

INQUIRY INTO 2008 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

Organisation: Armidale Dumaresq Council

Name: Mr Shane Burns

Position: General Manager

Date Received: 8/04/2009

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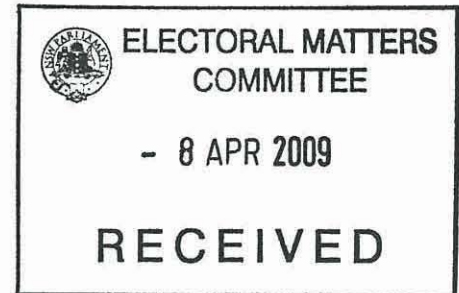


All Correspondence should
be addressed to
General Manager
Armidale Dumaresq Council
PO Box 75A
Armidale NSW 2350

Your Ref:

Our Ref: A02/0261-9 I/2009/06701 O/2009/02383

The Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000



3 April 2009

Dear Sir/Madam

INQUIRY INTO 2008 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the inquiry.

There are a few problematic issues which Council wishes to raise on the conduct of the 2008 election and also as part of our submission to suggest a way forward, which hopefully will lead to the improvement of future Local Government electoral processes.

Cost

Council was and continues to be extremely concerned about the cost contribution required by the State to run the election. The last election conducted by Council cost its ratepayers around \$65,000. The original cost estimate given was \$108,300 and Council held discussions with a State Electoral Officer with the view to reducing this cost estimate, with the expectation of reducing the cost. Following this discussion, Council was given a revised estimate which was substantially increased to \$140,600 which was disappointing and frustrating.

The cost of the 2008 election was eventually \$108,800 which was pleasing noting the estimate of \$140,000. If one looks at ratepayer value for money comparing between the two elections, the 2008 election would be assessed as of poorer value. One would then have to ask what was the point of the change.

Time taken to Obtain a Result

It is unreasonable that candidates have to wait up one to two weeks to find out if they are elected. The reason that the State Electoral Commission was reportedly appointed was to ensure transparency and good conduct of the election. This seems to have been at the expense of cost efficiency and timeliness in results. There is a view within the community and Council that the change in running of the electoral process has been a substantial step backwards.

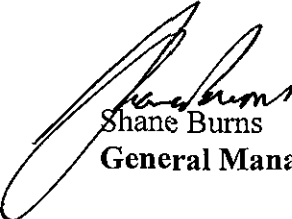
A Solution

There is middle ground between State Electoral and Local Government involvement in the conduct of future elections. The State Electoral Commission can still conduct and control the election, on the basis that they appoint a Returning Officer to run the election at a local level, utilizing local staff for the whole process. This oversight would still ensure transparency and good conduct in the election. Council, under what is proposed, would meet staffing and operational expenses for carrying out the election, but not as is presently the case having to pick up a substantial level of State Electoral Office overheads and staffing in Sydney. This will result in the following outcomes:

- Fewer costs to both Local Councils and the State Electoral Office.
- Maintain transparency and good conduct of the election through the Returning Officer employed and directed/controlled by the State Electoral Office.
- Instead of employing and having the counting process conducted in Sydney, this could be done under the direction of the returning officer locally, thereby providing a timely result for candidates.
- State Electoral Office will save administration by not having to organize and manage counting in Sydney from all over the State and just focus on the macro electoral management level.

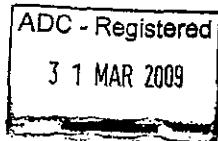
The submission is deliberately brief to encourage the key points to be absorbed. Again thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the inquiry.

Yours sincerely



Shane Burns
General Manager

CC: Councillors
The Hon. Mr Torbay MP



2007/1070

26 March 2009

Mr Shane Burns
General Manager
Armidale Dumaresq Council
PO Box 75A
Armidale NSW 2350

Dear Mr Burns

Final Reconciliation of Costs – 2008 Local Government Election

As you are aware, the New South Wales Electoral Commission (NSWEC) provided a budget estimate of costs for the conduct of the Local Government election for your council. We invoiced council for 85% against this estimate in August 2008 and advised that once final costs were known the NSWEC would invoice for the balance.

The NSWEC has worked to contain costs as much as possible. We are pleased to advise that in almost all council areas we have been successful in delivering the election for less than the budget estimate.

Attached please find your council's final summary of costs and invoice or credit note where applicable. An Electronic Funds Transfer form is attached where a credit is payable by the NSWEC.

Unlike previous Local Government elections we have now captured all costs associated with the conduct of the elections. This will be helpful to both the NSWEC and your council in planning and budgeting for the 2012 elections.

Should you have any questions regarding the final calculation of costs please contact Trevor Follett, Director Finance and Administration, at Trevor.follett@elections.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Colin Barry
Electoral Commissioner

TO: ARMIDALE DUMARESQ COUNCIL
PO BOX 75A
ARMIDALE NSW 2350

INVOICE NO: SCLG001721

ACCOUNT NO: AR00011
YOUR REF: General Manager
DATE: 20/03/09

DESCRIPTION	QUANTITY	PRICE	TOTAL
Credit Balance LGE 2008	1.00	10,700.00	11,770.00

Your Local Government Election cost summary is attached.

GST	1,070.00
TOTAL AMOUNT PAYABLE	11,770.00

Please email remittance advice to finance@elections.nsw.gov.au for any enquiries.

**Final Expenses for Armidale-Dumaresq Council
Local Government Election**

Item	Description	Amount
Local Government Elections Programme Management		
	Project Management	580
	Performance Evaluation & Reporting,	1,030
	Candidate Support, Legal	
	NSWEC Administration Fee	8,200
Programme Management Total		9,810
Finance Services		
	Budget Management	90
	Payroll Processing	1,060
	Payables Processing	340
	Mail Services	430
Finance Services Total		1,920
Election Services		
	Council Visits	110
	Candidate Info Sessions	270
	De-brief Programme for Returning Officers	30
	Centralised Vote Counting	3,340
	Voting Centres (Incl. pre-poll, DIs & polling places)	1,310
	Election Materials	5,870
	Training Programme	1,010
	Returning Officer Support Centre	940
	Wages - Returning Officers	7,440
	Wages - Office Assistants	20,650
	Wages - Election Officials	19,630
	Returning Officer Accommodation	10,910
	Registration of How-to-Vote Material	20
	Printing Ballot Papers	7,880
Election Services Total		79,410
Election Information Services		
	Equal Access to Democracy	500
	Elector Info Campaign - NSWEC Campaign	2,560
	Elector Info Campaign - Brochure	4,600
	Elector Information	310
	Info Kit	
	LG Profiling	
	Elector Enquiry Centre	1,160
	Website & Education Services	860
Election Information Services Total		9,990
Information Technology		
	Systems Support	1,530
	IT Setup	3,340
	Website (dynamic)	300
	Rolls	1,320
	IT Personnel	700
	Results	460
Information Technology Total		7,650
Total Expenses		108,800
less August 2008 Invoice		119,500
Amount to be Credited		- 10,700

Note: All amounts listed are GST Exclusive

2007/1070

1 September 2008

Mr Shane Burns
General Manager
Armidale Dumaresq Council
PO Box 75A
ARMIDALE NSW 2350

Dear Mr Burns

Charges for the 2008 Local Government Election

On 8 May 2008 we presented you with an estimate for the cost of your council's Local Government election. At the time we advised we would be invoicing you for 85% of the costs in August. This invoice is now attached.

You will be aware there has been considerable comment in the media on the issue of costs and who pays for the election. The New South Wales Electoral Commission (NSWEC) established an independent audit review of our charging model to satisfy you, our clients, and the general public.

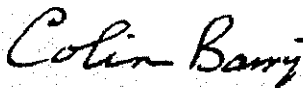
In the spirit of transparency we now advise you that we have made this report available publicly on our website www.elections.nsw.gov.au. The independent review confirms that the elections are not being run at a profit. In fact, conversely it found that councils are not paying for some associated costs, including capital equipment and elector roll maintenance charges. These costs (\$7M) are met by the State Government.

The Local Government and Shires Association (LGSA) has called for an IPART inquiry into election costs. The Premier has declined this request. We are pleased that the LGSA is supporting the view that the NSWEC should conduct the Local Government elections to the same standard as a State or Federal election. This is a view the NSWEC has always held.

Final invoicing will occur when all costs have been collated. This is expected to be in March 2009.

We will provide you with a written report on the conduct and administration of your election early in the new year.

Yours sincerely



Colin Barry
Electoral Commissioner

TAX INVOICE

TO: ARMIDALE DUMARESQ COUNCIL
PO BOX 75A
ARMIDALE NSW 2350

INVOICE NO: SILG001448

ACCOUNT NO: AR00011
YOUR REF: General Manager
DATE: 29/08/08

DESCRIPTION	QUANTITY	PRICE	TOTAL
85% Interim Invoice LGE 2008	1.00	119,500.00	131,450.00

Your Local Government Election cost estimate is attached. 85% is payable now with the balance to be invoiced when all costs are finalised.

PAY THIS AMOUNT 

GST 11,950.00
TOTAL AMOUNT PAYABLE 131,450.00

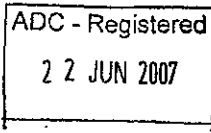
ACCOUNTS ARE PAYABLE WITHIN 21 DAYS OR INTEREST WILL BE CHARGED

Please make cheques payable to the **NSW Electoral Commission** at the address below or by
Direct Deposit to **BSB: 032-001 A/C: 20-4108** quoting the above invoice number.
Please email remittance advice to finance@elections.nsw.gov.au

Budget Estimate for Armidale Dumaresq Council

Item	Description	May 2008 Estimate
Local Government Elections Programme Management		
	Project Management	760
	Performance Evaluation & Reporting,	1,580
	Candidate Support, Legal	
	NSWEC Administration Fee	8,200
Programme Management Total		10,540
Finance Services		
	Budget Management	210
	Payroll Processing	2,190
	Payables Processing	350
	Mail Services	1,060
Finance Services Total		3,810
Election Services		
	Council Visits	140
	Candidate Info Sessions	240
	De-brief Programme for Returning Officers	110
	Centralised Vote Counting	5,030
	Voting Centres (Incl. pre-poll, DIs & polling places)	3,300
	Election Materials	9,250
	Training Programme	1,830
	Returning Officer Support Centre	1,240
	Wages - Returning Officers	20,850
	Wages - Office Assistants	20,730
	Wages - Election Officials	19,690
	Returning Officer Accommodation	14,040
	Registration of How-to-Vote Material	30
	Printing Ballot Papers	3,980
Election Services Total		100,460
Election Information Services		
	Equal Access to Democracy	750
	Elector Info Campaign - NSWEC Campaign	3,120
	Elector Info Campaign - Brochure	6,580
	Elector Information	290
	Info Kit	
	LG Profiling	
	Elector Enquiry Centre	1,420
	Website & Education Services	1,420
Election Information Services Total		13,580
Information Technology		
	Systems Support	1,710
	IT Setup	5,370
	Website (dynamic)	210
	Rolls	1,510
	IT Personnel	2,550
	Results	850
Information Technology Total		12,200
Budget Estimate		140,600
85% May 2008 Estimate		119,500

Sharing with Walcha Council
RO Office Located in Armidale



18 June 2007

Mr Shane Burns
General Manager
Armidale Dumaresq Council
PO Box 75A
Armidale NSW 2350

Dear Mr Burns

Indicative Costing for Local Government 2008 General Elections

I am writing to provide you with information that may assist in your budget for the September 2008 Local Government elections.

In 2005 the Council for the Cost and Quality of Government reviewed the New South Wales Electoral Commission (NSWEC) and identified a number of issues relating to the NSWEC's conduct of Local Government elections. The review, amongst other things, identified that the NSWEC was not conducting such elections on a full cost recovery basis.

The NSWEC receives no funding from the Government for the cost of establishing and maintaining an infrastructure and expertise to conduct Local Government elections. Government expects that all such election activity is undertaken on a full cost recovery basis.

The NSWEC commissioned independent auditors to review the current pricing structure and to recommend a pricing structure based on a full cost recovery model. The pricing structure reflects the full cost of providing professional election services.

The pricing structure is as follows:

- NSWEC election management fee of \$195 per hour for staff members;
- Casual staff to be charged at cost with no overhead added;
- Disbursements (printing, postage, ballot papers, etc) to be charged at cost with no overhead; and
- Legal costs to be at Crown Solicitor's invoice with no overhead.

The election management fee includes the NSWEC's costs associated with maintaining an infrastructure to provide election services to councils including maintaining customised local government computer systems, instruction manuals and forms for Returning Officers and candidates, the preparation of training material and seminars for Returning Officers and prospective candidates and our intellectual understanding of Local Government election legislation.



The NSWEC will arrange for the payment of all polling officials engaged by the Returning Officer and clerical assistants who are not full-time employees of the council. In the past this cost has been paid directly by councils.

Cost of the State Election

We have now completed the March 2007 State election. The cost of the election was approximately \$38.4m. This works out at \$8.79 per enrolled elector.

The Local Government elections do not have the costs associated with a tally room, the Legislative Council ballot paper production, interstate and overseas postal voting, the making of television commercials and the conduct of a large scale media campaign. Local Government elections in 2004 had some 4,500 candidates compared with 900 candidates at the recent State election. This increases the NSWEC's overhead in managing candidates.

In the case of the State election we required 93 Returning Officers. In the case of the Local Government elections we require some 152 Returning Officers. These people have to be recruited and trained.

The full cost of preparing for as well as conducting Local Government elections must be met by councils.

On the basis of the above the NSWEC has estimated that the cost of all Local Government elections will be \$31m. In the case of your council, Armidale Dumaresq Council, we have estimated that there will be approximately 15,172 electors at the time of the election. This will work out at \$7.14 per elector with a total budget of **\$108,300**. The reason for providing you with this information now is so that you can allocate an amount of money in your 2008/09 budget for the realistic cost of running elections in your area.

This estimate does not take into account costs associated with mayoral elections, referendums, polls or uncontested wards.

In the next six months a Client Services Officer from the NSWEC will be making arrangements to meet with you and your staff to discuss election services that you consider appropriate for your voters. Naturally this will effect the costing.

I look forward to meeting with you in the near future and for your staff to meet with one of our Client Services Officers in the next six months to discuss election services.

Yours sincerely

Colin Barry
Electoral Commissioner