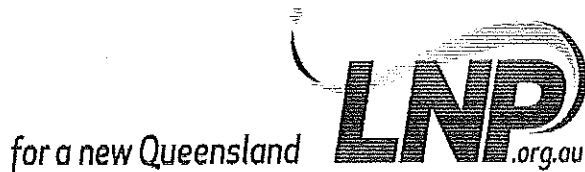


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26 Feb 2013

Electoral Reform submission from Toowoomba North SEC

Re -Suitability of the polling booths

Summary of our recommendations

- Polling booths should meet the requirements of the electoral act in full. (Access for disabled and parking is unlocked at schools where available)
- The period of Pre-Poll should be reduced to a maximum period of 2 weeks
- The Toowoomba North electoral office should be relocated to cater for the needs of disabled and elderly persons. (The McNab building Cnr Hume and Laurel St. Toowoomba was used for the Federal election and was better than the Easternwell Building at 10 Russell Street)
- The Toowoomba North Electoral officer should have statutory rights to request and expect the building owner and managers to comply with the electoral act. (An issue at 10 Russell Street)
- During an election period there needs to be mechanism to handle a complaint immediately for a speedy resolution to occur
- Need for a rearrangement of polling booths in the northern section of Toowoomba North
- Additional polling booth at Mary Mackillop School on Highfields Road, Highfields and retire Harlaxton North polling booth and possibly Harlaxton South.
- **Pre-poll location and Electoral Office for Toowoomba North**
 - The Electoral office and pre-poll was located on the 3rd Floor of the Easternwell Building 10 Russell Street Toowoomba and this building and venue was found to be inadequate for the required purposes
 - Issues encountered were;
 - Difficulty with disabled and elderly voters as there is insufficient parking on the street and it is a long walk from parking spots.

- The building manager had no understanding of the electoral act in that he refused to allow pre-poll party workers access to an area just outside 6 meters from the doorway, which is stipulated under the present act.
- The building is a multi-use building with around 400 employees and numerous visitors using the building daily which made it an awkward venue to conduct pre-poll and ECQ activity.

(All political parties encountered these problems)

The amount of floor space leased on this occasion would easily have provided sufficient space for all the different party workers to hand out their how to votes and still allow ample room to comply with the Act's requirements.

We believe that the Queensland Government had poor value for money in the selection of this venue, compared to many other options that were available to Toowoomba North at that time.

Volunteer workers from all the political parties felt very unsettled and found the venue quite stressful during the pre-poll period

The period of pre-poll should be reduced to two weeks which is sufficient time to pre-poll with the alternative being postal voting. Most pre-poll activity occurs in the last ten days. This would also save a great deal of money for the Queensland Government.

We submit the following recommendations

- Any polling booth should meet the requirements of the electoral act in full.
- The Toowoomba North electoral office should be located to cater for the needs of disabled and elderly persons.
- The Toowoomba North Electoral officer should have statutory rights to request and expect the building owner and managers to comply with the electoral act.
- During an election period there needs to be mechanism to handle a complaint immediately for a speedy resolution to occur (An example where a speedy resolution would have been good, was when the party volunteers asked the Electoral Officer if they could shelter under the building cover (nowhere near the 6 meters from the entrance door), and we told to write a letter to the Electoral Commission Queensland Office. Any response would have taken any number of days if at all).
- Reduce Pre-poll to 2 weeks.

- Toowoomba North State Election polling booths reorganisation

Below is an extract of a letter to the Electoral Commission Queensland that was sent by the LNP Toowoomba North local Campaign Director on the 19th June 2012 to which no reply was ever received that discusses this issue

I would like to provide some feedback and suggestions to you regarding some of the polling booths at the recent state elections.

I was the campaign director for Trevor Watts (LNP for Toowoomba North).

In my role I was responsible for our campaign workers at the various booths and they also passed on to me comments from constituents from polling day.

1) I did not see any disabled parking clearly identified at many of the Booths in Toowoomba North and particularly at Toowoomba East the school gates were locked up and the hall that was used beside the school (part of the school) was very difficult for disabled. The gutter is hand placed bluestone and very high and uneven and street parking particularly difficult at this venue.

The solution may be to ensure that the school make the adjoining car assessable flat area available as part of their commitment to the ECQ.

The other Booths should have some clear signage to indicate disabled.

2) Broadly their needs to be a rearrangement of Polling Booths on the Northern section of Toowoomba North.

Harlaxton, Harlaxton North, Harlaxton South and Mount Lofty are all relatively close to each other and then heading north after Harlaxton North there are no more polling booths until you get to the Highfields booth which in fact records the highest number of voters 12.44% of our whole electorate. Harlaxton North records one of the smallest total votes 0.93%

The queues at Highfields particularly in the morning were terribly long and at Harlaxton North no queues were evident throughout the day.

I am of the opinion that the 2 party preferred votes at Harlaxton North is not so skewed so as to be significantly important to the overall vote if that booth was discontinued.

There needs to be an additional polling booth at Highfields and the logical spot in my view would be Mary Mackillop School on Highfields road Highfields. A booth at this location would surely take some of the pressure from Highfields and improve the efficiency of the count with a better placed booth along what is a strong growth region.

3) I would also like to suggest that the booth Harlaxton South (Cnr Jellicoe and Hume) is reviewed as well as it is equally serviced by Mount Lofty, Harlaxton and Hume Street (Court House)


I would be pleased to provide further information if you require it.

I look forward to a response from you as this rearrangement if done could greatly improve voters traffic flows for the future.

Thank you for allowing us to make this submission and look forward to answer any questions you may have.

I can be contacted on mobile 0407151063 or email jwhite@bellpotter.com.au

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John White', with a stylized flourish at the end.

John White
Vice Chair,
Toowoomba North Branch SEC