

2012 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

Organisation: Ku-ring-gai Council
Name: Mr John McKee
Position: General Manager
Date Received: 4/03/2013

818 Pacific Highway, Gordon NSW 2072

Locked Bag 1056, Pymble NSW 2073

T 02 9424 0000 F 02 9424 0001

DX 8703 Gordon TTY 133 677

E kmc@kmc.nsw.gov.au

W www.kmc.nsw.gov.au

ABN 86 408 856 411



Contact: Manager Records and Governance

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Jai Rowell MP
Parliament of NSW
Committee on Electoral Matters
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000
electoralmatters.committee@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Jai,

Commission on Electoral Matters Inquiry into the 2012 Local Government Elections - Submission

Council has received your letter dated 20 December 2012 in which you advise of the formation of an Inquiry into the 2012 Local Government Elections. I also make reference to subsequent emails between Mr Jason Arditi, Inquiry Manager of your office and Mr Matt Ryan, Council's Manager Records and Governance, dated 18 January 2013 in which Council sought, and was granted, an extension of time to make a submission to the Inquiry.

At the Ordinary Meeting of Council held Tuesday, 5 February 2013 Council resolved to make a submission to the Committee. Comments from Councillors were requested and these formed the basis of a subsequent report that was considered at the Ordinary Meeting of Council held on Tuesday, 26 February 2013. At this meeting Council resolved;

"That Council's submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters in regards to the conduct of the 2012 Local Government elections include the comments contained within the report, and

"That the comments of individual Councillors be attributed to them in the contents of the submission".

Thereby please find Council's submission below.

Five (5) comments in relation to the elections were received from Councillors as follows;

Councillor Jennifer Anderson;

In relation to cost of the elections - decision out of our Council's hands as to where to install the Returning Officer. Cost of renting another building, inconvenient and confusing for pre-poll voters and candidates. Costs relating to a controversy over electricity bills. Enormous increase over recent elections in costs to each council.

Electronic roll comes too late to be of use to candidates.



Costs of printing brochures is enormous and must be beyond many potential candidates. Perhaps time for electronic information and electronic voting.

I attended two information sessions before the elections, one at Hornsby and one at Kuring-gai. Both had different presenters and differing information was given. One session said anyone who was a developer or associate of a developer who made their income from development, could not self fund their campaign. The other said they could self fund.

It's a significant impost on candidates and campaign workers to service the full 2 week pre-poll period. It's a massive task to have volunteers man the pre-poll for all day for the two weeks. The first week is usually pretty quiet. Suggest to shorten this period for pre-poll.

Councillor Christiane Berlioz;

The 2 week Pre-polling time - is too long and onerous on "manpower" for candidates and also for the electoral commission - not sure about impact on council. 5 days is more than enough for pre-poll.

There are too many polling places per ward (8 in St Ives) - this is extremely onerous for candidates to "man".

For integrity and fairness: candidates should run as individuals - not as a team with advantages over candidates standing individually "under the line". There should not be any preference sharing between candidates. This is exploited as candidates put up a selection of "dummy" candidates with which to exchange preferences.

Declaration of interest - candidates should have to sign a "statutory declaration" of interests - pecuniary or otherwise and other declarations on the Candidate Registration Form (eg properties ownership within the municipality, party membership). There should be heavier sanctions for breaches of declarations.

Councillor Christiane Berlioz;

Additional point: any person that declares themselves as member of a political party should have the information on all electoral material. For example Liberal Party member or Liberal Party endorsed, as the case may be.

Under the current system candidates who are members of parties but not endorsed - play both cards to suit their campaign - declaring themselves as an independent, or party member, as it suits them.

If it were mandatory to declare party membership or endorsement it would solve the problem for independents who are falsely accused by rival candidates as being members of political parties unpopular in the ward/municipality.

Councillor Christiane Berlioz;

Additional point: for non resident candidates - any business lease should be signed a minimum of 3 months before elections and there should be a statutory declaration that the lessee, or business property owner, occupies the business premises (ie not leasing an empty office space just to be eligible as candidate).

Councillor Cheryl Szatow;

I have two concerns to raise as a result of experiences in two local elections;

Anonymous flyers discrediting other candidates and/or sitting councillors and casting slurs on their bona fides - distributed to residents. What can be done?

Information stating in what Council Area candidates reside should be mandatory information to be included on all election material about a given candidate.

I would like to take this opportunity to formally thank you for inviting Council to be a part of this Inquiry and I look forward to reviewing the Committee's findings.

Yours faithfully



John McKee
GENERAL MANAGER