

**Submission
No 16**

INQUIRY INTO 2008 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

Organisation: Lane Cove Council

Name: Mr Ian Naylor

Date Received: 11/05/2009

While Lane Cove did not have any incidents of mismanagement, Council was charged \$161,150, when in 2004 it was charged \$82,000, a 196% increase. This is a similar case to many councils where the increase was in some cases up to 330% which is well in excess of cpi during the 4 years.

Lane Cove Council requests that the Inquiry consider:-

1. The release of the report by the Council on the Cost and Quality of Government into the NSW Electoral Commission on the grounds of public interest.
2. That the costs being charged to NSW councils for the conduct of 2008 Local Government Election by the NSWEC be based on the 2004 election costs plus cumulative CPI.

Lane Cove Council's concerns in relation to the conduct of the 2008 Local Government Election is the amount the NSW Electoral Commissioner has charged councils for the conduct of the election.

While Lane Cove did not have any incidents of mismanagement, Council was charged \$161,150, when in 2004 it was charged \$82,000, a 196% increase. This is a similar case to many councils where the increase was in some cases up to 330% which is well in excess of cpi during the 4 years.

Prior to 2008, NSW councils had the option of contributing resources to keep costs to a minimum; this included using council equipment, phone lines, internet access, and office space. In addition, staff who worked on the day of the election were paid through Council's existing payroll system.

However, for the 2008 elections the NSWEC externalised all these costs, and added a centralised call centre and enlarged vote counting centre. The NSWEC also increased its charge to \$195/hr for all of its staff used in the project, far in excess on normal staff costs. For example, Lane Cove were billed in excess of \$11,000 for IT infrastructure and support event though Council provided the phone lines for internet access and assisted the returning officer in installing the IT equipment.

The new methodology was based on a report by the Council on the Cost and Quality of Government into the NSW Electoral Commission. Access to this document was denied to Council, which remains a concern. The commission has stated from time to time that it used to "subsidise" local government elections and that current costs reflect true costs. No reasons has been given as to why the "subsidy" should not continue as many government services are subsidised. Given the current financial crisis that all councils are attempting to cope with this subsidy should continue.

The Local Government and Shires Association advised all councils in August last year that the Premier had advised them that NSW Treasury had allowed councils to pay the costs over 2 years. However, many of these requests have been subsequently rejected.

The Shires Association of NSW (who represents country councils) at their Annual Conference on 2-4 June 2008 resolved to: "Advise the NSW Electoral Commission that councils will pay a maximum amount based on 2004 costs plus cumulative cpi". This is a view supported by the majority of NSW councils.

In conclusion Lane Cove Council requests that the Inquiry consider:-

1. The release of the report by the Council on the Cost and Quality of Government into the NSW Electoral Commission on the grounds of public interest.
2. That the costs being charged to NSW councils for the conduct of 2008 Local Government Election by the NSWEC be based on the 2004 election costs plus cumulative CPI.

Yours faithfully,



Ian Naylor
Manager – Governance