



23 March 2020

The Hon Shelley Hancock MP
Minister for Local Government
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001

via email: office@hancock.minister.nsw.gov.au

Dear Minister

I am writing on behalf of all SSROC Councils to request the NSW Local Government Elections, scheduled for 12 September 2020, be delayed by 6 to 12 months. I have consulted with SSROC Delegates, and this request has the support of the vast majority.

We are currently experiencing a public health crisis that is without precedent. We are staring into an uncertain future of disruption; one that promises to shake the very foundations and institutions of our society.

During this time, it is more important than it has ever been before, that councils in NSW can focus on the key decisions that we will need to make to ensure that critical functions and core services are maintained. At this time, the uncertainty over the election will prove to only be a distraction.

Furthermore, an election risks the health and wellbeing of communities and candidates alike with the implications of mass gatherings and close contact now well and truly understood.

This is not about fettering the public's democratic right. Indeed, a decision to pursue the current timetable would be likely to force individuals to make the choice between exercising that right and maintaining the health and wellbeing of their families. No one could forgive our people for prioritising the latter, but it would be wrong to force them to choose.

We have seen exceptional leadership and decisive action across all three levels of Government in responding to this crisis. The move to delay the elections would be a continuation of this leadership and it would provide communities across NSW a little bit of certainty at a time when, for the most part, there is none.

It would also be consistent with what the community is asking for. I understand the NSW Electoral Commissioner has received a number of requests for the elections to be delayed, however as you would know, that decision rests with the NSW Government.



I look forward to hearing from you and I would be happy to engage further with you and the NSW Government on behalf of all SSROC Councils.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Faker".

Councillor John Faker
Mayor of Burwood Council
President, Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils



The Hon. Shelley Hancock MP
Minister for Local Government

Ref: A697248

Clr John Faker
President
Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils

By email: ssroc@ssroc.nsw.gov.au

Dear Clr Faker

Thank you for your correspondence of 24 March 2020 requesting that the 2020 local government elections be postponed.

At the outset, I would like to acknowledge the significant and unique challenges faced by councils across NSW as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In recognition of these challenges and to address the risks posed by the COVID-19 virus, I have announced that the September 2020 local government elections will be postponed.

To accommodate this, the *Local Government Act 1993* has been amended to confer on me as Minister, a time-limited power to postpone council elections. The amendment, which operates for only a limited period of 12 months, allows me by an order published in the Gazette, to postpone elections for 12 months from the date of the order. The order may be extended for an additional period to 31 December in the year after the order is made.

The decision to postpone the September 2020 local government elections, which has been made on the advice of the NSW Electoral Commissioner, has not been taken lightly but is necessary to ensure the health and safety of voters, NSW Electoral Commission staff and election candidates.

Thank you for taking the time to bring this matter to the Government's attention.

Yours sincerely

The Hon. Shelley Hancock MP
Minister for Local Government

- 6 MAY 2020