

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

**Organisation:** Baulkham Hills Shire Council

**Name:** Mr Dave Walker

**Position:** General Manager

**Date Received:** 7/04/2009

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# Baulkham Hills Shire Council

2 April 2009

Ms Cherie Burton MP  
The Chair  
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000



*"Confidential"*

Dear Ms Burton,

Thank you for the opportunity to lodge a submission in respect to *"conduct of the 2008 Local Government Elections, including matters relating to costs."*

As you are aware, in 2008 the NSW Electoral Commissioner undertook virtually all tasks associated with conduct of the elections. My Council did not provide accommodation, furniture, office equipment, telephone/facsimile lines or need to dedicate staff for administrative assistance with enquiries, payroll, accounts payable, printing etc.

In previous years, significant support and assistance has been provided to both the NSWEC and the local Returning Officer by our employees. These substantial costs had not been accurately captured because most involved reallocation of existing office space and resources. We suspect that this *"in-kind"* assistance was common for most Councils.

The resulting separation of our organisation's operational activities from the political process to conduct an election is fully supported by Senior Management of The Hills Shire Council. In our opinion, it also reflects intentions of the Local Government Act.

At a meeting with Commissioner Colin Barry in August 2007, the concept of increased independence of the election process was supported. No objection was raised to full cost recovery provided those costs could be justified based on the level of service provided.

The original quotation for The Hills Shire Council in June 2007 was \$795,000. That figure was subsequently revised to \$729,500 in May 2008 after our specific requirements had been provided. The final costs incurred by the NSWEC totalled \$585,000.

As our annual budgets are prepared in anticipation of future costs for Local Government Elections, there was adequate provision to meet cost projections by the NSWEC. In fact, after payment of advertising costs and other fees, a saving of \$153,000 was realised.

Obviously my Council supports any initiatives to further reduce costs imposed by the State Government for conducting the 2008 elections because this can only be of benefit to our ratepayers and residents.

As a general comment, the NSWEC and the Returning Officer, Lise Bellam provided a professional, prompt and reliable service to our voters. The only constructive criticism that my Council could offer relates to the adequacy of facsimile equipment and the decision not to provide Pre-Poll Voting facilities at our Administration Centre.

Yours faithfully

  
**Dave Walker**  
**GENERAL MANAGER**

