

WHAT WE KNOW FROM EXPERIENCE¹

- Insufficient **candidates** in some country areas result in failure of elections creating the need for costly supplementary elections for some Councils, some of which have a relatively small rate base.
- The proportion of candidates asked by existing members or friends to stand appears to have increased as a reason to nominate. Other reasons given are family tradition and recent experience on Council committees or advisory groups
- As Councillors and Mayors, women are an under-represented group.
 - In 1973, females constituted less than 3% . By 1987, this had grown to 16 percent, then to 25 percent in 1997, reaching growth curve plateau in the 2003 elections.
 - More women are elected to metropolitan than country councils
 - More male candidates contest Mayoral positions
- “Ageing” of the membership of Councils is a general trend across the State, but most evident in rural areas where those contesting elections are predominantly in the 55-64 year old age range.
- There was a reduction in **voter turnout** at the 2003 election compared to 2000 election. Possible reasons suggested include
 - Clearer advice to voters that voting is not compulsory appeared on ballot pack information
 - Initial novelty of postal voting may have worn off (introduced 1997, mandatory from 1999)
 - Fewer Mayoral election contests potentially reducing voting public interest
 - Absence of significant local galvanising issues to attract community attention or interest (for example, amalgamations leading up to the 1997 elections).
- More people vote in country areas.
- People who do not vote have reported they did not know the candidates or their views and therefore cannot make an informed choice.
- Research also suggests the following factors affect voter turnout.
 - There is some correlation between voter turnout and a range of socio-economic variables. Families with young children are less likely to vote.
 - Persons residing less than two years in a council area are unlikely to vote.
 - Negative experiences of overseas governments may mean some people who have migrated to Australia may prefer to disassociate themselves from a voluntary, postal electoral process.
- Most people **return voting papers** within three days of receiving their ballot pack in the post.

¹ Key issues highlighted in State Electoral Office electoral statistics, community surveys and research undertaken in South Australia and nationally by LGA and Office of Local Government (SA Government).