



21 January 2020

Ms Melva Hobson PSM  
President  
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Dear Ms Hobson *Melva*

**Re: ICEO establishment by LGAQ for 2020 elections**

Thank you for your letter of 18 December 2019 regarding the establishment of the Office of the Independent Council Election Observer (ICEO).

Rather than respond to every single question let me respond in the following terms. The kernel of the idea for the creation of such an office arose in the months following the conduct of the 2016 Local Government election. Many parties including the CCC, ECQ, councils themselves, and the media complained about the distortions of the truth, outright lies, hate speech and defamation, which occurred during the conduct of the poll.

Late in 2016 the LGAQ Policy Executive commissioned Grassroots Connections to explore the possibility of an LGAQ funded independent fact checker at the 2020 council elections to independently assess claims made by both current elected members and candidates. Every single council was formally consulted throughout that process as were the DLGRMA, CCC and the ECQ. A final report by the consultant was also sent to every council prior to the LGAQ Policy Executive considered the report's recommendations. In 2017 the Policy Executive approved an expenditure of up to \$375,000 in the 2019-20 budget to fund the creation of the Office of the Independent Council Election Observer. Those funds were provided in the current budget.

The matter was discussed for half an hour at this year's Annual Conference and been mentioned in no less than three Presidential addresses to member councils. In all, councils have been formally consulted no less than four times on this initiative.

Before commencing the role, retired District Court Judge John Robertson conferred with the heads of the CCC, ECQ, OIA and Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs to ensure he had their support and that firm protocols were in place to avoid overlap and duplication. Upon the announcement of his appointment in October 2019 both the Minister and Shadow Minister for Local Government publicly endorsed both the role of the ICEO and Mr Robertson himself.



Both the LGAQ and Mr Robertson have taken considerable steps to guarantee the integrity and independence of that role by not having communicated with each other since August last year.

As you correctly note a service level agreement was established by the LGAQ with a service company controlled by King & Company Solicitors to ensure strict separation of the parties. The LGAQ believes the ICEO will improve both the quality and tenor of political discourse and communication during this year's council elections and is a wise investment in civility.

Yours sincerely

Greg Hallam AM  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER