

## INQUIRY INTO THE 2015 NSW STATE ELECTION

Name: Name Suppressed

Date Received: 24/08/2015

Partially Confidential

Re: NSW 2015 General Election

Having worked as an electoral official for the NSW Electoral Commission in a casual capacity since 1994, I hereby make the following submission on a "individual basis".

A considerable number of changes in policies and procedures were introduced some of which were a direct result of the 2013 Federal Election. Implementing these changes required considerable effort and the Electoral Commissioner should be commended for doing so within an approximate time frame of only twelve months.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] During polling a candidate assaulted the Mayor. Although I did not witness the assault, I heard the commotion from within the polling place and went to investigate. I observed the candidate being restrained and the Mayor sitting on the ground clutching his face. I immediately called Police and safely observed the ongoing situation from within the polling place. Thereafter I provided the Returning Officer with regular updates as the situation evolved.

I feel that given the circumstances I could have been assaulted in the course of my duties, as the candidate was on the border of the six metre rule. I could have been instructing the candidate to move out of the six metre boundary and as an innocent bystander to the ongoing situation been assaulted. Although assaults are covered under the criminal code, making it an additional offence under Electoral Laws with serious penalties will assist in preventing/ reducing these type of incidents.

Besides having a victim, the image of politicians is tarnished. News of this incident went global, as post polling I was monitoring the internet. One should not immediately think of NSW politics as violent but certain other countries.

In-addition this type of incident can be viewed as a potential hazard to the OIC's and 2IC's. A large proportion of these senior polling place roles are undertaken by women (actual figures can be obtained from the NSWEC) and those women who I have spoken to are less likely to enforce the six metre rule as it might become an incident.

During the General Election, OIC's were issued with a six metre tape rule, which would have been beneficial during the by-election as I had to improvise in determining the six metre boundary.

Reading previous committee minutes, I have observed that some committee members commented on the "BER" – Building Electoral Reform. Due to Building the Education Revolution, a large number of polling places in schools are now suitable for use. This ranges from utilising the new school hall, level access, better lighting. Whereas once multiple classrooms were needed, now the single hall is used allowing improved staff supervision and polling management and at the same time reducing the chaos for voters.

I suggest that the "Building Electoral Reform" is over and "Best Electoral Reform" has begun. NSW is amongst the leaders of electronic voting. The committee might like to ask the Electoral Commissioner, what official visitors came to observe the 2015 General Election and how this compares to previous

elections. This should be asked after each election. People don't go to see how elections should't be run but rather go to see how they are run and what processes and ideas they can implement in their elections.

For "Best Electoral Reform" to continue in NSW the following areas need to be highlighted.

1) Recruitment

Considerable emphasis is undertaken with regard to Senior Election Officials – Returning Officers and Office Managers. More emphasis needs to be undertaken with regard to all other staff. In applying for working as an OIC, 2IC, Polling Officer and Office Assistant, the online recruitment application is restricted to xx characters which limits one to very creative responses.

When you first apply, the online recruitment program checks that you are a enrolled NSW voter and only then are you able to proceed with your application. The application process should then link to my NSWEC history. This way when the Returning Officer is filling positions they are viewing my actual NSWEC work history including assessments.

The online application only asks a limited number of electoral work history and this should be expanded upon.

2) Training

More emphasis is needed with regard to training online and in person. Three hours is not enough to train an OIC and 2IC especially when you have considerable changes to explain. The online training process generated considerable complaints from fellow staff. People having completed the training, were required to redo the training due to the application not recording the fact that they had successfully completed same.

Having undertaken computer industry training and certification, the online training program needs to be more interactive, especially with multiple questions. I found that you could pass on your second attempt by memorising the answers.

Having better trained polling staff improves on the overall efficiency and results in efficiency savings further along the electoral process.

3) Premises

Although premises have been covered before in previous submissions over the years, selection of premises now has to be regarded as important. With the introduction of the ULD (secure cardboard containers) there is a specific requirement that all entry doors and lifts at the premises be able to accommodate a pallet jack and the ULD's. During the 2011 General Election, I was fortunate to be in premises that could accommodate pallets and a pallet jack. All materials for collection were loaded onto pallets ready for shrink wrapping and collection by the courier. In this election I had to have the materials ready to be collected. The courier collected the materials and they were loaded into the partially assembled ULD on the tail gate of the

truck. The loading of materials via this process required not only the driver and his offsider but also two electoral officials. One had to act as a guard on the tail gate and the other was escorting the courier with the materials. Until the seals were placed on the fully assembled ULD, the materials were the responsibility of the NSWEC, upon which the courier then became responsible.

4) Logistics

Although logistics issues have improved, there needs to be dedicated contact with the contracted provider so that returning office's staff can easily discuss issues. This can range from providing information on clearways outside the office to best location to park. Also being able to get accurate information as to collection times especially with regard to delays.

5) Security

I have several comments regarding security which will be submitted separately