



MEDIA RELEASE

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Changes to Local Government Election Advertising

On the 1st of August changes to the *Local Government (General) Regulations 2015* (the Regulations) related to Local Government election campaigns came into effect – applying for the period commencing 9 August to 30 October.

One aspect of the changes related to the maximum amount a candidate can spend on election advertising (spend limits).

While the advertising spend for the period was going to be \$8000 (inclusive of GST) for all candidates it was only recently picked up that this spend limit now included the cost of pamphlets. For many elections Local Government candidates had been advised that pamphlet costs were not included in advertising returns made to the Electoral Commission.

In recognition that the cost of distributing pamphlets is significantly more in larger urban councils, indeed likely to exceed the spend threshold, the Government has agreed to LGAT's request to rapidly progress a change.

LGAT CEO Dr Stephenson said "in the larger councils, quotes for the printing and distribution of pamphlets to all households range from \$7-10,000. This means if a candidate did a letterbox pamphlet drop they would not be able to do any other form of advertising".

"A limitation on the how you can promote yourself of that nature would definitely give an advantage to current, incumbent, councillors over those running for the first time".

"Because of this, LGAT has worked with the Government to find a suitable spending limit that takes into account the significantly larger size of some councils".

"LGAT congratulates the Government on promptly acting on this issue, which will better ensure that new candidates in large councils will have sufficient opportunity to raise their profile and in general provides all candidates with greater flexibility in relation to their electoral advertising" said Dr Stephenson.

The most recent changes now mean:

- For councils with more than 15,000 properties (based on rateable valuation data collected by the Government) the spend limit will be \$16,000.
- This applies to councils categorised as Urban Medium – namely Hobart City Council, Clarence City Council, Glenorchy City Council, Launceston City Council and Kingborough Council. Please note however that Glenorchy City Council is not having an election in October having had their election earlier this year.
- For all other councils, the spend limit is \$10,000. Those councils have less than 15,000 properties.

These changes will be enacted before the 9th of August.

The other changes to the Regulations, that came into effect on 1st of August, will remain unaltered. Namely:

- There is no difference in advertising spend limits for candidates who are running for Mayor, Deputy Mayor or councilor (in a council area). Mayors and Deputy Mayors used to have an additional amount they could spend on their campaign.
- There is no longer a limit on the number and size of posters that a candidate can display in the municipality (it used to be restricted to 50). HOWEVER candidates must still be mindful of signage requirements under their local planning scheme and are encouraged to seek advice from their council.
- There are no limitations on the amount of television, radio and newspaper advertising (time and size) as long as the total electoral advertising spend (including that spent on media, posters, signs, pamphlets, how to vote cards and internet advertising) does not exceed the spend limits. As outlined above, previously the limit, and the advertising declaration, included only purchased newspaper, television and radio advertising and the number of signs.

Outside of election provisions, the Regulations also have changes related to the treatment and declaration of Gifts and Donations, and the Declaration of Office which now includes a commitment to ongoing professional development and to abide by the principles of good governance.

These changes will apply for the relevant period to be included in the expenditure limit (that is: 9 August to 30 October).

Dr Stephenson notes that “LGAT is currently updating our candidate information materials on our website to reflect these changes and anticipate we will have that completed early next week”