

## **2012 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS**

**Organisation:** Cowra Shire Council  
**Name:** Mr WJ West  
**Position:** Mayor  
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The Chair  
Mr Jai Rowell  
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters  
Parliament House  
Macquarie St  
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Mr Rowell

**Re: Submission to the Committee on Electoral Matters Inquiry into the 2012 Local Government Elections**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Committee on Electoral Matters Inquiry into the 2012 Local Government Elections. Cowra Shire Council recognises the significant cost and logistical commitment associated with the election process and commends the Parliament of New South Wales for its efforts to improve efficiency and participation in relation to future elections.

In line with the inquiry terms of reference we make the following comments:

**(a) The costs of the elections**

The 2012 Local Government Election for Cowra Shire Council was managed by the NSW Electoral Commission. Council felt that costs associated with conduct of the election were not inappropriate.

**(b) The experience of councils that conducted their own elections**

No comment. The 2012 Local Government Election for Cowra Shire Council was managed by the NSW Electoral Commission.

**(c) Possible legislative changes to improve the efficiency of and participation in Local Government elections**

Refer also question (e).

Most aspects of the 2012 Local Government Election for Cowra Shire Council ran smoothly. There were some concerns, particularly relating to issues raised by candidates that are covered in question (e).

The percentage of formal votes cast in the 2012 Local Government Election was 83%. This represented a 4% decrease in the number of formal votes cast in the 2008 Election (87%). I am unable to comment on the reason for this decrease.

**(d) Non-residential voting in Local Government elections**

No comment. Non-residential voting is not a significant issue within Cowra Shire.

**(e) The impact of requirements under the *Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981* on participation by candidates in Local Government elections and possible legislative changes to remove any barriers to participation**

The requirements of the *Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981* were a concern to candidates during the 2012 Local Government Election.

- Many candidates found the completion of the required documentation a long and onerous procedure.
- Requirements were not clear and it was felt that a simplification of forms and procedures is necessary in future elections.
- There seemed to be instances of duplication with regards to information required from candidates.
- Candidates seeking additional information and support from the Election Funding Authority commented that responses received were impersonal, demanding and focussed too much on penalties associated with misreporting under the Act. Experienced Councillors commented that the lack of individual support could be a disincentive to less experienced candidates.
- The requirements of the Act are geared to cover all level of candidates, up to and including those standing as representatives of political parties. In small rural Councils most candidates nominate as independents. Simpler reporting requirements for independent candidates may encourage greater participation.

**(f) Any other related matter**

While most aspects of the 2012 Local Government Election appeared to run smoothly there was some public comment on the time taken to finalise the poll. It is felt that more comprehensive publically-available progressive tallies would be appreciated by voters.

The Local Government election process is a large-scale undertaking for both State and Local Government. We value the opportunity to comment on experience gained during the 2012 Local Government election and trust that our submission will assist in completion of the final report.

Yours faithfully



WJ West  
Mayor