

1 March 2013

Electoral Reform
Strategic Policy, Legal and Executive Services
Department of Justice and Attorney-General
GPO Box 149
Brisbane QLD 4001

Dear Sir / Madam,

Re: Electoral Reform Discussion Paper

Thank you for encouraging public and industry feedback in relation to the Electoral Reform Discussion Paper released in January. CGI (formerly Logica in Australia) supports the government's effort to canvass options for improvement to Queensland's electoral laws.

This submission has been prepared primarily in response to section 5 of the Discussion Paper, seeking feedback in the area of electronic voting.

CGI has recent experience working with the New South Wales and Victorian Electoral Commissions and has also assisted the Scottish Government with technology-based improvements for elections. This has included electronic vote counting (eCounting), software applications, electronic voting (iVote), and a system that allows proactive government updating of the electoral roll (SmartRoll).

We would like to share our experience and expertise in relation to electronic voting, especially as the key partner of the New South Wales Electoral Commission in implementing their iVote system for the 2011 New South Wales State Election.

Furthermore, as experts in the field, we would like to promote the introduction of electronically assisted voting. We endorse internet and phone voting being made available to select groups at the next election. We believe this will help the Queensland Government to address some of the challenges to democracy that currently exist, and to shift these to a national Best Practice benchmark.

We advocate for electronic voting to be available as an option, especially to assist voters who:

- Are blind or vision impaired.
- Have a disability or very low literacy skills.
- Are physically incapacitated or in hospital for an extended period.
- Are out of Queensland on election day, including defence personnel.
- Live further than 20 kilometres from a polling place.

Following any initial use of electronic voting to assist these groups at one election, we would champion the more widespread use of this technology in Queensland at subsequent elections; especially given the disadvantage faced by blind voters who cannot cast a secret ballot, the challenges posed by the state's large geographic size and significant rural populations (often with irregular or unreliable postal services), and the success of e-voting in other jurisdictions.



About CGI

CGI and Logica are household brands and employ 72,000 staff in more than 40 countries. In August 2012, Logica was acquired by the Canadian-based CGI Group and now operates as part of CGI.

For over 35 years we have served federal, state and local governments across the United States, Canada, Europe and Australia. CGI strives to help governments serve as prudent, transparent and accountable administrators of scarce resources.

CGI's Logica team developed the Victorian Electoral Commission's election management system (EMS) for the 1999 Victorian State Election. We worked with the state electoral office to provide their election-related systems for more than 11 years.

In 2003 the New South Wales Electoral Commission engaged Logica to work with them to implement a range of software applications and solutions, as well as an electronic voting system.

By 2011 in New South Wales we had created applications to allow candidates to nominate online, to manage enquiries and non-voting excuses, and to capture and publish election night preliminary results. We also developed applications to manage and pay election staff, and built "SmartRoll" which proactively updates of the electoral roll using the most up-to-date government agency information.

The largest single electoral technology project undertaken so far in Australia, however, was the integration of the electronic voting "iVote" system which was used by more than 46,000 electors at the 2011 New South Wales State Election. It was subsequently used for the Clarence state by-election.

Challenges to democracy

Governments are faced with significant barriers when it comes to delivering Best Practice democratic elections. The Queensland Government in particular faces many challenges such as catering for Queensland's regional communities and disadvantaged citizens.

As stated in Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948:

"Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country... The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures."

The Queensland Electoral Commission has to date used postal voting, pre-poll booths, electoral visitor voting, absentee voting, and Braille ballot papers as techniques to achieve this declaration. These methods however can be costly, time consuming and are not always effective. For example, in rural areas postal services are irregular and can be cut in severe weather, many blind people cannot read Braille and need assistance casting a vote (therefore it is not a secret ballot), and military personnel can find postal or pre-poll voting inconvenient.

Electronically assisted voting can help solve these challenges.

How does iVote work?

iVote, as introduced by the New South Wales Electoral Commission in 2011, is a system that allows early voting at a state election via telephone or internet and at a location of the voter's choice.

In New South Wales iVote is available to people who are blind or have low vision, with a disability, who live in remote locations, or who will be outside the state on election day.

The iVote system works in the following way:

1. Voters who are currently on the electoral roll and who believe they are eligible for iVote apply online or by telephone up to 4 weeks out from an election.
2. The voter chooses a 6-digit Personal Identification Number (PIN) and is then sent their iVote number by mail, email, SMS or voice call (as per the voter's choice).
3. When voting, ballot papers are shown on screen or read to the voter if they are using a phone. Candidates can be selected by using a mouse, keyboard or telephone key pad. Voters have the chance to check, edit and confirm choices before their vote is submitted. Users can save the voting session and return later to finish. Once submitted, a voting receipt is issued.
4. Similar to pre-polling, iVote opens two weeks prior to an election and closes the day prior.
5. iVote ballot papers are printed anonymously and are added to the other ballot papers in the count on election night.

Benefits to voters

The results of introducing electronic voting (iVote) in New South Wales were notable:

- **Strong uptake.** It was forecast that 10,000 voters would use iVote in 2011. In actuality 46,864 voters used iVote – an uptake more than four times greater than the initial estimate.
- **Absent voters empowered to vote.** The largest proportion of iVote users were voters outside New South Wales on election day. The Electoral Commission estimates that 30,000 absent electors voted because iVote was available to them, the majority of whom were overseas. New South Wales defence personnel, Australians residing in Antarctica, and travellers on cruise ships and at airports also used iVote in 2011.
- **Blind voters given a secret ballot.** iVote was effective in facilitating a secret and independently verifiable vote for blind and vision impaired electors. The Electoral Commission stated that the system enfranchised many people who would not have otherwise voted.
- **High user satisfaction.** A post-election survey found that 94 percent of surveyed users were satisfied with iVote; most would use it again and recommend it to other people.
- **Cost effective.** Independent audits found iVote was cost-effective when compared to systems with similar aims. The cost was \$3.2 million in capital (to set up) and \$268,000 in operating costs, equating to \$68.28 per vote in 2011. This will decrease substantially at subsequent elections. In comparison, the average cost per vote was \$2,597 for the 2007 Federal election trial of electronic voting for blind electors and defence personnel. Braille voting has also previously cost in the vicinity of \$478 per vote and does not necessarily provide a secret ballot.

Other considerations

There are a few of other considerations relevant to a discussion on the introduction of electronic voting. We believe the Queensland Government may like to take these into account.

Firstly, as the population ages the prevalence of vision impairment is increasing. The introduction of an electronic voting system, like iVote, will help to address the increasing impact this has on voting.

Australia is often described as a country that suffers from the “tyranny of distance”. This is further magnified in a large state like Queensland and dictates that:

- A great deal of business travel needs to occur, both interstate and overseas; and
- Many Queenslanders live in regional areas away from convenient polling and pre-polling venues and with unreliable postal services.

Finally, with an increasingly mobile workforce and extended working and trading hours, an electronic voting system has the capacity to be expanded in future elections. This could include catering for fly-in fly-out mining workers, shift workers, business owners who open for extended hours (and therefore find it difficult to vote), and people who work away from home.

Testimonials

The introduction of iVote for the 2011 New South Wales State Election allowed many vision impaired electors to vote secretly for the first time. This led Vision Australia to grant iVote its prestigious Making A Difference Award:

“The fully automated iVote system used in NSW is superior to any other we have seen in an Australian election so far, and voters have clearly endorsed the system by using it in greater numbers than ever before. We will be working towards encouraging this system as the gold standard for future elections.”

Maryanne Diamond
General Manager, Vision Australia

“iVote, an internet and phone voting option, increased access to a secret ballot to many electors with a disability, as well enabling many overseas and interstate electors to conveniently exercise their right to vote.

“Usage of iVote greatly exceeded expectations by fourfold with almost 47,000 electors using it. We estimate that access to iVote enfranchised around 30,000 electors who were unlikely to vote if iVote had not been available.

“The independent evaluation found significant public value in extending this voting method to other elections such as enabling voters at Local Government elections to vote out of their council area.”

Colin Barry
Commissioner, NSW Electoral Commission

"The State [of New South Wales] has the most technologically sophisticated [election] process in the country. Logica has played an enormous role in building that capability. This capability can be seen in all aspects of the systems built and supported by Logica."

Ian Brightwell
Chief Information Officer, NSW Electoral Commission

Based on the results in New South Wales and our extensive experience, CGI believes that the introduction of iVote or a similar electronic voting system would benefit many thousands of Queenslanders, have a strong uptake, high user satisfaction, and be comparatively cost-effective.

Electronic voting would also help in reducing existing disadvantage for select groups in the community including blind and vision impaired voters and Queenslanders living in remote areas.

It would be our pleasure to assist further in the consideration of section 5 of the review, which looks at electronic voting.

We thank the Queensland Government for engaging with industry in their review of Queensland's electoral laws, and for the opportunity to provide this submission.

Please contact us if you have any questions or would like additional information.

Yours faithfully,



Russell Goslin
State Manager - Queensland