



Hon Ann Leahy MP
Minister for Local Government and Water and
Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers

Our ref: WR24/37071

13 DEC 2024

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Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
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Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter regarding petition 4172-24 received by the Queensland Legislative Assembly on 28 November 2024 about limiting political parties or groups to a maximum of forty five percent of any local government outside of Brisbane.

Democratic representation is a foundational principle for Queensland's system of local government, and I appreciate the petitioners' support for a democratic system of local government in Queensland.

In open democratic systems, like-minded individuals have the right to associate. As the petition states, under the *Local Government Electoral Act 2011* (LGEA), two or more candidates in a local government election can form a group to campaign together, implement common policies, and work toward shared goals if elected to council. Similarly, the LGEA and the *Electoral Act 1992* (EA) provide for registered political parties to endorse candidates for, and campaign in, a local government election.

Importantly, the LGEA and EA include provisions to ensure that groups of candidates and political parties operate in a transparent manner, including ensuring that voters can understand when candidates are campaigning as a group or as political parties' endorsed candidates.

Under the LGEA, candidates wishing to campaign as a group of candidates must first register with the Electoral Commission of Queensland (ECQ), and there are penalties for groups that are not registered. The ECQ will then publish the group's details on the ECQ webpage to provide transparency to the public. Similarly, the registration of political parties is governed by the EA, and the register of political parties and a political party's endorsement of a local government election candidate is made public by the ECQ.

Groups or political parties are also required to inform the ECQ of changes to a group's membership or a political party's endorsement of a candidate.

In addition, if a candidate is a member of a group or endorsed by a political party, the name of the group or political party will be written beside the candidate's name on the ballot paper.

These requirements enable voters to better know who they are voting for and to understand that certain candidates may work towards shared goals with other candidates or with political parties if elected.

A range of requirements apply to groups of candidates and political parties, including disclosure of gifts, loans and electoral expenditure, electoral expenditure caps, and requirements for dedicated campaign bank accounts.

These requirements ensure voters understand how a group of candidates or a political party is campaigning in an election and reinforce the transparent and equitable conduct of elections and integrity in Queensland's local governments.

More information regarding groups of candidates in Queensland's local government elections can be found on the ECQ website at www.ecq.qld.gov.au/election-participants/local-election-participants/groups-of-candidates.

More information regarding political parties in Queensland's local government elections can be found on the ECQ website at <https://www.ecq.qld.gov.au/election-participants/local-election-participants/registered-political-parties>.

I would like to thank the petitioners for raising this matter with me and I trust this information is of assistance.

If you have any questions, please contact Mr Angus McCaffrey, A/Chief of Staff on 0424 683 186 or Angus.McCaffrey@ministerial.qld.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ann Leahy', with a stylized, cursive script.

ANN LEAHY MP

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