



SOLGM ELECTORAL WORKING PARTY NEWSLETTER MARCH 2015

Training for Electoral Officers

National Training

The EWP has decided to bring the two day training programme previously offered in February of election year forward and provide training in October 2015. The main reason for this is to put some emphasis on election preparation which really should be commenced before the end of the year preceding elections.

*Put these dates in your diary now: **Monday 12 & Tuesday 13 October.***

*The training will take place in central Wellington at **Mac's Function Centre, Taranaki St Wharf** in close proximity to a variety of accommodation.*

The programme is being finalised and will be circulated once approved in early July 2015. There are some exciting changes to look out for as the team seeks to provide a focus on the aspects of training sought by electoral officers by way of feedback from the 2013 programme. And, as noted, this year's programme will provide for both pre- election and post-election issues in more detail.

Regional Meetings

The EWP has suggested that regional electoral meetings be held in February and May 2016. The cost allocation template will be completed towards the end of 2015 and it is recommended that councils arrange early regional meetings to discuss 2016 elections including allocation of costs. These regional meetings should be open to electoral officials from territorial authorities, regional councils, district health boards and licencing trusts.

Online Voting Update

The EWP discussed the draft policy setting document developed by the Department of Internal Affairs for the 2016 online voting trials and provided feedback.

The Department will be reporting back to the Minister for further consideration by the end of April.

Some Electoral Officers have been invited by the New South Wales Electoral Commission to observe the online component of the NSW State Elections at the end of March. An invitation was also received from the Estonian Government to observe their online elections, at the beginning of March. Whilst it is likely that there will be attendance in NSW the distance and short timeline to go to Estonia has precluded anyone going.

Voting Document Design

The voting document format and design has been reviewed taking into account issues raised in the 2013 elections including improvements suggested to make voting easier for vision impaired electors. The review is now complete and the final versions will be submitted to the Secretary of Local Government by 31 March 2015 for the formal approval process.

Working Party Changes

The EWP has acknowledged the work done by David Pannett representing the Ministry of Health and Karen Yates representing the Department of Internal Affairs in farewelling them as they continue with their careers. David will be replaced by Jennifer du Toit and Karen by Samantha Lay Yee.

SOLGM Good Practice for the Management of Local Authority Elections and Polls

The Electoral Officer Readiness checklist has been updated and will be circulated, with notification to Chief Executives, in January/February 2016. The checklist will be discussed at training for Electoral Officers in October.

FAQs for Electoral Officers are also being reviewed.

Part 12 - Voting Methods and Voting Documents has been reviewed and will be sent to the Secretary of Local Government as supporting material for the voting documents approval process. It will be posted after the approval has been given to the documents.

Part 20 -Local Government Reorganisation has been reviewed and will be posted as soon as the legal review has been completed.

Parts 1 - Overview of the Management of Local Authority Elections and Polls and Part 3 Electoral Officers and Electoral Staff have now been allocated for review.

Other Parts continue to be reviewed and Electoral Officers will be advised as each Part is posted on the SOLGM website. Those Parts that have been updated are clearly identified on the SOLGM website including the date of posting.

Electoral Officers are advised that some Parts may require additional review in light of online voting decisions when known. Electoral Officers will be kept updated of any further reviews as a result.

NZ Post

Peter Avison advised that NZ Post have been visiting with councils to demonstrate changes to VOTEXT. Discussions with councils have also included changes to postal delivery services including their commitment to meet postal requirements and that they are working on providing, as they did in 2013, a fast post service in the last few days of voting to ensure that votes are received through the post on time. The by-election process has also been discussed and NZ Post is looking to introduce a solution to start treating mail as fast post three days out from the by-election date. They have trialled this for a couple of by-elections that have taken place recently. There is an additional cost for this for councils. To assist the process envelopes are coloured differently for ease of identification in the sorting process. This process will also apply to polls.

Legislation

It was noted that s115 (2) of the Local Electoral Act 2001, that provided for the coming into office of elected members at elections other than the triennial elections, was repealed in error. The Department of Internal Affairs have advised that they will rectify this at the earliest opportunity. Advice from the EWP is that Electoral Officers should continue to apply the section as though it had not been repealed.

The Statutes Amendment Bill containing amendments to the electoral timetables in the Local Electoral Act and Local Government Act has completed the Committee of House stage, and is in its third reading (which started on 19 March 2015).

References to 82 days will be amended to 89 days. By-elections currently underway will not be affected. It is expected that royal assent will be by Easter. The amendments take effect the day after assent. By-elections that occur after this date will have to recognise for these changes.

Regards



Darryl Griffin
Chairperson
SOLGM Electoral Working Party