

11 November 2022

SUSPECTED VOTING IRREGULARITIES IN 2022 COUNCIL ELECTIONS UNDER INVESTIGATION

The Electoral Commission of SA (ECSA) has today confirmed three separate investigations into suspected voting irregularities in the 2022 Council Elections.

Electoral Commissioner of SA, Mick Sherry, has written to candidates in affected council areas to inform them of the scrutiny and investigations currently underway.

“I do want to point out to both candidates and voters that attempts to unduly influence the outcomes of elections are extremely rare. South Australians can have confidence that ECSA will ensure the integrity of these council elections,” he said.

City of Marion

Mr Sherry said ECSA staff identified some irregularities during the processing of returned ballots.

“We have identified approximately 490 returned declaration envelopes in the City of Marion that are suspected of not being completed by the eligible voter. These are currently under further scrutiny to determine if they will be included in the count on Saturday,” he said.

“Our scrutiny processes have identified a series of ballot paper envelopes that appear to have been submitted by the same individuals.”

Mr Sherry said the rejected ballots would be retained and unopened, as outlined by the Local Government (Elections) Act.

“We have thorough scrutiny processes in place which detects irregularities on returned ballots, and while this is extremely disappointing, I can assure you that ECSA has taken action to ensure the integrity of the election, and in the coming weeks and months, there will be a further investigation.”

The City of Marion and the candidates have been informed. Scrutineers in the City of Marion will be briefed at the scrutiny and count tomorrow (Saturday, 12 November). An electoral officer will be on hand to answer questions regarding these ballots and the processes undertaken.

The City of Adelaide and the City of West Torrens

The Electoral Commissioner has today written to the City of Adelaide candidates to provide information regarding the scrutiny arrangements following the allegations raised about the collection of ballot papers from apartment buildings in the Central Ward. Currently, approximately 90 returned declaration envelopes have been referred for further scrutiny.

The Commissioner has also written to candidates contesting the City of West Torrens elections about scrutiny arrangements following concerns raised regarding enrolments on

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the council supplementary voters roll. Currently, approximately 50 returned declaration envelopes are under further scrutiny.

In addition to the standard quality assurance practices for handling returned postal ballot materials, ECSA has included additional processes to ensure the integrity of the election. These will be applied to all returned ballots under investigation, including:

- Assessing returned declaration envelopes against enrolment forms where they are available; and
- Calling electors to confirm their details and whether they voted in the elections

“Where discrepancies are identified, these will be rejected from the count,” Mr Sherry said.

“I do not have authority to reject ballots on suspicion or conjecture. The Act sets out the situations in which ballots may be rejected, and I am obliged to work within the legislative framework provided to me.

“Investigations are continuing into these matters, and I will consider, as a result of the investigation, if matters will be referred for prosecution.

“Commenting on an ongoing investigation can compromise the investigation and any potential prosecution; therefore, I will not be commenting on the progress or detail of these investigations until they are concluded.”

Final numbers of excluded or rejected ballots will be confirmed at start of counting tomorrow (Saturday 12 November).

The vote count for the 2022 Council Election begins at 9am, with results to be posted to the ECSA website at <https://result.ecsa.sa.gov.au/lgeresults>

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