

Groups in local government elections

The Queensland Government is pursuing a rolling reform agenda to strengthen the transparency, accountability and integrity measures that apply to the system of local government and elections in Queensland. This means there are some changes for candidates at the 2020 election who are running as a group.

Nomination process

In local government elections, you can nominate as:

- ▶ an individual
- ▶ a member of a group of candidates
- ▶ a candidate endorsed by a political party.

The Electoral Commission of Queensland (ECQ) manages the candidate nomination process. You do not need to wait until nominations for the election are open to advise the ECQ you are campaigning as part of a group. It is recommended that you contact the ECQ to register as a group as soon as you publicly announce your intention to run in the election.

Groups must appoint an agent for the group, and provide to the ECQ all the relevant details of the group prior to candidates undertaking any group-like campaigning activities.

Definition of a group

A group of candidates means a group of individuals, each of whom is a candidate for the election, where the candidates:

- ▶ receive the majority of their campaign funding from a common or shared source; or
- ▶ have a common or shared campaign strategy (e.g. shared policies, common slogans and branding); or
- ▶ use common or shared campaign resources (e.g. campaign workers, signs); or
- ▶ engage in cooperative campaigning activities, including shared how-to-vote cards, engaging in joint advertising (e.g. on billboards) or formally endorsing another candidate.

Political party-endorsed candidate

Nominating as a candidate endorsed by a political party has separate requirements from groups of candidates. If you are a candidate endorsed by a registered political party:

- ▶ you are not considered to be nominating as a member of a group
- ▶ the registered agent of your political party will be responsible for nominating you as a party-endorsed candidate.

Group-like campaigning

Only political parties and registered groups will be able to undertake group-like campaigning activities, and there are penalties for groups that are not registered. This enables voters to better know who they are voting for by prohibiting 'secret' groups.

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Bank accounts, disclosures and returns

If you nominate as a group, you will need a single dedicated group bank account for all group members. All donations, income and expenditure must be transacted through this single account.

Records of gifts, donations and expenses will also need to be kept as group records managed by the group, with the designated agent of the group being responsible for meeting reporting requirements (see the *Campaign donations and expenditure* fact sheet). The donation disclosure threshold is \$500 in total for the group.

The agent for the group will be required to lodge a return disclosing all existing donations and expenditure by 3 February 2020, as well as a final election summary return to the ECQ within 15 weeks after the election. This information is then published on the ECQ website. As a candidate in a group, you have a responsibility to ensure the agent does not give returns that you know to be false or misleading.

Real-time disclosures (from 20 January 2020)

If your group receives a donation or loan for your campaign over \$500, from 20 January 2020 the agent for the group will be required to disclose this to the ECQ within seven business days. Also from 20 January 2020, your agent will be required to disclose all expenditure within seven business days. During the last seven business days of the election, all expenditure and donations are required to be disclosed to the ECQ within one business day.

Your group also has a legal obligation to make sure anyone who is a donor to your campaign is aware of their own obligation to disclose their donation in the ECQ's online Electronic Disclosure System. Your group is also required to notify the community of your requirement to disclose.

For more information about your disclosure requirements see the *Campaign donations and expenditure* fact sheet.

The election campaign

You are expected to conduct your campaign in a way that maintains the public's trust and confidence in the democratic election process. This includes registering as a group if you intend to conduct group-like campaign activities.

Any advertising or posts on social media containing election material must comply with the *Local Government Electoral Act 2011* if they are posted during the official election period (after the Notice of Election is published). This includes stating the name and address of the person who authorised it and the name of your group.

More information

dlgrma.qld.gov.au/candidates

ecq.qld.gov.au

(07) 3452 7148

For more detailed information, you should also refer to Queensland legislation which governs local government and elections:

- ▶ *Local Government Electoral Act 2011*
- ▶ *Local Government Act 2009*
- ▶ Local Government Regulation 2012
- ▶ *City of Brisbane Act 2010*
- ▶ City of Brisbane Regulation 2012.

