

**Submission
No 29**

2012 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

Organisation: Gosford Council
Name: Councillor Lawrie McKinna
Position: Mayor
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Gosford City Council

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Mayor

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Mr Jai Rowell MP
Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
electoralmatters.committee@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Rowell

Committee on Electoral Matters Inquiry into the 2012 Local Government Elections

Thank you for the opportunity of making a submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters Inquiry into the 2012 Local Government Elections.

Overall, I am pleased to report that Gosford City Council was very satisfied with the conduct of the 2012 elections by the NSW Electoral Commission (NSWEC). The Returning Officer provided by the NSWEC was well trained, very informed and professional. Having the NSWEC allowed for absolute transparency and accountability as the election was conducted at arm's length from the Mayor and Councillors. This is central to building public confidence in the impartiality of the election processes and the outcome.

Council would, however, like to raise the following points:

- There is an overabundance of polling places provided in certain localities. This increases the cost to Council, as well as making it difficult for candidates and candidate's parties to man all polling places. The NSWEC did request Council to review the number and location of polling places, and a reduction in some areas was requested, however Council's suggestions were not agreed to. Whilst appreciating that the NSWEC must ensure that the voting public is not unduly disadvantaged or discouraged from voting due to the unavailability of a polling place, Council feels that there was an opportunity for some rationalisation of polling places.
- Given that local government elections are conducted on a cost recovery basis from councils, councils should be entitled to some share of the fine revenue raised from the Failure to Vote penalty notices that are issued for failing to vote at the local government elections. Currently the NSWEC receives all revenue from the fines issued.
- The preferential system of voting is overly complicated and very difficult for the average voter to understand. This leads voters to feel disenfranchised from the election process. There needs to be a clear explanation of the preferential system of voting in local government elections so that voters understand exactly where their vote is being allocated.

- Councils are always looking to reduce costs where possible. Council requests that the Inquiry investigates all opportunities for the NSWEC to reduce their costs and to ensure that there is no cost shifting from state to local government.

I trust that the information provided will assist the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters in their inquiry. If you require any further information please feel free to contact the Director - Corporate Services, Nic Pasternatsky on (02) 4325 8340.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Lawrie McKinna
MAYOR OF GOSFORD CITY

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