



SOLGM ELECTORAL WORKING PARTY NEWSLETTER

June 2015

It is with sadness that we begin this newsletter acknowledging the resignation of Charlie Inggs from the working party. Charlie made a heartfelt announcement to the group on June 5th tendering his resignation to EWP given changing circumstances with his role at Wellington City Council. Members received this information with some sadness and expressed how much his contribution would be missed. Charlie was duly thanked for his loyal involvement with the EWP and the tremendous work he has done.

Feedback from the Electoral Working Party Meeting on 5th June

At the June Electoral Working Party meeting the Electoral Working Party members received a number of updates from key agencies. The key matters raised are as follows:

NZ Post

Peter Avison, Local Government Programme Manager, provided an update on the following matters:

- (i) ***Candidate directory:*** The cover, the Send, Pack, Post graphics and the candidate photos can now all be in full colour, at no extra cost. The instruction panel has now been updated with EWP and Simpson Grierson input. The number of languages on offer for the additional instructions is currently being investigated, with a view to increasing the range.
- (ii) ***Postal delivery:*** The changes to a three day delivery from 1 July 2015 will not affect the 2016 elections. For these, the 4 working day delivery timeframe for outgoing post is still the target. For returned post, the last 3 days of the voting period will still be returned by fast post.

Department of Internal Affairs

Samantha Lay Yee, Policy Analyst with the Department of Internal Affairs advised on the following matters:

- (i) ***STV Calculator:*** The main STV calculator is currently being tested with PWC with completion and certification expected very soon. As the back-up STV calculator

has never been used (since its development in 2003), and is no longer supported on current operating platforms, it has been agreed between DIA and the EWP not to have a back-up STV calculator.

- (ii) **Telephone voting:** It was noted that there is strong interest in having telephone voting available for the 2016 elections as an option for visually impaired (and disabled) electors, similar to what was offered to these groups at the 2014 parliamentary elections. DIA has asked for a formal request from the EWP on this matter so that this can be investigated. A conference call is being held with EWP members in early July to discuss the approach EWP will take in making this request to DIA.
- (iii) **Voting documents:** The general layout of the 2016 voting document, as approved by the EWP, is currently with the Secretary for Local Government for approval. This is a legislative requirement.
- (iv) **Omnibus Bill:** DIA are currently collating any matters relating to local elections and polls that require correction/amendment to local electoral legislation/regulation under the Omnibus Bill. Any matters that electoral officers may have should be directed through the EWP.

Local Government Commission

The Local Government Commission has recently appointed a new CE, Sandra Preston. The Commission is currently working on three reorganisation proposals – Northland, Hawke's Bay and Wellington, although recent announcements leave just one – Hawke's Bay – proceeding. The Commission has released guidelines on advertising and petitions seeking polls on final reorganisation proposals -refer www.lgc.govt.nz

With regard to representation arrangements reviews, of the 23 councils undertaking these in 2015, 3 have made initial proposal resolutions with the balance expected after the LTP process.

Election Insurance

The team from Jardines attended the meeting and commenced discussions with the EWP regarding insurance cover for the 2016 local government elections. Cover will largely be the same as for previous elections except for:

- (i) The national policy will now include cover for any judicial recount required (cover for a judicial inquiry was already included);
- (ii) The \$1m cover limit for any one claim would still apply, with the higher limit for Auckland Council likely to be increased;
- (iii) Legal representation to increase from \$100,000 to \$250,000;
- (iv) Need to reflect changes resulting from any local government reorganisation and any use of online voting.

Election insurance cover for the 2016 elections is expected to be in place by late February 2016.

It was noted that after many years assisting with local government election coverage, Stephen Tustin is retiring in October 2015. Thanks were conveyed to Stephen by the EWP for his many years of valuable assistance to the sector. For all future insurance queries, the contacts in Jardines are Martin Holden and Richard Preston.

Online Voting

Pallavi Chhibber and John Sutton from the Department of Internal Affairs spoke about the potential online voting trial for the 2016 local elections. Discussion took place around the May version of the Online Voting Framework Requirements document issued by DIA, noting these are policy requirements not legislative requirements. (Regulations are generally drafted from the policy requirements).

The policy requirements have been drafted to assist councils understand all matters that need to be considered and notably *that councils (not their service providers) now need to demonstrate that the requirements can be met for a successful trial.*

Based on council proposals seeking to participate in the trial (which close with LGNZ on 30 June 2015), the final decision on whether online voting trials are undertaken in 2016 however still rests with the Associate Minister and Cabinet. This decision is expected in December 2015.

The EWP is concerned about the additional requirements included to the Framework Requirements document, namely the need for a second 'transaction' of voting credentials (essentially a second mailout to all electors) and the need for electoral officials to issue confirmation to a voter that an online or postal vote has been received (practical and privacy concerns). These concerns are being progressed through DIA and to the Associate Minister.

Electoral Training

National training forum: The programme for the national electoral training to be held in Wellington on 12-13 October 2015 has now been finalised. There are some interesting and fun changes from previous training sessions, so make sure you register and attend! The training will be held at Mac's Function Centre located at the Taranaki Street Wharf. Registrations will open mid to late July.

Regional training: The EWP is encouraging all electoral officers and officials to attend regional training sessions convened by regional groupings to be held in February and May 2016. These are to follow a consistent approach so the same issues are being addressed. EWP are working to produce a guidance note for this purpose. Please note that there will not

be any further national training opportunities in early 2016; the emphasis will be for electoral officers to coordinate regional meetings as mentioned above.

Ratepayer Roll

In the past SOLGM has been responsible for a nationwide ratepayer roll advertising programme. SOLGM are again looking to undertake such a programme in the first half of 2016.

Discussion around potential updates to national branding will be undertaken in July.

Ombudsman

Following a complaint at the 2013 triennial election, Wellington City Council sought clarification from the Office of the Ombudsman that electoral officials were still exempt from the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987. On 16 April 2014 the Office of the Ombudsman advised Wellington City Council that electoral officials were NOT exempt from LGOIMA.

This was queried on 27 May 2014 by the council's solicitors.

The Office of the Ombudsman on 17 March 2015 responded to the query from Wellington City Council solicitors confirming that electoral officials were NOT exempt from LGOIMA. A copy of this confirmation is attached.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Ofoske', written in a cursive style.

Dale Ofoske
Acting Chair
SOLGM Electoral Working Party