

**Submission
No 34**

INQUIRY INTO 2008 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

Organisation: North Sydney Council

Name: Ms Penny Holloway

Position: General Manager

Date Received: 13/05/2009



address 200 Miller Street North Sydney NSW 2060

telephone (02) 9936 8100

all correspondence General Manager North Sydney Council
PO Box 12 North Sydney NSW 2059
DX10587

facsimile (02) 9936 8177

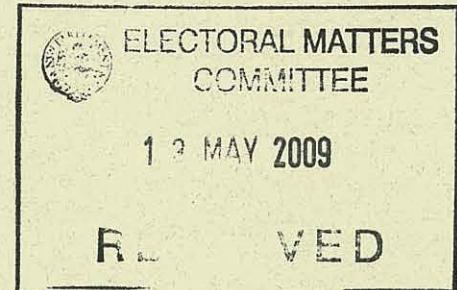
email council@northsydney.nsw.gov.au

internet www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au

ABN 32 353 260 317

8 May 2009

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000



Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Submission from North Sydney Council

Council resolved on 4 May 2009, to make a submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters.

North Sydney Council has a number of concerns in relation to the 2008 Local Government Election. These issues concern changes to polling places which caused confusion amongst the electorate; insufficient staff at polling places; absentee voting and the cost of the election.

Details are:

North Sydney Council wrote to the Electoral Commissioner of NSW on 14 October 2008, setting out the following concerns:

1. "Changes to Polling Places"

The Polling Place selected by the Electoral Commission were in different locations in a number of wards to those previously used for Local Government Elections. This caused much confusion for electors.

North Sydney Council requested that the previously used polling places be used but the Electoral Commission would not agree.

Electors had particular difficulties finding the Polling Place at SCEGGS Redland.

Council advertised the Polling Places on our website, in the local newspapers and in our Community Newsletter as well as via our Precinct Committees. We also promoted the Electoral Commission's website, however, electors were still confused due to the changes.

2. Insufficient Staffing

There was insufficient staffing to cope with the number of electors. This was particularly evident at Neutral Bay Primary School where electors had to queue for hours.

Council put a number of referendum questions to the electorate, which obviously would take more time to complete, but it would appear that this was not taken into consideration when determining staffing levels.

3. Absentee Voting

The legislation disallowing Absentee Voting in Local Government Elections, continues to create problems for electors. There needs to be much more promotion leading up to the elections in the future in order to minimise this problem.

North Sydney Council requests that the Electoral Commission takes these matters into consideration when preparing for the next Local Government Election.”

In addition, the Council resolved that the following points should be raised:

- There were insufficient staff and polling booth boxes to cope with the number of electors throughout the Council area, in particular Neutral Bay Public School, Crows Nest Uniting Church, St Peters Church Neutral Bay and North Sydney Demonstration School.
- There needs to be a more even distribution of polling booths, in this context we query the need for North Sydney Girls High School.
- Access to polling booths for the elderly or those with disabilities needs to be improved.
- Better information needs to be provided to assist people, particularly elderly people, to access postal voting.
- Shaded areas need to be provided at polling booths for those waiting in queues.
- We need to revert to the old system of organising Council elections, whereby with Council administration input, cost were reduced over all.

Election Costs

North Sydney Council has received an account for \$333,400 (GST exclusive) from the Electoral Commission of NSW for the conduct of the 2008 Local Government Election.

North Sydney Council is concerned in relation to the costs, particularly as they compare to the 2004 election. Direct costs for the 2004 election were \$145,666.07. This did not include the cost of accommodating the Returning Officer.

North Sydney Council provided accommodation for the Returning Officer at a cost of \$72,100. When subtracted from the above amount, it leaves a total of \$261,300. This is a 79% increase on the previous costs.

Whilst the expenses have been itemised by the Electoral Commissioner (copy attached), the costing has not been justified in any way.

One item of concern has been specifically which was raised with the Electoral Commissioner is the cost of Printing Ballot Papers. In 2004 North Sydney Council conducted a poll, consisting of three questions. The cost for printing both the ballot and poll papers was \$7,700. For the 2008 election, the cost of printing ballot and poll papers, albeit for five questions was \$51,930. We consider this to be excessive.

Should you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Penny Holloway
GENERAL MANAGER

Attachment

2007/1070

26 March 2009

cc. K. Gibson

Ms Penny Holloway
General Manager
North Sydney Council
PO Box 12
North Sydney NSW 2059

Dear Ms Holloway

Final Reconciliation of Costs – 2008 Local Government Election

As you are aware, the New South Wales Electoral Commission (NSWEC) provided a budget estimate of costs for the conduct of the Local Government election for your council. We invoiced council for 85% against this estimate in August 2008 and advised that once final costs were known the NSWEC would invoice for the balance.

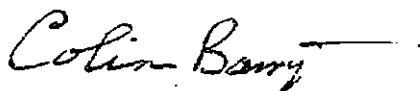
The NSWEC has worked to contain costs as much as possible. We are pleased to advise that in almost all council areas we have been successful in delivering the election for less than the budget estimate.

Attached please find your council's final summary of costs and invoice or credit note where applicable. An Electronic Funds Transfer form is attached where a credit is payable by the NSWEC.

Unlike previous Local Government elections we have now captured all costs associated with the conduct of the elections. This will be helpful to both the NSWEC and your council in planning and budgeting for the 2012 elections.

Should you have any questions regarding the final calculation of costs please contact Trevor Follett, Director Finance and Administration, at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely



Colin Barry
Electoral Commissioner

**ORIGINAL INVOICE
FORWARDED TO ACCOUNTS**

invoice no. SIL6001698

**Final Expenses for North Sydney Council
Local Government Election**

Item	Description	Amount
Local Government Elections Programme Management		
	Project Management	1,510
	Performance Evaluation & Reporting, Candidate Support, Legal	2,710
	NSWEC Administration Fee	21,800
Programme Management Total		26,020
Finance Services		
	Budget Management	230
	Payroll Processing	2,790
	Payables Processing	880
	Mail Services	1,130
Finance Services Total		5,030
Election Services		
	Council Visits	290
	Candidate Info Sessions	700
	De-brief Programme for Returning Officers	90
	Centralised Vote Counting	8,770
	Voting Centres (Incl. pre-poll, DIs & polling places)	7,330
	Election Materials	15,420
	Training Programme	2,660
	Returning Officer Support Centre	2,470
	Wages - Returning Officers	23,380
	Wages - Office Assistants	36,270
	Wages - Election Officials	46,600
	Returning Officer Accommodation	72,100
	Registration of How-to-Vote Material	40
	Printing Ballot Papers	51,930
Election Services Total		268,050
Election Information Services		
	Equal Access to Democracy	1,320
	Elector Info Campaign - NSWEC Campaign	6,730
	Elector Info Campaign - Brochure	-
	Elector Information Info Kit	810
	LG Profiling	
	Elector Enquiry Centre	3,050
	Website & Education Services	2,260
Election Information Services Total		14,170
Information Technology		
	Systems Support	4,030
	IT Setup	8,770
	Website (dynamic)	790
	Rolls	3,470
	IT Personnel	1,840
	Results	1,210
Information Technology Total		20,110
Total Expenses		333,400
less August 2008 Invoice		259,600
Remaining Amount to be Paid		73,800

Note: All amounts listed are GST Exclusive