

**Submission  
No 40**

## **2012 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS**

**Organisation:** Port Macquarie Hastings Council  
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Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters  
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## **Port Macquarie Hastings Council Submission to the Inquiry into the 2012 Local Government Elections**

### **Overview**

Port Macquarie Hastings Council (PMHC) contracted the services of The NSW Electoral Commission (NSWEC) to facilitate the 2012 Local Government Elections. PMHC was under Administration from 2008 - 2012 and therefore did not host an election in 2008.

### **Issues**

#### **Costs:**

The date on which the availability of election cost estimates were made available to PMHC was, in this Council's opinion, far too late. Council were provided a fixed quote for services in September 2011 by a reputable election services provider and were provided with a final estimate by the NSWEC in May 2012 - this is well outside the statutory requirements of the Local Government budget cycle.

Other Mid North Coast councils were provided a fixed cost by the same reputable election services supplier and decided to engage this provider in 2011. These councils have indicated that this cost did not vary from the initial quote and budgets were not altered.

Further consideration should be given to Local Government budgeting cycle by the NSWEC. This would allow for inclusion in the relevant draft budgets.

#### **Facilities:**

PMHC initially proposed the use of Council owned facilities to accommodate NSWEC staff and relevant storage/space requirements. The NSWEC appointed Returning Officer was satisfied with the proposed accommodation. The NSWEC electoral officials based in Sydney did not inspect the proposed accommodation however determined the property unsuitable for the NSWEC requirements.

The rental of this alternative accommodation was \$28,980 (ex GST), which was included in the final invoice to PMHC. This additional cost was, in this Council's opinion, excessive and unnecessary.

There were no externally displayed information brochures or posters pertaining to the election on the exterior of the premises in which the Returning Officer was housed. This lead to Council fielding numerous requests for information from voters.

Further to this, the results of the electoral ballot, Mayoral ballot and current progress in the voting were not displayed externally at the premises in which the Returning Officer was housed. This further impacted Council through fielding requests for information.

**Returning Officer:**

The performance of the Returning Officer appointed to conduct the PMHC election was satisfactory and professional in all matters.

**Count turnaround time:**

The count of our election appeared to be one of the longest in the state. It was what this Council would consider an excessive amount of time to conduct the count. The election was held on 8 September 2012 and Councillor results were not conclusive until 16 September 2012.

Should you require any further information please contact Stewart Todd, Group Manager Governance and Executive Services on ☎ 02 6581 8111.

Yours sincerely



Tony Hayward  
General Manager