

**Submission  
No 2**

## **INQUIRY INTO 2008 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS**

**Organisation:** Gosford City Council

**Name:** Mr Peter Wilson

**Position:** General Manager

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Gosford City Council

Ms Cherie Burton MP  
The Chair  
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters  
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Dear Ms Burton

### **Conduct of 2008 Local Government Elections**

Thank you for the opportunity of making a submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters on the administration and conduct of the 2008 local government elections.

Gosford City Council reports the following issues:

- 1 In 2004 the local government election cost Gosford City Council \$377,183. The NSW Electoral Commission (NSWEC) has advised Council that the final cost for the 2008 local government election is \$600,900. This represents an increase in cost for Gosford of 59%. The amounts referenced are all exclusive of GST.

Since 2004 Council had been budgeting \$100,000 per year into its election account to result in a budget of \$400,000 for the 2008 election. However, as a result of the cost increase, Council had to allocate a significant additional amount in the 2008/09 Budget to cover the cost of conducting the 2008 election.

In order to meet the 59% cost increase for the 2008 election, Council had to defer certain Capital Works Programs from its 2008/09 Budget. Consequently, Gosford requested the Electoral Commissioner to allow Council to pay for the 2008 election over two financial years.

- 2 There was a general lack of community awareness regarding the elections. Feedback received from the community indicates that many people were not aware that the elections were being held; that voting was compulsory; and that no absentee voting was available. Comments were received from members of the community stating that they only realised there was an election being held when they observed the voting booths open on the actual election day. Gosford City Council posted information on its website with a link to the NSWEC website, and provided information in Council's News Corner in the local paper. However, all statutory advertising was undertaken by the NSWEC.

- 3 Gosford's Returning Officer for this election was located at Erina, contrary to Council's request. In all other elections, the Returning Officer has been accommodated in the Gosford town centre, in the main street. This change caused some confusion amongst voters and some inconvenience, as Erina is not centrally located to all suburbs of the Gosford local government area.
- 4 The pre-poll venues in Gosford and Woy Woy were, from observation and comments received, understaffed. In the week leading up to the elections, voters experienced excessive queuing and waiting time. Businesses adjacent to the pre-poll venues were adversely affected by the queues. On the Friday prior to the election, the queue was extremely long and frustration levels were high.
- 5 The voting booth at Gosford was closed for more than two (2) hours on election day due to the fact that the venue ran out of ballot papers. Concern is also expressed at the booth selection at Valley View, which was difficult to access for older or disabled people and at Gosford West, where the access was inadequate and dangerously close to a busy road.

I trust that the information provided will assist the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters in their inquiry. If you require any further information, please feel free to contact the Director - Corporate Services, Nic Pasternatsky, on [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely



Peter Wilson  
**General Manager**