

INQUIRY INTO 2008 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

Organisation: Randwick City Council

Name: Mr Ray Brownlee

Position: General Manager

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Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000



Dear Sir/Madam

Submission - Inquiry into the '2008 local government elections'

This submission relates to the 'Joint Standing Committee on Election Matters' current inquiry into the '2008 local government elections.'

Randwick City Council, like all NSW councils, continues its struggle to remain financially sustainable. This is hampered continually by the State Government's relentless cost-shifting and its continued support of rate pegging, both of which are creating economic barriers to councils servicing their communities.

The NSW Electoral Commission's costing of the 2008 local government elections (and proposed costing for future elections) is adding further pressure to council's capacity to deliver services.

A comparison of election expenses for Randwick City Council for the September 2004 election and September 2008 election are as follows:

Election	Total cost
September 2004	\$251,000
September 2008	\$450,752**

Representing a 80% increase from 2004 to 2008.

**Final invoice from the Electoral Commission	\$572,100
+ advertising costs	31,165
- rental income for Returning Officer accommodation	152,513
Total cost of election:	\$450,752

It is worth noting that the Electoral Commission's original estimate for the September 2008 election was \$542,900. The final cost of the election (\$572,100) was an increase in what was originally estimated by some \$30,000, despite the Electoral Commission's assurances that the original estimates were overstated.

Of the \$572,100 that Randwick City Council was charged for the September 2008, \$41,740 (or 7.3%) of the total cost charged by the Electoral Commission was for 'NSWEC Administration Fee' for which no break-down was provided.

Part of the Electoral Commission's justification for the increase in cost for the September 2008 local government elections, included:

- selection and training of returning officers (ROs)
- **production of high quality manuals for ROs and election officials;**
- selection of appropriate election officials'
- recruitment drive for staff using the NSWEC website;
- providing a special help desk for candidates;
- providing a centralised elector enquiry service;
- **providing a computerised election management system to ROs to streamline administration in the ROs office;**
- **introduction of e-Learning via the NSWEC's website to train polling place managers;**
- **providing an internet election night results system similar to that provided at State elections;**
- management of the election advertising campaign by the NSWEC; and
- providing councils and the Minister with a detail report on the conduct of the elections

I put it to you that a number of the above expenses (**those highlighted**) are expenses that should be significantly reduced for the next local government elections. The initial cost of setting up the services in question has been charged to Councils as part of the cost of the September 2008 elections and the ongoing cost for these services should be significantly lower than the initial/setup cost.

In conclusion, I submit that Local government elections are part of the democratic process and should be funded through national taxes.

Yours faithfully



Ray Brownlee
General Manager