



# **GOLDFIELDS LAND AND SEA COUNCIL**

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20 July 2017

Mr P Katsambanis, MLA  
Chairman  
Community Development and Justice Standing Committee  
Parliament House  
Perth WA 6000

Via email: [lacdjsc@parliament.wa.gov.au](mailto:lacdjsc@parliament.wa.gov.au)

Dear Mr Katsambanis,

**RE: Inquiry into the Administration and Management of the 2017 State General Election**

Thank you for the invitation to make a written submission into an 'Inquiry into the Administration and Management of the 2017 State General Election'.

Please find attached the GLSC's written submission for the Committee's consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Hans Bokelund  
Chief Executive Officer

## **Submission to Community Development and Justice Standing Committee Inquiry into the Administration and Management of the 2017 State General Election**

### **The participation of communities with traditionally low levels of enrolment or turn out and/or high levels of informality**

General Comment: There are two key issues in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ('ATSI') people living in remote areas in Western Australia. The first relates to the accuracy or completeness of the electoral roll – we expect that there is considerable underrepresentation of ATSI people on the electoral roll in remote areas. The second issue is the turnout of enrolled ATSI electors to vote. With this issue, it is possible to identify the problem areas by considering the % elector turnout against the electoral roll. There is an issue overall for all voters, of course, in that the state average turnout was just 86%. A conservative indicator of the extent of the ATSI under-participation in remote areas can be measured by the extent to which the voter turnout falls short of the state average. In some cases, this is a considerable margin.

- What factors affect rates of enrolment, turn out and informality in Aboriginal and cultural linguistically diverse communities and amongst young people?

A clear issue that affects ATSI people in regard to enrolment, turnout and informality is a general lack of knowledge and understanding of the importance of enrolling to vote, of actually turning up to vote (if enrolled), and when they do turn up, of how to fill out the ballot slip correctly.

I think it would probably be timely for the Electoral Commission to undertake a campaign in remote areas designed to inform people of the electoral process and the importance of registering on the electoral roll.

- What initiatives have other Australian jurisdictions adopted to address low enrolment or turn out and high levels of informality?

Whilst we are unaware of what other jurisdictions have adopted, we recall with reference to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission ('ATSIC') and its voting process, the Commonwealth government engaged Aboriginal Electoral liaison officers to undertake an education, motivation and facilitation role in seeking to engage ATSI people in the electoral process. These individuals were generally recruited from the areas they were to service, and worked for a period leading up to each election. These positions allowed for ATSI people to speak to their own people and make them aware of the importance to vote, the importance of enrolling and the importance of filling the paper out correctly. They also made special arrangements as necessary to facilitate maximum turn out, according to the logistical issues faced in each case. (Though, in hindsight, the turnout was never all that great in any event.)

- How effective was the Commission's Ambassador Program during the 2017 election?

I am unaware of the Commission's Ambassador Program.

### **Remote polling services**

- How adequate were the polling services provided to people living in remote Western Australia?

Whilst we have very limited knowledge of how adequate the polling services were for people living in remote Western Australia, in the past it was essential to ensure that the employees were knowledgeable of ATSI people living in remote Western Australia.

Remote mobile polling has its uses, but is only going to work for those electors who happen to be on site when the mobile poll is on site. To snare electors missed in this process, consideration might be given to broadening the scope of those eligible to apply for registration as a general early voter. Currently, registration is restricted to the disabled and the frail. This could be extended to those living in remote areas and likely to be unable to vote under the existing arrangements. Community based organisations could act as a distribution and collection point for such ballots, under the supervision of an ATSI Electoral liaison officer.

- How do other jurisdictions in Australia and internationally provide polling services to people in remote locations? Could such initiatives be employed in Western Australia?

I have no knowledge of practices in other jurisdictions either in Australia or internationally to provide polling services to people in remote locations.

- What factors affect the delivery of remote polling services in Western Australia?

One of the main issues with this is to ensure that the employees of the Electoral Commission have a greater knowledge of the remote communities that they will be going into. It is also important that the employees are Aboriginal, preferably from the area concerned, and therefore familiar with the issues that people are currently facing.

### **The operation of polling places, including early voting centres, campaign advertising and distribution of campaign material**

- What were the experiences of electors, candidates, campaign workers/volunteers and polling place officials on election day and at early voting centers?

I have no comment of this.

- Are there alternative early voting and/or polling place operational methods that could be adopted in Western Australia to improve the experience?

See “Remote Polling Services” above.

### **Goldfields Land and Sea Council**