

**Submission
No 22**

**INQUIRY INTO PUBLIC FUNDING OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT
ELECTION CAMPAIGNS**

Organisation: Liverpool City Council
Name: Mr Farooq Portelli
Position: Acting General Manager
Date Received: 22/09/2010



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Our Ref: 145703.2010
Contact: Vladimir Grepl 9821 9298

20 September 2010

Robert Furolo MP
Chair, Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mr Furolo

Re: Inquiry into the Public Funding of Local Government Election Campaigns

This submission is in reply to the Committee's call for comment on issues related to a public funding scheme for local government elections. The submission covers some of the questions raised in your Issues Paper.

Council management is supportive in general terms of public funding for local government elections as a means of reducing the perception of undue influence on local government decision-making by donors. A public funding scheme would rapidly increase public confidence in the integrity of local government as opposed to a long period of education on the making and use of political donations.

The support for a scheme is tempered by the fact that many of the practical features of a public funding system are not yet in place or have had an inadequate exposure in the local communities, among councillors and in local government generally. A premature introduction of an inadequate system is itself a threat to public confidence. A scheme such as this is one where detail matters and all its components need to be clearly shown before the introduction.

The assistance to candidates could be in two forms. One is the provision of candidate/platform information across an electoral area through a defined communication campaign which removes as far as possible partisan political messages. The other is an allowance, based on an agreed per elector quantum, for the candidates to promote their messages. It is difficult for this Council to collect real data on campaigning costs or to accurately estimate these costs in order to suggest a relevant allowance. Public funding should also support this second form through assistance for auditing financial reports. An expenditure cap is not required as these two would be the only sources for financing campaigns. The in-kind support candidates must need to be treated as a non-financial input as its use cannot be precisely defined.

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Administration Centre 1 Hoxton Park Road, Liverpool NSW 2170, DX 5030 Liverpool

Customer Service Centre Liverpool City Library, 170 George Street, Liverpool NSW 2170

All correspondence to The General Manager, Locked Bag 7064 Liverpool BC NSW 1871 **Call Centre** 1300 36 2170

Fax 9821 9333 **Email** lcc@liverpool.nsw.gov.au **Web** www.liverpool.nsw.gov.au **TTY** 9821 8800 **ABN** 84 181 182 471

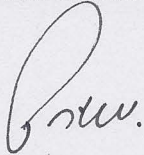
Public funding of local government elections would need to be funded and administered by the state government, primarily as a means of increasing the public confidence that the system is managed centrally and beyond local tampering. The state government already oversees some key aspects of local government such as the setting of remuneration, disciplinary processes and ultimately the viability of an elected council.

The current disclosure requirements are adequate and transparent enough to use under a public funding system. These requirements would be further highlighted in the education and promotion stages of the new system.

A necessary corollary to a new public funding scheme will be a cap and new rules about donations to political parties and organised independents. These rules will need to be communicated widely to shore up the overall public confidence of the scheme.

Should you wish to clarify any of these matters, please do not hesitate to contact Council's Manager Governance and Corporate Support, Vladimir Grepl on 9821 9298.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Portelli', written in a cursive style.

Farooq Portelli
Acting General Manager