



**INFORMATION FOR
RATEPAYERS**

on whether Palerang Council should hold

**CONSTITUTIONAL
REFERENDA**

in conjunction with the 2012 Local Government
General Election

on one or both of the following issues:

1. Dividing the Council area into wards
2. Changing the method of electing the mayor to direct election by its electors (popularly elected) every 4 years or retaining the current system of election of the mayor by the councillors each year.

Council encourages you to read the enclosed information which outlines the cases for and against both issues.

A comprehensive community consultation process will take place in the coming months on a number of issues, including the two listed above.

Your feedback during this process will help Council determine whether to hold constitutional referenda to decide these two particular issues in September 2012.

*Peter Bascomb
General Manger*

Cases for and against division of Palerang Council into wards

Case For

- Wards would give voters in Palerang representation in each particular area and ensure that Council hears specific information about the area.
- Councillors would still be able to represent the interests of other wards as well as the one they were elected in.
- Without wards, it is possible that most councillors could be elected from the one local area, causing some parts of the LGA to be without local representation.
- Wards ensure a knowledge base of all of the Council's area all the time.
- Wards promote common interests within geographical areas and enable residents to identify specific councillors with a real interest in and knowledge of their area.
- It may be less daunting and expensive for candidates to seek election as a ward councillor than to seek election in the LGA as a whole. Ward elections can even be decided without a vote if only the requisite number of candidates nominate.
- A system of wards reduces the administrative cost of by-elections. If a sitting councillor leaves office and a by-election has to be held; only eligible voters in the ward have to vote to fill the vacancy.
- Communication to constituents could be more effectively targeted to the issues that matter most in the ward area. Councillors build up a knowledge bank of their particular ward, become better known and can thus be more responsive to their constituents.

Case Against

- Councillors should be responsible for the interests of the LGA as a whole, as well as interests of their local area.
- Electing councillors from the whole of the shire, rather than just one area encourages their involvement in all local issues and those impacting on the whole of the LGA.
- An undivided Council enables more strategic, whole-of-LGA planning, essential to ensure coordinated services and facilities for all residents.
- Wards could be divisive for Palerang, when much time has been spent working to unify "the east" and "the west" after amalgamation.
- Constituents may feel they can only deal with their specific ward councillors, resulting in conflicts or pressure on those ward-elected representatives.
- Ward boundaries may need adjustment frequently to ensure the prescribed 10% population variation is not exceeded. In areas with faster population growth, frequent boundary changes could lead to confusion.
- Rates revenue goes into a pool to provide facilities and services for the whole LGA whereas wards may encourage parochialism.
- Voters have a greater choice of quality candidates in an undivided council.
- It is more likely that councillors who are elected from the whole LGA will be involved in and informed about all local issues and those affecting all the LGA.

Cases for and against popularly electing the Mayor of Palerang

Case For

- The position of Mayor, as the leader of Council, should be determined directly by the voters.
- Popular election of the Mayor could give predictability about the style and direction of the Council leadership for a period of four years.
- The Mayor would be able to provide leadership to the strategic directions and long-term planning and policy setting.
- Election of the Mayor by the people would remove the internal politics of Councillors each year during the time leading up to the election of Mayor.
- Popular election of Mayor would give residents an opportunity to consider Mayoral candidates' policies and vote accordingly.
- Popular election of Mayor would make the position of Mayor more accountable to residents.
- The possibility of a Mayor being elected "out of the hat" is avoided in the event of two or more Councillors receiving equal votes from their peers.

Case Against

- The role of the Mayor is quite specific and popular election attaches more importance to the role than exists.
- Until such time that all elections are publicly funded, popular election benefits financially resourced candidates.
- Popularly elected Mayors are entrenched for four years, precluding rotation and skills development.
- The elected council should elect their leader and not have one imposed on them and with whom they may not be able to work constructively or cooperatively.
- Councillors should have the option of assessing the Mayor on an annual basis and be able to change that person if she/he does not perform to expectation, or if conflict develops.
- A popularly elected Mayor and his/her planning and policy directions, views and actions may not have the support of the majority of councillors.
- There is no way to remove an unsatisfactory mayor before the next general election.