

Declaration of Independents - local government



Purpose and preamble

The purpose of this declaration to:

1. Differentiate 'community-minded independents' from 'independents' who are affiliated with political parties and who by that affiliation cannot act solely in the best interests of the electorate.
2. Promote and commit to participatory and deliberative processes to enrich the character, quality and effectiveness of our democracy, particularly in relation to difficult issues that are potentially divisive.
3. Commit to inclusive, respectful, transparent and accountable behavior and conduct.

The concept of 'community minded independents' is defined by a core set of values and principles; as expressed in this Declaration.

Summary Declaration:

A 'community minded independent' is a representative who acts according to the following values and principles:

- Independence: is not currently a member of a political party, and will vote as an individual.
- Representation: always acts in the best interests of their constituents and gives effect to the ideals of democratic government by consulting the community and acting on community priorities
- Conduct: conducts themselves honorably, respectfully, honestly and transparently with dignity and care, putting the community's interests before any personal, sectional or partisan interest; and by doing so, retains the trust and respect of their community by 'being their best self'.

Relation to policies and issues:

This independence, commitment to engagement, and mode of behavior can then be applied to any priority, issue or policy whether raised by the constituents or brought by the representative to the electorate for deliberation.

Relevance to local government:

While relevant to all levels of government, the declaration is particularly important at the local government level for the following reasons:

- For 'career politicians', local government is often the first step in their progression to state and federal government. However local elected representatives should focus exclusively on the well being of their constituents. Councillors are effectively the board: setting policy that is then enacted by staff and reviewed by the councillors.
- Local government is the arena of politics most directly connected with the day-to-day life of a community and can have a direct bearing on the quality of life of individuals. It is not the place for the implementation of party policies. Nor is its role simply to enact or implement state or federal programs.

Declaration:

Independence: I declare that I am not currently affiliated with a political party.

- 1a I have been a member of a political party in the past 3 years (circle) YES / **NO**
if YES
- 1b I am a former member of a political party (please specify which party, date joined and resigned).
No
- 2 Disclose whether and when you have worked as a paid political staffer;
No
- 3 Disclose whether you have made donations to a political party of more than \$50 in the last three years
No
- 4 Disclose whether you have an immediate family member or partner who has held political office as a member of a political party, or who has been an officer of a political party within the last 5 years.
No
- 5 If I am included in a 'group' in the local government elections, this is an indication of the shared values of representation and behavior. If elected I will vote as an individual not as part of a group.

Representation: I declare that I will represent the interests of my electorate as a whole and give effect to the ideals of democratic government by:

- Being inclusive and respectful of the views and priorities of the diverse range of people I represent;
- Actively engaging with the community I represent, by developing participatory and deliberative processes that draw on reputable evidence and analysis to identify and address issues of interest and concern to the community.
- Advocating in public, to government and in Council, and voting for, the policies that are informed by and in the best interests of my constituents as a whole

Behaviour: I declare that if elected, I will conduct myself honourably, with dignity and care¹ and

- Put the community's interest before any personal, sectional or partisan interest;
- Refrain from exploiting my rivals' private failings for political gain;
- Hold myself accountable for conduct for which I am responsible;
- Act in good conscience so as to strengthen the trust and respect of the community for our democratic institutions;
- Be transparent in all my actions when in office, by publicly disclosing all donations and meetings within a reasonable timeframe.

Name

Madeline Hinchy

Signed

Date 23.7.21

¹ This section based on St James Ethics Centre 'StIM Politicians Pledge' <https://www.stim.com.au/national/mw/taku-the-pledge-nsw-politicians-urged-to-sign-ethics-agreement-20150305-13x1c7.html>