

# Plea for voters to get informed about candidates' backgrounds

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**With voting in the country's local elections now open, a disinformation expert is pleading with voters to make sure they're informed about candidates' backgrounds.**



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This year there's been an increase in candidates linked to mis and disinformation groups.

"There's a cloak and dagger issue going around where those are standing for office are not being honest about who they are and what they stand for," Sanjana Hattotuwa of the Disinformation Project said.

"That's something that constituents will have to take into account when they exercise their rights."

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Hattotuwa said some candidates hadn't been forthright about their backgrounds - what they're connected to, partial to, what they've been a part of, who they've given money to, what they've subscribed too and what they believe in.

The researcher claimed people who are anti-vaxxers, anti-mandate, anti-science and anti-government are trying to get into power as part of a "long-term play".

"Researchers like myself are concerned about the level of strategic play," he remarked. "There is a very sophisticated script that clearly has an in-state desire years into the future."

"What you're seeing is a design that's going to erode

democracy and democratic and public institutions years down the line," he said.

Hattotuwa said there's a danger to democracy if people linked to mis and disinformation groups are elected.

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He said for democracy to thrive, people must actively participate in its "nurture" and "curation".

Hattotuwa urged people to exercise their right to vote. He described apathy as being the elephant in the room which needs to be addressed.

"I urge, beg, plead, pray that those looking at this programme (Breakfast) to inform themselves about the nature of the candidates they think they should be voting for and to go exercise their vote.

"It's absolutely fundamental, but look into candidates' backgrounds first."

Voting documents are being sent out by local councils to those enrolled from today to September 21. Voting closes at 12pm on October 8.

**Links to more information on candidates standing in your area can be found on the relevant local government website. Links to all local bodies can be found [here](#).**

