

VOTING

IN THE MAY 2003 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

Who can enrol to vote in Local
Government Council elections

How to get on the Local
Government Electoral Roll

Postal voting and what to do

How to get involved in Local
Government Business



General elections for all Local Government Councils in South Australia are held every three years.

- The next elections will be held in May 2003.
- Voting in Local Government Council elections is voluntary, by secret ballot postal voting.
- To exercise your right to vote, you must be on the Electoral Roll.

This brochure answers some of the questions people often ask about why voting is important, who is entitled to vote, and what you need to do to be involved. Another brochure in this series explains what Local Government business is all about. At the end of this brochure there is a list of some places you can go to get more detailed information about Council elections. The best place to start is at your local Council office.

VOTE FOR YOUR NOW AND YOUR FUTURE

Voting in Local Government Council elections is about voting for who decides about some key things that happen in your local community. The people who get elected to the Council will help to decide what happens locally - your now, your future.

Each candidate standing for election to the Council is likely to have different views about what should happen in your local community, and you can choose to vote for the person whose views are most like yours.

A story about what each candidate thinks is important will be posted to you with your postal voting papers. You can also contact the candidates and talk to them about what they want for the area and why they want to be elected. All Councillors represent everyone in their community so ask them what they know about the things Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people think are important, and how they will represent you and your people. You may decide that some candidates will be better at representing you than others.

By voting, you can help to influence what sort of place your community will be. It is about your future so vote for the representative(s) you want. Talk to other people you know and encourage them to vote too.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR RUNNING THE ELECTIONS?

The person who is responsible for running the elections is called the "Returning Officer". The Returning Officer for all Local Government Council elections is the State Electoral Commissioner, who is appointed by the Governor following a recommendation and resolution by both Houses of Parliament. The State Electoral Commissioner is also responsible for conducting State parliamentary elections. The Returning Officer may appoint a Deputy Returning Officer to each Council to help run the elections. The Deputies are usually people who work for the State or Commonwealth Electoral Offices or they can be someone nominated by the Council who is approved by the Returning Officer. Other people, called Electoral Officers also help out during the elections and provide people with information and advice about what to do. All these people are trained by the Returning Officer and it is their job to carry out their role in strict adherence to directions and delegations from the Returning Officer.

WHO HAS THE RIGHT TO ENROL TO VOTE IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCIL ELECTIONS?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are encouraged to enrol to vote as well as anyone who is

- 18 years of age or over at the time of voting,
- a resident - **you do not have to own a house to be entitled to vote,**
- a ratepayer in the Council area. This could be a person who owns a house or other people who own property but who are not residents like people who run a business, and
- an Australian citizen (all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders born in Australia are Australian citizens).

You must be enrolled to be able to vote.

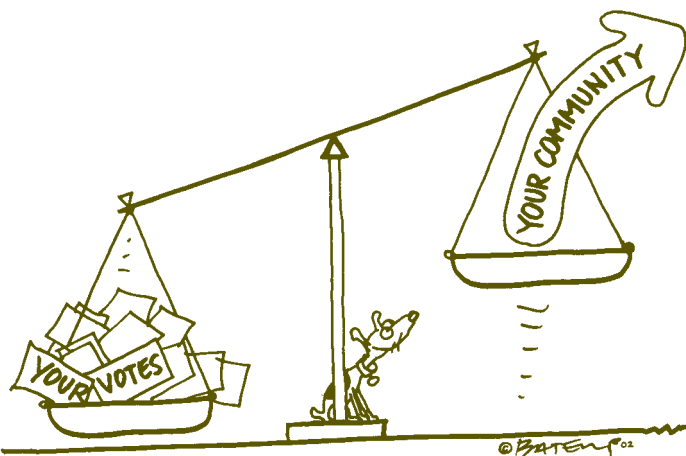
HOW DO I GET ON THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTORAL ROLL?

Rolls close for 2003 Local Government elections on Thursday 13th February 2003 (6th February in the City of Adelaide). If you are already on the State Electoral Roll (which means you vote in State and Federal elections which are compulsory) then you are automatically on the Local Government Council Roll. You only have to enrol once, but if you move somewhere else to live you will need to fill out another form to let the Electoral Office know so they can send you information to your new address.

- **If you have changed your address recently, you will need to fill out a form** at any Post Office or Electoral Office **before 13th February 2003 (6th February for the City of Adelaide Council area)** to make sure your voting papers are sent to you at your new address.

If you have not voted before, or just turned 18 years of age, all you need to do is to go to any Post Office and fill in an enrolment form. You must enrol by:

- **6th February in the City of Adelaide elections, or**
- **13th February 2003 for all other Council areas in South Australia.**



ENROL BY
13/2/03
City of Adelaide
6/2/03

**CANDIDATES
NOMINATE BY**
12 noon 27/3/03

**RECEIVE BALLOT
PACK IN MAIL BY**
end April 2003

**POST BALLOT PAPER
FOR DELIVERY BY**
close of election
12 noon 12/5/03

**ELECTION RESULTS
PUBLISHED BY**
12/6/03

HOW DO I GET MY POSTAL VOTING PAPERS AND WHAT DO I DO?

Everyone who has enrolled will receive postal voting papers - called a Ballot Pack - in the mail near the end of April. The Ballot Pack will include:

- ballot papers and envelopes,
- a short story ("profile") of each candidate, and
- information about what to do and how to vote.

If you do not receive your papers or lose them, go to your local Council office and tell them. You can fill out a form and get new ballot papers.

- Follow the instructions in the Ballot Pack and complete the ballot paper.
- Fill out the declaration on the back of the ballot paper envelope.
- Post it back so the Returning Officer receives it by **12.00 noon on Monday 12th May.**

HOW CAN IT BE A SECRET BALLOT IF I HAVE TO SIGN THE BALLOT PAPER ENVELOPE?

The laws about elections say the declaration on the back of the ballot paper envelope must be completed so the Returning Officer or Deputy Returning Officer can check that you are on the Electoral Roll.

After this is checked, the Returning Officer tears the declaration section with your name and signature off the ballot paper envelope leaving the sealed ballot paper envelope with your vote in it. After this is done to all returned ballot paper envelopes, they are then put together and mixed up, so no-one can know which is your envelope. It is a secret ballot.

HOW ARE THE VOTES COUNTED?

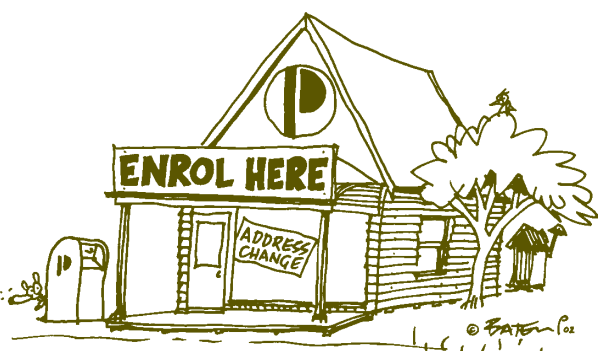
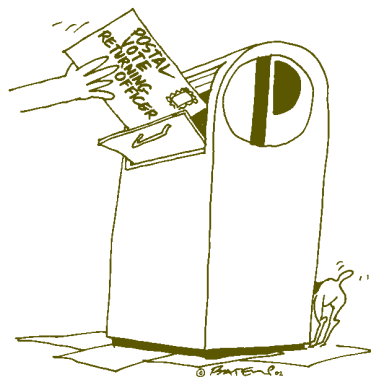
A system called "Proportional Representation" is used for counting the votes in Local Government Council elections - similar to the system used in ATSIIC elections. It is based on each candidate gaining a "quota" of votes to get elected. The "quota" is worked out on the basis of dividing the number of votes by the number of vacancies plus 1, and adding 1 to the result as follows:

$$\text{Quota} = \left(\frac{\text{Number of formal votes}}{\text{Number of vacancies} + 1} \right) + 1$$

It sounds quite complicated, but it is a fair way of counting votes especially where there are several vacancies to be filled. If you would like to know more about the way votes are counted, you can see where to go for further information at the end of this brochure.

HOW WILL I KNOW WHO WINS THE ELECTION?

After all votes are counted and the successful candidates are known, the Returning Officer lets the Council office know about the results and notices are put in the "Government Gazette" and local newspaper. If you do not see the notice in the paper, you can ask at the Council office about the election results.



WHAT IF I NEED HELP TO FILL IN MY VOTING PAPERS?

If you have any trouble understanding what to do, ask someone you know and trust to help you. Special arrangements can sometimes be made to help people who are sick or have trouble with reading or writing. You can ask at the Council office if you, or someone you know, needs help to vote.

SO I HAVE VOTED, BUT HOW CAN I KEEP INVOLVED IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUSINESS?

- Contact your elected Councillor and talk about what issues you think are important in the local area, and ask how you can be involved in consultation meetings.
- Get involved in community meetings and events run by the Council.
- Go along to Council and Committee meetings and listen to what is talked about and what decisions are being made.
- Find out from your local Council Office what services they provide locally and what is available to you.
- Ask your local Councillor or someone from the Council Office to come along and talk at your gatherings about Council business.
- Ask community and sporting groups you are involved with what they know about Council business and whether Council can assist them in some way.

MORE

INFORMATION

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN FINDING OUT MORE ABOUT STANDING AS A CANDIDATE FOR THE MAY 2003 LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCIL ELECTIONS?

Refer to another brochure in this series - "LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUSINESS - Being a Councillor" available from your local Council office. **Nominations to stand as a candidate close at 12.00 noon on 27th March 2003**

For further information about Local Government Council elections and voting matters contact your local Council office, or visit the following web sites

- Local Government Association of SA
www.lga.sa.gov.au
- SA Government - Office of Local Government
www.localgovt.sa.gov.au
- State Electoral Office
www.seo.sa.gov.au



Cover Artwork

The cover artwork by Tamara Watson depicts pathways to places and communities, and a hand grasping the crystal ball is a symbol of taking control of the future. Tamara's family is from the Coorong in South Australia - Tangane-kald people.