

## Ready for council elections in 2020?

The Queensland Government is pursuing a rolling reform agenda to strengthen the transparency, accountability and integrity measures that apply to the system of local government and elections in Queensland. This means there are some changes that candidates for the 2020 election need to be ready for, even if you are an existing mayor or councillor or you have been a candidate before.

### Nomination process

The Electoral Commission of Queensland (ECQ) manages the candidate nomination process. Updated fact sheets and handbooks to assist candidates will be published on the ECQ website. The Notice of Election will be published in early 2020 and the nomination period will then be open for approximately two weeks.

To check your eligibility to be a councillor visit [www.dlgrma.qld.gov.au/candidates](http://www.dlgrma.qld.gov.au/candidates).

### What do I need to run in the election?

- ▶ Complete *So you want to be a councillor?* compulsory training available online at [www.dlgrma.qld.gov.au/training](http://www.dlgrma.qld.gov.au/training). You will need your completion certificate to submit with your nomination to the ECQ. It is best to complete the training as early as possible.
- ▶ A dedicated bank account for all election expenses and donations received. These account details must be provided to the ECQ at the time of nomination. Note: credit cards cannot be used for election expenses.
- ▶ An ongoing written record kept for all expenses received from 1 May 2019 onwards.
- ▶ Registration with the ECQ to make real-time donation and expenditure disclosures.
- ▶ For election signage, you should contact your local council to find out about local laws regarding signage. For example, you may require a permit to display signage (even on private property).

### Do you need party endorsement?

You can nominate as:

- ▶ an individual
- ▶ a member of a group of candidates
- ▶ a member of a political party.

If you are nominating as an individual candidate, you will need endorsement (i.e. signatures) from six people who live within the division or ward you are contesting (or within the local government area for undivided councils). For information on running as a group or party candidate, see the *Groups in local government elections* fact sheet.

### Real-time disclosures (starting 20 January 2020)

If you receive a donation or loan for your campaign of \$500 or more (or smaller individual amounts from the same donor adding up to \$500 or more), from 20 January 2020 onwards you will be required to disclose this to the ECQ within seven business days. Also, from

20 January 2020, you will be required to disclose all expenditure within seven business days. During the last seven business days of the election, you will be required to disclose all expenditure and donations to the ECQ within one business day.

Donors are also themselves required to directly disclose donations to the ECQ. As a candidate, you have a legal obligation to make sure anyone who is a donor to your campaign is aware of their obligation to disclose. You are also required to take steps to notify the community of your obligation to disclose.

Your disclosure period depends on your individual circumstances. For new candidates, your disclosure period starts on the day you announce or otherwise indicate that you will run for election and ends 30 days after election day. For sitting councillors or candidates who contested the election in 2016 (or a more recent by-election), your disclosure period is from 30 days after the 2016 election or the by-election you contested, and ends 30 days after election day.

For more information see the *Campaign donations and expenditure* fact sheet.

### **Transitional disclosure returns**

New disclosure obligations for sitting councillors and local government election candidates commence on 20 January 2020. To transition to the new laws, you must lodge one-off 'transitional disclosure returns' with the ECQ within 14 days of the new laws commencing.

These transitional disclosure returns must contain details of:

- ▶ all campaign donations of \$500 or more (cumulative) received from the start of the disclosure period that applies to you, up until 19 January 2020, and
- ▶ all campaign expenditure incurred for the period commencing 01 May 2019, up until 19 January 2020.

### **After the election**

You will be required to lodge a final election summary return to ECQ within 15 weeks after the election. This information is then published publicly on the ECQ website.

You will also be required to provide a full bank statement for the dedicated campaign account. An audit of all your campaign's financial records may be conducted. You may also be required to provide additional information and documentation to support this audit, such as evidence a transaction was for election purposes.

### **What else do I need to know?**

- ▶ Queensland law bans political donations from property developers. It is illegal to make or accept these prohibited donations.
- ▶ You will be required to disclose details of your (and your spouse's) activities and financial interests on your nomination form. If elected, you will also be required to declare the interests of other people closely related to you, including your children.
- ▶ Candidates can nominate for either mayor or councillor, but not both.

### **The election campaign**

You are expected to conduct your campaign in a way that maintains the public's trust and confidence in the democratic election process.

For example, any advertising or posts on social media containing election material must comply with the *Local Government Electoral Act 2011* if they are posted during the official election period (i.e. after the Notice of Election is published in early 2020). This includes stating the name and address (not a PO Box) of the person who authorised it. The authorising person can be you or somebody else authorising on your behalf.

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### **More information**

[dlgrma.qld.gov.au/candidates](http://dlgrma.qld.gov.au/candidates)

[ecq.qld.gov.au](http://ecq.qld.gov.au)

(07) 3452 7148

For more detailed information, you should also refer to Queensland legislation which governs local government and elections.