



SOLGM Electoral Working Party Newsletter

October 2006

This newsletter is to update electoral officers on the following election-related topics:

1 Electoral Officers / Electoral Staff Training Events

Electoral officers and other staff associated with elections are reminded that the following dates and training programme have been confirmed:

Where: Brentwood Hotel
16 Kemp Street, Kilbirnie
Wellington

When: Monday 13 November 2006 – New Electoral Officer Training (Day 1)
Tuesday 14 November 2006 – Electoral Officers' Forum
Friday 9 February 2007 – New Electoral Officer Training (Day 2)

Programmes are available on the SOLGM website – www.solgm.org.nz – intending participants are urged to register as soon as possible, and complete the associated questionnaire and return it with their registration form. Registrants wishing to stay at the Brentwood should book direct, using the accommodation request form provided.

2 Legal Opinions

The SOLGM Electoral Working Party wants to compile a list of all legal opinions that electoral officers have received in relation to the provisions of the Local Electoral Act 2001, so as to:

- Assist with the review of the Code of Good Practice; and
- Provide a resource for electoral officers to draw on if necessary (the opinions would be lodged in the Election Section of Local Government On-line's Resource Library)

If general publication of particular opinions would be unacceptable to the solicitor/s involved, then a brief description of the opinion (i.e. the issue, the sections of the legislation involved and the outcome) together with your contact details would suffice.

3 Assistance in Locating Suitable Premises for 2008 Parliamentary Elections

The Ministry of Justice has indicated that it will be approaching local electoral officers seeking their assistance in locating buildings suitable for use as polling places for the 2008 parliamentary elections.

Although it is acknowledged that it is some years since booth voting has been used for local elections and polls, electoral officers are nevertheless requested to offer the Department every possible assistance in locating suitable premises, with access for the disabled.

4 Voting Documents

Those of you who were involved in the 2004 local authority elections will recall the problems that were experienced by a significant number of electoral officers with the general quality of the voting documents produced for the elections.

The Justice and Electoral Committee's Inquiry into the 2004 local authority elections identified this as an area of concern. The Committee included the following recommendations in its final report to the Government:

- *that work be undertaken to identify ways to improve the quality of voting documents and that guidance be provided to electoral officers in this area*
- *that there should be a clearer distinction between FPP and STV issues where both systems are used on combined voting documents.*

In its response the Government agreed that high quality voting documents were important for participation in local elections. It also noted the statutory role that the Secretary for Local Government had in approving general formats for voting documents and indicated that it would continue to work with the local government sector to develop and implement good practice in this area.

As a result of those recommendations, and its own concerns about the quality of the voting documents used in the 2004 elections, the Working Party developed a voting document that rectifies the problems experienced in 2004. One of the main aims has been to develop one voting document format that can be used by all local authorities no matter which mailhouse is used to print the documents or what voting systems are being used.

A review of the previous voting document by Clemengers provided valuable input into the mechanics and design of the new format and also some useful suggestions on how to simplify the language used in the document. The views of a number of appropriate organisations, including the mailhouses, the Electoral Commission and the Chief Electoral Officer, have also been obtained. The document has also been reviewed by two focus groups and a number of their comments/suggestions have been incorporated in the final draft version of the document.

A sample of the final draft voting document will be available for review by those electoral officers attending the Electoral Officers' Forum in Wellington on Tuesday 14 November 2006. Any feedback received at the Forum will be incorporated in the final version which will then be referred to the Secretary for Local Government for his consideration.

It is anticipated that the general format/s of the voting documents to be used at the 2007 local authority elections will be approved by the Secretary for Local Government before Christmas.

5 Electoral Process and Counting Assurance

The Electoral Working Party is in the final stage of producing a policy document to guide software vendors, election contractors and electoral officers in undertaking the certification of election software packages, and auditing of overall election processing systems. The document represents a major effort by the EWP and is currently being peer reviewed by Audit NZ and KPMG.

It is expected that the policy document will act as an important piece of advice to the Department of Internal Affairs and the Government concerning steps that can be taken to ensure that systems and processes employed in local government elections and polls produce a timely and accurate result.

The detail included in this document is intended to provide an electoral officer with an understanding of how to achieve assurance for an election or poll, whether the electoral officer is organising that event in-house or contracting it out. If the electoral officer is contracting-out the election, then it is *critical* that the electoral officer gains a good understanding of the contractor's approach including the key steps and controls within that approach. Furthermore, the electoral officer must be sure that the contractor is using software and business processes that have been certified and audited.

It is most likely that independent certification of software and independent auditing of overall election systems and processes will be mandatory for the 2007 elections. This issue will be discussed at the up-coming EO training day and forum in November.

6 Electoral Enrolment Centre Update

EEC are working on a number of improvements to the electoral roll data which will be in place for 2007. These include:

- Including licensing trust entitlements in the files being supplied – for those licensing trusts who have boundaries that comply with meshblocks, following the current review by LGC and Ministry of Justice. The date for completion of the update and file spec change will be advised at the EO Forum on 14 November. This will be a 4 digit field, the first 2 digits specify the licensing trust, the last 2 specify the ward. This field will be left blank for those LT's that do not conform to meshblock boundaries. There is also a proposal for those Licensing Trusts that have boundaries that don't follow meshblock boundaries that these be altered to conform.
- Updating all addresses with the new postcodes and amending addresses to comply with the new NZ Post addressing standards.
- Setting up the local government page on the elections website, www.elections.org.nz/councils.
- Recommending that TAs print the EEC elector barcode and number on the outside of the outgoing envelope (above the elector address), so that any GNAs can be recoded by the TA and returned to EEC in a spreadsheet for updating back to the database.

Any queries regarding these matters are to be directed to Bob Chandler, Electoral Enrolment Centre, 04 801 0703, bob@elections.org.nz.

Regards



Peter Guerin
Chairperson
SOLGM Electoral Working Party