

Doctors call for scrapping of all voting fines

No one should be fined for failing to vote in last weekend's local government elections, according to Queensland doctors.

Australian Medical Association (AMA) Queensland President Dr Dilip Dhupelia said the pandemic was creating enough financial hardship and mental health issues for people without adding a \$133 fine to the mix.

"It was grossly disappointing the Queensland Electoral Commission (ECQ) did not extend the deadline for postal voting, given the unprecedented circumstances, or found other ways for people to lodge their ballot rather than having to attend public booths at this time," Dr Dhupelia said.

"Given the Council elections went ahead despite the pandemic protocols outlined by the Prime Minister and growing concerns amongst the medical profession, it is vital the State Government shows empathy during these unprecedented times.

"While exercising the democratic right to vote is important, so is our health and people who opted to stay away from polling booths to protect themselves and their families should not be punished."

The Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine President Dr Ewen McPhee said many Queenslanders found the call to attend polling booths at schools and other public places to contradict official advice on physical distancing and staying home.

"It is perfectly understandable for people to feel worried about their own health and that of their family members at this time," Dr McPhee said.

"And many Queenslanders have been adhering to official advice to stay home unless they require essentials and to practice social distancing when they do go out.

"We are calling on the State Government and the ECQ to be reasonable and scrap any fines for those who didn't vote on March 28, given the unprecedented circumstances."

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