voting for local government elections appears to enjoy widespread support from both candidates and officers. However, there is a significant but vocal minority of (mainly candidates) who either object to postal voting on the basis of principle, or believe the choice should be the decision of each council. It is also worth noting that postal voting was even more accepted in council areas where postal voting had been used previously.

The proponents of postal voting cite the benefits of increased voter participation and greater ease of voting. The objectors cite such things as:

⁴ Refer Attachment A3

- It encourages donkey or 'uninformed' voting;
- Only 'committed' voters make the effort to go to the ballot box;
- Electors think it is compulsory to vote;
- It is more susceptible to corruption and manipulation;
- It makes voting impersonal.

Of particular concern is the potential for outrageous and unsubstantiated claims to be made about postal voting malpractices.

Majority Opinion

There is majority support for the continuation of mandatory postal voting.

Minority Opinion

There is a significant minority view (of mainly candidates) which opposes mandatory postal voting either on principle, or on the basis that it should be left to the choice of each individual council.

5.3 The Voting Franchise

A relatively small number of participants (candidates and officers) argued that the local government voting franchise should be reformed (removal of the property franchise). Others suggested that voting in local government elections should be compulsory. The usual rationale advanced when this was raised was that local government should have the same voting systems as the other spheres of government in Australia.

Minority Opinions

Voting should be compulsory.

The property franchise should be removed.

5.4 Timing of the Election

Apart from views on PR, this was the most frequent 'other matter' spontaneously raised in candidates' and officers' groups in particular. There is a broadly shared view that May is a 'bad' month of the year to hold local government elections because:

- It 'automatically' clashes with school holidays and a number of public holidays during the election process;
- The newly elected council, in practice, necessarily has to consider and adopt a budget prepared under the direction of the 'old' council. New

members do not have time to get 'up to speed' and may have no 'ownership' of the budget decisions in the forthcoming year;

- It is a difficult time for council staff who are intensively involved in budget preparation and end of financial year compliance requirements.

However, there was not universal agreement on an alternative date for the election with some groups suggesting earlier in the calendar year, others later.

Majority Opinion

The timing of the local government election should be moved from the month of May (general view). While there were different views about alternative times, a small majority supported the holding of the election earlier in the calendar year, say, March.

5.5 Supplementary Elections

A small number of councils reported that casual vacancies had occurred since the May 2000 election and expressed concern about the cost and inconvenience of being required to conduct supplementary elections by way of postal ballot. Two proposals were raised to cover this circumstance:

Proposals for Consideration

Consideration should be given to amending the Local Government (Elections) Act 1999, to provide for councils to not be required to conduct supplementary elections for casual vacancies in wards (especially multi-member wards) similar to existing provisions for area councillor casual vacancies.

Consideration be given to providing an exemption for mandatory postal voting for the conduct of supplementary elections necessary as a result of casual vacancies.

5.6 Primary and Ordinary Returns

While nothing to do with the Local Government (Elections) Act 1999, there was a spontaneous identification of issues with Primary and Ordinary Returns required of elected members pursuant to the Local Government Act 1999. The issue was prominently (and passionately) raised in a number of candidates groups, but also in a number of officers groups.

A very small number of participants objected to the requirement to complete a statement of interests, in principle, generally arguing that local government was a form of voluntary public service and such a requirement was not warranted.

However, the majority of participants identifying concerns appeared to accept the need for some form of statement of interests to be completed but were extremely critical of the current provisions including:

- The prescribed forms are confusing and difficult to fill in and should be simplified;
- The scope of 'interests' was far too broad and the requirement to provide details of interests of family members, in particular, should be reviewed;
- The requirement to declare membership of a political party was an invasion of privacy (this view was not generally shared);
- The timing and procedures for lodgement should be reviewed and possibly coincided with the Campaign Donations Return.

Majority Opinion

The scope, design, contents and lodgement procedures for the Primary and Ordinary Return should be reviewed and modified to make the task of completion easier.

5.7 City of Adelaide

Special electoral provisions relating to the City of Adelaide are contained in the City of Adelaide Act 1998. The City of Adelaide has raised a number of matters during the course of this review (both through discussion groups and a written submission) which are detailed in Attachment A3.

- The City of Adelaide has a number of provisions, which are different to the requirements of the Local Government (Elections) Act 1999, applying to all other councils. These differences include the single voting entitlement, the provision for public inspection of the roll prior to closure and the timing of the roll closure. The City recommends that the key election timetable dates be aligned in both Acts and that other differences be promoted in generic advertising campaigns associated with local government elections;
- The provision for campaign donation returns should be amended to be consistent with the Local Government (Elections) Act 1999.

6 PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE FROM INDIVIDUALS

During the discussion sessions there were a number of suggestions put forward for change. Suggestions that related to the major findings of this study have been included in Sections 4 and 5 of this report. There were also a number of other suggestions that were put forward by individual officers and candidates that have not been identified in the Major Findings. It is important to point out that no investigation or analysis has been undertaken to determine the validity or merit of individual proposals and it is known that some proposals are factually incorrect or the proposed improvements are already in place. Suggestions, in no particular order, are as follows:

- To assist with campaigning the Voters Roll should be provided in street order;
- It would be helpful for some candidates who are computer literate to be able to access the Voters Roll in electronic format;
- To be eligible to vote, voters should have to be a naturalised Australian;
- To assist candidates with their understanding of local government it would be a benefit to provide a mentor for candidates;
- It was suggested that the Candidates Profile should be produced in pamphlet style where the sheet is opened out, rather than as a double – sided document;
- People with criminal record should be precluded from nominating;
- Consideration should be given to banning all election signs;
- Some candidates suggested that they should be reimbursed campaign expenses;
- More flexibility should be provided to councils in the process for re-issuing ballot papers (City of Adelaide’s written submission refers);
- There should be greater prominence on the voting pack to a statement advising that voters could lodge their vote at the council;
- Information should be provided in the ballot pack on “how to register a valid vote”;
- Voters should be provided with an explanation as to the purpose of the tear off declaration slip, as there is widespread misunderstanding in some elector groups that the secrecy of the ballot is compromised;
- There should be a single declaration statement for all categories of voters;

- That the close of voting for those votes that are posted should be earlier than those votes that are hand delivered;
- In order to alleviate the problems associated with candidates forgetting to complete their campaign donations returns, the returns should be posted out after the elections;
- A review should be conducted after the next council elections in three years time;
- It was a perception that some members of the community were unaware of their entitlement to vote. It was suggested that a promotional campaign is required to explain entitlement to vote etc to the community;
- There should be a nomination fee for nominations. It was considered that this would prevent bogus or multiple nominations;
- In the past it was a requirement that an elector nominated a candidate. One of the changes in the new Act eliminated this requirement. It was suggested that this should be reintroduced;
- A checklist should be developed to assist council officers in the checking of nomination forms;
- Changes to candidates profiles should be allowed after the close of nominations;
- Candidates should be required to sign a document accepting the conditions for campaigning (election signs);
- Regarding the validity of candidates' information it was suggested that the SEO should have the authority to check (for example false addresses) if he/she considers there is reasonable cause;
- It was suggested that provision should be made for the electronic transmission of nominations and profiles including photos;
- Candidates should be provided with better information as to the rules and risks associated with last minute nominations;
- It was suggested that councils should send out a package of information on each candidate. This would help cut expenses of candidates and would also reduce frustration within the community about unwanted information in their letterboxes;
- To assist resolve issues with photographs it was suggested that photos should be taken at the briefing session;

- Some candidates perceived that there were different voting instructions for the position of Mayor and Councillor and stated that the voting instructions should be the same;
- More extensive multilingual information should be provided for voters to assist those of non-English speaking backgrounds;
- Concern was expressed with regard to the security of ballot boxes. It was suggested a security protocol should be developed for ballot boxes in order to eliminate any problems.

7 DISCUSSION SESSIONS – SUMMARY OF COMMENTS NOT INCLUDED IN FINDINGS

This part of the report provides a general overview of the outcomes of the discussion groups with candidates and officers and some anecdotal comments. In order to minimise repetition, major findings are not included as they are to be found in Sections 4 and 5, and individual suggestions for change in section 6 of this report. This section of the report therefore includes a combination of “general observations” and individual comments which do not necessarily become reflected in the Major Findings, but are, nevertheless, required to be reported given the undertakings to the discussion groups.

- Most participants understood that it was the first election conducted under the new rules and did acknowledge that some problems were ‘teething problems’ and should improve next time around;
- The cost of having the SEO run the election was expensive and that the election was costing councils considerably more than it had in the past. Concern was also expressed as to the cost of supplementary elections. One council remarked it was going to cost their council \$30,000 to conduct a supplementary election for one casual vacancy;
- The excessive length of time taken (mainly due to postal voting) to fill the vacancy through a supplementary was also another issue raised;
- The absence of a facility to place an ‘absentee vote’ raised complaint. The option of having a friend or relative collect and forward the postal voting packs to the absent voter was not considered satisfactory;
- There appeared to be confusion about whether a nomination must be lodged by 12 noon or accepted as valid by 12 noon;
- There was also confusion as to the time and date for required lodgement of returns where a person is elected unopposed;
- There was concern about the payment of elected member allowances (not payable until July after the election) when members effectively “commence duties” before this date;
- In one council there were considerable problems caused by replacement of the Deputy Returning Officer;
- Some candidates and officers were concerned that there were not enough people counting the votes;
- In some rural councils, due to the tyrannies of distance, councils did not receive votes posted on the previous Thursday, before 12 noon on the following Tuesday;

- Questions were raised concerning the process for determining the validity of votes. This related to the issue of illegible signatures and the associated uncertainty of whether it really was the signature of the individual whose name was on the ballot paper;
- All council officers provided very positive comments about their relationship with the State Electoral Office and the support provided. However a few did remark they had received conflicting information from the SEO and some advised that it was difficult to get through to the toll free number. In addition some said they could not get through to their Deputy Returning Officer;
- In some cases mail out packs went to the wrong council and some (particularly rural councils) were concerned about the cost and time associated with mailing house preparations;
- Voting papers that were 'returned to sender' went back to the SEO giving the councils no opportunity to investigate the problem and attempt to correct the address;
- Some voting papers were received late from the SEO causing additional cost to councils as a result of having to pay staff for the time that they 'sat around and did nothing';
- Some candidates believed that voting papers were not delivered to all electors. In one case it was asserted that voting papers were not delivered 'even after it was reported to the SEO', and in one group one candidate advised that voting papers were not delivered until after the election closing date;
- Concern was raised about the security of the voting system. Comments related to security of votes held in councils overnight, irregularities in the casting of votes (including claims that voters were pressured to vote in certain ways or that candidates 'put votes in' for electors) and the security associated with the disposal of "unused" ballot papers. No substantiation was provided for any of the claims made about the security of the postal voting system;
- The Primary and Ordinary Returns were considered confusing by some;
- In one group the candidates advised that they did not receive a copy of the Voters Roll by the promised date;
- A small minority of candidates advised they were confused as to what was acceptable and what was not acceptable when it came to campaigning. Candidates remarked that it was 'too late after the election' to try to deal with allegations of illegal and inappropriate campaign practices;

- A small number of candidates advised that they experienced some difficulty in getting information about the election. One (a rural candidate) remarked that the information sought was received after the nomination period had closed. This may be associated with the mailing problems faced in some rural areas;
- Australia Post's handling of bulk mail caused campaigning problems for some candidates;
- Some candidates from rural councils believed that rural voters had been disenfranchised as a result of councils choosing to eliminate Wards. It was their belief that the majority of voters come from the townships and subsequently vote for nominees from 'the town';
- Potential candidates are sometimes unaware of the commitment required to be a successful councillor. There needs to be more information provided to candidates regarding what is involved in being a councillor, particularly the workload required.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A1 – Project Brief

PROJECT BRIEF: REVIEW OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS HELD IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA – MAY 2000

JOINT CLIENTS: The Local Government Association of SA, and the Office of Local Government (SA)

1. OBJECTIVE

The May 2000 local government periodic elections were the first to be conducted under the provisions of the Local Government (Elections) Act 1999 (“the Act”). The primary project objective is to conduct a technical and administrative review of the electoral processes and practices and identify any regulatory or administrative refinements that may be needed.

This review will be cognisant of two other reports associated with the May 2000 elections. Firstly, the “Report on the Local Government Elections, May 2000”, prepared by the Electoral Commissioner, which provides a context for the conduct of the May 2000 elections and a consolidated record of results. Secondly, the ‘Local Government Association – Participation in Local Councils Elections’ report which reports on the perceptions and attitudes towards council elections among the general public.

2. PROJECT OUTLINE

- 2.1 The project is to be conducted under the direction and guidance of the Project Steering Committee. Prior to the commencement of the project it is expected that an invitation will be issued to councils and others to make written submissions to the Review.
- 2.2 The consultant will establish and consult with two specific focus groups. Each focus group will comprise sub-groups of ideally 8-10 members:
 - the first focus group is to be made up of Chief Executives (CE) and Deputy Returning Officers (DRO) of councils (approx. 15 sub-groups). CEs and DROs of all councils should be invited to participate in focus group meetings at a range of regional locations. One sub-group should comprise persons nominated by the SA Institute of Rate Administrators.
 - the second focus group is to comprise a selection of successful and unsuccessful candidates in the May 2000 election, ideally, one of each from each council (approx. 15 sub-groups).

- 2.3 The consultant will act as a facilitator in each group moving through a series of specific questions. These questions will be designed to ascertain feedback on issues related specifically to technical and administrative matters concerning the electoral processes and procedures to identify areas where difficulties were experienced, and where they worked well.

The structure of questions to be addressed will be agreed in advance with the Steering Committee. Opportunity and time is to be allowed at the end of each sub-group's session to enable members to raise other issues/ concerns relating to the broader policy provisions for the conduct of local government elections. Discussion of and debate on possible solutions and/or recommendations are not the primary purpose of the consultations, but should be noted if advanced.

The purpose of each session is to gather information that can then be processed and analysed.

Timeframe: It is estimated a period of eight to ten weeks will be required to complete this stage of the project.

2.4 Deliverables

The consultant is to prepare a narrative summary of information gathered on an individual sub-group, focus group and overall basis, and a similar summary of all written submissions received.

The consultant is to submit an interim report bringing together the summaries to the Project Steering Committee.

Timeframe: It is estimated a period of two weeks will be required to complete this stage of the project.

- 2.5 The Project Steering Committee will provide feedback and comment on the interim report, which is to be refined as appropriate to form the Final Report.

Timeframe: It is estimated a period of four weeks will be required to complete this stage of the project.

3. SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

The matters to be included in the review are to relate primarily to technical and administrative issues. As indicated above, the Project Steering Committee will provide direction on the specific questions to be asked at each of the focus group's sub-groups' meetings.

The areas to be covered will seek views, inter alia, on matters such as:

- difficulties or otherwise experienced in merging council's roll with House of Assembly data supplied by the Electoral Commissioner
- problems arising and action taken to eliminate duplicate entries
- errors detected following mailout and remedial action taken
- the current requirements for candidate profiles and photographs, including views on the controls as to length and content
- the difficulties posed by last minute nominations
- design and readability of ballot papers, declaration envelopes and official instructions
- the detail required on prescribed forms
- practicality of devising one nomination form and one form of words for an elector's declaration

Policy issues arising should be noted and the frequency of mention reported by the consultant.

4. REVIEW PROCESS

The consultant will seek information through the formation of sub-groups of the two focus groups mentioned in 2 above. It is expected that approximately 30 sub-groups in total will be established. These sub-groups will enable the Chief Executives and Deputy Returning Officers of all councils to express their views on the electoral process and also ensure a representative sample of successful and non-unsuccessful candidates in the May 2000 council elections from each council contribute to this review.

5. REPORTING AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The Project will be managed on behalf of the Joint Clients by a Steering Committee comprising:

- Acting Director, Legislation and Policy, Office of Local Government, or nominee;
- Director, Legislation and Environment, Local Government Association of S.A., or nominee;
- Electoral Commissioner, or nominee.

Direct support and day-to-day contact with the consultants will be provided through a Project Co-ordinator appointed by the Joint Clients, who will be available at any reasonable time. The consultant will meet with, and report progress to, the Steering Committee at least fortnightly, or as required by the Steering Committee.

The consultant will be expected to comply with all reasonable requests of the Steering Committee. Any alterations to this Brief will require unanimous agreement of the Committee, and be set out in written form.

Three bound and one unbound copies, plus one copy on computer "floppy" disc in a software format acceptable to the Steering Committee, of the Final Report are to be supplied to **each of the members of the Steering Committee**, no later than the date set out in the letter of offer of appointment to the consultant.

The Local Government Association and the Office of Local Government will provide access to all relevant resource material in their possession. The Electoral Commissioner has indicated his firm support for, and willingness to co-operate with, the appointed consultant in carrying out the review. However the Commissioner will have absolute discretion as to the nature, format and conditions under which material available to him is provided to the consultant.

The consultant is expected to provide all office accommodation, equipment and administrative support, and to research all information as part of the project, at the consultant's cost. Production of all interim and other reports will be the consultant's responsibility.

6. PAYMENT OF CONSULTANCY FEE

The consultant will be paid the tendered fee by the Office of Local Government in accordance with a payment schedule agreed with the Steering Committee. This schedule is to be confirmed in writing, before commencement of the review.

7. SUBMISSIONS BY CONSULTANTS

- Tenderers must demonstrate significant experience in research and evaluation in the social sciences, ideally in an electoral or political context.
- They should possess, or provide evidence of access to, appropriate client or community consultation capabilities.
- Price will be an important, but not prime, selection criterion. Intending tenderers are advised that the indicative budget allocation for the project is in the order of \$35,000.
- Proposals should contain full details on:-
 - the procedure and approach proposed by the consultant to achieve the objectives of the brief;

- any proposed variation to the Project Outline and Scope as set out in sections 2 and 3 above;
- details, relevant skills and experience of personnel and sub-consultants who will be involved in undertaking the project including degree of involvement, availability and their suitability for the task;
- the proposed tender price including all disbursements;
- the budget for, or component parts of, the tender price including all necessary elements such as time for synthesis and write-up of summaries of discussions;
- a preferred payment schedule; and
- whether or not there are any potential or actual conflicts of interest.

8. SELECTION PROCESS

The consultant will be selected using a selected tender process. A small number of consultants will be invited to tender for the project. The joint clients reserve the right to select a consultant without interviewing all or any potential consultants after the close of the submission period.

9. SELECTION CRITERIA

Criteria to be considered in selecting a consultant are:

- understanding of the review task;
- commitment to gain an understanding of the existing arrangements for the conduct of local government elections in South Australia;
- calibre, and range of professional expertise offered by, personnel and sub-consultants;
- suitability of approach and capacity to meet timelines;
- tendered price;
- experience and performance in tasks of similar type, scope and complexity and/or demonstrated capacity to undertake the project;
- independence or capacity to be objective; and
- possession of additional or unique skills or resources for use in the project.

10. COPYRIGHT AND INDEMNITY EXPECTATIONS

The State of South Australia and the Local Government Association will have ownership of all reports and material produced as part of, or research data generated in, this project. The consultant will waive prior publication rights.

The successful consultant is expected to indemnify the Local Government Association, the State of South Australia, its Ministers and Officers against claims of copyright breaches, for death or injury and under common law in respect of this project.

Attachment A2 – Discussion Group Details

REVIEW OF MAY 2000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

ATTENDANCE AT DISCUSSION GROUPS

Date	Location	Officers	Candidates
15 November 2000	LGA	9	
15 November 2000	Marion		5
17 November 2000	Salisbury	7	
20 November 2000	LGA		7
22 November 2000	Salisbury		5
23 November 2000	Berri	6	
23 November 2000	Berri		5
27 November 2000	Penola	7	
27 November 2000	Penola		4
28 November 2000	Tailem Bend		5
28 November 2000	Tailem Bend	8	
29 November 2000	LGA		4
30 November 2000	Victor Harbor	4	
30 November 2000	Victor Harbor		5
30 November 2000	LGA	16	
1 December 2000	Beaumont	14	
4 December 2000	Kadina	3	
4 December 2000	Kadina		4
5 December 2000	Kapunda	4	
5 December 2000	Kapunda		6
6 December 2000	Jamestown	3	
6 December 2000	Jamestown		4
7 December 2000	Marion	8	
12 December 2000	Pt Lincoln	4	
12 December 2000	Pt Lincoln		5
24 January 2001	Whyalla	3	
24 January 2001	Whyalla		4

Attachment A3 – Summary of Written Submissions

A3.1. Written Submissions – Summary

In September 2000, The Minister for Local Government (Hon Dorothy Kotz, MP) and the President of the Local Government Association (Mayor Brian Hurn, OAM) wrote to all councils inviting written submissions on the conduct of the May 2000 Elections as part of the review process. The consultants were requested to include analysis of these written submissions in the review report.

Formal written submissions were received from the following councils:

City of Adelaide

District Council of Barunga West

Campbelltown City Council

Goyder Regional Council

Kingston Regional Council

City of Mitcham

City of Mount Gambier

City of Norwood Payneham and St Peters.

The consultants were also requested to include comments from the *Electoral Reform Society of South Australia* in correspondence to the Minister dated 24 August 2000.

Finally there are two other sources of 'written material' included in the analysis in this section:

- Written material provided session participants (where relevant) during or after the conduct of the discussion groups
- Written correspondence to the Electoral Commissioner on matters pertaining to the election provided by the Electoral Commissioner.

A3.2. Formal Written Submissions

The key comments of the formal council submissions (as interpreted by the consultants) are summarised below:

COUNCIL	COMMENT
Adelaide	<p><i>City of Adelaide Act 1998</i></p> <p>Differences in the City of Adelaide Act re electoral matters should be promoted in generic advertising campaign including:</p> <p>Single voting entitlement</p> <p>Public inspection of the roll prior to closure</p> <p>Timing of the roll closure</p> <p>Campaign Donation returns (amend City of Adelaide Act to provide consistency with Elections Act)</p>
	<p><i>Re-issue Process</i></p> <p>Suggestion that the re-issue process for lost or destroyed ballot papers be changed to alleviate delays. Bar code number series to be provided to councils which would record details and advise SEO at the end of each day / close of voting</p>
	<p><i>Timing of Elections</i></p> <p>Election should be held earlier in the calendar year to reduce conflict with school and public holidays and budget planning processes</p>
	<p><i>Preparation of the Roll</i></p> <p>SEO and Councils should use the <i>National Standard of Abbreviations</i> for consistency in matching records; Helpful if SEO used legal names and addresses</p> <p>Truncation of name field records is not desirable</p> <p>SEO and council to agree on process for removing invalid records from the roll, in particular, changes of address</p> <p>May be more efficient for the SEO to combine the rolls</p> <p>Three month period between closure of the roll and election where changes of address cannot be recorded – reflects on accuracy – should be reviewed</p> <p>Review the legislative intent of right for objections by potential electors ‘omitted in error’ from the roll (City of Adelaide Act only) – different legal advice – clarification required</p>

COUNCIL	COMMENT
<p>Adelaide (continued)</p>	<p><i>Candidate Eligibility</i></p> <p>Clear definition of 'place of residence' qualification for natural persons seeking to nominate</p> <hr/> <p><i>Postal Voting</i></p> <p>Timely to conduct a 'full risk assessment' review of postal voting to ascertain whether are sufficient controls in place to manage risks</p> <hr/> <p><i>Internet Voting</i></p> <p>Ascertain progress in the development of Internet voting elsewhere and the feasibility of early adoption in SA</p> <hr/> <p><i>Other Comments</i></p> <p>Promotion of statewide public interest in local governance in the year before the periodic election</p> <p>Simplify requirements in relation to entitlements and voting</p> <p>Closing date for voter registration is too early</p>
<p>Barunga West</p>	<p><i>Postal Packs – Signature</i></p> <p>Suggest inclusion of a prominent warning, adjacent to the signature box, stating that unsigned envelopes cannot be accepted to the count</p> <hr/> <p><i>Close of Voting</i></p> <p>Significant number of votes not accepted as they were not available from Post Office by 12 noon. Suggest 5:00 pm closure, especially after long weekend</p>
<p>Campbelltown</p>	<p><i>Roll Preparation – Matching</i></p> <p>Extreme problems in record matching between SEO roll and council records – name and address details</p> <p>Voter confusion about multiple entitlements</p> <p>SEO hotline referred callers back to council</p>

COUNCIL	COMMENT
Campbelltown (continued)	<p data-bbox="427 264 852 300"><i>Suggestions for Improvement</i></p> <p data-bbox="427 331 1289 367">Electoral Commissioner to be responsible for roll preparation</p> <p data-bbox="427 398 1315 474">Other classes of electors (non House of Assembly) required to apply and register</p> <p data-bbox="427 506 1308 618">General agreement that election was well conducted and candidates were pleased with briefing sessions. Postal voting supported as an important part of the electoral process</p>
Goyder	<p data-bbox="427 651 692 687"><i>Candidate Profiles</i></p> <p data-bbox="427 719 1356 831">Content restrictions on candidate profiles were difficult for current members – should be able to list areas of council operation they were pleased with or needed improvement</p> <p data-bbox="427 862 836 898"><i>Campaign Donation Returns</i></p> <p data-bbox="427 929 1302 1005">Should be the responsibility of the Electoral Commissioner as Returning Officer</p> <p data-bbox="427 1037 951 1072">Overall, election conducted very well</p>
Kingston	<p data-bbox="427 1108 501 1144"><i>Cost</i></p> <p data-bbox="427 1176 1366 1252">Concerned about the cost to ratepayers resulting from the blanket appointment of the Electoral Commissioner as Returning Officer</p> <p data-bbox="427 1283 826 1319"><i>Computer Counting System</i></p> <p data-bbox="427 1350 1264 1426">All councils should be provided with the computer counting system to save time and cost in country councils</p> <p data-bbox="427 1458 884 1494"><i>Deputy Returning Officer (DRO)</i></p> <p data-bbox="427 1525 1331 1561">Important for country councils to have the option of a local DRO</p>

COUNCIL	COMMENT
Mitcham	<p><i>Roll Preparation</i></p> <p>Conversion of supplementary roll to format required by assembly roll extremely difficult and time consuming</p> <p>Checking for duplicates difficult – not only between the rolls but within properties</p> <p>Requirement to identify owners and occupiers onerous and often not possible</p> <p>Recommend abolition of Supplementary Roll and removal of property franchise consistent with State and Federal elections</p>
	<p><i>LGA Booklet</i></p> <p>‘So You Want to be a Councillor’ good but too late in arriving from the LGA</p>
	<p><i>DRO</i></p> <p>No contact from the DRO to council for two days during the count – unable to deal with questions from candidates or the public</p>
	<p><i>Close of Nominations</i></p> <p>Official close of nominations not declared until 12:30 because of checking – announcement should have been made at 12 noon</p> <p>Possibility of last minute nominations being lodged at SEO cause anxiety</p>
	<p><i>Primary and Ordinary Returns (Local Government Act)</i></p> <p>The two separate returns are almost identical and should be combined</p>

COUNCIL	COMMENT
Mount Gambier	<p><i>Costs</i></p> <p>Seemed excessive after estimates were given to councils</p> <hr/> <p><i>Campaign Donation Returns</i></p> <p>Inappropriate for candidates who were members of previous council to include information back to 1997</p> <p>Is there any point in requiring unsuccessful candidates to complete</p> <hr/> <p><i>'Advance' Voting</i></p> <p>No provision for people travelling interstate or overseas to vote – felt cheated</p> <hr/> <p><i>Roll – Business Occupiers</i></p> <p>Enormous difficulty – councils would have to change rolls daily with businesses changing hands, locations etc</p> <hr/> <p><i>General</i></p> <p>Excellent relationship with SEO and DRO (AEC – Mt Gambier)</p> <p>Training sessions and LGA information very good</p> <p>Problems with date for close of voting – difficult to get new council operational asap</p>
Norwood Payneham & St Peters	<p><i>Roll Preparation</i></p> <p>Merging rolls very difficult – councils data → property based – assembly roll → natural persons</p> <p>Merging process resulted in incorrect entitlements both ways (ie more votes and less votes than entitled)</p> <p>Australia Post address procedure should be used in updating all amendments to the Voters Roll to minimise duplicates</p> <p>SEO should be advised of incorrect street addresses as a matter of procedure</p>

COUNCIL	COMMENT
<p>Norwood Payneham & St Peters (continued)</p>	<p><i>Nomination Process</i></p> <p>Recommended that timing of the draw for positions on ballots be deferred until 1 hour after close (1:00pm) to provide for processing of last minute nominations</p> <p>Candidates briefing sessions should be held earlier in the process (just after the opening of nominations)</p>
	<p><i>Candidates Profile</i></p> <p>Remove requirement for black and white photograph – passport size colour should be acceptable</p> <p>Content restrictions prohibitive – should allow for achievement and actions of members and council as a whole</p>
	<p><i>Conduct of the Count</i></p> <p>Nominated count commencement time should be say, 3pm to allow staff to prepare for the count and minimise inconvenience to observers</p> <p>Count should remain local unless otherwise determined by council</p> <p>Scrutineers observed that electoral staff were ‘distracted’ during count – suggest development of code of conduct for electoral staff</p>
	<p><i>Campaign Donation Returns</i></p> <p>Campaign Donation Return Form should be provided together with the nomination form</p> <p>Unsuccessful candidates should no have to complete Campaign Donation Return</p>

A3.3. Other Written Material Provided By Councils

A number of council officers provided written material to the consulting team (that had not been forwarded as a formal submission to the Office of Local Government). In some cases, written material was provided because of inability to attend a session, while in others the material was the result of a council report on the election process or similar. The main points contained in this written material is summarised below:

COUNCIL	COMMENT
Ceduna	<p><i>Training and SEO Support</i></p> <p>Training sessions for council staff very useful</p> <p>DRO Manual extremely useful – could it be made available on disc and/or on lga.net</p> <p>More delegation to local DRO's in country eg requirement to fax profiles etc</p> <p>Duplication – multiple requests for information – recognised pressure on SEO staff – not criticism</p> <hr/> <p><i>Briefing Sessions</i></p> <p>Candidate briefing sessions should be held much earlier</p> <hr/> <p>Election ran smoothly given the new provisions of the Elections Act</p>
Gawler	<p><i>Roll Preparation</i></p> <p>Extreme difficulty in merging the rolls eg unknown deceased, maiden names, mis-spelling, multiple joint owners, postal addresses etc</p> <p>Format requirements from SEO were vague and confusing</p> <p>Location and identification of occupiers</p> <hr/> <p><i>Conduct of the Count</i></p> <p>Question the efficiency of conducting the count locally in the Hall</p> <p>Complaints about the time taken for counting</p> <p>Needed more staff and more computers to conduct count</p> <p>Envelopes sometimes difficult to open – some would not go through electric opener properly</p>

COUNCIL	COMMENT
<p>Gawler (continued)</p>	<p><i>Other</i></p> <p>More spare packs for re-issues should be provided</p> <p>Different colour (or size) voting papers for wards and mayor</p> <p>Suggest provision of proforma for completion of candidate profile</p> <p>Difficulty in confirming correct signature for corporates and groups</p>
<p>Onkaparinga</p>	<p><i>Roll Preparation</i></p> <p>Significant problems with flexibility of council software in matching process because of database size – initial extract took 30 hours to process</p> <p>Significant problems with name and address matching</p> <p>Assembly roll and council property records do not follow the same standards – full details provided</p> <p>Suppressed addresses: need to develop a mechanism with SEO to deal with suppressed addresses while maintaining privacy</p> <p>Validity of election jeopardised by current data matching problems</p> <p>No provision for Assembly roll to be amended by councils</p> <p>Question automatic entitlement for groups – should return to nomination process</p> <p>Merging of databases and roll production should be done by SEO</p> <p>Cost - \$210,000 plus enormous staff costs</p>

COUNCIL	COMMENT
Playford	<p><i>General</i></p> <p>Newly elected candidates were more satisfied with election process than re-elected candidates</p> <p>'Have Your Say' advertising well received by public</p> <p>Perception that local media coverage favoured sitting member candidates</p> <p>Candidate briefing sessions and candidates hand book well received</p> <p>Some candidates thought council still had a choice of voting method</p> <p>Candidates believed it took too long to receive result outcome by letter</p> <p>Problems with merging the roll</p> <hr/> <p><i>Recommendations</i></p> <p>Candidates briefing sessions – should be earlier and compulsory attendance</p> <p>Modify software to enable more effective roll preparation</p> <p>Develop policy on regulation of election signs and material</p> <p>Develop agreement with SEO specifying services outcomes and responsibilities of the parties</p>
Salisbury	<p><i>Preparation of the Roll</i></p> <p>Enormous task – required employment of additional casuals to assist existing staff working 'day and night' over several weeks</p> <p>Major mismatch between council data requirements (legal names) and SEO preferred names and natural persons</p> <p>Similar problems with address details</p> <p>Business occupiers - council cannot keep track of tenants – has no council reason to collect this information</p> <p>After advertising, only two business occupiers enrolled</p>

COUNCIL	COMMENT
Salisbury (continued)	<i>Conduct of the Election</i>
	Candidates have limited time to influence elector decisions – some electors wished to change their vote after returning paper earlier Propose a formal process of reporting votes returned, rejected or invalid during the voting period to keep candidates informed
	<i>Other</i> Candidates briefing session should be held earlier Timing of election be reviewed – consider different times for rural and metropolitan councils if necessary

A3.4. Correspondence To The Electoral Commissioner

The Electoral Commissioner made available to the review team correspondence forwarded to him on the conduct of the election, where in his opinion, the correspondence was relevant to the terms of reference for the review. It is of course not appropriate to directly or indirectly identify the individual authors of this correspondence. However, where the correspondence was from a council (as distinct from a candidate or member of the public), this is signified without identifying the name of the council. The comments are listed below in no particular order:

- Complaint about a council taking out paid advertising in local newspaper prior to and during the election period allegedly promoting 'what a good job' the (existing) council is doing
- Complaint that a votes roll for a council area, listing electors in street order, was not available
- Complaint about voting system the requirement to vote for at least the number of positions required – why should I have to vote for someone I do not want?
- (Council Comment) Concern about the time allowed for mail out and return of postal packs in rural areas with extended postal delivery times
- Request for re-count on the basis of disagreement with the prescribed method of voting/counting
- Complaint about unauthorised electoral material; recommendation that electioneering be prohibited within 500m of ANZAC day activities

- Complaint – misspelling of a word on a candidates profile during the SEO proofing process
- Concern about the unavailability of pre-poll voting – elector going overseas
- Concern about security of ballot boxes at council office
- (Council Comment) Objection to PR voting system. Request to return to Optional Preferential
- Concern expressed by a sitting member candidate that content restrictions on the candidate profile unfairly impacted on the candidate's ability to convey past achievements and future benefits to the electors

A3.5. Correspondence from the Electoral Reform Society

Correspondence from the Society to the Minister dated 24 August 2000 was also referred to the review team for consideration. The Society makes it clear that it is an advocate for the Proportional Representation system of voting and the 'Hare-Clark' variant in particular. Its comments need to be understood in that context.

Key points in the correspondence are summarised as follows:

- Strong support for the use of PR by all councils
- Suggestion that there be 'wider circulation' of the 'excellent literature' prepared by the SEO explaining the system and responding to some common misapprehensions of electors
- Suggestion that 'full optional' voting be introduced under PR eg a ballot paper would still be valid if it contains votes for a lesser number of candidates than vacancies to be filled
- Suggestion that larger wards or 'at large' elections be required to maximise the 'effectiveness' of PR
- Alleged 'incorrect' counting procedure prescribed in the legislation in relation to calculation of transfer value of surplus votes
- Suggestion to include 'how to vote' material in postal packs
- Suggestion that voters who are not Australian citizens should be eligible to nominate
- Unnecessary 'loss of talent' from current Mayoral election process

- Clarification of entitlement to vote when a property is in joint names
- Encourage use of Internet voting
- Request for access to actual figures and election count details

Attachment B1 – Briefing Note - Officers

Office of Local Government Local Government Association of SA

**REVIEW OF THE MAY 2000
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS**

7th November 2000

BRIEFING NOTE – OFFICERS

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the Review of the May 2000 Local Government Elections project. Your session details are included in the attached confirmation slip. The purpose of this briefing note is to outline the background to the review and to provide some indication of the nature of the material intended to be covered in the discussion groups.

BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW

The May 2000 local government periodic elections were the first to be conducted under the provisions of the *Local Government (Elections) Act 1999* [‘the Act’]. The primary project objective of the current review is to conduct a technical and administrative review of the electoral processes and practices and identify any regulatory or administrative refinements that may be needed.

The review has been commissioned by the Local Government Association of SA (LGA) and the Office of Local Government under the direction of a Steering Committee comprised of representatives of the Office of Local Government (OLG), the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Electoral Commissioner. Prodirections Pty Ltd has been appointed to conduct the review and it will be using a team of three consultants (Michael Barry, Bill Furse and Janet Binder).

The review will entail the conduct of discussion groups across the State with council officers and candidates for the election (successful and unsuccessful). The discussion groups will be asked to consider a number of specific matters in relation to the conduct of the election (see below) but any views that officers wish to express will be recorded and relayed to the Steering Committee.

The results of the Discussion Groups will be collated and referred to the Steering Committee to consider any possible changes to the arrangements for the next periodic local government election. **The input of council officers on their experience in administering the May 2000 election process is a vital contribution to this process.**

SPECIFIC MATTERS TO BE COVERED

In addition to any matters that officers may wish to raise, the Steering Committee is particularly interested in receiving comments on the following aspects of the election process:

- Roll Preparation: eg merging of rolls, sole occupiers, duplicates
- Nomination process: eg timing considerations, candidates profiles, rules and procedures
- Postal Voting Packs: eg timing of mail out and return, contents of packs, problems reported by electors
- Conduct of the Count: eg timing of the close of voting, timing of preliminary and final results, centralised versus local counts
- Post Election Matters: eg Completion of campaign donations returns, comments from candidates
- Other: Relationship with State Electoral Office, training and reference material, future improvements to the system

The consultants will raise these questions in the discussion groups so you are invited to reflect on your experience prior to and during the May 2000 election in relation to these issues. However, any other comments you have will also be recorded by the consultants and referred to the Steering Committee for consideration.

Once again, thank you for your willingness to participate in the review. Please contact Janet Binder (8388 9747) or Michael Barry (8364 0799) if you have any questions prior to the meeting.

Michael Barry

Director

Prodirections Pty Ltd

Tel: 8364 0799

Fax: 8364 0344

Email: msbarry@bigpond.com

Attachment B2 – Briefing Note - Candidates

Office of Local Government Local Government Association of SA

<p style="text-align: center;">REVIEW OF THE MAY 2000 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS</p>

7th November 2000

**BRIEFING NOTE FOR USE WITH FOCUS GROUPS
OF CANDIDATES AT THE MAY 2000 ELECTION**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the Review of the May 2000 Local Government Elections project. Your session details are included in the attached confirmation slip. The purpose of this briefing note is to outline the background to the review and to provide some indication of the nature of the material intended to be covered in the discussion groups.

BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW

The May 2000 local government periodic elections were the first to be conducted under the provisions of the *Local Government (Elections) Act 1999* [‘the Act’]. The primary project objective of the current review is to conduct a technical and administrative review of the electoral processes and practices and identify any regulatory or administrative refinements that may be needed.

The review has been commissioned by the Local Government Association of SA (LGA) and the Office of Local Government under the direction of a Steering Committee comprised of representatives of the Office of Local Government (OLG), the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Electoral Commissioner. Prodirections Pty Ltd has been appointed to conduct the review and it will be using a team of three consultants (Michael Barry, Bill Furse and Janet Binder), all of whom have extensive experience in local government matters.

The review will entail the conduct of discussion groups across the State with council officers and candidates for the election (successful and unsuccessful). The invitations to candidates have been selected by random selection based on inviting one successful and one unsuccessful candidate from each council, together with some additional candidates who have expressed views about the election process. The discussion groups will be asked to consider a number of specific matters in relation to the conduct of the election (see below) but any views that candidates wish to express will be recorded and relayed to the Steering Committee.

The results of the Discussion Groups will be collated and referred to the Steering Committee to consider any possible changes to the arrangements for the next periodic local government election. **The input of candidates on their experience of the May 2000 election process is a vital contribution to this process.**

SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

As stated above the primary focus of the current review is the technical and administrative aspects of the election process. It is acknowledged that the new Act introduced significant fundamental changes such as the proportional representation as the single voting system and the **mandatory** use of postal voting. (However, in the case of postal voting it should be acknowledged that many councils had previously used this method on a voluntary basis to increase voter participation). It is also acknowledged that there are strongly held views amongst candidates and in the community generally on these fundamental issues.

These matters were canvassed extensively and considered thoroughly through a process of consultation and in the Parliament prior to their inclusion in the new Act.

SPECIFIC MATTERS TO BE COVERED

In addition to any matters that candidates may wish to raise, the Steering Committee is particularly interested in receiving comments on the following aspects of the election process:

- Nomination process: eg timing considerations, candidates profiles, rules and procedures
- Election Campaigning

- Postal Voting Packs: eg timing of mail out and return, contents of packs, problems reported by voters
- Conduct of the Count: eg timing of the close of voting, timing of preliminary and final results
- Post Election Matters: eg Completion of campaign donations returns

The consultants will raise these questions in the discussion groups so you are invited to reflect on your experience during the May 2000 election in relation to these issues. However, any other comments you have will also be recorded by the consultants and referred to the Steering Committee for consideration.

Once again, thank you for your willingness to participate in the review. Please contact Janet Binder (8388 9747) or Michael Barry (8364 0799) if you have any questions prior to the meeting.

Michael Barry

Director

Prodirections Pty Ltd

Tel: 8364 0799

Fax: 8364 0344

Email: msbarry@bigpond.com

Attachment B3 – Notes for Discussion Groups

May 2000 Local Government Elections

Notes for Discussion Groups

Relevant Legislation

- conduct of May 2000 local government elections was governed predominantly by the Local Government (Elections) Act 1999 (the Act) but also by the Local Government Act 1999 and the City of Adelaide Act 1998;
- the Electoral Commissioner was the Returning Officer for each council.

Timing of elections

- set out in Local Government (Elections) Act 1999 – see Appendix 1;
- dates for the May 2000 election are set out in Appendix 2.

Voters Roll

- compiled from House of Assembly electors and additional council entitlements;
- comprises the following;
 - persons enrolled as electors for the House of Assembly;
 - residents within the area or ward who have lodged the prescribed application;
 - ratepayers who are the sole owners or sole occupiers of the rateable property;
 - a body corporate if it is a sole owner or sole occupier of the rateable property;
 - a group of persons who are joint owners, owners in common or joint occupiers and at least one member of the group is not enrolled on the relevant voters roll in respect of residency;
- the council chief executive officer is responsible for the maintenance of the voters roll for the area and certifies the roll.

Nomination Process

- a nomination must contain a declaration of eligibility by the candidate and information required by the regulations to the Act including the candidate's profile;
- a photograph of the candidate is optional;
- the nomination period is 21 days;
- if there is any matter that might render a nomination invalid the returning officer must take all reasonable steps to notify the nominated candidate so that the matter can be addressed before the close of nominations;
- nominations must be displayed in the principle office of the council as soon as practicable after lodgement;
- a nominated candidate may withdraw a nomination before the close of nominations;
- if, at the close of nominations, a person has been nominated for election to two or more vacancies, both or all the nominations are void.

Election Campaigning

- electoral material must contain the name and address of the person authorising publication and in the case of printed material, the name and address of the printer or person responsible for production must be included;
- electoral material must not be inaccurate or misleading to a material extent.

Postal Voting

- the May 2000 election was conducted by postal voting although postal voting has been used in some councils in previous elections;
- the use of postal voting does not preclude the personal return of voting papers;
- the returning officer may in certain circumstances, but only for country councils, determine that voting be conducted by the use of polling places by notice in the government Gazette;
- voters must sign the relevant declaration.

Conduct of the Count

- proportional representation is prescribed under the Act as the method of counting;
- manual counting of first preference votes locally not mandatory under the Act;
- the returning officer may, after consultation with the relevant council, decide to use a computer program to carry out steps involved in the recording, scrutiny or counting of votes in an election.

Campaign Donations

- a candidate must provide a campaign donations return to the chief executive officer of the council within six weeks after the conclusion of an election.

Local Government Elections Timetable

Legislative Provisions

	<i>Local Government (Elections) Act 1999</i>
CLOSE OF ROLL	
Second Thursday in February	[S 15 (7)]
<i>[1st Thursday in February for City of Adelaide – City of Adelaide Act 1990 Schedule 1 s6(2)(a)]</i>	
Public notice inviting nominations	
<i>No later than the first Thursday in March</i>	
	[S 18 (a)]
NOMINATIONS OPEN	
No earlier than 21 days before the day nominations close	
	[S 19(4)]
NOMINATIONS CLOSE	
12 noon the last Thursday in March	
	[S 23 (A)]
Draw for position of names of candidates on ballot-papers	
<i>Immediately after close of nominations</i>	
	[S 29 (2)(3)]
Public notice of nominations received and notice in writing to candidates	
<i>Within 14 days of close of nominations</i>	
	[S26 (1)(2)]
Mail out of ballot packs to electors	
<i>As soon as practicable after 21 days and not later than 14 days before polling day</i>	
	[S 39 (1)]
Public notice of place for counting of votes	
<i>No later than 7 days before polling day</i>	
	[S 30 (2)]
POLLING DAY – CLOSE OF VOTING	
12 noon, the first business day after the second Saturday In May	
	[S5]
Provisional declaration	
<i>Immediately after the count is completed</i>	
	[S 48(1) (c)]
Written advice to candidates notifying election results	
<i>Immediately after the conclusion of the election</i>	
	[S 50 (3) (a)]
Public notice of election results	
<i>Within one month of the conclusion of the election</i>	
	[S 50 (3) (b)]

Date of close of polling for the next periodic elections

Monday 12 May 2003

Local Government Elections Timetable

Periodic Elections May 2000

Several public notice dates are listed on days less than the full statutory period permitted as the Government Gazette is published on a Thursday

CLOSE OF ROLL

Thursday 10 February 2000 (3 February City of Adelaide)

Public notice inviting nominations

No later than Thursday 2 March 2000

NOMINATIONS OPEN

Thursday 9 March 2000

NOMINATIONS CLOSE

12 noon Thursday 30 March 2000

Draw for position of names of candidates on ballot-papers

Immediately after 12 noon, Thursday 30 March 2000

Public notice of nominations received and notice in writing to candidates

No later than Thursday 13 April 2000

Mail out of ballot packs to electors

Wednesday 26 April to Tuesday 2 May 2000

Public notice of place for counting of votes

No later than Thursday 4 May 2000

POLLING DAY – CLOSE OF VOTING

12 noon, Tuesday, 16th May 2000

Provisional declaration

Manual Counts – immediately after the completion of each election count

Computer counts – immediately after the count has been completed

Written advice to candidates notifying election results

Immediately after the conclusion of the election

Public notice of election results

No later than Thursday 15 June 2000

Attachment B4 – Interview Guide - Officers

Office of Local Government Local Government Association of SA

<p style="text-align: center;">REVIEW OF THE MAY 2000 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS</p>

INTERVIEW GUIDE – OFFICERS

ITEM
1.0 INTRODUCTION
1.1 Welcome and outline purpose.
1.2 Describe joint project – LGA/OLG – role of steering committee.
1.3 Outline focus on administrative and technical aspects.
1.4 Session will cover a number of specific issues on which the Steering Committee seeks comment. However, participants encouraged to comment on any other matters pertinent to the conduct of the election.
1.5 Comments will be recorded by the Consultants and collated into a report for the Steering Committee with any major findings and recommendations from all the discussion groups.
1.6 Steering Committee will then report to the Minister and the President of the LGA with recommendations for improvement.

2.0	Roll Preparation
2.1	What was your experience in updating the Supplementary Roll and merging it with the Electoral Commissioners roll in the period between November 1999 and March 2000?
2.2	<i>(Supplementary)</i> What specific problems did you encounter and how might these be overcome for a future election? <ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>duplicates</i>- <i>classification of Crown entities and corporate utilities</i>- <i>identifying occupiers</i>- <i>inconsistent treatment of deceased estates</i>- <i>adjustments during election</i>- <i>automatic mailout to bodies corporate and groups</i>
2.3	What was the impact on council resources (in merging the rolls)?
2.4	<i>(Supplementary)</i> Will more resources be required in the future?
2.5	How did you identify sole occupiers of non-residential property and include them on the roll?
2.6	<i>(Supplementary)</i> Based on this experience how could this be done differently in the future?
2.7	Can you provide suggestions on identifying and removing duplicate entries on the rolls on an ongoing basis?
2.8	Do you have any more comments on the roll preparation phase before we move on?
3.0	Nomination Process
3.1	What questions were you asked most frequently by possible candidates during the nomination period?
3.2	<i>(Supplementary)</i> What appeared to be their major areas of uncertainty or concern?

3.3 With the benefit of experience, what controls do you think should be placed on:

- (a) the length of candidate profiles
- (b) the content of candidate profiles

lodged with nominations?

- *improved information on photographic requirements*
- *other information available eg information sheets, PR guide, manuals*

3.4 Do you have any comment on the time period allowed for lodgement of nominations?

- *reduce the time period?*
- *public display of nominations: the impact of this on late nominations*

3.5 *(Supplementary)* It has been said that the time period for nominations could be shorter – what are your views?

3.6 Did you experience any difficulties arising from last minute nominations (including candidate profiles)?

- *quality of written and facsimile nominations and profiles*
- *numerous changes to nomination profiles*

3.7 *(Supplementary)* Do you have any suggestions to minimise the problems?

3.8 Do you have any comment on the timing of the draw for position on ballot papers?

4.0 Issues and Return of Postal Voting Packs

4.1 What were the sort of questions that you were most frequently asked by

- (a) candidates
- (b) electors

during the mailout period?

4.2	<i>(Supplementary)</i> What were their areas of uncertainty or concern?
4.3	Do you think there is adequate time allowed for preparation and return of ballot material?
4.4	What were the main faults found when voters mailed back their votes, leading to votes being rejected from the count?
4.5	Do you think the rate of informal and rejected rates is likely to fall over the years as people get more used to council postal voting procedures?
4.6	Did many people choose to hand deliver their votes to the council office?
4.7	Should this facility be expanded or reduced?
4.8	Do you have any general comments on the equipment and materials provided in the postal voting packs? <ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>design etc eg colour and design of declaration envelopes</i>- <i>single form of words in declaration for both individual electors and those nominated by bodies corporate or groups</i>- <i>detail required on prescribed forms</i>- <i>proforma for profiles</i>
5.0	Conduct of the Count
5.1	Do you think the close of voting at 12 noon Tuesday was a good idea?
5.2	<i>(Supplementary)</i> When do you think the voting should have closed?
5.3	Do you have any comment on the timing of results of count?
5.4	How many people here had their vote finalised using computer data entry?
5.5	<i>(Supplementary)</i> Would you favour centralised counting, in lieu of first preference counts being conducted locally? <ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>trade off manual first preference counts v's centralised processing</i>

5.6	What other improvements would you like to see to the conduct of the count phase of the election?
6.0	Post Election Matters
6.1	How did candidates find the process for completing the campaign donations returns?
6.2	<i>(Supplementary)</i> Were the time frames for completion reasonable
6.3	<i>(Supplementary)</i> Do you have any comments on the requirement to lodge campaign donations returns?
6.4	What general comments have you received from candidates on the conduct of the election?
6.5	What difficulties are you aware of that were experienced by council staff?
7.0	Other
7.1	Do you have any comments on your relationship with the State Electoral Office throughout the election process?
7.2	<i>(Supplementary)</i> Do you have any suggestions for improvement?
7.3.	Do you have any comments about the training for, and guidelines and other information on, the conduct of the election?

Attachment B5 – Interview Guide - Candidates

Office of Local Government Local Government Association of SA

<p>REVIEW OF THE MAY 2000 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS</p>

INTERVIEW GUIDE – CANDIDATES

ITEM
1.0 INTRODUCTION
1.1 Welcome and outline purpose.
1.2 Describe joint project – LGA/OLG – role of steering committee.
1.3 Outline focus on administrative and technical aspects.
1.4 Session will cover a number of specific issues on which the Steering Committee seeks comment. However, participants encouraged to comment on any other matters pertinent to the conduct of the election.
1.5 Comments will be recorded by the Consultants and collated into a report for the Steering Committee with any major findings and recommendations from all the discussion groups.
1.6 Steering Committee will then report to the Minister and the President of the LGA with recommendations for improvement.
2.0 Roll Preparation
2.1 Do you have any comments on the preparation of the voting roll prior to the conduct of the May 2000 election?

<p>3.0 Nomination Process</p>
<p>3.1 Do you have any comment on the time period allowed for lodgement of nominations?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>reduce the time period?</i>- <i>public display of nominations</i>
<p>3.2 (Supplementary) It has been said that the time period for nominations could be shorter – what are your views?</p>
<p>3.3 Were you able to readily get all information you needed about lodging a nomination?</p>
<p>3.4 Were the legal forms which you had to complete easy to follow?</p>
<p>3.5 Did you have any difficulty in having your candidate profile accepted as complying with the requirements?</p>
<p>3.6 With the benefit of experience, what controls do you think should be placed on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(c) the length of candidate profiles(d) the content of candidate profiles <p>lodged with nominations?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>improved information on photographic requirements</i>- <i>other information available eg information sheets, PR guide, manuals</i>
<p>3.7 Do you have any comment on the timing of the draw for position on ballot papers?</p>
<p>3.8 Did you experience any serious difficulties or have any specific concerns with the rules and procedures surrounding the nomination process?</p>

<p>4.0 Election Campaigning</p>
<p>4.1 Did you experience any serious difficulties with the rules and procedures surrounding campaigning?</p> <p>4.2 <i>(Supplementary)</i> Do you think the rules and procedures surrounding campaigning are too restrictive or are they necessary to ensure fair campaigning?</p>
<p>5.0 Issues and Return of Postal Voting Packs</p>
<p>5.1 Do you have any comments about the timing of the mailout of ballot packs and the return of completed votes by electors?</p>
<p>5.2 Do you recall any problems frequently mentioned by electors about casting their votes?</p> <p>5.3 <i>(Supplementary)</i> Did you report any problems?</p>
<p>5.4 Do you have any general comments on the equipment and materials provided in the postal voting packs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>design etc eg colour and design of declaration envelopes</i> - <i>single form of words in declaration for both individual electors and those nominated by bodies corporate or groups</i> - <i>detail required on prescribed forms</i> - <i>proforma for profiles</i>
<p>6.0 Conduct of the Count</p>
<p>6.1 The close of voting was set at 12 noon Tuesday so that the morning mail delivery after the long weekend could be admitted to the count. Do you think this was a good idea?</p> <p>6.2 <i>(Supplementary)</i> When do you think the voting should have closed?</p>
<p>6.3 Do you have any comment on the timing of results of count?</p>

6.4	How many people here had their vote finalised using computer data entry?
6.5	<i>(Supplementary)</i> Would you favour centralised counting, in lieu of first preference counts being conducted locally? - <i>trade off manual first preference counts v's centralised processing</i>
7.0	Post Election Matters
7.1	How did you find the process for completing the campaign donations returns?
7.2	<i>(Supplementary)</i> Were the time frames for completion reasonable
7.3	<i>(Supplementary)</i> Do you have any comments on the requirement to lodge campaign donations returns?
7.4	What general comments do you have on the conduct of the election?
8.0	Other

Attachment B6 – List of Abbreviations

AEC	Australian Electoral Commission
CE	Chief Executive
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CoA	City of Adelaide
DRO	Deputy Returning Officer
FPP	First Past the Post
LGA	Local Government Association (of South Australia)
OLG	Office of Local Government
OP	Optional Preferential
PR	Proportional Representation
SAIRA	South Australian Institute of Rate Administrators
SEO	State Electoral Office