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2007 New South Wales General Election
Registered Political Party Feedback on Performance of the
New South Wales Electoral Commission

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The New South Wales Electoral Commission (NSWEC) commissioned The Research Forum to conduct a survey of the 17 registered political Parties (RPPs) which participated in the March 2007 General Election. The overall objective of the research was to collect independent fearless feedback on stakeholders' perceptions of NSWEC's performance in a number of the key areas, including briefings, the mail out to electors, performance of Returning Officers, the voter information campaign, and overall service to political Parties in responding to their questions during the election period.

The research surveyed the five (5) major Parties via face-to-face interviews while the 12 minor Parties were surveyed using a mail-out/self-complete/mail-back method. Six of the 12 minor Parties responded to the survey.

The general feedback from the RPPs participating in the research was that **NSWEC's performance was of a very high standard – being both highly professional and very responsive to the needs of the political Parties.**

Furthermore, for those with a historical perspective (being able to look back on a number of elections), the overwhelming feeling was that service from NSWEC had definitely improved and that the Commission was 'heading in the right direction', modernising what was seen as an antiquated system. Even without a long perspective, internal party discussions had indicated to Registered Officers that the NSWEC was now much more service oriented than in the past. The impetus for increased standards and professionalism within the NSWEC is clearly delivering in terms of services being provided to RPPs.

The main aspects of NSWEC service singled out for praise by RPPs participating in the research were:

- ♦ the overall speed and responsiveness of service;
- ♦ professionalism of service;
- ♦ availability of election officials, especially the Electoral Commissioner himself;
- ♦ the NSWEC website – information (polling booths/places), maps, seat profiles, forms, and timeliness of election results on the website; and
- ♦ the 1300 telephone number and associated services.

The main research findings are summarised below.

Pre-Election

Overall, RPPs praised the process of **briefings** which were described as informative and well structured. There was also an overall consensus that **handbooks** were comprehensive, useful and informative. A suggestion was made by one RPP that briefings could include an agreed written statement regarding the main outcomes to avoid issues of misinterpretation and misunderstanding on both sides.

The **level of service** in responding to any pre-election questions was rated as good to excellent. The NSWEC and the Commissioner were described as being accessible and providing excellent response times on all requests. It was suggested by a major party that a contact list of NSWEC senior staff would be useful in the Commissioner's absence.

The **mail out to electors** informing them of boundary changes (and including their name on a card) was rated as a good idea by minor Parties. Furthermore, major Parties described the mail out as a good concept, with one seeing it as 'moving down the right track of authenticating the voter'. One criticism of the brochure layout was that the elector card was not easily torn off; as it was neither in the centre of the brochure nor was it pre-perforated.

The **voter information campaign** was rated positively by both the major and minor Parties. A number of RPPs participating in the research suggested that more resources should be spent on the campaign, especially on the 'How to Vote/Formality' phase of the campaign. There was a perceived need for this because of the complex optional preferential system and confusion with the voting system for Federal elections. **Circulars** and other information were also rated as 'excellent,' being regarded as "timely", as well as showing good "attention to detail".

Pre-Poll and Postal Issues

Service to NSW electors interstate and overseas through **pre-poll voting options** received a mixed reaction. On the one hand pre-poll options were described as highly improved, whereas on the other hand they were described as being littered with inconsistencies. Some pre-poll places for example were open longer than others and this caused some voter confusion. There were also a large number of voters who, for various reasons, did not get their postal vote applications in on time.

Election Day Issues

RPPs were generally satisfied with the selection and location of **polling centres**. There does however appear to be inconsistent communication from NSWEC with RPPs re changes in polling locations, with some reporting constant updates and others complaining about lack of communication. This is clearly an area where NSWEC should strive to improve the consistency of its communication with RPPs.

One of the major Parties (The Greens) was also concerned about the level of **intimidation at some polling booths**. This was seen to be on the increase and confined to 'close call' or very marginal seats.

iRoll was seen as a great idea to help absentee voters identify where they were enrolled. Further use of this facility was suggested by the RPPs: iRoll to be available at *all* polling centres; use of iRoll to prevent multiple/fraudulent voting; and use of iRoll at pre-poll locations. Other feedback from RPPs indicated that NSWEC should provide clear direction to ROs on whether iRoll should be used inflexibly or whether some discretion should still be exercised by ROs. For example, one issue worth clarifying is whether electors *are* entitled to a Declared/Statutory Vote and under what circumstances, especially in the context of iRoll. This information should also be communicated to RPPs.

The timeliness of **election results on the NSWEC website** was much appreciated and most felt it was showing that the Commission was moving into the 21st century. Most did not attend the Tally Room.

General Service Issues

RPPs were satisfied with the **general timeliness** with which they were provided with the necessary information needed to undertake their work. The overall performance of Returning Officers (**ROs**) as **local area managers** of election arrangements was rated as good. Most were described as flexible and fair. The **professionalism of ROs** as local area managers in the delivery of election services to candidates and scrutineers was also rated highly by minor Parties. Major Parties reported that professionalism varied because the ROs who 'have been doing it a long time, are often set in their ways' and that new ROs while more responsive and flexible, obviously were less experienced. Overall, these points were largely viewed as 'par for the course' on Election Day.

The **consistency of decision making** across the state was also rated highly by the minor Parties. Major Parties, however, noted inconsistencies with interpretation of the Electoral Act and approved how-to-vote cards. Some inconsistency was noted by these RPPs when it came to counts at some of the marginal seats, especially when less experienced ROs were involved. This is a concern and means that **high level NSWEC staff should be allocated to any close call counts ASAP** in order to maximise consistency of decision making.

Other/Future Services

An additional service suggested by one major party was provision of **on-line training for RPPs on the electoral process**. For example, online training could be used to illustrate the process for a Candidate and the Candidate registration process.

Another request concerned the **electoral roll CD** provided to Parties. It was suggested that a search facility be developed to be able to find an elector anywhere on the roll without having to examine the roll Electorate by Electorate.

There was general support for discontinuing use of the **Tally Room** among the major Parties. In fact, none of the Parties we spoke to relied on the Tally Room for keeping up with the results and all saw the NSWEC website as more effective for this purpose. The minor Parties were evenly split on the issue of closure – half agreed with discontinuation and half did not. The only opposition to discontinuing use of the Tally Room came from some of the minor Parties that saw it as a media opportunity. These Parties would not generally be able to generate the same media attendance if they called media to their headquarters.

Problems Encountered

The main problem raised by the major Parties related to the **Electoral Act** itself and not to the service provided by the NSWEC. The issue relates to the time gap between allocation of candidate names on ballot papers and the NSWEC deadline for approval of 'How-to-Vote' cards which was felt to be far too short. The impact was often extraordinary pressure on drafting the How-to-Vote cards, approval from NSWEC and printing of approved cards. All of this needs to take place in a very short timeframe to allow for distribution of cards state-wide and to allow electors to effectively exercise their pre-poll and postal options through access to 'How-to-Vote' information. The RPPs participating in the research would support NSWEC putting forward a recommendation to NSW Government/Parliament to effect appropriate legislative change in this regard. One major RPP also suggested that NSWEC should be prepared to provide in-principal approval of draft How-to-Vote cards (with no or dummy names on the draft cards) and then provide final approval quickly once candidate names are known and added to the final version.

Another legislative issue raised by a number of major RPPs related to the requirements imposed by the **Election Funding Authority**. Rather than submitting forms that need to go back four (4) years, some RPPs would prefer to put in an *annual* return setting out all their expenses/costs – along the lines of AEC requirements. Going back over four years is seen as too difficult and problematic by some of the less well resourced (though major) Parties.

Another issue raised related to **inconsistent advice** from the Commissioner and NSWEC staff. For example, conversations with the Commissioner provided different answers from that provided by staff and this created a lot of 'backtracking' work by RPPs. A particular example concerned signage on fences, and inconsistency as to whether this was allowed at polling places and the allowable size of posters.

Some of the RPPs also requested that they be directly advised of any **last minute changes to polling place locations**. The feedback was that the final locations were not even on the website and this posed significant logistical challenges for the major Parties in ensuring all polling places were adequately covered on polling day. There were calls for providing the list of polling places – even in draft form – months before the election to organise their workers/volunteers. The list could then be fine-tuned and finalised at a later date, as long as the RPPs were kept up to date with any changes.

The overall conclusion of this research is that the NSWEC served the RPPs very effectively during the 2007 NSW General Election, providing a level of proactivity, responsiveness and professionalism that was highly appreciated by the RPPs participating in the research. Although some clear directions for further improvements are outlined above, service standards were clearly lifting and had improved significantly in comparison with earlier elections.

2 INTRODUCTION

The New South Wales Electoral Commission (NSWEC) conducts elections for the Parliament of New South Wales, local Councils and other clients (i.e. registered clubs statutory boards and state registered industrial organisations). NSWEC has many responsibilities including managing the Commonwealth electoral roll (in partnership with the Australian Electoral Commission), providing administrative support to the Election Funding Authority and undertaking research relating to administration of enrolment and elections in NSW.

The last NSW General Election was conducted on 24 March 2007, and as part of its role in conducting this election the NSWEC was required to liaise with stakeholders, especially the registered political Parties (RPPs).

The 17 registered political Parties were key stakeholders for the NSWEC in conduct of the election. Broadly, the RPPs fall into two groups:

- The **5 major Parties** (the Australian Labor Party, Liberal Party, National Party, The Greens and the Christian Democrats) which fielded a large number of candidates at the State election; and
- The **12 minor Parties** – including Australian Democrats, Australians Against Further Immigration, the Country Labor Party, Horse Riders Party, Outdoor Recreation Party, etc.

3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Following conduct of the election, the NSWEC commissioned research to collect feedback from RPPs on performance of the Commission in the following key areas:

- ◆ **Briefings** for political Parties prior to the election on election arrangements;
- ◆ **Mail out to electors** of an elector brochure informing them of new electoral boundaries;
- ◆ Performance of **Returning Officers** as local area managers of election arrangements;
- ◆ The **professionalism** of Returning Officers in the delivery of election services to candidates and scrutineers and the consistency of decision making across the State;
- ◆ NSWEC's **voter information campaign** as a means of informing electors of their key responsibilities to enrol and vote;
- ◆ Service to political Parties in **responding to their questions** during the election period;
- ◆ **Timeliness of election results** published on the NSWEC's website and Tally Room;
- ◆ **Availability of the Electoral Commissioner** to deal with enquiries from the Registered Officer of the party;
- ◆ Service to New South Wales **electors interstate and overseas** by way of pre-poll voting;
- ◆ Introduction of **iRoll** at polling places as a means of assisting absentee voters to identify where they are enrolled;
- ◆ Selection and location of **polling places**;
- ◆ Views on **discontinuing the use of the Tally Room** (bearing in mind that the use of the internet is now the primary source of information regarding election results);
- ◆ The **handbooks** produced by NSWEC for candidates and scrutineers;
- ◆ Selection and location of **pre-poll voting centres**;
- ◆ Arrangements for **postal voting** during the election;
- ◆ **Circulars** to registered political Parties during the election on key election information; and
- ◆ General **timeliness of providing RPPs with necessary information** to enable them to undertake their business.

The overall objective was to collect **independent fearless feedback** on stakeholders' perceptions of NSWEC's performance on the above issues.

4 METHOD

The research consisted of:

- A mail/email/fax-back questionnaire – used to contact the 12 minor Parties, and
- Face-to-face interviews – used to consult with the 5 major Parties.

All interviews and surveys were conducted from 18 to 31 May 2007.

4.1 Questionnaire Content

The specific questions were designed to extract comment from RPPs on the issues of interest to the NSWEC (outlined in section 3 above).

A copy of the questionnaire (and accompanying letter sent to the minor Parties) is at Attachment 1.

4.2 Face-to-face Interviews

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with up to three people nominated by the relevant Registered Officers of the party. The interviews predominantly followed the questionnaire with additional questions to measure length of time dealing with the NSWEC and whether the way NSWEC conducts elections has improved in this time. Interviews lasted 1 hour maximum and were digitally recorded for later analysis.

4.3 Mail/email/fax Questionnaires

The 12 minor Parties were contacted by telephone initially to confirm/collect their fax and/or email details. The questionnaire was sent via the method chosen by the RPP and a short timeframe (2 weeks) was provided for these Parties to complete and send back the questionnaire. Once received, the responses were coded and analysed by The Research Forum.

5 FINDINGS

5.1 OVERALL SATISFACTION

When compared to previous elections, the major RPPs were very complimentary about the service provided by NSWEC in 2007. NSWEC is definitely seen to be heading in the right direction, and modernising what was seen by RPPs as an antiquated system. This was especially evident in use of the website for posting of information re polling booths, maps and seat profiles. Furthermore, RPPs were impressed with the effort to lift standards and professionalism on the one hand and to improve communication via documentation and the website. The use of the 1300 telephone line enquiry number was also thought to be new and uniformly welcomed as a useful service and a sign that the Commission was 'moving with the times'. Direct access to the Commissioner for RPPs was also favourably commented upon.

As some major RPPs commented:

You can see it's being pulled up by its bootstraps and making its way out of the anachronistic phase.

I was very impressed by Collin Barry's appointment and the effort in my view to lift the standards and bring comprehensive documentation, improvement to website, the 1300 number, in general terms I find the new face of the NSWEC is improving – increased professionalism.

There was the documentation on the Parties/Candidates briefing day that I have not seen before.

I was also impressed with amazing website where you have all the polling booths on a map and link to Election Funding Authority.

Yes, absolutely, we can see change from our perspective as a stakeholder. They laid out their new approach and all of those things were delivered and actually work ... website was probably the greatest ... pretty useful, with Forms, access to information, polling booths, seat profiles, maps absolutely everything was excellent ... shame it wasn't up earlier NSWEC briefing sessions provided a great deal of information.

A number of resource kits and calendars (were provided) which we could then refer back to ... Brian directed us to the Manual for a lot of our day to day enquires ... The manual became our first reference point ... excellent!

After working with Members of the Campaign Committee who have been involved in NSW campaigns for a long time, they certainly did see some change in the focus of the Commission, willingness to work with the Parties, briefings etc... so they have seen a change.

The communication ... you can see the effort ... you could see there was a dinosaur trying to be turned around ... give them points for effort ... they treated us like stakeholders and that is all you can ask for ... Better than the AEC actually, they take ages.

Their attempts at treating us like stakeholders and getting our views was quite good ... and in all of this, there was no suggestion of bias ... there was no bias.

Therefore, the general feedback from the RPPs participating in the research was that **NSWEC's performance was of a very high standard – being both highly professional and very responsive to the needs of the political Parties.** Furthermore, for those with a historical perspective (being able to look back on a number of elections), the overwhelming feeling was that service from NSWEC had definitely improved. Even without a long perspective, internal party discussions had indicated to Registered Officers that the NSWEC was now much more service oriented than in the past.

The main aspects of NSWEC service singled out for praise by RPPs participating in the research were:

- ♦ speed and responsiveness – quick to answer questions and resolve important queries;
- ♦ level of professionalism – co-operative, flexible, thorough, efficient and competent ... all within very demanding timeframes;
- ♦ availability of election officials, especially the Electoral Commissioner himself – at all times of day and night, including weekends;
- ♦ the new website – information (polling booths/places), maps, seat profiles, forms, timeliness of election results on the website; and
- ♦ the 1300 telephone number and associated services.

As one major RPP commented:

They were very open to suggestions, flexible and responsive to issues raised... No stubbornness on their behalf... that was probably the best... we felt it was actually worth picking up the phone because they would genuinely listen to our concerns.

A number of **negative issues** and **problems** were raised by the RPPs. On the whole, taking these on board will serve to further improve an already improving service. However, as noted below, some of the problems in particular are unrelated to NSWEC service delivery and more to do with the various Acts and Regulations governing the conduct and funding of NSW elections.

The main problem raised by the major Parties related to the **short time gap between allocation of candidate names on ballot papers and the NSWEC deadline for approval of electoral material**, especially 'How-to-

Vote' cards. The impact was invariably extraordinary time pressure on drafting/finalising the How-to-Vote cards, approval from NSWEC and printing of approved cards. All of this has to happen in a very short timeframe to allow for **distribution of cards state-wide and to allow electors to effectively exercise their pre-poll and postal options through access to 'How-to-Vote' information.**

As the major RPPs explained it:

Our postal vote was a one page postal voting form showing every electorate, who was standing, who we would recommend voting for, it was a one page document... but basically we just could not get that registered in time and distributed Now, that's very difficult because it is all dependent on when the Candidates become registered and then when the draw occurs we can't do it before thatvery tight time frame

Some flexibility on that specific legislation should be permitted if for example the Party could submit a format and have that approved and then at a later date (as late as the last week) be permitted to put the actual numbers in.

I would be surprised if any of the RPPs managed to do an efficient job on absentee voting given the time constraints.

In fact, the RPPs participating in the research would support NSWEC putting forward a recommendation to NSW Government/ Parliament to effect appropriate legislative change in this regard. One major RPP also suggested that NSWEC should be prepared to provide in-principal approval of draft How-to-Vote cards (with no or dummy names on the draft cards) and then provide final approval quickly once candidate names are known and added to the final version.

Similarly, a complaint was lodged about timeliness of postal deliveries and the impact of this in rural areas:

Postal voting just does not work in the context of State election ... so many people missed out on voting... Australia Post is not helping by not putting on extra runs to get mail out... because there is such a small space of time between issuing of the Writs... just not enough time to get mail out...need to give voters more options to pre-poll if we are not going to find a way to improve postal voting system. We have a huge list of voters who just didn't get their postal vote application in. In seats like Barwon people just don't bother voting...they would rather cop a fine...process is just not conducive to them.

Another legislative issue raised by a number of major RPPs related to the requirements imposed by the **Election Funding Authority**. Rather than submitting forms that need to go back four (4) years, some RPPs would prefer to put in an **annual return** setting out all their expenses/costs – along the lines of AEC requirements. Going back over four years is seen as too difficult and problematic by some of the less well resourced (though major) Parties.

The Declarations at end of the campaign particularly for Parties, which span a four year period is onerous. It's hard enough to sift through one year's records let alone four years records but that is what legislation says. It would be better done annually ...we do it annually for Australian EC and that works well, it's not an issue... NSWEC should be able to accept basically same sort of reporting.

Our view is that the Disclosure of Funding should be mirrored to the Federal (that's a political view that's not the NSWEC's area) .. We know we've got a different system ... but to try and take Party units back four years instead of just the election period ... I think we are being asked a bit more this time than last time ... again it is probably a more strict interpretation of the Act.

Related to this was the issue that three different forms rather than one single streamlined claim form had to be completed for the EFA. This was also seen to be illogical and overly onerous, as explained by one major RPP:

A Candidate or RPP now has to obtain at least three different forms to complete the Returnin the case of a Candidate they have to do two Auditor's Certificates which they have probably got to create unless the Auditor is really on the ball (but they are not going to look up the form of words in the Handbook) the Certificate states that 'I as the Auditor am satisfied that I saw all the records, there was full disclosure relating to expenditure for the campaign and contributions, donations to campaign'. The other Auditor's Certificate relates to the Claim for Payment and states: 'Yes I saw all the records in relation to this claim for payment'. So they have to do: 2 Auditors Certificates, Claim for Payment, Declaration (details all finances) and a Direction Form (as to which bank account the electoral funding is to go into).

Another issue raised related to **inconsistent advice** from the Commissioner and NSWEC staff. For example, conversations with the Commissioner provided different answers from that provided by staff and this created a lot of 'backtracking' work by RPPs. A particular example concerned fixed posters on fences, and inconsistency as to whether this was allowed at polling places on election day and the allowable size of posters. Two major RPPs raised this issue. The suggestion was that the Commission should seek legal advice to clarify issues such as this and then advise the Parties in writing. This would prevent the need for later backtracking and the imposition of a 'logistical nightmare' on the RPPs as they receive different advice from different areas of the NSWEC on eve of Election Day or on the day. As explained in the words of one major RPP:

We found communication pretty good ... just a bit of inconsistency ... am not sure if that was the Commissioner or his staff or what it was, but we found sometimes that conversation with Commissioner was different to what we got from staff ... in the end we would only rely on something given in writing... it was sort of that in the past the Electoral Act was not followed to the letter, and we felt that Colin was determined to do that ... so he would say

that or that was going to happen but when the practicalities of it actually dawned on him he'd have to backtrack which is probably why the Act wasn't followed in first place ... which meant that in some regards we were following his earlier statements and enacting things and then finding out later that he had backtracked and that Labor were doing it and we weren't ... issue of signage on fences is probably the best one ... all info and advice given to us was that you could not affix your poster to a fence because that was against the Act ... so we instructed our campaigners ... it was policed in that regard in a previous bi-election so we expected it to be policed ... but we got a phone call on Saturday morning "Well, if you are just tying , it's not affixed" ... it sort of was a backtrack... so Labor affixed everything to fences and we didn't because we expected the Commission to follow the earlier ruling ... but I take it that none of ROs were keen to police it. In my view, I think there is a need in future to seek Crown Law advice, seek proper legal opinion and provide that to the Parties ... bit of inconsistency there.

These views and concerns were echoed by a second major RPP:

I had a severe issue with it - a particular RO would keep telling me signage would be taken down but it wasn't. There was no line of communication between local RO to Booth Returning Officer until I got my superiors to contact Colin to pretty much read the riot act to them. Putting it bluntly, there is always going to be issues 'on the ground' with volunteers who are just there for duration, never with NSWEC staff ... if we contact the Commission they are great ... in terms of providing feedback. So, I thought there was clarity what the size of signage should be from the outset, so much so that other ROs in other seats were happy to comply on both size and location of signage but these ones weren't.

The one **complaint about timeliness of service** (from a major RPP) related to the perceived need to provide the "re-throw" figures for the two party preferred (TPP) contest – ALP vs. Liberal. The re-throw would be useful in answering interesting questions such as "Who got the swing overall?" and "Who got the popular vote?" The view here was this service needed to be taken more seriously because the state-wide TPP figures would indicate the overall swing to/away from each party following the election. In turn, this may influence any independents in deciding whether to support one party or the other in either forming government or supporting/opposing any legislation.

As expressed by a major party:

Still very unhappy that they have not done the re-throws for the Lab vs. Lib contest ... we still do not have a State-wide TPP figure still have not seen that ... could not even tell my Party what the swing was ... think it has to be done straight away as soon as Poll is declared ... there was one Independent who held balance of power and had to make his mind up whether to form government ... one of the reasons that that person might make his mind up on

which Party to form government, is on which one won the popular vote ... a state-wide TPP is actually quite important.

Some of the RPPs also requested that they be directly advised of any **last minute changes to polling place locations**. The feedback was that the final locations were not posted on the website and this posed significant logistical challenges for the major Parties in ensuring all polling places were adequately covered on polling day. There were calls for providing the list of polling places to RPPs – even in draft form - months before the election so they can organise their workers/volunteers. The list could then be fine-tuned and finalised at a later date, as long as the RPPs were kept up to date with any changes.

Relevant comments from major RPPs follow:

And it's always a case of, "Sorry, we can't give it to you until just before the election"; "Sorry, we can't give you a copy because it's not finalised". But we need (list of booths) months before election to organise our workers. Give us the draft or proposed list so that at least we can get that information out to our 93 Electorates (2,800 booths).

We received the list only a matter of 2-3 weeks before this last election we have our own on-line polling booth system which we can access and our organisers can put someone on the Cobar booth from here (Sydney) ... we are fairly sophisticated in terms of what we can provide but we are not getting polling booth info. early enough from NSWEC to enable us to use these sophisticated resources.

5.2 PRE-ELECTION ISSUES

Briefings & Handbooks

Overall, RPPs praised the process of briefings which were described as informative, useful and well structured. The resource kits and calendar were also appreciated and judged useful, "impressive" in the words of one RPP. The format of one-on-one briefings was particularly described as enjoyable and very informative as RPPs were able to clarify specific issues and questions.

A suggestion was made by one RPP that briefings could include an agreed written statement regarding the main outcomes and NSWEC undertakings to avoid issues of misinterpretation and misunderstanding on both sides as the election draws closer. It was felt that there was some inconsistency between the briefing and what was done 'on the ground' by ROs during the election.

I must admit that when it came to the campaign itself, on some of the things that were agreed at the briefings, the Commission had different interpretation to what we had (especially when it came to Postal Votes and systems in place and when they wanted things) ... seemed to be different interpretation from my staff and their staff

and ... think in future briefings should have a written Summary and agreed Statement because I didn't enjoy having "my staff are not lying, yours are" sort of conversation.

There was also an overall consensus that the handbooks were comprehensive, useful and informative. The usefulness and thoroughness of the handbooks was rated as 'excellent' by the minor Parties. The major Parties agreed and added the handbooks were 'impressive' and a 'pleasant surprise'.

Very useful ... both briefing and material that came with it was particularly useful ... I was able to draw on it numerous times. I like that sort of approach, it's good to be able to sit down and discuss everything [in person].

The mail out to electors

The mail out informing electors of boundary changes (and including their name on a card) was seen as a good idea by minor Parties. Furthermore, major Parties described the mail out as a good concept, with one seeing it as 'moving down the right track of authenticating the voter'. One criticism of the brochure layout was that the card was not easily torn off, as it was in the middle of the brochure rather than being in the corner or pre-perforated.

Despite the card, new boundaries were still said to have caused some elector confusion, particularly in the Murrumbidgee and Murray Darling areas. Another concern was that the voter card could potentially be misused through identity fraud, as anyone could take the card to the polling booths and claim to be its owner.

Yes, we received it in mail, and my reaction was that it was not easily torn off, it was right in the middle of brochure ... just didn't make sense... needed to be on the edge and perforated to be able to take off... but as a concept it's brilliant.

It's all moving down the right track of "authenticating" the voter we are full in favour of that ... in fact we'd actually like to see electronic voting just being ramped up one more step in trials or whatever.

It was also suggested that the mail out could have been used to 'clean' the electoral roll by eliminating those who had a 'return to sender' notification. While this was not done in 2007 it was suggested as something to consider undertaking in future elections.

The voter information campaign

The voter information campaign was praised by both the major and minor Parties. Absentee voting, in particular, was described as very well explained. Similarly, the broad range of print and other media was described as appropriate and effective. The campaign was unbiased and was seen as fair as it did not favour one party over others.

One suggestion, from a number of RPPs participating in the research, was that more resources should be spent on the campaign, especially on the 'How to Vote/Formality' phase of the campaign. It was also suggested that the campaign focusing on Postal Voters could be extended in remote and rural areas.

Well I didn't have a complaint about it ...execution did not favour any one Party ... overall though it was ok ... no objections.

It was good, fine, effective ... seem to be in broad range of print and across a number of radio stations ... had no issues with this ... of course we always would like to see more money spent on it because it means more people are enfranchised.

The RPPs felt particularly strongly about the need for more effort to educate electors about Formality and optional preferential voting:

It's all useful. What we are concerned about is that most voters do not understand how the preference system works and because of this it impacts on their choice of Primary Vote. There needs to be a lot more done to explain preference system to voters. There was some good info on NSWEC website but it wasn't that easy to find should be front page/home page Icon about how preferences work.

I am strongly in favour of (and this is a govt or parliamentary decision) having one system of voting, not one for State and another for Federal Basically voters now have to be re-educated for the Federal election to put "1" above the line (but if they vote "1, 2, 3" above the line here, their vote will be counted as 'Informal' - not counted.

There is always very little money spent by the NSWEC on the actual voting/electoral education system ... it's all about the practical details (getting registered to vote etc.) most significantly there were no resources put into "Informal" and when we went to the training day for the NSWEC, all the other minor Parties said exactly the same (major Parties not interested) so more resources required on 'informal' in future from my viewpoint.

Level of service in responding to questions

The level of service in responding to pre-election questions was rated as good to excellent. The NSWEC and the Commissioner were described as being accessible and providing excellent response times on all requests.

It was suggested by a major party that **a contact list of NSWEC senior staff** would be useful in the Commissioner's absence.

As a major RPP summarised it:

They were very accessible the whole time, even up to Commissioner level and on weekends ... Colin was excellent with response times, usually within an hour ... even down to really simple requests, response was excellent.

I had direct access to the Electoral Commissioner. When issues were raised with me I emailed him and he was very responsive. I did not always get the response I wanted but the Commissioner always responded...

In addition, there was never any problem contacting the NSWEC because the 1300 number call centre was an effective conduit for asking questions and obtaining clarification – for RPPs, candidates and electors. Similarly, RPP's were impressed with quick replies via email.

The 1300 number and the call centre was fantastic idea if there was a question that our staff couldn't handle we went straight to the phone there was never any problem with us contacting the NSWEC with this form we just went straight to the right person to be able to source the correct info they were very responsive never any delays in head people (from my point of view or from Party's) with answering questions, including the Commissioner.

Circulars

Circulars and other information were also rated as 'excellent', being regarded as "timely", as well as showing good "attention to detail".

The Circulars are always helpful on an ongoing basis.

Excellent, they were really timely ... nice reminder about what was happening ... attention to detail. Even after Election period they were sending them out to remind us of the updated times the Leg Council was still being counted ... showed attention to detail which I think was coming from Colin down, they were great.

Pretty good, election Circulars that were put out were very useful, very helpful.

They were fine ... didn't have any issues with them ... lot of paper going through ... did not find a problem if we rang them, always accessible ... sure they (circulars) were good for newer Parties.

A suggestion was made to turn the circulars into a newsletter format as this might make more them more user-friendly.

I think a newsletter form would be better than just a circular letter.... might be more user-friendly, with a weekly update either during election or even continuously ... don't believe NSWEC have this (I don't think) but the AEC does.

5.3 POSTAL AND PRE-POLL ISSUES

Service to NSW electors interstate and overseas through **pre-poll** voting options received a mixed reaction. While pre-poll options were described as highly improved, there was a feeling that the process was still full of inconsistencies. Some pre-poll places for example were open longer than others and this caused some voter confusion as did issuance of incorrect ballot papers (described below).

*Anecdotally from some Pre-Polls some incorrect issuing of ballot papers by ROs at pre-polls took place .In one electorate 14 ballot papers for a neighbouring electorate were issued in **that** electorate so the people voted in that, not being aware of who their local Candidates were ... so there were 14 people disenfranchised... obviously those votes don't count ... that also happened on Election Day ... this info has gone back to NSWEC via scrutineers.*

There was voter confusion because pre-poll in Moree was open for just 1 week, but in Narrabri it was open for 2.5 weeks ... why some bigger centres had less time available I'm not sure... a lot of inconsistencies

Another situation where an RO Office (acting as a pre-Poll Centre) was situated well outside of the electorate, posed significant difficulty to get to (away from main shopping and business centres). Only upon our insistence they took up a second Pre-Poll location. This needs to be very closely watched But then this created resource issues for us and also created confusion for Electors But, NSWEC was very responsive to our concerns and very accommodating, the fact they opened up a second polling place showed this.

Basically they were in shopping centres and reasonably accessible.

Well basically they were the ROs and we don't have a problem with that.

Pre-Poll was OK. Overseas seemed to be OK. I'll check our logs but overall wasn't anything like the Federal campaign which was absolute disaster.

Overall, however, pre-poll voting centres were rated as 'excellent' by the minor Parties. An apparent trend was noted by two RPPs for the number of people voting via pre-poll to be increasing.

It is obvious that there is a trend of an increasing number of people voting via Pre-Poll and I am sure that NSWEC is aware of that people have very busy lifestyles and we live in a very mobile society and I think we are going to see that increase.... in terms of resources it is very difficult for us to man those but that is our internal issue.

We do seem to be noticing an increase in Pre-Poll and Postal votes and we wonder if a lot of those are actually people who couldn't get there on polling day should not be encouraged to do that

unless they genuinely can't get there our concern with Pre-Poll is we have to staff a booth for 10 working days prior to election which is a big ask .. has been steady increase.. .. maybe people's lives are busy and more people can't get to vote on Saturday polling day ... certainly people should have max opportunity to vote wonder if perhaps major Parties are encouraging this when it is not a necessity don't have an answer to that as obviously voters need to be informed that it is an option just a query we have seems to be more voters using it.

The **postal** voting system was described as 'not working' in the context of State elections. The short gap between issuing of the Writ and getting postal applications out means Australia Post needs to (but does not) conduct additional mail runs in rural areas to get the mail out in time. Consequently, in rural areas, there was a large list of voters who, because of this and for various other reasons, did not get their postal vote applications in on time.

Not everyone blamed NSWEC for this situation and saw a clear role for Australia Post in being part of the solution:

It is just too short a period of time, to match the system up with mail runs ... The relationship with Aus Post and NSWEC needs to be stronger ... I think Aus Post can do a better job ... may have to even look at other mail delivery mechanisms so that these voters get their mail in time.

Re the Postal issue ... I want to make it very clear that while a number of people in my party [The Nationals] put the blame for this entirely on NSWEC, I don't because there are a number of players in this... it is just this ongoing bugbear of ours.

Another concern with postal voting was that a list of those who had *registered* for a postal vote was not made available to RPPs. Having this list would have been advantageous for the RPPs as they could send registered voting material to these electors.

There was an issue for one of our organisers who complained that NSWEC was not giving out list of people who had registered for postal vote in their electorates. They have security issues in making sure that it's an authorised person. But our Party should be privy to who are registered as postal voters so that we can send out our material. This is the first time this has happened.

5.4 ELECTION DAY

Polling Places – selection, location, running

RPPs were generally satisfied with the selection and location of **polling centres**.

Although wheelchair access has improved, it was noted that it is still very difficult (in some instances) for voters with a disability to park nearby and that there are some problems with parking nearby with safety.

Another issue concerning *country* polling centres in particular is that if polling locations are changed, there needs to be a lot of effort from NSWEC to inform voters in the area of the change. In fact, it appears that the level of communication re polling place changes was inconsistent across RPPs with some reporting constant updates from NSWEC and others complaining about lack of communication on this issue. This is clearly an area where NSWEC should improve the consistency of its communication with RPPs.

Verbatim comments from RPPs re this issue follow:

It was fine ... we were emailed, it was fine.

It's always going to be an issue when Polling places for whatever reason are changed but process was great ... we got emailed changes as they were happening (second wave they emailed us again).

What really concerned us was the sort of changes to some of the Polling booths that were advertised in the last week ... we saw discrepancies... we logged all our polling booths onto database system so that we could manage the polling booths so we picked up that there were some inconsistencies. We were given assurances that the ROs would contact every Candidate to let them know if there were any changes ... I heard that in Kurin Gai that did not happen.

Just a concern that changes to polling booths were advertised in last week and were not advised to us we were checking website and it did not seem like that website was up to date.

I know there can be last minute changes but the fact is it is a fixed election date, those sites should have been booked 2 yrs ago ... must admit when we found some booths that we were unhappy were not in there, we saw changes. NSWEC were responsive and took our advice.

One of the major Parties was concerned about the level of **intimidation at some polling booths**. This was seen to be on the increase and confined to 'close call' seats. The NSW **Greens** were prepared to be identified as the party lodging this complaint, in the hope that NSWEC would address this issue directly. A quote on this issue from Geoff Ash of The Greens follows.

Our Booth workers did experience some harassment in Lower House seats where Greens are a chance of winning, such as Balmain (not Marrickville). This is not first time, obviously we are being targeted. It tends to be largest Booths in Greens' best electorate and we got quite a bit of harassment. We called the police. On two occasions (both State and Federal) Liberal Senator [name withheld] has stolen our How-to-Vote cards from one of our Booth workers and yells out untruthful things about Greens' policies (this was in Balmain) and also a number younger of men at another Booth (also in Balmain). It wasn't just RPPs either, there is one group that dislikes us that isn't actually a political party and they just sent people along to harass us.

*What I am suggesting is that perhaps in those bigger Booths in a Seat where the Greens can win, the RO might like to have a look or might even suggest that even the Police might cruise a couple of bigger booths because it is becoming a bit of a pattern. **Sooner or later there will be a nasty incident** which is the last thing the NSWEC wants on its hands.... Even our political opponents do not have the wherewithal to do this on every booth So look at the biggest Booth in the Greens' best seat with Police presence (Police might cruise by in the morning and check everything is alright). This would calm things down.*

*What I also think needs to happen (suggestion) is that it might be good for the Commissioner to request the RPPs to direct their Booth workers to behave appropriately on the polling booths and not engage in intimidating or abusive behaviours. It is actually creeping in more and more. We will **not hesitate to make it a media issue** if we need to. Nobody really wants that, not if we can stamp it out.*

Use of iRoll

iRoll was seen as a great idea to help absentee voters identify where they were enrolled. It was an impressive innovation showing that NSWEC was moving with the times. In fact, further use of this technology was suggested by the RPPs:

1. iRoll to be available at *all* polling centres;
2. use of iRoll to prevent multiple/fraudulent voting; and
3. use of iRoll at pre-poll locations.

It was reported that ROs made fewer mistakes by using iRoll. The system could have been improved, however, by having iRoll at *all* polling centres not just at some. For some RPPs, the system should be widened and used both to minimise electoral fraud and to minimise mistakes re ballot papers allocated to absentee voters.

As RPPs summarised the issue:

Anecdotally we heard (when we were out scrutineering) from a lot of local staff and even others who we were scrutineering with those who knew the area were saying there was a lot lower number of mistakes with iRoll.

Yes, thought it was a great idea but it needs to be on every booth. One for every booth ... feedback from Port Stephens was that Hawks Nest or Tea Gardens got none but Raymond Terrace got four.

That shows that NSWEC is moving into 21st Century, could take it one step further because they could all be on-line because PDAs now can be Wi-Fi'd and if they were on-line they could actually implement a system of checking against multiple/ fraudulent voting. It's absolutely brilliant that they can access the e-Roll but the next logical step is to put it on-line.

Just concerned me a bit about the iRolls that they were not in every booth. Could be a way of reducing fraud, ultimately computer will do that as well but it is probably easier way to do it because if it is off website then you can easily spot someone that has voted already and then ask for name and ID.

We still had 48 people in Port Stephens getting Newcastle or Maitland Ballot Papers who were on the Port Stephens Roll ... by winning by only 68 votes, if that figure was above 68 we would be in Court of Disputed Returns at the moment. This should be looked at with the AEC [re sharing use of iRoll/PDA equipment]. If they do it for their booths then you would find the NSWEC could share them with the AEC ... plenty for everyone.

The Nationals identified a specific problem with iRoll and the **inflexible use of this device by some ROs**:

*That was where there was a major issue on border with Murrumbidgee and Murray Darling where the system was in fact wrong and people were forced to vote in wrong Electorate Also people not coming up on iRoll system ... so the system said "you are not on the roll, so too bad". But they knew that they were enrolled but were **not even given opportunity to do a Declared or Statutory Vote** ... and rather than Polling Officials doing as they used to do saying "If you are not on the roll, you can put in a Declared/Statutory Vote" ... then it goes in an envelope and they go back and track it. They can't be definitive ... if people say they are on the system, they are entitled to have that declared vote. I think this new system seemed to be quite definitive, you were either "on" or "off " ... but then Electoral Officials didn't seem to have an understanding if the system does allow these people to have a vote ... although if it is counted or not is determined at a later date. I understand that it is the first time they were using it, it is getting people through more quickly ... and obviously it is*

going to have teething problems ... but it is important I think that every one get that declared vote.

Given this feedback, NSWEC should consider further training of ROs on use of iRoll and providing clear direction on whether iRoll should be used inflexibly or whether some discretion should still be exercised by ROs. Further clarity is also required regarding whether electors *are* entitled to a Declared/Statutory Vote and under what circumstances, especially in the context of iRoll. This information should also be communicated to RPPs.

Timeliness of election results - website

The timeliness of election results on the NSWEC website was much praised and most felt it was showing that the Commission was moving into the 21st century. Most did not attend or rely on the Tally Room for results. These views are reflected in direct RPP comments below:

Website was so efficient... quick.

Timeliness of results on the web was the best ever particularly for Upper House which is traditionally notoriously slow count results done in record time!

Thought they came through really good on the night ... we ditched our system actually from scrutineers and just relied on the NSWEC website.

It was brilliant and not only that you could leave it on-line and get automatic refresh updates ... it was absolutely brilliant.

The NSW Greens were again happy to be identified as raising a specific issue of concern with **posting of the website tally** (not to do with timeliness):

*On election night figures, NSWEC included "Informal and Other" in the sub-totals ... so it had Greens 100,000 and Labor 1,000,000 and then they had another line at the bottom of those for "Informal/Other" where '**Other**' **actually included below the line votes** but the bulk of that was Informal.*

From the Greens' viewpoint, because these Informal/Other votes were counted as part of the 'total vote', the effect was to show The Greens polling at 8.1% on the website but in reality they were polling 9% because of the sizeable Informal vote. [In fact for those who polled higher, the impact was said to decrease their apparent vote by 3%-4%.] Given that these results were available on the night, incorrect statements were made in the media about The Greens' vote (and about other RPPs votes) and these reports have not been corrected. The results stayed up on the web so that, from The Greens' viewpoint, the inaccuracy persisted. The Greens therefore felt that Informal/Other should be displayed under the table and excluded from the total, so that their percentage would have been percentage of total *correct* votes counted.

A related criticism and suggestion from The Greens was that the NSWEC should also have **counted the below line votes on the night**. The view was that these represent only about 5% of the vote and could just be sorted in piles of "ones" for the lead Candidates. These votes could then have been removed the Informal/Other percentage to give a truer picture of outcome on the night.

Timeliness of election results – Tally Room

Timeliness of Tally Room results was regarded as acceptable, however, most RPPs could not comment on this topic because they relied on the website results and most did not attend the Tally Room.

There was **general support for discontinuing use of the Tally Room** among the major Parties. In fact, none of the major Parties relied on the Tally Room for keeping up with the results and all saw the NSWEC website as more effective for this purpose.

The minor Parties were evenly split on the issue of closure – half agreed with discontinuation and half did not. The only opposition to discontinuing use of the Tally Room came from some of the minor Parties that saw it as **a media opportunity**. These Parties would be unable to generate the same media coverage if they called media to their headquarters.

Wouldn't worry us in the slightest ... go for it... get rid of it.

We didn't send anyone to the Tally Room. We had no interest in it. Some of our MPs went along for media point of view. We don't care about it.

I just was looking at the web ... most of us were.

Only had a few people there. No, most of us were here [party HQ]... one or two observers in the Tally Room, that's all.

From the Politician's point of view, current Tally Room is about media opportunities.

Maybe have it in a revised form, maybe Media Room in Parliament House then Politicians can come in and out, media are all online then.

We didn't use it but frankly I love the Tally Room. I love going there, I love the buzz ... but I think with modern day communications, I think if there could be a "real-time" element added to the net, I would not be upset if there was no Tally Room. TV and journalists might mind though.

5.5 GENERAL SERVICE ISSUES

General Timeliness: Speed with which information was provided

As indicated earlier, RPPs were satisfied with the **general timeliness** with which they were provided with the necessary information needed to undertake their work.

It was always good in terms of dealing with the Commission. The fact that we had such good access to the Commissioner meant that we did not have to go through three or four people to get an answer ... Colin was happy for us to take things directly to him.

The only problem the major Parties have on this score is the time between the date of issuance of the Writ and the election date. The major Parties suggested that the NSWEC should recommend legislative change to Parliament to remedy this situation.

Two major RPPs made much of this issue as a significant problem, as shown in the verbatim comments below.

The one issue that we had the most complaint about was not so much the NSWEC, but the legislation that dictates the time when applications close (e.g. nominations close at noon and are then released 3pm/4pm on-line). But we have to go to print (2 million pieces of electoral material) the next day and it can't be done in a day. It is not possible for us to distribute two million How-to-Votes two weeks before-hand to our people (from a central place) ... how do we get this material to locations such as Bourke? It takes 2 weeks to mail things to western NSW, it is absolutely impossible.

Generally pretty good timeliness I don't think the nomination forms were available early enough (not quite certain of this) maybe it was because they did a new form. Having it earlier would enable us to get them out to Candidates we can't complete them and that is part of problem with nomination period two people have to sign the nomination form for a Party (the Registered Officer and the Candidate) but it does become problematic if you both live at opposite ends of the State and you have a short nomination period ... and Commissioner confirms that these forms cannot pre-date the date of the Writ (to do with declaration on form) so the Registered Officer has to sign it, it has to then get to the Candidate and be lodged locally, either way it still has to get to two people and end up at an Electoral Commission Office so that's a problem you end up doing it by fax we are not keen on faxing around nominations we have had to do it in some instances But I appreciate it is out of NSWEC hands and they can only work within the legislation that they have.

RO performance

The overall performance of Returning Officers (**ROs**) as **local area managers** of election arrangements was rated as good. Most were described as flexible and fair. For example, one RPP said that most ROs "gave a fair deal and stood up for rights of each RPP and were fair in (the) placement of posters".

Again I suppose it came down to just policing of the Act ... actually pretty quiet during the day ... didn't have a lot of issues so did not have a lot of cases of ringing up the ROs.

The **professionalism of ROs** as local area managers in the delivery of election services to candidates and scrutineers was also rated highly by minor Parties. Major Parties reported that professionalism varied as the ROs who 'have been doing it a long time, are often set in their ways' and that new ROs were more responsive and flexible but less experienced. It was a widely held view that the professional development ROs are currently being put through should, however, assist in a cultural change that will be evident at the next election. All in all, there were no problems with the professionalism of ROs.

One minor issue was a call by a major party for **standardisation of scrutineering hours**:

We had a state of affairs where all ROs will do a count, a re-count, a check count on the Sunday, and then into the week and the week after that doing the re-count, but the hours we do this are completely dictated by the local RO. For example, on Sunday morning start time ranged widely over 3 seats in Hunter - 8.00am, 8.30am, 9.00am and so on, as late as 10.am. Then the RO I was with wanted to start later, say 10am and finish later, going on into the night to about 6pm or 7pm. This is kind of left to the individual jurisdiction - so if we could just have a standardizing of those hours, just a standard 9am to 5pm (or 6pm) that would help us from a resourcing point of view

Consistency of decision making

The consistency of decision making across the state was also **rated highly** by the minor Parties. Major Parties, however, noted inconsistencies with interpretation of the Electoral Act and approved how-to-vote cards.

One issue arises when counting is taking place and less experienced ROs are pressured or convinced to take a specific decision by a RPP. This is of course of concern and means that **high level NSWEC staff should be allocated to any close call counts ASAP** in order to maximise consistency of decision making.

Getting officials out into those seats as quickly as possible, if seats are very tight, every party fiercely contests every vote ... sometimes if RO is new or inexperienced, it can create lot of difficulties for both the RPPs and for the RO. So oversight from high level from Commission is required ASAP. For example in a

very close seat, the second some of the Electoral Officials were there, there weren't any issues. There was an experienced voice in the room, but prior to that (through no fault of the RO but just due to their own inexperience) there was a fair amount of indecision going on which will be the case ... and with warring Parties this is always going to create a problem.

A major RPP also complained about the **inconsistency** in the decision making when it came to **approving How-to-Vote cards**, the perception being that Independents were given a lot more scope for providing How-to-Vote cards that were not based on actual ballot papers.

The issue relating to the representation of the Senate Paper and the How-to-Vote Cards, I saw a great deal of inconsistency between How Vote Cards ... we were run through the mill on our Senate representation, whereas I saw other representations of Ballot Papers that in no way reflected what the actual Paper looked like.... it seemed that greater scrutiny was placed on ours ... and I note Robert Oakshott's "How-To-Vote Card" in no way reflected accuracy ... he had first names, surname ... so he had like Bob Smith .. where it's Smith ... and that was allowed through the system ... where we had one tiny little thing and we had reprint a couple of million How-to-Vote cards

5.6 FUTURE SCOPING

In this section of the interview we asked RPPs to consider both future services they may require from NSWEC and current services which may be seen as unnecessary.

An additional service suggested by one major party was provision of **on-line training for RPPs on the electoral process**. For example, online training could be used to illustrate the process for a Candidate and the Candidate registration process. It was acknowledged that these types of documents were already online, however, the online training would ensure all Parties were well trained (especially newer members) to an acceptable standard.

Training our staff in the electoral process and what the Electoral Commission does is an ongoing challenge because we have staff coming and going. There was one day provided for the RPPs assuming that the staff do this every year/every election and know what they were doing. RPPs staff could take an on-line tutorial to take them through for example the process for a Candidate, even things like Candidates registration process and applying for a refund granted they have got those documents on-line but it helps to have either training time in town, or I think the most cost effective thing would be for someone to actually do it on-line and use flash or whatever to provide that.

Some support for **online voting** was apparent among the major Parties but not from the main two RPPs (ALP & Liberal).

We have a motion up at our Conference to pursue this [online voting] specifically for registered voters in remote seats ... don't want to roll it out State-wide we want it to fit the particular circumstances of people living in remote rural communities ... just to get over this issue of Postal voting which clearly doesn't work in context of NSW.

With one smart programmer and a website we could take 50% of people away from polling booths and why NSWEC doesn't come into 21st century, I don't understand It's possible (banks and betting agencies do it) and then they could actually be getting locations such as High Schools etc. with as much off-street parking as possible ... definitely would solve the problem that we had this year of long queues.

Another possible future service suggested concerned the **electoral roll CD** provided to Parties. It was suggested that a search facility be developed to find an elector anywhere on the roll without having to examine each roll Electorate by Electorate. In other words, a State-wide search facility was required on the electoral roll CD.

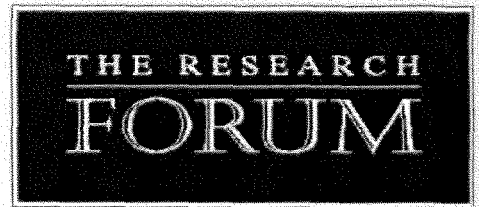
Finally, one major RPP requested that the **requirement for notifying the NSWEC of members that have moved address or died since the RPP was last registered be amended**. Our understanding is that RPPs now have to update the list kept by NSWEC and take off those who are deceased, notify of ones that have changed address and add on new members. This is seen to be both onerous and time consuming. This RPP would prefer a simple system whereby an up to date list of current financial members is provided to the NSWEC when re-registration comes up. This problem is described in the verbatim quote below.

This is not about the election but about the process for re-registration of our Members with 750 Members to take off membership list (deceased or moved address) it is a difficult thing for us to do, to take off and add we would simply like to submit to NSWEC a list of 750 current registered financial Members whereas they keep a list and then want to take off those who are deceased and add on etc ... it is too difficult and too time consuming. That is an ongoing issue that is a heartache for us.

ATTACHMENT 1:

SURVEY ADVICE LETTER AND QUESTIONNAIRE

18 May 2007



STRATEGY & INSIGHT

GOVERNMENT & SOCIAL

QUALITATIVE & QUANTITATIVE

**2007 New South Wales State Election -
A Survey of Registered Political Parties
→ Please Respond before 31 May 2007 ←**

This is a survey to collect feedback on the performance of the New South Wales Electoral Commission (NSWEC) in conduct of the recent State election.

The Research Forum has been commissioned by the NSWEC to collect **independent fearless feedback** on stakeholders' perceptions of NSWEC's performance in a number of key areas.

The attached questionnaire is your chance to provide this feedback. Your candid views will be most appreciated and will help the NSWEC improve its services to registered political Parties.

Your responses are of course confidential and will **not** be identified individually to the NSWEC (unless you specifically request to be contacted directly re any issues arising in responding to the survey). You also have the right to contact us to request access to your responses or to have all your information deleted.

Please note that the **cut-off date for receipt of all completed questionnaires is Thursday, 31 May 2007**. Your cooperation in sending the completed questionnaire to ensure receipt by the 31st would be much appreciated.

If you have any questions about the survey please call or email me (contact details below), otherwise I look forward to receiving your response by the end of May.

Regards,

Dr Fadil Pedic

Director

The Research Forum

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2007 NSW State Election - A Survey of Registered Political Parties

Please use the following scale to rate NSWEC's performance in relation to the questions below -

- 1 Very poor
- 2 Poor
- 3 Average
- 4 Good
- 5 Excellent

PLEASE NOTE - you can also write 'N/A' for questions/issues that are not applicable in your case/for your party

SECTION 1: PRE-ELECTION ISSUES

Rate performance of the NSW Electoral Commission on ...	Rating: 1-5 or N/A
1 Briefings provided to your party <i>prior</i> to the election regarding election arrangements - <i>If appropriate, please explain your rating here</i> _____ _____ _____	
2 The mail out to electors of an "elector brochure" informing them of new electoral boundaries - <i>If appropriate, please explain your rating here</i> _____ _____ _____	
3 The voter information campaign which informed electors of their key responsibilities to enrol and vote - <i>If appropriate, please explain your rating here</i> _____ _____ _____	
4 Level of service provided to your political party in responding to any questions during the election period - <i>If appropriate, please explain your rating here</i> _____ _____ _____	
5 Circulars and other information provided to your party on key	

Survey of RPPs
Questionnaire

election information during the election – <i>If appropriate, please explain your rating here</i> _____ _____ _____	
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SECTION 2: PRE-POLL AND POSTAL ISSUES

Rate performance of the NSW Electoral Commission on ...	Rating: 1-5 or N/A
6 Service to NSW electors interstate and overseas through pre-poll voting options – <i>If appropriate, please explain your rating here</i> _____ _____ _____	
7 Arrangements for postal voting during the election – <i>If appropriate, please explain your rating here</i> _____ _____ _____	
8 The selection and location of pre-poll voting centres – <i>If appropriate, please explain your rating here</i> _____ _____ _____	

SECTION 3: ELECTION DAY

Rate performance of the NSW Electoral Commission on ...	Rating: 1-5 or N/A
9 The selection and location of polling places – <i>If appropriate, please explain your rating here</i> _____ _____ _____	
10 Use of iRoll at polling places to allow absentee voters to identify where they are enrolled – <i>If appropriate, please explain your rating here</i> _____ _____ _____	

Survey of RPPs
Questionnaire

11 Timeliness of election results published on the NSWEC's website and Tally Room – <i>If appropriate, please explain your rating here</i> _____ _____ _____	
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SECTION 4: GENERAL

Rate performance of the NSW Electoral Commission on ...	Rating: 1-5 or N/A
12 Availability of the Electoral Commissioner to deal with enquiries from the Registered Officer of the party – <i>If appropriate, please explain your rating here</i> _____ _____ _____	
13 General timeliness with which your party was provided with the necessary information to enable you to undertake your work – <i>If appropriate, please explain your rating here</i> _____ _____ _____	
14 Overall performance of Returning Officers (ROs) as local area managers of election arrangements – <i>If appropriate, please explain your rating here</i> _____ _____ _____	
15 The professionalism of Returning Officers (ROs) in the delivery of election services to candidates and scrutineers – <i>If appropriate, please explain your rating here</i> _____ _____	
16 The consistency of decision making across the State – <i>If appropriate, please explain your rating here</i> _____ _____ _____	
17 The usefulness and thoroughness of the handbooks provided by the NSWEC to party candidates and scrutineers – <i>If appropriate, please explain your rating here</i> _____ _____	

Survey of RPPs
Questionnaire

- 18** Please list here anything that the NSWEC **did particularly well** during the election, apart from the issues already raised above.

- 19** And list here anything that the NSWEC **did not do well** during the election, areas where it could improve, apart from the issues already raised above.

SECTION 5: THE FUTURE

- 20** Please list here **any other services** which you think your party may need from the NSWEC in the future, apart from those it already provides to you.

- 21** Please list here any services currently provided by the NSWEC that you feel **are not needed** or do not need to be provided in the future.

- 22** The final question is about the Tally Room. Considering that there was a reduced media presence at the Tally Room in 2007 (e.g., Channel 9 did not have a presence there in 2007, and will not return), that the main Parties no longer attend, the availability of results on the NSWEC website in real time, and considering the cost of the Tally Room, would you agree or disagree with **discontinuing the use of the Tally Room**?

Survey of RPPs
Questionnaire

Please circle one number to indicate your answer:

- | | | | |
|---|----------------------------|---|-------------------|
| 1 | Agree strongly | 2 | Agree |
| 3 | Neither agree nor disagree | | |
| 4 | Disagree | 5 | Disagree strongly |
| 6 | Unsure/Don't know | | |

23 And, finally, **explain** here any reasons for your answer.

MANY THANKS FOR RESPONDING TO THIS SURVEY FOR NSWEC

PLEASE RETURN TO THE RESEARCH FORUM BEFORE 31 MAY 2007 USING
THE METHOD BY WHICH YOU RECEIVED IT (POST, FAX OR EMAIL)