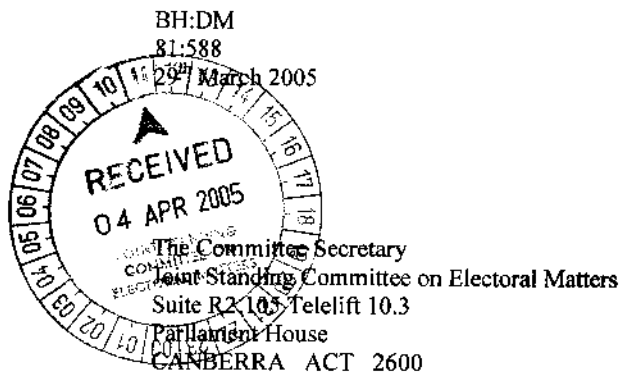


# Winton Shire Council

SUBMISSION NO. 93



Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Submission No. 93
Date Received 29-3-05
Secretary

Dear Ms Forbes

### *Submission – Inquiry into the Conduct of the 2004 Federal Election*

I refer to the above and advise that I have been asked by Council to provide the following written submission and to also request the opportunity to address the Committee in person, if possible and appropriate, given that the Committee will be pretty close when meeting in Longreach.

As a background, I note that Winton is a shire of 53,000 sq km and serviced predominantly by unsealed roads.

The well-publicised debacle with postal voting impacted very heavily on residents of this shire. For example, Council is aware of the Manager of a station in the south-west of the shire who drove 180 km in to Winton to vote (even though his wife had already received her postal voting papers) and then returned home. This was a special trip, much of it, over rough, gravel roads. Such is the extent to which country people value their democracy. There were a number of other such cases involving lesser distances of which Council is aware.

In the days leading up to the election I heard a number of radio interviews with staff from the AEC, during which the spokesperson stated that voters who had not received their postal votes by Friday should “lodge a pre-poll vote”. In view of the scarcity of pre-polling centres in both Maranoa and Kennedy this was nothing short of a deliberate delusion of the voting public. The distances involved would clearly preclude many, if not most, of the affected people from making such a trip. Moreover, designated pre-polling places were not well advertised.

Given these actual impacts on the voters of our Shire, Council is requesting consideration of the following reasonable and relevant initiatives for future Federal elections:



#### **All Communications to:**

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- More pre-poll places in towns like Winton. Specifically, for Winton, staff for polling places are very experienced with pre-polling for state elections and are quite capable of handling a high level of electoral complexity and confidentiality. I am sure this would also be the case in similar townships through the Maranoa electorate and Council has discussed this with our peers at CEO forums and the Western Queensland Local Government Association and found this to be the case.
- This would also be true for inter-state polling. This could be a real problem given the high numbers of tourists, depending on the timing of an election, given the strong seasonal nature of tourism visitation and also given the lack of knowledge amongst tourists of the lack of availability of absentee voting options
- Council is very much in favour of the exploration of options for using technology to facilitate voting for our constituents, given the distances involved. Use of internet is expanding on properties and this is now becoming a real options with improvements in bandwidth and speed. Obviously, issues of confidentiality and security of information need to be properly addressed. However, because this is a way of rapidly responding to glitches such as occurred with the postal voting in 2004, this option is well worth exploring.

Thank you for considering these matters. Please contact me for further clarification, if required, or to make arrangements for attendance at a public hearing.

Yours faithfully



Bob Hoogland  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER