



**SENATOR THE HON SCOTT RYAN**  
**Special Minister of State**  
**Minister Assisting the Cabinet Secretary**  
**Senator for Victoria**

REF: MC16-002489

Mayor Troy Pickard  
President  
Australian Local Government Association  
8 Geils Court  
DEAKIN ACT 2600

Dear Mayor,

Thank you for your correspondence of 28 August 2016 regarding Resolution 67 of the National General Assembly of Local Government, which asks the Commonwealth Government to introduce electronic voting.

Applying electronic electoral solutions is an ongoing activity which requires careful management to ensure the integrity of, and public confidence in, the electoral system is maintained.

Historically, changes to Australia's electoral system have occurred based on bi-partisan inquiries by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters (JSCEM). In December 2014, JSCEM tabled an interim report: *Second interim report on the inquiry into the conduct of the 2013 Federal Election: An assessment of electronic voting options*. The report concluded that there can be no large-scale system of electronic voting introduced in the near future without compromising our electoral integrity. Based on this conclusion, JSCEM did not recommend online voting be pursued at that time, although it did recommend a number of changes to increase electronic support for the electoral process.

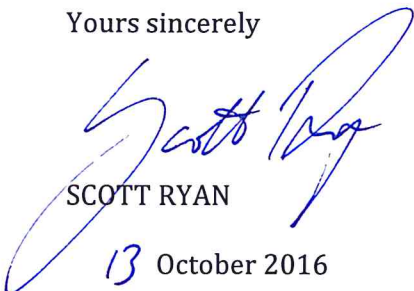
Following this recommendation, several innovations for counting votes have been implemented recently. For example, at the 2016 federal election, the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) used a semi-automated process to conduct the Senate count. Senate ballot papers are now scanned using optical character recognition, an innovation which is expected over time to significantly reduce the human effort, time and cost of capturing voter preferences. Additionally, electronic certified lists now increasingly replace the traditional paper electoral roll, online enrolment is available to voters, and the EasyCount Senate computer system is used to calculate the quota, distribute preferences and determine the result of the Senate election.

Given the potential to realise further efficiencies in electoral processes, I have referred the potential application of new technology to voting, scrutiny and counting to the newly appointed JSCEM as part of its inquiry into the 2016 federal election.

The Australian Local Government Association may wish to make a submission to JSCEM for this inquiry. Further information about the role of the JSCEM is available on the Parliament House website: [www.aph.gov.au/em](http://www.aph.gov.au/em).

Thank you for raising this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Scott Ryan', is written over the typed name. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

SCOTT RYAN

13 October 2016