

## **2012 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS**

**Organisation:** Liberal Party of Australia - NSW Division  
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**Position:** State Director  
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29 April 2013

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

Dear Chairman,

**RE: Inquiry into the 2012 Local Government Elections**


Thank you for the opportunity to put forward a submission in relation to your review of the 2012 New South Wales Local Government Elections.

Please find **enclosed** at **Annexure A** to this letter the Liberal Party of Australia (New South Wales Division)'s submission. Please note that our comments at Annexure A apply with respect to elections that were conducted by the New South Wales Electoral Commission and the Australian Election Company.

**As a general comment, it is the position of the Liberal Party of Australia (New South Wales Division) that, in order to ensure consistency, efficiency and cost effectiveness, all future local government elections in all Local Government Areas should be conducted by the New South Wales Electoral Commission and no other entity.**

Please do not hesitate to let me know if you wish to discuss.

Yours sincerely,



Mark Neeham  
State Director

## ANNEXURE A

### *Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters regarding the 2012 New South Wales Local Government Elections*

Term of reference	Item	Subject	Submission
Possible legislative changes to improve the efficiency of and participation in Local Government elections	A.1		We refer to and reiterate our comments at Items B.1, C.1 and D.2.
Non-residential voting in Local Government elections	B.1	Inconsistent practices	<p>Our experience was that the process for registering as a non-resident voter varied from Local Government Area to Local Government Area.</p> <p>We also express serious concerns regarding the collapse of the non-resident voter rolls across the State, but particularly in the City of Sydney. The complex and unstandardised nature of re-enrolment procedures before each election has effectively disenfranchised an important voting community.</p> <p>Our recommendation is an overhaul of the non-resident voter enrolment system to require compulsory enrolment and ongoing maintenance of the Rolls across the State, pursuant to strict standardised guidelines.</p>
The impact of requirements under the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981 on participation by candidates in Local Government	C.1		We note that there is no cap on how much an individual on an electoral roll can donate to a local government campaign. We also note, however, that the aggregate of all amounts donated by an individual on an electoral roll to a local government campaign affects

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elections and possible legislative changes to remove any barriers to participation			<p>how much that same individual can contribute to state election campaigns.</p> <p>Our position is that this should not be so. Our view is that separate expenditure caps should apply with respect to local government and state government campaigns.</p> <p>We have previously expressed this view to other Joint Standing Committees.</p>
Any other related matter	D.1	Insufficient quantities of ballot papers in rural areas	<p>Our experience, particularly in rural and regional areas but also in some metropolitan areas, was that polling places were often either poorly located or insufficiently numerous. Our experience in these areas was also that many polling places did not stock sufficient ballot papers. It is likely that the former identified concern resulted in over-use of some polling places and that, in turn, this created the latter identified concern.</p> <p>We recommend greater consultation with local councilors ahead of the 2015 elections to obtain their input into the optimal placement and number of polling places and pre-polling places in their respective Local Government Areas.</p> <p>We also recommend a greater focus on postal voting. In rural and regional areas particularly, such a focus would ease the pressure on both polling places and voters with accessibility issues.</p>
	D.2	Inconsistent rulings	<p>Our experience was that electoral officers, be they employees of the New South Wales Electoral Commission or of the Australian Election Company, applied different standards with respect to the application</p>



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			<p>of regulations.</p> <p>For example, we found that a model 'How to Vote' card that was acceptable in one Local Government Area was often unacceptable in another Local Government Area.</p> <p>This is patently unacceptable. We consider that greater regulation is required with respect to all matters in relation to which local rulings may be needed, so as to ensure rulings are consistent across all Local Government Areas.</p>
	D.3	Better training for electoral staff	<p>Both before and on polling day, and both in respect of the New South Wales Electoral Commission staff and the Australian Election Company staff, countless examples of misinformation were brought to our attention.</p> <p>We appreciate the difficulties associated with the work performed by staff of the New South Wales Electoral Commission and the Australian Election Company; however, we consider that instances of misinformation could be reduced if staff of these organisations were more frequently and better trained.</p> <p>Our comments in this regard obviously also echo the position we have articulated at Item D.2.</p>