

2nd October 2020

To: The Attorney General, The Hon Jill Hennessy MP
Attorney-General@justice.vic.gov.au
The Minister for Local Government, The Hon Shaun Leane MP
OfficeMinLeane@ecodev.vic.gov.au

Election Integrity

Dear Ministers,

Recent media disclosures of allegations against a Bass Coast Shire Councillor (dating back to 2018) have received much attention locally. The Councillor concerned is standing for re-election in Bass Coast, and the Bass Coast Ratepayers & Residents Association (BCRRA) is greatly perturbed at the potential these allegations may have on the integrity of the upcoming Local Council Election.

Although the right to the presumption of innocence is enshrined in our system, so also are the confidentiality requirements of formal investigations in process. The latter prevents any refutation of unproven allegations by the aggrieved party, leaving only one side of the story "out there" in the community.

It is quite proper that due process is complete before any formal comment is made, but this restricts the ability of the candidate fender to counter any assertions in the public arena. With a council election due in three weeks time, BCRRA believe it is essential that this process is concluded swiftly, so that voters may make a fully informed decision when voting, and request that you take one of the following two courses of action:

1. Conclude your investigation, and make the findings public, before the intended mail-out date of postal ballot packs.
- or
2. In the event that this conclusion is not reached in time, postpone the local government election for Bass Coast Shire Council until it is.

If the election proceeds without a concluded investigation, any result will have been tainted. The presence of doubt is a disrupting influence for voters and you have the authority to restore order to this process by ensuring the election does not take place while such doubt exists.

We look forward to your urgent attention to this matter.

Yours faithfully,

John Trigt, Andrew Marston, Peter McMahon
BCRRA Committee Members

c.c. Member for Bass, Jordan Crugnale MP; CEO Bass Coast Shire Council, Ali Wastie