

2024 local government elections

The Countdown



Message

FROM THE ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER

Welcome to the third edition of *The Countdown* – the ECQ’s regular update that delivers valuable information to you in the lead up to the 2024 local government elections.

Since the last edition the momentum is growing as we start to gather pace towards Election Day on 16 March 2024.

The ECQ is continuing to engage with stakeholders in preparation for the local government election. Our First Nations engagement officer travelled to the Torres Strait, while I went to the recent LGAQ Bush Councils convention in Goondiwindi. Both were worthwhile trips to hear from those on the ground and to answer any questions people may have around the electoral process. I was also able to brief the Queensland Parliament during the annual Estimates hearings on the ECQ’s planning and preparations for the 2024 local government elections, as well as the ECQ’s engagement program with local governments and First Nations communities.

One of the many important items of business in the past month has been the release of electoral expenditure caps which have come into force for the first time in this upcoming election. We have a team of election experts here at the ECQ working hard to assist local government participants.

We also recently sent a letter to local government chief executive officers, outlining our election service plans to assist councils with preparations and administration as they move into the final quarter of the year.

The Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning (DSDILGP) has released its refreshed training package, *So You Want to be a Councillor*. This mandatory training helps candidates complete the necessary legislative requirements and understand their new roles, should they be successful on election day. For councillors who are re-contesting, the training provides an opportunity to refresh on essential content, including any changes to legislation.

Other work underway for the 2024 election includes four divisional boundary reviews and finalising of requests for postal ballot applications.

We'll continue to keep you up-to-date with the latest news and information via *The Countdown*, so please keep an eye on your inbox and share this newsletter with any interested colleagues.

Regards,

Pat Vidgen
Electoral Commissioner



In this edition of The Countdown

- **Electoral expenditure caps**
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Electoral expenditure cap

Electoral expenditure caps for local government elections now apply in Queensland, introduced by an amendment to the *Local Government Electoral Act 2011*. Candidates, groups of candidates, registered political parties and third parties now have a limit on the total amount of electoral expenditure they can incur during an election's capped expenditure period. Caps vary across local government areas on a sliding scale with reference to the number of electors, and whether a candidate is contesting a mayoral or councillor position.

The ECQ has published the [Notice of expenditure caps and number of electors](#) ahead of the capped expenditure period, which provides the value of caps for each LGA.

What is a capped expenditure period?

The capped expenditure period for 2024's local government elections runs from 14 August 2023 until 6pm on 16 March 2024 (election day). The caps apply to all electoral expenditure incurred by candidates or other election participants during the capped expenditure period.

How can I tell if electoral expenditure is incurred during the capped expenditure period?

Electoral expenditure is incurred when the relevant goods are first used for a campaign purpose during a capped expenditure period for an election. The date the expenditure was invoiced or paid does not matter. The electoral expenditure of the goods used for a campaign purpose in more than one election is incurred when the expense was first used during a capped expenditure period.

The ECQ has published a range of [fact sheets and handbooks](#) to help candidates and other election participants understand their legislative obligations under the *Local Government Electoral Act 2011*. Our fact sheets explain electoral expenditure and caps in more detail, including examples so election participants can see how their obligations might apply in real campaign situations. For additional assistance, contact the ECQ's Funding and Disclosure team at fad@ecq.qld.gov.au.



ECQ's role in regulating candidate behaviour

Have you ever wondered what the ECQ does when it receives a complaint about a potential candidate's advertising?

The ECQ has a limited remit when it comes to regulating this type of material. Section 182(2) of the *Local Government Electoral Act 2011 (LGEA)* limits the ECQ to only investigating conduct which involves knowingly publishing (in print or online) a false statement of fact about the personal character or conduct of a candidate, for the purpose of affecting the election of the candidate.

Investigations of this nature will need to establish if:

1. the published material contained a false statement of fact (as opposed to an opinion)
2. that the statement of fact was about a candidate's personal character or conduct (as opposed to their professional or public character or conduct)
3. the publisher's intent in publishing the material was to affect the election of that candidate (and not for some other purpose)
4. the person who published the material knew that it contained a false statement of fact.

It is not sufficient to demonstrate that the statement of fact was incorrect – the motives and knowledge of the publisher must be established to substantiate an offence against section 182 of the LGEA.

For further information about the ECQ's role in regulating advertising materials, please see [Fact Sheet 7](#).



Election rehearsal

The ECQ's planning has been put to the test in its early rehearsal activities held in July, which involved the conduct of a local government election for a selected range of local government types through various scenarios.

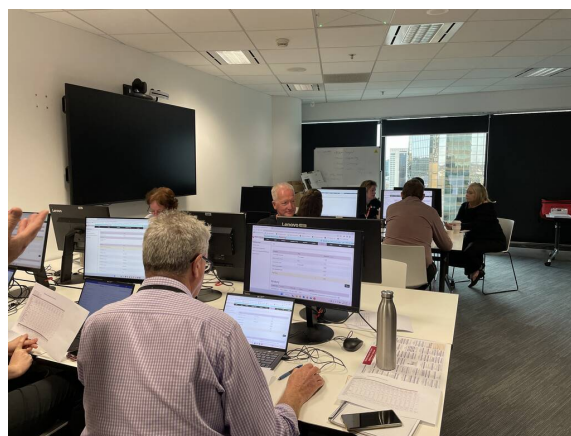
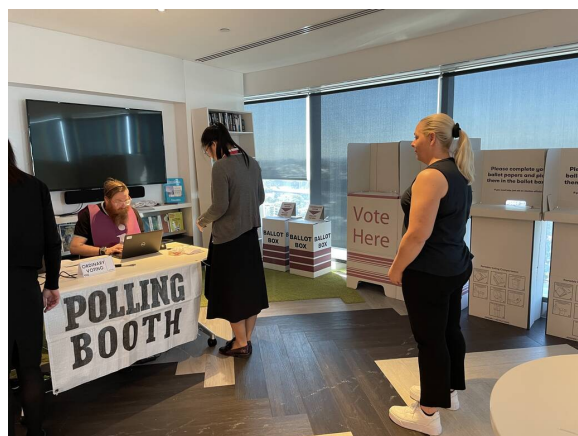
Queensland is made up of a diverse range of local governments ranging in size, landscape, and population density. They can be divided, undivided, coastal, regional, or remote. Therefore, the people, processes and systems required to deliver elections in each local government need to be effective, efficient, and well-practiced.

Some of the election rehearsal scenarios included ballots for large and small councils, large

volumes of candidates, through to uncontested elections for both mayoral and councillor positions in divided and undivided councils, and attendance and full postal ballots.

Activities as part of the election rehearsal incorporated new and updated processes and procedures driven from 2020 election evaluation recommendations.

The rehearsal enabled end-to-end use of the necessary systems and supplier integrations and gave ECQ staff exposure to the highly orchestrated behind-the-scenes activities required to deliver an election in the field.



ECQ staff conducting the election rehearsal



Draft Service Plans released to council CEOs

Each council CEO will have recently received a letter from the ECQ's Executive Director of Election Event Management, Julie Cavanagh, via email.

The letter provides an important update for councils including information relating to the overall delivery of the election in 2024, plus a draft Service Plan that details specifically planned services relating to their local government area.

The draft Service Plan attached to the letter is a valuable asset that is intended to help with council's own election preparations as March 2024 grows nearer. To discuss the content of the letter or draft Service Plan, the ECQ encourages all CEOs to reach out to the key contact person listed in the communication.



ECQ visits the Torres Straits

A recent trip to the Torres Strait involved the ECQ listening and sharing useful discussions about the upcoming local government election with people in Far North Queensland.

The ECQ's First Nations engagement officer, Quentin Barba and ECQ principal program

coordinator, Kim Beamish attended the Queensland Police Service Police Liaison Conference and also met with the Torres Shire Council and Torres Strait Regional Council.

“These conversations were very useful, especially to hear from people on the ground, to make sure we are managing issues that need to be managed with the upcoming elections,” Quentin said.

“We discussed ways to boost communications to increase voting, employment opportunities for temporary election staff, and candidate opportunities.

“It was useful to hear about the best polling booth locations and the need to be flexible in case of cultural business or an unplanned event such as a funeral. It is so worthwhile to have those face-to-face meetings to understand the needs of our First Nations people.”

If you would like to get in touch with Quentin about First Nations engagement you can email him at quentin.barba@ecq.qld.gov.au.



Quentin Barba discussing the upcoming local government election



July meeting of Local Government Engagement Advisory Committee

On 5 July 2023, the Local Government Election Advisory Committee held its second meeting.

The meeting agenda was extensive, and members were presented information on various topics including:

- the recruitment, training, and allocation of Returning Officers and Assistant Returning Officers

- the ECQ's compliance approach for the 2024 local government elections, without reference to specific compliance matters or methodologies
- implementation of local government electoral expenditure caps
- the review of the mandatory councillor training by the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning
- an overview of the cost estimates provided to each local government for delivery of the 2024 elections
- an update on planning activities for the 2024 local government elections
- the process for assessing and providing recommendations to the Deputy Premier on applications for full postal elections
- the completion of the inaugural ECQ [First Nations Engagement Strategy](#), and
- the ECQ submission to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts' Postal Services Modernisation discussion paper.

Discussions on these topics proved fruitful for the ECQ's preparations for the 2024 local government elections.

The next meeting is planned for October 2023.



Local Government Change Commission Divisional Boundary Reviews

The Local Government Change Commission (Change Commission) has commenced divisional boundary reviews for:

- Bundaberg Regional Council
- Fraser Coast Regional Council
- Isaac Regional Council, and
- Tablelands Regional Council.

The boundary reviews, with the exception of Tablelands Regional Council, are being conducted to ensure all divisions in these local government areas have approximately the same number of electors ahead of the 2024 local government elections. Tablelands Regional Council divisions are being reviewed to determine if moving the township of Herberton from Division 2 to Division 1 is in the public interest.

On 31 July 2023, the Change Commission published proposed divisional boundaries and asked members of the public for comment. This public consultation closed on 14 August 2023.

The Change Commission will review the submissions and another relevant information to inform its final recommendations. The Change Commission will prepare a report by late October 2023 for the Minister responsible for Local Government to consider implementation by Regulation.



Mandatory training for candidates



SO YOU WANT TO BE A COUNCILLOR?

The Queensland Government has launched its refreshed online, *So you want to be a councillor* candidate training.

Remember all candidates, regardless of whether you have done the training before, must complete it within six months of nomination for election.

The department will be promoting the training through their networks and channels. Follow them on [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#) for updates and visit the website at www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/lg-elections.

The training is important for councillors, candidates, and anyone else who engages with local elected representatives. It takes approximately 90 minutes to complete online but it does not have to be finished completely in one sitting.

The training will refresh your understanding of candidate and councillor obligations considering recent legislative reforms to the *Local Government Electoral Act 2011*, including information about expenditure caps.



Applications for Postal ballots

The Deputy Premier has decided on the applications for postal ballots received earlier this year. He has approved postal ballots in all, or part, of the following local government areas:

- Balonne Shire Council
- Banana Shire Council
- Barcaldine Regional Council
- Barcoo Shire Council
- Blackall-Tambo Shire Council
- Bulloo Shire Council
- Diamantina Shire Council
- Ethridge Shire Council
- Goondiwindi Regional Council
- Isaac Regional Council (hybrid postal and attendance ballot)
- Longreach Regional Council
- Maranoa Regional Council (hybrid postal and attendance ballot)
- North Burnett Regional Council
- Paroo Shire Council
- Quilpie Shire Council
- Richmond Shire Council
- Western Downs Regional Council.

These local government areas have received notice of the decisions and the ECQ will deliver the approved elections and ensure all electors can participate successfully.



Did You Know?

- There will be around 15,900 pencils used in polling booths and approximately 1,900 pencil sharpeners to extend their usefulness.
- There will be 1,786 cardboard counting frames used to help accurately count first-past-the-post votes.



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This email was sent by Electoral Commission of Queensland, Level 20, 1 Eagle Street, BRISBANE, QLD 4000, Australia to edrick.bamba@ecq.qld.gov.au

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