

2012 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

Organisation: Bankstown City Council
Name: Mr Matthew Stewart
Position: General Manager
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28 February 2013

Mr Jai Rowell MP
Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Parliament of New South Wales
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mr Rowell

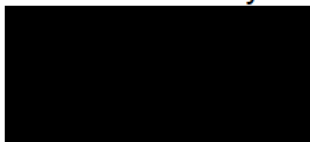
**Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters -
Inquiry into the 2012 Local Government Elections**

Reference is made to your letter dated 20 December 2012 in regards to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters Inquiry into the 2012 Local Government Elections.

Attached is Council's submission regarding the matter, which includes issues raised by our Councillors along with other relevant administrative issues associated with the Election.

If you require further information, please contact Ken Manoski, Council's Director Corporate and Financial Services on 9707 9664 or Rachel Symons, Team Leader Executive Services on 9707 9533.

Yours sincerely



Matthew Stewart
General Manager

Attachment A: Bankstown City Council Submission

Attachment A

Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters - Inquiry into the 2012 Local Government Elections

Council's responses to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference are as follows:

The costs of the elections

Given the recent changes to legislation, Council agreed to appoint the Electoral Commission to carry out its 2012 Local Government Elections and subsequently review is adopted approach following the election.

At the time, it was estimated that the cost to conduct its own elections would be comparable to engaging the Electoral Commission.

The cost incurred to administer Council's 2012 Local Government Elections was \$700K, \$13K less than previously estimated by the Commission.

In comparison, the cost represents an increase of around \$57K (8.8%) to that incurred in running the 2008 Elections, which is considered reasonable, given the impact of CPI increases to relevant cost since that time.

Notwithstanding this, Council will be reviewing its total cost in further detail as well as comparing it with other Council's to determine how best to approach administering its 2016 Local Government Election.

As an option, thought should be given to developing an approach for Councils and the Commission to jointly carry out Local Government elections. This would provide Councils and General Managers the flexibility to manage its own community expectations while being supported by the independence and expertise provided by the Commission.

Furthermore, this option would allow Councils to gain a number of operational cost savings and efficiencies through better use of its own facilities and internal resources such as staff and printing, as well as existing purchasing contracts.

The experience of councils that conducted their own elections

Whilst Council did not conduct its own 2012 Local Government Election, it will be reviewing how best to approach administering its 2016 Local Government Election.

Possible legislative changes to improve the efficiency of and participation in Local Government elections

Council supports any legislative changes which would improve the efficiency of and participation in Local Government Elections.

The 2012 elections saw larger than expected numbers participate in Pre Poll voting, suggesting that communities are seeking alternate and/or broader voting options.

Consideration should be given to exploring the broader use of technology to encourage greater participation, in addition to the current voting methods.

Non-residential voting in Local Government elections

Whilst Council has very few Ratepayers on its Non-residential Roll, our experience is that the process is quite onerous, particularly when it relates to potential candidates, and should be administered by the Australian Electoral Commission.

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

Generally Councillors highlighted recent changes in regard to political donations as an area of concern, in particular the appointment, registration and role of official agents and expectations of the Councillors. An example being the registration and administration of political donations to candidates election campaigns and the expected responsibilities on Councillors.

Other related matters

Pre-Poll Venue

As referred to earlier, the 2012 elections saw larger than expected numbers participate in Pre Poll voting, suggesting that communities are seeking alternate and/or broader voting options.

Whilst Council appreciates that the current legislation would need to be amended, consideration should be given to introducing electronic voting technology (i.e. secure internet voting) as a means to enable a more efficient and effective election process.

Polling Places

Council appreciates the Commission's approach to align Polling Places at Local Government elections with those used for the Federal and State elections. However, Councils should be provided the opportunity and flexibility to determine the final location of Polling Places which best suit its community and minimise costs by utilising their own facilities.

Similarly, it would be Council's preference to remove the existence of dual booths at future elections.

Election Day

On election day, lengthy queues were reported at a number of booths throughout the city.

Whilst the decision is a matter of cost, thought should be given to be able to effectively respond to unexpected volumes of voters at certain booths, particularly in communities where a large proportion are of non-English speaking backgrounds.

Enforcement of the Act

An option to improve the efficiency of elections could be to provide Returning Officers with further delegation to manage the election, in particular the need to address, advise and enforce the application of relevant legislation.

An example being the need to appropriately deal with use of unauthorised campaign material and the conduct of candidates, their officials and the public in general.

Alternate Option

As an option, thought should be given to developing an approach for Councils and the Commission to jointly carry out Local Government elections. This would provide Councils and General Managers the flexibility to manage its own community expectations while being supported by the independence and expertise provided by the Commission.