

2012 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

Organisation: Temora Shire Council
Name: Mr GC Lavelle
Position: General Manager
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TEMORA SHIRE COUNCIL

Our reference:

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The Chair
Committee on Electoral Matters
Parliament of New South Wales
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

electoralmatters.committee@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Sir

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission in relation to the conduct of the 2012 Local Government Elections. These elections exposed major flaws in the system in terms of process, expense and efficiency.

The issues of particular concern to Temora Shire Council:

- 1) Cost. The attitude of the NSW Electoral Commission (the commission) led to the elections costing Council more than reasonably should be expected. This was caused by the Commission establishing a virtual monopoly on the conduct of the election.
There needs to be far greater flexibility in the services provided by the Commission, with Councils able to purchase the services they need, such as training, form templates, counting program's and other services. At the 2012 poll, the commission took a "all or nothing" approach to service delivery. Given the unconscionable behaviour at the 2012 poll, the charges for these services would need to be independently monitored.
- 2) Delay. In 2012, it took almost a week (6 days to be exact) for the poll in Temora to be declared. Six days to count less than 4000 votes is unacceptable. When Council used to run the elections, the result was known on the night of the election and checked the next day.
- 3) Information Sessions. There was one regional information centre for prospective candidates. Given the desire of the Government to improve access for target groups such as disabled, unemployed, female, indigenous, it seems counter productive to make it more difficult for those people to access these seminars. At a minimum, these should be held in each local government area.
- 4) Joint Returning Officer. This concept is an abject failure. It fails to meet the minimum standards of access to all but the community in which the Returning Officer is located. This is not a comment on the quality of the officer who in our case was very efficient, rather the concept of the joint system.

Address:
105 Loftus St,
PO Box 262
TEMORA NSW 2666

Telephone: (02) 6980 1100
Facsimile: (02) 6980 1138
Email: temshire@temora.nsw.gov.au
Website: www.temora.nsw.gov.au
DX: 5494 Temora

- 5) Postal Votes. The act provides that postal votes are not closed until the Monday after the poll. This causes delays and has the potential for corruption of results. In small local government areas, the withholding of say 20 votes until after the poll is known could knowingly change the election result. It is imperative that postal votes close at the close of poll.
- 6) Agents. The 2012 election saw the introduction for the need for candidates to appoint an agent. This is required, we imagine, due to party political needs. There is no need for this for an independent who should be able to act of his own volition. This point caused major dissension among the candidates at the election and should be abolished.
- 7) Electronic. The system of voting is quite antiquated with little change since elections began. Surely it is time to consider the introduction of electronic voting rather than the normal town hall charade. This system has been trialled in other countries and perhaps some leadership in this regard is due.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to make a submission to the committee. We trust that the committee will take the opportunity to make major changes to the process to streamline and reduce the cost of elections.

Yours faithfully



GC Lavelle
GENERAL MANAGER