

**Submission
No 55**

INQUIRY INTO 2008 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

Organisation: Blayney Shire Council

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From: Anne Garraway <[REDACTED]>
To: "electoralmatters.committee@parliament.nsw.gov...
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Subject: Blayney Shire Council's Submission Inquiry into 2008 Local Government Elections

Submission to the Inquiry into 2008 Local Government Elections

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry in relation to the 2008 Local Government Elections.

Whilst Council's election appeared to run relatively smoothly, the following issues/concerns were identified during the process:

(i) The length of time in determining the results of Council's election

Due to the size of Council's electorate, and the simple voting process, Council's election was counted by our allocated returning officer. Even though the ballot papers were collected on the Sunday morning, Council was made aware that counting was not going to commence until Tuesday. The result being that Council's election was not declared until late Thursday afternoon. In previous years, Council's elections have been declared by the Monday, or at the latest Tuesday afternoon.

(ii) Increase in Cost to Council of Election

The total cost to Council of the 2004 elections amounted to \$25,135.20, which included a payment of \$8,192.38 to the NSW Electoral Commission, and the provision of a dedicated returning officer to Blayney Shire.

In August 2007, Mr Brian DeCelis of the NSW Electoral Commission met with Council's General Manger and provided Council with an estimate of the cost of the upcoming 2008 elections. This estimate amounted to \$33,200 calculated at \$7.14 per elector, and included the provision of a dedicated returning officer to Blayney Shire.

At this meeting, it was discussed that Council could reduce this estimate by sharing its returning officer with one (or more) of its neighbouring Councils. Accordingly, Council entered into an arrangement to share a returning officer with Bathurst Regional Council.

In May 2008 Council received a revised estimate for the election which had been prepared on the basis of a shared returning officer with Bathurst Regional Council. The revised estimate had now increased to \$44,900 and not decreased as was suggested at the meeting in August 2007.

The final cost to Council for the 2008 election totalled \$38,319.58 which included a payment of \$36,200 to the NSW Electoral Commission. The other costs expended by Council were associated with the advertising and administration of the Non-Residential Rolls.

When compared to the cost of the 2004 election, Council's 2008 election expenses increased by 52%. As the cumulative effect of the Ministerial approved rate increases since the 2004 election amounted to 17.85%, the increases above this amount were required to be funded by reductions in Council's service delivery.

(iii) Survey of Candidates and Councillors

Following each election, the Department of Local Government (DLG) requires Councils to complete a survey relevant to that election (see DLG Circular 08.54).

Following the 2008 election the information/returns which are used to complete this survey were collected by the Returning Officer and forwarded onto the NSW Electoral Commission before Council had the opportunity to complete the survey.

Despite numerous requests to the NSW Electoral Commission, this information has not been

provided to Council. The DLG survey was required to be completed by 17 October 2008. Council has informed the DLG of the reasons why Council has not been able to complete this survey.

Overall, Council was generally satisfied with the processes by which the 2008 Local Government Election was conducted, and with the services provided by Council's shared returning officer. As detailed above, Council's main concern is over the exorbitant increases in the costs despite the reduction in, and the sharing of, services.

Should you require further information, please contact Council's General Manager, Aaron Jones on [REDACTED]
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