

Government Elections



Albury City Council•Armidale Dumaresq Council•The Council of the Municipality of Ashfield•Auburn Council•Ballina Shire Council•Balranald Shire Council•Bankstown City Council•Bathurst Regional Council•The Council of the Shire of Baukham Hills•Bega Valley Shire Council•Bellingen Shire Council•Berrigan Shire Council•Blacktown City Council•Bland Shire Council•Blayney Shire Council•Blue Mountains City Council•Bogan Shire Council•Bombala Council•Boorowa Council•The Council of the City of Botany Bay•Bourke Shire Council•Brewarrina Shire Council•Broken Hill City Council•Burwood Council•Byron Shire Council•Gabonne Shire Council•Camden Council•Campbelltown City Council•City of Canada Bay Council•Canterbury City Council•Cessnock City Council•Central Darling Shire Council•Cessnock City Council•Clarence Valley Council•Cobar Shire Council•Coffs Harbour City Council•Conargo Shire Council•Coolamon Shire Council•Cooma-Monaro Shire Council•Coonamble Shire Council•Cootamundra Shire Council•Corowa Shire Council•Cove Shire Council•Deniliquin Council•Dubbo City Council•Dungog Shire Council•Ebor Shire Council•Floods Hill Shire Council•Forbes Shire Council•Gungahlin Shire Council•Innes-Evenington Council•Goulburn Shire Council•Grafton City Council•Goulburn Mulwaree Council•Great Lakes Council•Greater Hume Shire Council•Greater Taree City Council•Griffith City Council•Gundagai Shire Council•Gunnedah Shire Council•Guyra Shire Council•Haiter Shire Council•Harden Shire Council•Hawkesbury City Council•Hay Shire Council•Holroyd City Council•The Council of the Shire of Hornsby•The Council of the Municipality of Hunters Hill•Hurstville City Council•Inverell Shire Council•Jerilderie Shire Council•Junee Shire Council•Kempsey Shire Council•The Council of the Shire of Karriama/Karriama/Murrumbidgee/King-gal Council•Kempsey Shire Council•Lance Cove Municipal Council•Lambton Shire Council•Leeton Shire Council•Murrumbidgee Municipal Council•Lisieux City Council•City of Luggalugga Council•Liverpool City Council•Liverpool Plains Shire Council•Lockhart Shire Council•Maitland City Council•Manly Council•Marrickville Council•Mid-Western Regional Council•Moree Plains Shire Council•Mosman Municipal Council•Murray Shire Council•Murrumbidgee Shire Council•Muswellbrook Shire Council•Nambucca Shire Council•Narrabri Shire Council•Narrandera Shire Council•Narromine Shire Council•Newcastle City Council•North Sydney Council•Oberon Council•Orange City Council•Palerang Council•Parkes Shire Council•Parramatta City Council•Penrith City Council•Pittwater Council•Port Macquarie-Hastings Council•Port Stephens Council•Queanbeyan City Council•Randwick City Council•Richmond Valley Council•Rockdale City Council•Ryde City Council•Shellharbour City Council•Shoalhaven City Council•Singleton Council•Snowy River Shire Council•Strathfield Municipal Council•Sutherland Shire Council•Council of the City of Sydney•Tamworth Regional Council•Temora Shire Council•Tenterfield Shire Council•Tumbarumba Shire Council•Tumut Shire Council•Tweed Shire Council•Upper Hunter Shire Council•Upper Lachlan Shire Council•Uralla Shire Council•Urana Shire Council•Wagga Wagga City Council•The Council of the Shire of Wakool•Walcha Council•Walgett Shire Council•Warren Shire Council•Warringham Council•Warrumbungle Shire Council•Waverly Council•Weddin Shire Council•Wellington Council•Wentworth Shire Council•Willoughby City Council•Wingecarribee Shire Council•Wollondilly Shire Council•Wollongong City Council•Woolahra Municipal Council•Wyong Shire Council•Yass Valley Council•Young Shire Council

2008

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Foreword

Local Government in NSW in 2007/08 was a \$7.3 billion industry with councils collecting \$3.5 billion in rates and annual charges.¹ The election of representatives to councils is a significant event given the size and nature of Local Government and its direct and active interaction with members of the local community.²

I am pleased to present the NSW Electoral Commission's (NSWEC) first report prepared on the administration and conduct of a Local Government election. Local Government elections in NSW are the most complex in Australia. The legislative and regulatory provisions impose different rules and processes for the voting and counting systems applicable to the different elections required for each council. These requirements with the scale of the exercise and the geographical distribution of NSW councils make the conduct of these elections very challenging.

The 2008 NSW Local Government Elections were held on 13 September 2008. The NSWEC conducted 332 contested elections across NSW, including mayoral elections, referenda and polls. Nearly 4 million votes were counted for 4,620 candidates. The variations across the 148 Local Government authorities in terms of geographic size, population and population density were significant. Different logistical arrangements were required to meet the operational challenges of providing efficient electoral services across 148 councils where resident numbers ranged from 1,400 residents (Urana) to 283,000 residents (Blacktown), where the smallest geographical Local Government area was 5.8 square kilometres (Hunters Hill) to the largest 53,510 square kilometres (Central Darling), where the density of population varied from 0.045 person/ square kilometres (Central Darling) to the most densely populated 6,624.8 person/ square kilometres (Waverley).³

The 2008 elections saw the introduction of Regional Returning Officers, an innovation necessary to provide cost effective electoral services to some regional and rural councils. The strategy worked well with significant savings of around a third on average for participating councils.

Four councils were returned to democracy in these elections however, another three were placed under administration during 2008 and their elections deferred.

Uncertainty existed in the preparation for the elections on the legislative and regulatory provisions to apply as the NSWEC waited for the Local Government Amendment (Elections) Bill 2008 to be considered by the Parliament and the Local Government (General) Amendments (Elections) Regulation 2008 to be made. In mid 2008 rather late in the preparations for the elections, the Local Government (General) Amendments (Elections) Regulation 2008 came into effect and transferred amongst other things, certain responsibilities from Returning Officers and councils to the Electoral Commissioner. In addition the day of the election was moved from 27 September to 13 September to ensure that the elections did not fall within NSW's public school holidays.

Despite these challenges, the 2008 Local Government Elections were a success. There were no court challenges to the NSWEC's conduct of any of the elections.

Counting for all elections finished on Wednesday 24 September 2008 three days ahead of schedule with 1,474 councillors and 28 mayors elected to office for a four year term. All elections including referenda and polls were declared by Thursday 25 September 2008. Two recounts were undertaken and the outcomes were not changed. Three by-elections were held in late November as a consequence of insufficient candidates to fill vacancies.

The NSWEC employed 13,684 election officials of which 82.3% were employed just for election day on 13 September 2008. All officials were trained in their duties by the NSWEC. 90 Returning Officers' offices including 23 Regional Returning Officers' offices, and 197 pre-polling and 2,597 election day polling places were established and managed.

The NSWEC consulted councils during the preparations for the elections. The contentious issues identified concerned the full cost recovery model and the timeliness of declaring results. These concerns prompted the NSWEC to establish independent quality assurance mechanisms to review arrangements for the centralised vote counting and the costing model. I'm pleased to report that in both cases the findings of the independent assessments upheld the arrangements. The voting centre review reported that the count was "extremely well managed, open and transparent at all times with little opportunity for errors to occur". It is a credit to staff that both reviews were positive in their findings. These independent review reports were made publicly available on the NSWEC website.

While the cost of the 2008 Local Government Elections attracted considerable local media interest and concern from the Local Government and Shires Associations, the actual expenditure for the 2008 Local Government Elections was \$25.9 million with savings of some \$5.2 million achieved. The costs for the 2008 Local Government Elections were reasonable with a cost of \$5.71 per elector.

Overall, the feedback including that from General Managers has been positive. These responses have set service benchmarks for the NSWEC to exceed at future elections.

Many lessons were learnt from the 2008 Local Government Elections and the NSWEC will use this knowledge for future elections. While the NSWEC is the mandated service provider for Local Government elections, it is our goal that if councils could choose, they would select the NSWEC to conduct their elections.

I would like to thank all staff involved in providing the 2008 Local Government Elections and to thank electors, councils, candidates, registered political parties and other stakeholders for their participation in this important event.



Colin Barry
Electoral Commissioner

Election Snapshot

The NSWEC conducted the 2008 Local Government Elections in 148 council areas on Saturday, 13 September 2008.

Due, Contested and Uncontested Elections, 2008 Local Government Elections.

	Due	Contested	Uncontested
Councillor elections – Divided councils	223	187	36
Councillor elections – Undivided councils	86	84	2
Councillor elections – Total	309	271	38
Mayoral elections	28	27	1

In conducting these elections, the NSWEC:

- managed the roll for 4.5 million electors;
- processed 4,654 candidate nominations;
- provided services for 4,620 candidates;
- conducted 332 individual elections in 187 wards and 84 undivided council areas including:
 - 27 contested mayoral elections;
 - referenda for 15 councils (17 referenda);
 - polls for eight councils (17 polls);
- counted 3,529,220 votes for councillor positions;
- managed 2,597 polling places;
- oversighted 90 Returning Officers in the field; and
- employed 13,684 election staff.

Section 1: The NSW Electoral Commission

The key responsibilities of the NSWEC are to:

- conduct elections and by-elections for the Parliament of New South Wales;
- conduct elections for Local Government councils;
- conduct elections for registered clubs, statutory boards and State registered industrial organisations;
- prepare the New South Wales electoral roll in conjunction with the Australian Electoral Commission;
- provide administrative support to the Election Funding Authority; provide advice to the Premier on issues affecting the conduct of parliamentary elections, including:
 - administrative issues requiring legislative remedy;
 - contribute to public understanding and awareness of elections and electoral matters; and
 - report to the NSW Parliament on the NSWEC's activities.

The NSWEC is required to deliver impartial elections in accordance with the law whereby voter participation is maximised and informal voting minimised. These requirements are specified in the NSWEC's Results and Services Plan, a performance management tool that sets out these outcomes, the services provided to achieve these outcomes, and the costs of delivering the services.

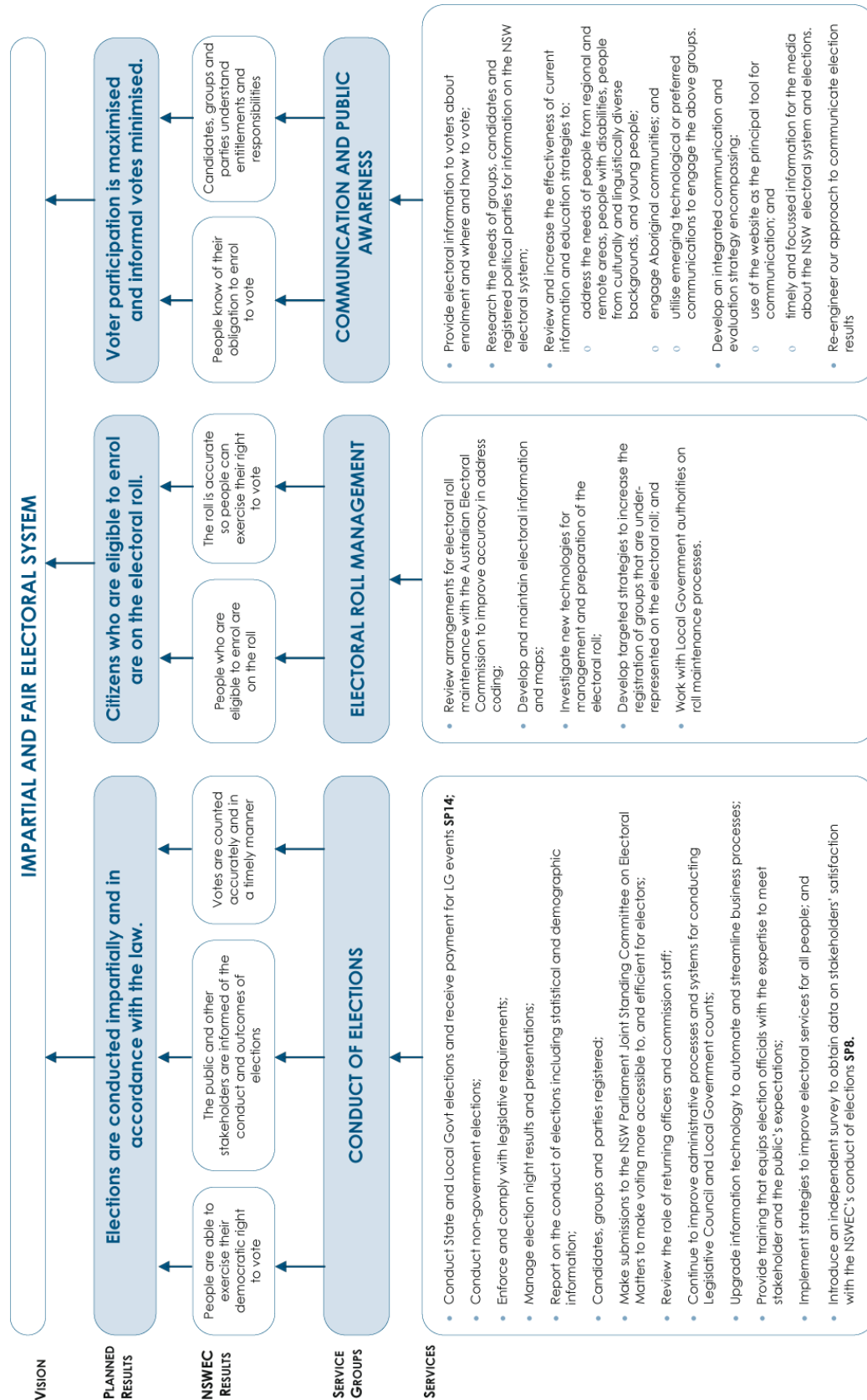
The NSWEC's Results and Services Plan together with the 2008 – 2011 Corporate Plan set out the outcomes expected of the NSWEC.

The NSWEC's Results and Services Plan contains a core set of key performance targets used for managing and reporting service delivery. These are:

- Citizens are able to exercise their democratic right to vote;
- The public and other stakeholders are informed of the conduct and outcomes of elections;
- Votes are counted accurately and in a timely manner;
- People who are eligible to enrol are on the roll;
- The roll is accurate so people can exercise their right to vote;
- People know of their obligation to enrol to vote; and
- Candidates, groups and parties understand entitlements and responsibilities

The services the NSWEC provides and the logic linking the services to intended results are set out in the diagram following.

Results and Services Logic Framework



Creating 'Value Added' Election Services

The NSWEC is responsible for implementing the democratic principles of an open and fair electoral system in which elections are conducted impartially and in accordance with the law, and voter participation is maximised and informal voting minimised.

These principles underpin the activities that the public associates with the electoral system – enrolling to vote, voting and the counting of votes. Related to these core functions are activities such as raising the public's awareness of coming elections, and advising candidates and registered political parties of their responsibilities.

The importance of these principles requires the performance of the NSWEC to be measured and open to scrutiny. Unfortunately, it is difficult to benchmark performance across Australia on key indicators such as timeliness for declaration of results and the cost of elections. Currently there are no agreed performance indicators for electoral administration across Australia. Further, only NSW requires full attendance voting for Local Government elections with the other States and Territories using either full postal voting or a mix of postal and attendance voting.

The NSWEC now measures its performance in conducting elections by addressing:

- dimensions of the task such as the size and logistical challenges;
- how well the task was undertaken utilising a range of measures including client and stakeholder satisfaction ratings; and
- achievements measured against internal targets and available external survey findings.

To achieve this, the NSWEC introduced measurement of the satisfaction of stakeholders as part of its 2008 – 2011 Corporate Plan and its Results and Services Plan.

The NSWEC reports on the conduct and outcomes of elections to the NSW Parliament, the Premier and in the case of Local Government elections, to the Minister for Local Government and to each council. The NSWEC's website www.elections.nsw.gov.au provides copies of such reports.

Commensurate with the importance of Local Government, the NSWEC sought to bring to Local Government elections the standards and services provided for State and Federal elections such as:

- Elector Inquiry Centre to answer telephone inquiries;
- Candidate and Council Help Desks;
- NSWEC website dedicated to the 2008 Local Government Elections;
- Candidate Information Seminars throughout NSW;

-
- Mobile pre-polling in remote areas;
 - Braille ballot papers for electors with visual disabilities;
 - Electoral information strategies for Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse electors;
 - Election information brochures;
 - Voter information in community languages;
 - A Virtual Tally Room on election night; and
 - Reporting on the administration and conduct of the elections.

For the 2008 Local Government Elections, the NSWEC is providing a report to the NSW Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters and the Minister for Local Government, and individual reports to councils on the conduct of the 2008 Local Government Elections.

NSWEC Involvement in Local Government Elections

The NSWEC (then the State Electoral Office) was first involved in the conduct of Local Government elections and polls in 1987 following assent to the Local Government (Elections) Amendment Act 1987 which transferred responsibility for council elections from the (then) Town and Shire Clerks to the NSW Electoral Commissioner.

This change occurred to facilitate consistency of interpretation and administration of electoral laws, greater uniformity with State election procedures; to utilise the expertise of the NSWEC and to raise the awareness in the community of the importance of Local Government elections. These changes were initiated by a growing awareness of the question of the appropriateness of the Town and Shire Clerks who reported to elected officials, conducting elections. In addition, the tensions incumbent in elected representatives undertaking unpopular responsibilities of electoral legislation such as issuing penalty notices for failure to vote, were recognised.

The 1987 and 1991 elections were conducted using Town and Shire Clerks as Returning Officers under the direction of the Electoral Commissioner. At the 1987 elections, counts were conducted manually and completed count sheets faxed to State Electoral Office for checking. These checks revealed a number of counts were wrong as a result of incorrect interpretation of rules applicable to the counting system.

In 1993 the Local Government Act was amended with Town and Shire Clerks becoming General Managers on contract. Over the next few years there was greater awareness within public sector administration and within Local Government of the need to separate conflicting roles where possible.

From 1995 onwards, independent Returning Officers were appointed however elections were conducted from council premises with a heavy reliance upon council resources supporting the Returning Officers. Formal training of Returning Officers was minimal on the basis that Returning Officers would be supported by council staff. While this worked well in a number of locations, in other Local Government areas there were reports of security issues; inadequate office space; interference by council staff; and occasions of council staff over-riding the (then) State Electoral Office directives.

The financial arrangements for elections were not transparent and were spread across both the State Electoral Office and councils. The State Electoral Office invoiced councils for certain costs such as the Returning Officers' salaries. The invoicing however, related only to actual goods, forms provided and an administration fee without covering many associated costs. The costs of electoral services were offset by using council premises and council staff but the financial value of this support was not captured or built into expenditure reports. As a result the true costs of Local Government elections were never determined.

In 2003/2004, following review of the State Electoral Office by the NSW Council on the Cost and Quality of Government, the NSW Government required the NSWEC to charge the full cost of providing Local Government elections. As part of this change the NSWEC became fully responsible for the provision of elections. This commenced after the 2004 Local Government Elections with Local Government by-elections from that point being conducted by the NSWEC on a full cost recovery basis.

The 2008 Local Government Elections were the first occasion the full cost recovery model was implemented across NSW in a general Local Government election.

Section 2: The 2008 Local Government Elections

Local councils are the clients for the provision of electoral services for Local Government elections.⁴ The parameters for the conduct of the Local Government elections are set down in legislation (the Local Government Act 1993), Regulation (the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 incorporating the Local Government (General) Amendments (Elections) Regulation 2008) and policy decisions that give effect to the legislative and regulatory provisions. The Local Government Act 1993 requires Local Government elections in NSW to be conducted on a four yearly basis with election day to be the second Saturday in September.

A number of key decisions made the 2008 Local Government Elections markedly different to those of earlier elections. The most significant of these were not just the distribution of responsibility for electoral services between the NSWEC and NSW councils and full cost recovery, but also the changes to the electoral reporting responsibilities of candidates and registered parties.

Funding of the 2008 Local Government Elections

Local Government elections differ from State General Elections in both the nature of provisions and the funding arrangements. The Electoral Commissioner is required by law to conduct the Local Government elections on a full cost recovery basis with each council required by law to pay for the cost of their election. Unlike the State General Elections and State by-elections, the NSWEC is not funded by the NSW Government for conducting Local Government elections although the NSW Treasury provides an advance to cover preparation for the elections. This advance is repaid following recoupment of expenses from councils.

The expenditure for the 2008 Local Government Elections and the NSWEC's cost containment strategies are discussed in the 'Electoral Services for Councils' and 'Cost of the 2008 Local Government Elections' sections of this report.

Legislative Reforms

During the preparation for the NSW 2008 Local Government Elections, the Local Government Amendment (Elections) Bill 2008 was introduced into the NSW Parliament by the Minister for Local Government in early April 2008. It was not until mid 2008 that it became clear this Bill would not be passed.

Although the Bill was not passed, in mid 2008 amendments were made to the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 to modernise the arrangements for the conduct of Local Government elections in NSW. These reforms applied to the 2008 Local Government Elections.

Some of the key amendments to the Regulation included:

- Electoral Commissioner rather than the council being responsible for statutory election advertising as well as the transfer of other electoral

functions from the council and Returning Officer to the Electoral Commissioner;

- Local Government elections advertised more broadly including on the NSWEC and council websites;
- Ability to facsimile or email nomination proposals and withdrawals;
- Aligning the date for the close of nominations and time by which nominations must be lodged or withdrawn;
- Increasing access to pre-poll voting for certain groups;
- Enabling pre-poll voting at mobile booths in remote local government areas;
- Requiring an elector to vote for at least half the number of candidates of the total number of vacancies;
- Requiring certain information to be placed on the NSWEC's website; and
- Providing for ballot papers to be issued in Braille format.

Importantly, the amendments also introduced a regulated election period for Local Government elections as in State General Elections, bringing greater alignment between the procedures and terminology for council and state elections.

New Election Funding and Disclosure Rules

In the same Parliamentary session, changes to the Election Funding and Disclosures Act 1981 brought significant changes to the requirements of registered candidates, candidates and donors concerning political donations and electoral expenditure. The intent was that electors be made aware of the sources of political donations and the amount of electoral expenditure incurred by parties, elected representatives, groups and candidates.

These amendments required candidates and groups to register with the Election Funding Authority which was also provided increased powers. The new disclosure rules affected not just State Government candidates and groups, members of NSW Parliament, political parties and political donors but also Local Government councillors and Local Government candidates and groups. The major difference from the provisions for parliamentary elections, that is no provision of public funding of registered political parties or coverage for electoral expenses of candidates, remained unchanged.

Measuring NSWEC's Conduct of the 2008 Local Government Elections

The NSWEC is the mandated service provider for Local Government elections paid for by councils. This arrangement imposes an accountability on the NSWEC for the standards and services it provides.

As part of the NSWEC's commitment to provide high quality, value for money services for the 2008 Local Government Elections, the NSWEC measured its performance by:

- Assessment of the satisfaction of key stakeholder groups such as electors, council General Managers, registered political parties, candidates and election staff. These initial surveys are intended to serve as benchmarks for future performance;
- Independent assessment of key features of the 2008 Local Government Elections such as the costing model and the effectiveness of the Local Government Counting Centre;
- An internal debrief process that reviewed the performance of election staff; project management, complaints made and customer service standards;
- Comparisons with the performance of other Electoral Commissions within Australia and overseas where possible; and
- Comparisons against indicators and targets within the NSWEC's Results and Services Plan and its 2008 – 2011 Corporate Plan.

The stakeholder surveys were distributed to electors, council General Managers, the media, candidates, groups and registered political parties and election officials. These surveys assessed satisfaction with the key objectives of impartiality, effectiveness and efficiency as well as operational issues such as provision of:

- Voting services to the general public;
- Braille ballot paper voting for visually impaired electors;
- Services to registered political parties and candidates;
- Training and support provided to Returning Officers and polling officials;
- Communication programmes including those for the media; and
- Provision of results via the NSWEC website.

An online debrief approach was adopted by the NSWEC for all stakeholder groups with the exception of voters using Braille ballot papers. For the latter group, a telephone survey was undertaken.

Seeking feedback from stakeholders provided a wealth of material both quantitative and qualitative. The feedback from stakeholders has been included in the relevant section on services to that stakeholder group and in the final 'Evaluation Overview' section summarising the performance of the NSWEC.

Planning for the 2008 Local Government Elections

Election Timetable

The conduct of elections is governed by the election timetable – a schedule for the conduct of certain electoral administrative functions. For the 2008 Local Government Elections, the regulated election period began on Monday 4 August and ended at 6pm on Saturday 13 September 2008. This was the first time that there was a regulated election period for Local Government elections.

Key election dates for the 2008 Local Government Elections were:

Electoral rolls closed	Monday, 4 August 2008
Nomination Day	Wednesday, 13 August 2008
Pre-poll voting started	Monday, 1 September 2008
Registration of 'how to vote' material closed	Friday, 5 September 2008
Postal voting applications closed	Monday, 8 September 2008
Declared Institution voting started	Monday, 8 September 2008
Declared Institution voting closed	Wednesday, 10 September 2008
Pre-poll voting closed	Friday, 12 September 2008
Election Day	Saturday, 13 September 2008
Return of postal votes closed	Monday, 15 September 2008
Distribution of preferences started	Tuesday, 16 September 2008

Consultation with NSW Councils

The 2008 Local Government Elections involved many months of planning for the NSWEC. The task was made more challenging by the 2008 legislative and regulatory changes, which while welcomed, were passed after some key activities such as candidate information seminars, had already commenced.

The major components of the preparation entailed early consultation with councils, a process of risk identification and reduction through review of earlier elections, project planning, and financial forecasting and budgeting for each council participating in the 2008 elections.

As part of the consultation programme with local councils, in the second half of 2007 the NSWEC visited every council scheduled to have an election with the exception of Broken Hill City Council (which was continuing under administration).

The purpose of the visits was to receive input from councils, provide information regarding services and initiatives the NSWEC would provide, and discuss how the elections would be costed.

The agenda for these meetings included electoral advertising; increasing access for groups who typically participate less; timeframes for provision of budget information, assistance to candidates; recruitment and payment of election officials; council help desks, elector inquiry centre; printing of ballot papers, electoral roll; changes to the NSW website and vote counting.

On raising community awareness of the elections, councils were advised of:

-
- The option of using a NSWEC produced election information brochure tailored for their communities;
 - The advertising strategy and the inclusion of specific advertising in community languages or Aboriginal media;
 - The conduct of candidate information seminars by NSWEC staff;
 - Establishing a link to the NSWEC website for the benefit of electors and candidates; and
 - Provision of election information for council newsletters.

Feedback from councils indicated that while some councils preferred to be more involved in the conduct of the elections, others saw benefits in the NSWEC taking total responsibility. One of these benefits was the NSWEC paying all election officials. This had been a significant administrative burden on many councils in terms of staff resources and costs. The NSWEC further consulted on matters such as polling places; pre-poll voting and advertising.

During these consultations, councils indicated that the key issues for them were timeliness of election results, the cost of the elections and the quality of electoral staff in professionally administering electoral processes and conducting the count.

Strategic and Operational Strategies

At the strategic level, the NSWEC made submissions to the NSW Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters on how to make voting more accessible and efficient for electors. The NSWEC also provided regular briefings to the NSW Premier and Minister for Local Government on the planning and preparation for the elections. A briefing of the Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW was also undertaken.

Operational strategies included:

- Reviews of the role of Returning Officers, polling places and the administrative processes and systems involved in conducting Local Government counts;
- Using information communication technology to automate and streamline processes, for example online registration of employment interest, a web based payroll, training of election staff and to communicate election information and results;
- Improving accuracy of the electoral roll by address coding and investigating new technologies for management of the electoral roll and work with local councils on roll maintenance processes.
- Targeted strategies to increase the registration of groups under-represented on the electoral roll;

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- Increasing the effectiveness of current information and education strategies to address the needs of people from regional and remote areas, people with disabilities, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, young people; and engaging aboriginal communities;
 - Integrated communication and education strategy encompassing use of the website as the principal tool for communication, and timely and focussed information for the media about the NSW electoral system and elections;
 - Business risk analysis and development of mitigation strategies, including a strategic internal audit programme; and
 - Team-based and project management approaches to work planning and implementation.

The services provided by the NSWEC to local councils were broad in scope and interwoven with strategies addressing the needs of other stakeholders such as electors, registered political parties, candidates and the media.

Raising Awareness of the 2008 Local Government Elections

The NSWEC in its Corporate Plan 2008 – 2011 committed to developing an integrated communication and evaluation strategy using the NSWEC website as a principal tool of communication. Another goal was to provide timely information for the media about the NSW electoral system and elections conducted. The emphasis upon electronic communication preceded but was consistent with the changes to the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 which required advertising, notice of elections, call for nominations, declaration of results and Candidate Information Sheets to be placed on the NSWEC website.

The communications strategy for the 2008 Local Government elections addressed each of the stakeholder groups: the people and electors of NSW; local councils; candidates and other participants at elections; registered political parties; the media, the NSW Parliament and the Minister for Local Government.

Regular briefings were provided to the NSW Premier, the Minister for Local Government and the Department of Local Government on the progress in preparing for the 2008 Local Government Elections. These briefings covered significant issues such as implementation of the changes to the Regulation and changes to the Election Funding and Disclosures Act 1981, the costs of conducting the elections, candidate nominations, contested and uncontested elections, inclusion of Braille ballot papers and topical issues. Following the elections, further briefings were provided on the outcomes, timing of the declaration of results and the November 2008 by-elections.

In addition to direct communications provided to electors and local councils through newsletters, emails and presentations, the NSWEC utilised advertising, media interactions and the networks provided by key NSW public sector agencies such as the NSW Community Relations Commission, the Department

of Ageing, Disability and Home Care and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs to increase awareness of the elections and to reach groups typically underrepresented in the democratic process. Both electronic and non-electronic forms of communication were used to achieve these objectives.

The Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 prescribes that advertisements must be placed in newspapers to advise the community of key actions such as closure of electoral rolls, call for nominations by intending candidates, notice of contested elections and declaration of the results. These advertisements are known as 'statutory' advertisements.

Prior to the amendment of the Regulation in 2008, each council General Manager was required to place notices inviting claims for inclusion on the electoral roll in newspapers circulating within the council area twice in the 60 days before the rolls closed. Following the Regulation changes the responsibility for placing this notice was moved to the NSWEC and the advertisement was to be published once in the 14 days prior to the rolls closing and advertised generically across NSW as well as on the NSWEC and council websites.

The amended Regulation also required the NSWEC to publish on its website information relating to closure of electoral rolls, notice of the elections and call for nominations and other statutory requirements. The time frames for publication of this material were regulated. Councils were also required to publish this material or to provide a link between their website and that of the NSWEC.

The advertising campaign consisted of three major components:

- State wide information campaign;
- Statutory advertisements in local media; and
- Election information brochure and other materials.

The objectives of the communication campaign were to:

- Create awareness of the coming elections and maximise participation;
- Encourage enrolment from those under represented on the electoral roll; and
- Publicise voting arrangements such as key dates, polling places, candidates, services for Aboriginal electors, culturally and linguistically diverse electors and electors with disabilities as well as special services for those in rural and remote locations.

An assessment of the NSWEC's communication and media strategies is included in the feedback from stakeholders and the cost of the advertising campaign is included in the Section 10 'Cost of the 2008 Local Government Elections'.

NSWEC's Communication Campaign

The statewide newspaper and radio advertising campaign focussed on messages addressing enrolling, voting arrangements, remembering to vote and registering electoral material. Television advertising was not utilised due to the cost impost for councils.

The enrolment campaign for the 2008 Local Government Elections commenced on 21 July 2008. The NSWEC placed a total of 163 press advertisements in a mix of general, multilingual and Aboriginal press throughout NSW. The NSWEC also placed a total of 3,244 radio advertisements during the course of the campaign, and 260 'live reads' in the week before the elections in Sydney and Newcastle. The pattern of radio distribution and deferred elections made it difficult to extend the 'live reads' further into NSW.

The media strategy of the NSWEC matched the timing of the advertising campaign with press releases and interviews organised to supplement and expand the messages in the advertisements. Also, many of the 4,620 candidates generated their own press coverage and in some cases, radio advertising and newspaper advertisements. Similarly councils included articles in their community newsletters. These activities generated media comment and articles in local newspapers and increased awareness of the elections.

Statutory Advertising

The four statutory advertisements required under the Regulation were placed in 217 different local newspapers across NSW including at least one local newspaper from each council area. These advertisements covered the need for electors to enrol to be able to vote at the 2008 Local Government Elections; the call for nominations; advice regarding the candidates standing for election and location of polling places and lastly, results.

Councils were asked to nominate the newspapers in which the advertisements were to be placed and the frequency of placements if more than the statutory requirements were considered necessary by the council.

Electoral Information Brochure

All councils were offered the option to send to each elector or household an election information brochure. A similar brochure was provided to electors as part of the 2007 State General Election. The advantage to councils of this service was that all production management, electoral information and council and the ward (if applicable) information would be provided by NSWEC and delivered direct to local residents. Councils were offered a choice of an elector brochure, sent to each enrolled elector, or a household brochure sent to each household with one or more electors. A generic brochure without council specific details was placed on the NSWEC website for the information of all electors.

The election information brochure option was utilised by a total of 61 councils while 87 councils declined. Only eight councils opted for the brochure addressed to individual enrolled electors while the remainder (53 councils)

chose the household brochure. The total number of brochures produced whether household or elector was 940,806. Upon investigation of the receipt of these brochures by electors and households, the rate of household brochures returned to the NSWEC was 1.3%.

Electronic Information - NSWEC Website www.elections.nsw.gov.au

The take up of electronic communications within Australia and NSW is high. The NSWEC sought to utilise this medium in a dynamic manner to reach stakeholders by placing relevant topical material on the NSWEC website and updating this regularly as well as ensuring that other appropriate websites such as, the NSW Government and the Department of Local Government websites, had links to the NSWEC website. In the 2007 consultation visits, councils were asked to set up links from their websites to that of the NSWEC to assist local voters and candidates. In 2008 the amendment to the Regulation required that this occur and that specified material was placed on these websites for certain timeframes.

The NSWEC restructured its website to bring the Local Government elections content up to the same level as State election information and to serve as a key information resource for election stakeholders.

The new structure provided an overarching Local Government elections page from which users could source information on:

- Election timetable;
- Employment at the election;
- Enrolment requirements;
- Council profiles and other detail;
- Information on referenda and polls;
- Voting methods;
- Local Government political parties;
- Candidate information;
- Reference documents such as Guidelines, Handbooks and forms; and
- Election results.

The council profile pages developed for the NSWEC website were provided to each council for comment prior to posting on the web. These profiles included information on:

- Localities/suburbs;
- Surrounding councils;

-
- Regional area;
 - Wards - if a divided council;
 - Mayor;
 - Councillors;
 - Council's voting system;
 - Council contact information;
 - Polling places and accessibility;
 - 2004 Local Government Elections summary; and
 - 2006 Australian Bureau of Statistics census data.

The NSW Electoral Commission website also provided:

- An enrolment verification facility that linked to the Australian Electoral Commission database;
- Google maps showing Council and Ward boundaries, polling places and a search facility for voters to identify their nearest polling place and disability access;
- Lookup facility to allow electors to check if they were on the roll; and
- Names and details of candidates.

The website was heavily utilised with almost 11 million hits over three months. The pages most utilised were:

- Local Government Elections overview;
- 2008 Local Government Elections results;
- Council search;
- 2008 Local Government Elections timetable and portal;
- Pre-poll voting centres;
- Inability to vote form;
- Penalties for not voting;
- General search of site; and
- How the vote counting is done.

A search facility was placed on the NSWEC website to assist electors verify their enrolment and check in which Local Government area they resided and what ward (if a divided council), and to locate a polling place. Polling place information also provided information on whether a polling place was accessible for electors using wheelchairs.

For those unable to vote on the 13 September, election day, the NSWEC placed on the website information on alternate voting services such as postal voting, pre-poll voting, mobile voting and declared institution voting.

Media Communications Strategy

The NSW media environment is one of the most competitive in Australia consisting of approximately 300 outlets across radio, television, print, magazine and online mediums. Media outlets are located in metropolitan, suburban, regional and rural locations as well as the NSW Parliamentary press gallery in Macquarie Street. A number of media hubs consisting of print, television and radio outlets have developed in Albury, Wagga Wagga, Newcastle, Tamworth, Lismore, Dubbo, Orange, Wollongong and Bega. All of these provided opportunities to raise awareness of the coming Local Government elections in September 2008.

Following a review of the management of media interest in the 2007 State General Election, the NSWEC developed a communications strategy for managing media interactions during the 2008 Local Government Elections period. The key needs were to provide electoral material to the media and to have a media spokesperson who could respond in a timely, transparent and accurate manner to the media. A number of small but effective internal changes were made to ensure that the media could access quality resources online, over the phone, and in person at local electoral offices across NSW. The various initiatives included establishing a Media Centre on the NSWEC website; ensuring Returning Officers had media training; providing media releases; participating in discussion of issues through 'letters to the editor'; and raising the profile of the campaigns the NSWEC was running such as the 'Aboriginal Electors' Strategy'.

The 2008 Local Government Elections were characterised by high levels of local media interest. To manage the flow of information from NSWEC staff and Returning Officers, a media protocol was established to ensure issues of public interest were dealt with professionally. The Media Centre on the NSWEC website provided information such as press releases and copies of reports from the independent assessments of the NSWEC's costing model and the central Local Government Counting Centre.

The NSWEC provided 64 media releases containing important election information such as the Candidate Information Seminars held across NSW, the changed arrangements for declaration of political donations, the increased election services available to electors, nominations, recruitment of electoral staff, and council budgets. These media releases were also available on the NSWEC website and generated considerable interest with more than 7,000 media mentions recorded and more than 100 live radio interviews.

Over 60 letters to the editor were drafted with the majority published within a week of the original story allowing the NSWEC to convey important information, unedited, directly to voters. These activities generated many follow on articles in local newspapers and radio interviews.

Various forms of the media had regular weekly contact with both Returning Officers (59%) and media spokesperson (61%). This contact produced articles and other activities which increased the community's awareness of the 2008 Local Government Elections.

Section 3: Electoral Services for Electors

The NSWEC advises electors and potential electors of their obligation to enrol and vote. Such advice is necessary to ensure electors are able to exercise their democratic right to vote in elections that are conducted impartially and in accordance with the law. The electoral services involved in achieving these outcomes include the provision of election information, accurate management of the electoral roll, provision of polling and pre-poll options and ballot papers, accurate candidate information, timely counting of votes and dissemination of election results.

The NSWEC's communication strategy was broadly based to deliver information to stakeholders. As well, services specific to different stakeholder groups were provided. Services included programmes targeted at specific community groups to maximise participation in addition to generic electoral services. Services provided specifically for electors are outlined below.

Throughout this section and in greater detail at its conclusion, feedback obtained from the electors' survey is provided.

Ensuring Equal Access to Democracy within the Community

Participation in a democracy cannot be limited to those who either have the knowledge or physical ability to access the electoral process. Sections of the community who are less likely to participate in elections are people who have difficulty with physical access to facilities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and electors from indigenous communities amongst others.⁵

The NSWEC as part of its Corporate Plan 2008 – 2011, committed to implementing strategies to improve electoral services for all people and to overcome the disadvantage experienced by some sections of the community. The strategies involved increasing the effectiveness of current information and education strategies to:

- Address the needs of people from regional and remote areas, people with disabilities, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and young people;
- Engage Aboriginal communities; and
- Utilise emerging technologies or preferred communications to engage these groups.

Activities, such as the 'Train the Trainer' module for Aboriginal communities, were developed. Some were in response to requests from councils. Other activities were undertaken with appropriate NSW Government agencies and the non government sector to utilise the expertise and networks these agencies possessed.

Improving Access for Electors with Disabilities

In order to maximise the participation of people with disabilities, the NSWEC Equal Access to Democracy Reference Group reviewed the NSWEC's 2007 Equal Access to Democracy Plan.

Key improvements from the 2007 State General Election's plan were:

- Provision of Braille ballot papers for vision impaired electors;
- Increased consultation with NSW government organisations such as the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care;
- Increased website accessibility including specific information for electors with a disability;
- Newsletters outlining both electoral information and the employment opportunities available in the 2008 Local Government Elections; and
- Review of Returning Officer guidelines to include information on assisting electors with a vision impairment, mental illness and intellectual disability.

Effective strategies such as provision of information to and liaison with community groups and the non-government sector were retained.

An issue that is regularly raised with the NSWEC is the accessibility of polling places for people with disabilities and frail older people. The NSWEC seeks to ensure that as many of its polling places are wheelchair accessible as possible but it is difficult when the NSWEC does not own the polling places venues. In the 2008 Local Government Elections, 549 (21.1%) of all polling places were wheelchair accessible and 1,103 (42.5%) accessible with assistance. 78.2% of pre-poll places were wheelchair accessible. Information on the accessibility of polling places was provided on the NSWEC's website and from the telephone Elector Inquiry Centre.

New Services for Vision Impaired Electors

The provisions for vision impaired electors were amended during 2008. The amendment of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 introduced the option for vision impaired voters to request Braille ballot papers. This was a significant change to the services provided for people with disabilities from the 2004 Local Government Elections. The NSWEC worked closely with Vision Australia to make this initiative successful and the ballot paper developed with Vision Australia incorporated large print in addition to the Braille format.⁶

Registration by vision impaired voters was necessary to use the Braille ballot paper option as the design and printing of the ballot papers required significant lead times and special printing. Applications for Braille ballot papers were taken by the NSWEC between Monday 14 July and 5pm Wednesday 13 August, 2008. An application could be verbal or written and either taken by phone, fax or email. Braille ballot papers were prepared for postal, pre-poll or ordinary voting and were counted in the same way as

other (non Braille) ballot papers and were available for postal, pre-poll or ordinary voting at the closest convenient location for the elector.

Vision Australia commenced its Braille ballot paper information campaign in July 2008 to coincide with the NSWEC's enrolment campaign. A total of 52 electors registered to vote using Braille ballot papers. Of this total, 18 voted on election day while others utilised the Braille pre-poll (3 electors) or postal voting options (31 electors).

In addition to this service, the NSWEC also provided on its website audio and large print guides for those electors with visual disabilities. The election information brochure and another guide 'This can help you when you vote' were also prepared in audio format. The NSWEC's call centre was available to read printed material such as candidate information sheets to those with vision difficulties.

The cost of the introduction of Braille ballot papers is outlined in Section 10.

Aboriginal Elector Information Strategy

The NSWEC developed an Aboriginal Elector Information Strategy for the 2007 State Election to establish practical and achievable strategies to increase Aboriginal enrolment, improve the provision of information to Aboriginal electors and promote the recruitment of Aboriginal people as electoral officials. This policy provided the foundations for the strategies deployed at the 2008 Local Government Election.

Following a review of feedback after the 2007 election and an assessment of possible strategies to increase the participation of Aboriginal electors, the focus of the 2008 Local Government Elections Aboriginal stakeholder strategy was to encourage enrolment and voting, and boosting recruitment of Aboriginal people as polling officials.

The activities undertaken under these components included:

- Distributing information via the networks of Aboriginal peak bodies;
- Utilising the Aboriginal Employment Strategy to distribute information to their stakeholders;
- Developing an Aboriginal Electors section of the NSWEC website with links for employment and Aboriginal Elector newsletters;
- A NSWEC indigenous ambassador (rugby player Dean Widders);
- Participating in the Aboriginal festival Yabun on 26 January 2008 to raise awareness of the elections and increase enrolment, and to promote the employment opportunity provided by the Local Government elections;
- Circulating newsletters outlining electoral information and the employment opportunities available in the 2008 Local Government Elections;

-
- Aboriginal Train the Trainer module developed for Aboriginal electors upon request of Walgett Council and provided to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the NSW Aboriginal Land Council, Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Secretariat, Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council, Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, and the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly; and
 - Increased consultation with bodies such as the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the NSW Aboriginal Land Council.

Newsletters were distributed via the networks of Aboriginal peak bodies from May through to September 2008 and were also published on the NSWEC website.

The NSWEC achieved some success with developing a greater presence and connection with Aboriginal communities.

Purfleet Polling Place

Purfleet is an Aboriginal community located on the outskirts of Taree. While a large number of votes were not predicted for the polling place, the NSWEC appointed a polling place within the community which assisted the many residents of Purfleet who have limited access to transport.

The NSWEC selected polling place staff who were a part of or who demonstrated experience and/or willingness to work with the local Aboriginal community. Electors who voted at Purfleet polling place specifically noted that they felt respected and treated with dignity by the polling place staff. Feedback from the polling place staff indicated that while a proportion of voters required assistance to read the ballot paper, electors that were required to wait did so patiently.

Elders of the community said that they felt proud to have a polling place located in their community and that it reflected that the NSW Government felt that their vote mattered. The Elders asked that the Purfleet polling place operate at all Federal, State and Local Government elections.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Electors

The NSWEC sought to ensure that all electors from culturally and linguistically diverse communities were able to access the full range of election services.

The major communication initiatives were:

- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse News newsletters;
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Electors Information page on the NSWEC website; and

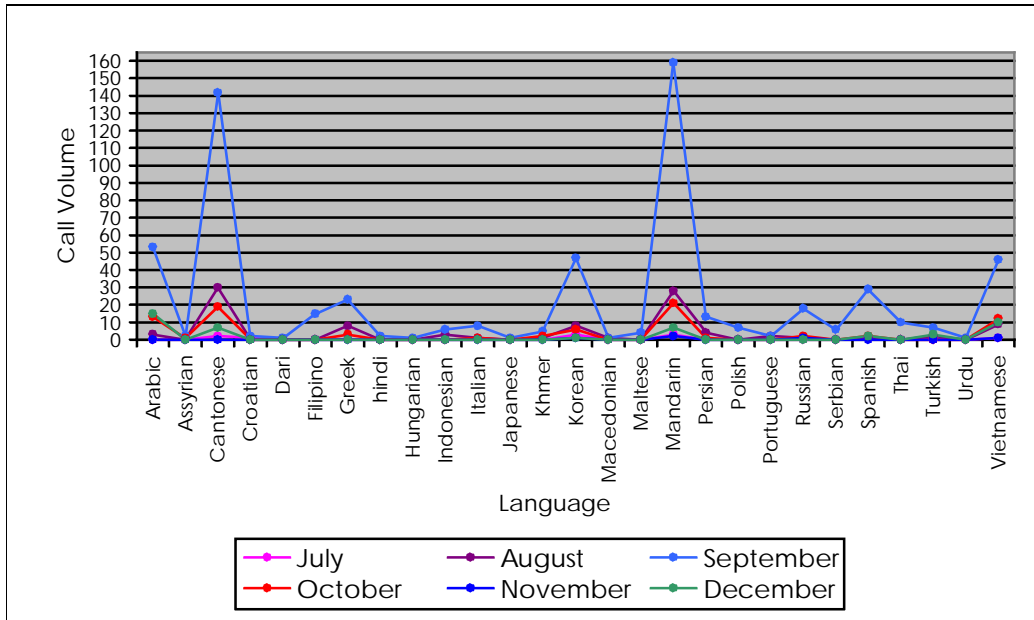
-
- Increased contact with culturally and linguistically diverse communities and organisations.

The printed material prepared for culturally and linguistically diverse electors was distributed as widely as possible. The NSWEC liaised with the NSW Community Relations Commission to use its community networks to distribute election information for culturally and linguistically diverse communities such as the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse News newsletter. Through these means the NSWEC reached a far greater number of individuals and organisations. The first newsletter was provided to the Community Relations Commission for distribution in May 2008. The newsletters were published on the NSWEC website commencing from May through to September 2008 outlining both electoral information and the employment opportunities available in the 2008 Local Government Elections.

An 'Easy English Guide to the 2008 Local Government Elections' was developed and distributed as well as published on the NSWEC website in August 2008. As at the 2007 State election, the NSWEC provided all pre-poll voting centres and polling places with a Multi-Lingual Voting Assistance Guide. The Guide contained information in 24 community languages on how to vote, the electoral roll and silent voting. Each polling place also displayed a poster identifying the languages spoken by polling place election officials and advising that election officials could assist if required.

A telephone interpreting service for electors was also provided during the elections as in the 2007 State General Election. Advertising in both multicultural press and English language newspapers advised electors of this service. The Federal Department of Immigration's Interpreting Service was engaged to provide the multilingual telephone interpreter service. Calls to the service during the 2008 Local Government Elections are presented below.

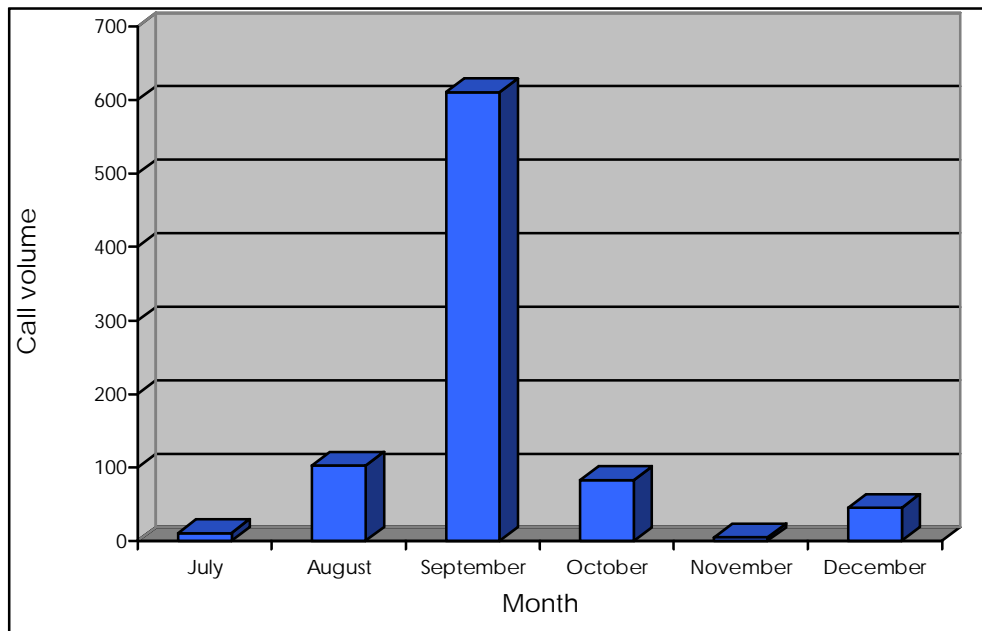
Calls volumes through the translating service were significantly higher than average during September with over 600 calls taken in that month alone. At the 2004 Local Government Elections there were 140 calls to the telephone interpreting service.⁷ Electors requiring translations in 27 different languages used the service with the majority of callers in September requiring assistance in the Mandarin (26.0%) or Cantonese (23.2%) languages.



Graph 1: Telephone Interpreting Service National Calls by Language in 2008 Local Government Elections, July – December 2008.

The spike in usage in September 2008 reflected the overall interest and engagement of the community peaking just prior to the elections. This usage pattern was similar to the call rate experienced by the Elector Inquiry Centre.

The interpreting services provided to electors from culturally and linguistically diverse communities continued to be utilised beyond the election as the chart below shows. The calls to the telephone interpreting service in October and December 2008 corresponded to post election activities such as electors seeking 'Inability to Vote' forms, results information and information on penalty notices for failure to vote following the receipt of these in early December 2008.



Graph 2: Total Calls to Telephone Interpreting Service National by Month, 2008 Local Government Elections.

In addition to informing culturally and linguistically diverse electors of the approaching Local Government elections the NSWEC sought to ensure that it had electoral staff able to assist such electors.

In areas with significant culturally and linguistically diverse communities the NSWEC sought to increase its employment of election officials with a second language. The ability to do this was affected by the numbers of multilingual applicants. In some councils this was achieved well for example, in Auburn Council where 74.9% of their community has a second language, 72.8% NSWEC's polling place staff were multilingual.

Overall 14.0% of all of the NSWEC's polling place staff spoke at least one language other than English. Two thirds of councils (65.5%) had at least one polling place staff member who spoke a second language. Of those Local Government areas shown in the most recent census to have a significant proportion of their population speaking a second language, at least 32% of the NSWEC's polling place staff in those areas were multilingual. Of the top five multilingual Local Government areas, at least 50% of staff were multilingual.

On the basis of its strategy to address equal access for electors from multicultural communities the NSWEC was a finalist for the 2008 National Multicultural Marketing Awards.

Increasing Voter Participation through Enrolment

In NSW enrolment and voting is compulsory for people who are:

- 18 years of age or older;
- Australian citizens (or a British subject on an Australian electoral roll on 25 January 1984); and
- Living at their present address for at least the last month.

Electors for council elections include residents as well as ratepayers who may reside outside the Local Government area. The Local Government Act 1993 prohibits a person voting more than once in one area however an individual can vote once in one council as a resident and vote again in another council area as a rate payer. Non-resident ratepayers are not required to vote except in the case of enrolled ratepayers of the Council of the City of Sydney.

The NSWEC promoted enrolment through its advertising campaigns and other communication strategies during the election period. Advertisements were featured in press and radio in metropolitan, regional, rural areas and in Aboriginal and community language press and radio using community languages covering 76% of culturally and linguistically diverse language speakers. The languages utilised in the NSWEC advertising are listed in Appendix 1.

Enrolment information and access to enrolment forms were provided to the public via the NSWEC website.

The management of electoral rolls is outlined in greater detail in Section 4 'Electoral Services for Councils'.

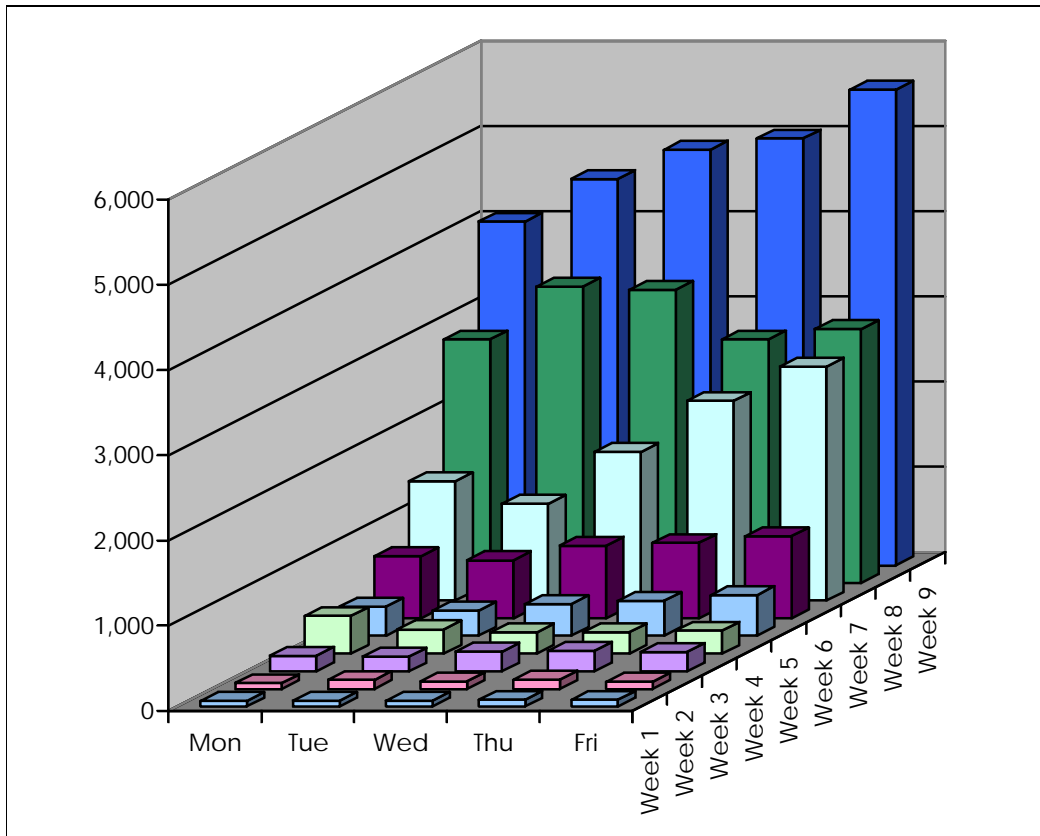
Elector Inquiry Centre

For the first time a dedicated call centre known as the 'Elector Inquiry Centre', was established for a Local Government election. These are regular services for State Government Elections.

The NSWEC established an Elector Inquiry Centre to ensure that relevant, timely and specific information was available to all electors and to decrease the number of telephone inquiries made to councils. Following assessment of options and costings, this service was provided by the NSWEC and not outsourced. The Elector Inquiry Centre utilised a 1300 number to ensure that people outside of the metropolitan area would be able to obtain information at the same call rate as metropolitan electors.

The Elector Inquiry Centre was operational from 28 July to 29 September 2008 with peak usage coinciding with the distribution of election information brochures and the NSWEC advertising campaign. The centre received 81% of the total calls in the three weeks leading up to election day. Particularly, high volumes were experienced in days directly prior to election day. Call volumes

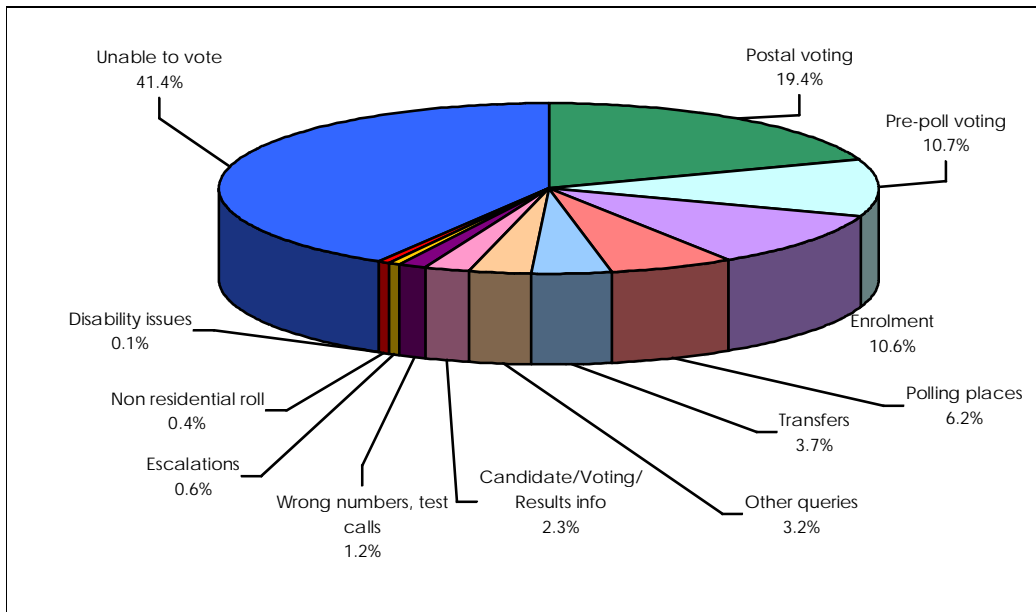
also remained high in the week following election day with a number of calls from electors who were unable to vote on election day.



Graph 3: Elector Inquiry Centre Call Volumes by Days and Weeks, 2008 Local Government Elections.

The Elector Inquiry Centre was very well utilised. Of the call data which has been obtained, an estimated 106,955 calls were made to the Elector Inquiry Centre during its operating period from the 28 July to closure on 29 September 2008. Within the constraints of call data recorded, the nature of the calls typically required action to address callers' inability to vote on polling day (41.1% of calls), or to provide information on postal voting (19.4%) followed by pre-poll voting (10.7%) and enrolment (10.6%).

The nature of calls is shown in the following graph.



Graph 4: Nature of Calls to the Elector Inquiry Centre, 2008 Local Government Elections.

Technical problems were experienced which resulted in the NSWEC's service standards not being met in some weeks when some calls were not answered or recorded. The impacts were most severe and inconvenient for callers in the period 1 to 8 September just prior to the election. The average lost call rate was 13.8%. The abandoned call rate and service levels for the 2004 Local Government Elections and 2007 State General Election call centre are not known.

Comparisons with the general elector telephone inquiry support provided in 2004 are difficult due to differences in data collected and the different natures of the 2008 and 2004 elector telephone inquiry services. All that can be compared is the volume of calls with available records revealing calls in the three months before the 2004 Local Government Elections numbered 24,590.⁸

In 2008, the average total call length including recording of the nature of the call and outcomes, was 3:03 minutes. This was a significant improvement on the average call length for the 2007 State Election Elector Inquiry Centre, and facilitated better servicing of queries received. In addition to calls answered, approximately 7,500 pieces of mail were posted to electors, many containing multiple items. Almost all posted items were postal voting forms being sent to applicants. The Elector Inquiry Centre also processed almost 30,000 paper requests to be excused from voting from electors unable to get to a polling place on election day. The administrative work undertaken by the Elector Inquiry Centre provided support to Returning Officers and ensured the productivity of staff.

Usage of the Elector Inquiry Centre varied across councils. Of the total calls to the call centre, the five councils with the highest proportion of calls were⁹:

- Council of the City of Sydney 3.95%
- Sutherland Shire Council 3.36%
- Blacktown City Council 3.31%
- Parramatta City Council 3.25%
- Fairfield City Council 3.20%

The councils with the lowest proportion of calls were:

- Forbes Council 0.01%
- Brewarrina Shire Council 0.02%
- Jerilderie Shire Council 0.02%
- Murrumbidgee Shire Council 0.02%
- Bombala Council 0.02%

The Elector Inquiry Centre supplemented the NSWEC website and the communications campaign as a major means of providing information to stakeholders at the 2008 Local Government Elections. The Elector Inquiry Centre was able to provide responses to the particular needs of callers not covered by the general information provided by the NSWEC through advertisements or the website.

Feedback from electors on the Elector Inquiry Services is provided at the conclusion of this chapter.

Arrangements for Voting Before Election Day

The Local Government Act 1993 and the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 regulate arrangements for voting. The NSWEC provided a variety of voting services for electors unable to vote on election day, including arrangements for:

- Postal voting;
- Pre-poll voting;
- Mobile voting; and
- Declared Institution voting.

These services were promoted via advertising and the NSWEC's website.

Postal Voting

An elector could apply for a postal vote if he or she was:

- Not within his or her council area or ward on election day;
- Not within eight kilometres of any polling place within his or her council area or ward on election day;
- Travelling under conditions which do not allow voting on election day;
- Seriously ill or disabled and unable to attend a polling place on election day;
- Pregnant and unable to attend a polling place;
- Unable to vote in person on election day due to membership of a religious order or religious beliefs;
- In a correctional centre;
- At a place other than a hospital caring for a person who requires care for medical reasons;
- Working throughout polling hours; or
- A silent elector.

Postal vote application forms were provided on the NSWEC website and also available from Returning Officers or local council offices. Postal voting arrangements in Local Government elections differ from those for State Government elections where registered political parties distribute their own postal vote applications to constituents who return them to the candidate or party who in turn send them on to the Returning Officer to issue ballot material. The registered political parties did not do this in Local Government elections.

Postal vote applications had to be received by the Returning Officer by no later than 5pm, Monday 8 September 2008. Completed postal declarations and ballot papers had to be received by the Returning Officer no later than 6pm, Monday 15 September 2008 in order to be eligible to be included in the count.

Registered General Postal Voters

There is a provision that enables electors to avoid making a separate postal vote application at each election by applying to be a general registered postal voter. Once registered, electors automatically receive their ballot papers from the Returning Officer. This registration applies not just for Local Government elections but also for State and Federal elections. In the 2008 Local Government Elections, eligible electors could apply up until 6pm Monday 4 August 2008 to be a registered general postal voter.

Of the total votes cast for councillor positions in the 2008 Local Government Elections, 134,802 or 3.8% were made as postal votes. This was less than the 223,951 postal votes returned in the 2007 State General Election.¹⁰ Comparisons with the 2004 Local Government elections are not possible.

Of those respondents who participated in the survey of the NSWEC's conduct of the 2008 Local Government Elections, 48 or 2.1% had voted using postal voting. The responses suggest that the applicants were satisfied with postal voting however, the proportion of postal voters was too small to be used as a reliable indicator of the experience of all postal voters.

Pre-Poll Voting

An elector could apply for a pre-poll vote if he or she fulfilled any of the conditions listed above for postal voting with the exception of being an inmate of a correctional facility.

Pre-poll voting required an elector to physically attend a pre-poll location. These locations were available in every council area where an election was to be held, typically at Returning Officers' offices or any other additional locations appointed within the council area. Electors could only vote pre-poll within the council area in which they were enrolled. The details of the pre-poll voting locations and times of operation were available from the Returning Officer, the NSWEC website or the Elector Inquiry Centre.

The pre-poll voting procedure required an oral application, stating the reason for requesting a pre-poll vote, followed by a written declaration by the voter, who then was provided with ballot papers. A written declaration was also required by:

- A person whose name did not appear on the electoral roll and who claimed it should be;
- An elector shown as having already voted at the election and who claimed this was not the case; and
- Electors whose names appeared on the roll and whose addresses have been suppressed for personal safety reasons.

There were 197 pre-poll centres throughout NSW of which 78.2% were wheelchair accessible. Of the total votes cast for councillor positions in the 2008 Local Government Election, 308,735 or 8.7% were made as pre-poll votes. This was greater than the 223,266 pre-poll votes cast prior to election day for the 2007 State General Election.¹¹ Data from the 2004 Local Government elections was not available for comparative purposes.

Of those respondents who participated in the survey of the NSWEC's conduct of the 2008 Local Government Election, 126 or 6.2% had voted pre-poll, a smaller proportion than that of the total population of pre-poll voters. Of these respondents 60% were satisfied with the location of the pre-poll voting facility; 62% with the time taken to cast a pre-poll vote; 62% with the accessibility of pre-poll voting centre and 37% with the information about pre-poll voting.

Declared Institutions

Facilities such as nursing homes, retirement villages and hospitals may be appointed by the NSWEC as Declared Institutions where voting can occur outside of a pre-poll or polling place. Voting at Declared Institutions is only for patients or residents. To be eligible to vote, residents needed to be enrolled in the local council area (or ward if a divided council) where the Declared Institution was located. Frequently, residents in long stay facilities have not changed their enrolment details and, as there is no absent voting in Local Government elections, some residents are unable to vote.

In the lead up to the elections the NSWEC wrote to all of the Declared Institutions used at the 2007 State Government Election asking if they would like to be listed as a Declared Institution for the 2008 Local Government Elections. Of the 521 responses received, 81 stated that they would prefer that postal vote applications be provided to their residents.

Election officials visited the Declared Institutions during the statutory period from Monday, 8 September 2008 to Wednesday, 10 September 2008 to take votes. Scrutineers were invited to attend. The procedure for voting was the same as for pre-poll voting.

Of the votes cast for councillor positions in the 2008 Local Government Elections 9,421 or 0.3% were made in Declared Institutions. This was less than the votes taken from Declared Institutions in the 2007 State General Election (15,970).¹² Data from the 2004 Local Government elections were not available.

Of those respondents who participated in the survey of the NSWEC's conduct of the 2008 Local Government Elections, five or 0.2% had voted in a Declared Institution. The figure is too small to be able to draw meaningful and valid conclusions in relation to the experience of electors voting at Declared Institutions for the 2008 Local Government Elections.

Mobile Polling Booths

Providing voting services to electors in isolated and remote areas of NSW remains a challenge. Electors in isolated rural communities often experience difficulties in getting to a polling place due to the significant distances to be travelled and inability to lodge a timely postal vote due to irregular mail services.

The amendments in 2008 to the Local Government Regulation 2005 enabled the NSWEC to implement pre-poll voting at mobile booths in remote Local Government areas for the 2008 Local Government Elections. Mobile polling was established in eight locations in the far west and northern NSW from 1 September 2008. These locations were:

- Bellata (Narrabri Shire) 10am to 2pm, Monday, 1 September;
- Gwabegar (Narrabri Shire) 10am to 2pm, Thursday, 4 September;
- Pilliga (Narrabri Shire) 10am to 2pm, Friday, 5 September;

-
- Emmdale (Central Darling Shire) 11am to 4pm, Saturday, 6 September;
 - Fords Bridge (Bourke Shire) 10am to 3pm, Sunday, 7 September;
 - Booligal (Hay Shire) 10am to 3pm, Wednesday, 10 September;
 - Maude (Hay Shire) 10am to 3pm, Thursday, 11 September; and
 - Hatfield (Balranald Shire) 10am to 3pm, Friday, 12 September.

An estimated number of 30 – 40 electors voted using the mobile polling booth service. As this was the first time mobile voting locations had been used, it is not possible to provide comparative data with either the 2004 Local Government Elections or the 2007 State General Election. Of those respondents who participated in the survey of the NSWEC's conduct of the 2008 Local Government Elections, seven had voted using mobile polling booths. This figure is too small to be able to use to draw meaningful and valid conclusions.

Voting on Election Day - Ordinary Polling

The legislation does not provide for absent voting at Local Government elections.¹³ On election day an elector could only vote at the following polling places:

- Undivided Council area – at any polling place within the council area in which the elector was enrolled; or
- Divided council area (with wards) – at any polling place within the ward in which the elector was enrolled; or
- Designated multi ward polling place or multi council polling place.

Polling places were open on election day from 8am until 6pm. Votes could be cast by:

- Electors enrolled in the Council area or ward in which the polling place was located or servicing in the case of multi ward polling place or multi council polling places;
- A person whose name did not appear on the electoral roll and who claimed it should be;
- An elector shown as having already voted at the election but who claimed this was not the case; and
- An elector whose name appeared on the roll and their address had been suppressed for personal safety reasons.

The number of votes taken as ordinary votes on election day was 2,821,087 (or 79.9% of the total votes counted of 3,529,220).

The feedback from surveyed electors indicated that the aspects of voting that provided the most satisfaction were:

- Manner of staff with 89.9% of electors indicating that they were very satisfied, satisfied or neutral;
- Convenience of polling places and their accessibility (87.4% on both aspects); and
- Assistance provided at the polling place (77.5%).

More detail on feedback from electors' is provided at the end of this section.

Assistance to Electors When Voting

Assistance was provided to electors during voting if an election official was satisfied that the elector was unable to vote without help.

The NSWEC provided assistance in a variety of ways. For those electors with writing difficulties who needed to complete declaration envelopes, electors could make their 'mark' as a signature in the presence of an election official acting as a witness.

For elderly or frail electors or those with a disability, voting screens suitable for such electors were available at polling places and in pre-poll voting centres. In addition, appropriate equipment such as extra large pencils for those unable to grip regular sized pencils or magnifying sheets for visually impaired electors were provided.

For culturally and linguistically diverse electors, polling places displayed a sign advising electors that assistance was available in the form of multilingual staff and the languages spoken. The telephone interpreter service was also available.

For electors seeking information on candidates, the polling places were able to provide the Candidate Information Sheets provided by candidates. The sheets provided information on the candidates' full name and residential address and if provided by the candidate, details such as the candidate's occupation, trade and professional qualifications, organisational memberships, the registered party (if any) that endorsed the candidate, and any information provided on the candidate's policies and beliefs or other qualifications. (There are limitations on the usefulness of these documents according to what candidates chose to provide.)

Prior to election day, to enable electors to research candidates, the Candidate Information Sheets of all candidates were published on the NSWEC and council websites and were available for public inspection in the Returning Officer's office from noon on nomination day and at the pre-poll office(s).

Any elector could seek help however those who did tended to be frail, older people; people with a disability including vision impairment; electors with

reading and writing difficulties and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

In addition to assistance provided by the NSWEC, by law an elector could nominate any person, except a candidate, to assist them. If the elector declined to nominate someone then the election official could provide assistance if requested. An elector could be accompanied by an interpreter who was entitled to be present at all times if the elector needed such help.

Satisfaction of Electors with Electoral Services - Feedback

The survey of electors was developed for online usage by an independent agency.¹⁴ It was placed on the NSWEC website early on election day Saturday 13 September 2008. Leaflets were distributed at polling places which along with a section in the NSWEC's brochure, advised electors that they could provide feedback via the survey on the NSWEC website from election day. The survey remained open to any individual until Tuesday October 7 2008.

Over two thousand electors (2044) responded to the NSWEC's survey. The response rate is estimated at 0.05% of all NSW electors. The advice received by the NSWEC from the research agency was that the response rate is biased not because of the sample size but as a non random sample, it was more likely that voters who had a complaint were more likely to respond than those that did not have negative views.¹⁵ Further, the views expressed by respondents reflect their understanding of electoral procedures and their expectations of how the NSWEC should implement these.

Almost all survey participants [99.3%] were enrolled to vote and voted [95.7%]. The Councils most represented in the electors' survey were: The Council of the City of Sydney, Ku-ring-gai Council, Ryde City Council, and Sutherland Shire Council.

There were a similar proportion of males and females participating in the survey. The mean age was 50.21 years with a range of 18 to 97 years old. Older respondents were more likely to be rural electors. More than three quarters of participants were Australian born (78.4%). Of those reporting that they spoke another language, the main languages spoken were: Chinese, French, German and Italian. Close to three quarters [70.1%] of the participants were from urban areas and a slightly higher proportion of males (50.6%) participated than females (47.3%).¹⁶

Overall Perspective

The feedback from electors was positive. Almost three quarters of the respondents (72.2%) reported that they were neutral, satisfied or very satisfied with the overall process.

Overall, the aspects of voting that electors responded most favourably towards were: privacy (90.3%) and security (88.1%).

Proportionally, more rural electors indicated satisfaction with the NSWEC's services than their urban counterparts.

Table 1: Electors' Overall Satisfaction with Voting at the 2008 Local Government Elections, Percentages.(a)

	% Very Unsatisfied	% Unsatisfied	% Neutral	% Satisfied	% Very Satisfied
Convenience	13.8	6.1	9.6	33.6	34.6
Privacy	4.0	3.4	10.0	40.4	39.9
Security	4.6	4.9	14.4	38.1	35.6
Ease of voting	13.7	6.7	10.5	35.5	31.5
NSWEC administration	15.2	8.8	22.9	29.5	20.4
Overall process of voting	12.3	12.4	17.2	34.5	20.5

Note: (a) percentages may not add to 100% in all cases as missing responses are not included.

Polling Places

In terms of satisfaction with the process of voting at polling places electors provided very positive feedback about convenience of polling places, time taken to vote and the information provided about polling places.

On polling places, electors reported they were either very satisfied, satisfied or neutral on:

- Convenience of voting locations (87.4%);
- Manner of staff (89.9%);
- Amount of time spent at the polling place (77.9%);
- Information available to locate the polling place (89.6%);
- Polling place layout (82.3%);
- Polling place accessibility (85.4%);
- Accuracy of polling place accessibility information (84.0%), and
- Assistance provided by staff (if required) (77.5%).

Detail of the responses to these aspects is provided below.

Table 2: 2008 Local Government Elections, Electors' Satisfaction with Polling Places, Percentages.(a)

	% Very Unsatisfied	% Unsatisfied	% Neutral	% Satisfied	% Very Satisfied
Locations	8.8	3.1	5.9	35.0	46.5
Time required to vote	15.1	6.0	5.7	33.1	39.1
Information provided	10.9	7.3	17.2	36.3	26.1
Layout	9.5	6.8	10.4	42.6	29.3
Accessibility	9.1	6.5	9.9	43.3	29.2
Accuracy of polling place access information	8.3	4.5	23.3	36.5	24.2
Manner of staff	5.9	2.8	9.2	35.7	45.0
Assistance provided	5.8	3.1	20.0	27.2	30.3

Note: (a) percentages may not add to 100% in all cases as missing responses are not included.

Pre-poll Places

Of the electors participating in the feedback survey who had used pre-poll voting, one third (33.1%) indicated that they had voted used pre-poll at a previous election. Other major ways participants knew about pre-poll voting was from the NSWEC website (23.1%) or newspaper advertisements (23.1%). The satisfaction of pre-poll participants is provided in the following table.

Table 3: 2008 Local Government Elections Satisfaction with the Pre-poll Voting Process, NSW, percentages.

	% Very Unsatisfied	% Unsatisfied	% Neutral	% Satisfied	% Very Satisfied
Location	10.7	14.9	14.0	36.4	23.1
Time taken	10.7	12.4	12.4	39.7	22.3
Accessibility	9.1	14.0	12.4	42.1	19.8
Information	19.0	14.9	25.6	29.8	7.4

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 as missing responses were not reported.

Postal Voting

Of the electors responding to the elector feedback survey and who postal voted, 40.0% indicated that they knew about postal voting because they had done so at a previous election, followed by 20.0% who read about postal voting on the NSWEC website.

Feedback from postal voting participants is provided in the following table.

Table 4: 2008 Local Government Elections Satisfaction with Postal Voting Process, NSW, percentages.

	% Very Unsatisfied	% Unsatisfied	% Neutral	% Satisfied	% Very Satisfied
Applying	6.7	6.7	11.1	44.4	24.4
Timeliness	4.4	8.9	6.7	35.6	37.8
Instructions	4.4	11.1	11.1	44.4	24.4
Information	4.4	0.0	17.8	53.3	17.8

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 as missing responses were not reported.

The survey revealed differences between electors in metropolitan and rural councils. Some of these differences were statistically significant for example, rural electors were more satisfied than urban electors with the length of time it took to vote; with polling place layout; the manner of staff and the assistance provided.

More than half of the participants heard about the elections from newspapers (57.6%) and/or candidate material (54.1%). Males (60.0%) were more likely to hear about the elections through newspapers than females (55.2%). There were also differences between country and city respondents with the highest proportion of electors who heard about the elections from newspapers being rural electors (68.0%). The greatest proportion who became aware of the elections via candidate material was urban electors (56.5%).

The information provided by the NSWEC was regarded as useful by all participants but males and rural participants more likely to regard the information provided as useful. The main topic that surveyed electors recalled from NSWEC advertising was to remember to vote (30.0%) followed by candidates and polling places (21.7%). Compared to urban respondents, rural counterparts were more likely to have recalled NSWEC's advertising of information on candidates and polling places; enrolment; postal and pre-poll voting and nominations.

The uneven take up by councils of the brochure was reflected in the results of the electors' survey with two thirds (69%) of respondents saying that they did not receive a brochure. Of those who did, 86% said that it provided all or part of the information they required. The content found to most useful was the election date; where to vote and voting hours.

The NSWEC also asked electors their reasons for failing to vote if they had not voted. The proportion of respondents who did not vote was small (4.2%). Of these the majority were enrolled (85.9%). Amongst this group 18.4% said that the reason they could not vote was that they were away from the area, followed by 'Couldn't get to a polling place' (13.8%).

There was a sizeable proportion of electors surveyed, almost half (46.2%), who did not know that there was no provision for absent voting at Local Government elections.

The NSWEC's survey asked electors to suggest how the NSWEC could better assist them in an election. Most responses involved such matters as providing more information, changing the voting system by dropping wards or switching to a completely postal system, and reducing queues at polling places:

Abolish the system where electors are divided in to different wards and have to vote for persons who are unknown to them both in policies and ideas. Electors should be given the chance to vote for any councillor they choose no matter where they live within the Shire. I thought the system in which I voted on Saturday was very undemocratic.

would much rather vote by mail -.... as we did in Tasmania for years and years

More staff and voting booths to reduce length of queues

Yes! As voting is compulsory absentee voting must be available. Information re candidates could be easily made available on line at polling stations.

*Ensure that candidate-helpers keep a good distance away from the polling-booth door. *Ensure that candidate supporters do NOT harass voters by engaging in bickering with a rival team or talking to voters in an offensive way about any candidate. *Please encourage voters to recycle brochures back to the relevant team after voting.

In terms of the requests for more information, the topics most regularly were information on candidates, polling places, and ward boundaries:

The only name known to us was the present Mayor. No other information has been made available on the names, experience or credibility of any of the people who were on the voting cards.

Bigger signs to indicate entry, where to queue, ballot box and exit.

Need to advertise the street names of the ward boundaries at the polling place.

The reports of election staff were also positive and as the following comment demonstrates, were able to assist voters who had not obtained information before election day on certain matters:

Poor information in media re voting procedures and preferences. Spoke to election lady marking roll. She assisted me.

Braille and Large Print Ballot Paper Users

The NSWEC surveyed by phone the experiences and views of electors who used Braille ballot papers for voting at the 2008 Local Government Elections. The NSWEC was able to gain the feedback of 71.2% of these voters.¹⁷

The overwhelming majority welcomed the initiative feeling that Braille ballot papers improved:

- Privacy of their vote (62.2.1%); and
- Independence when voting (72.2%).

80.6% said that based on their experience at the 2008 Local Government Elections, they would cast their vote on Braille ballot papers at future elections. The detail of the responses is presented below.

Table 5: 2008 Local Government Elections, Electors' Satisfaction with NSWEC's Braille Ballot Paper Arrangements, Percentages. (a)

	% Very Unsatisfied	% Unsatisfied	% Neutral	% Satisfied	% Very Satisfied
Access and availability of information	0.0	8.1	2.7	64.9	24.3
Registration process	0.0	2.7	5.4	54.1	37.8
NSWEC communication of arrangements	5.6	2.8	8.3	41.7	41.7
Ballot paper instructions	0.0	8.1	16.2	51.4	24.3
Manner of election staff	2.7	0.0	8.1	24.3	64.9
Overall ease of process	2.9	5.7	2.9	51.4	37.1

(a) Overall response rate of 37. Aspects of the question received different response rates.

Some respondents pointed out that the low numbers of electors using Braille ballot paper per council meant that their privacy was lessened. The improvements that the majority wanted was for the NSWEC to incorporate electronically assisted voting into its voting services as provided by the Australian Electoral Commission in the 2007 Federal elections.

In conclusion, the elector survey provides not only feedback on the NSWEC's performance in the conduct of these elections but also provides information on directions the NSWEC can explore for future elections. The NSWEC's internal debrief process covered in Section 9 Post Elections discusses issues raised in relation to polling places and other aspects of the elections.

Section 4: Electoral Services for Councils

The leadership of local councils impacts upon the daily lives of residents and ratepayers. Elected representatives comprise the council's governing body and oversight the provision of many services that support local communities.¹⁸

Types of elections

Local Government elections can be comprised of mayoral elections, referenda and polls in addition to the election of councillors. If a council is divided into wards, each ward has its own election for councillors.

The total number of mayoral elections due to be held in the 2008 Local Government Elections was 28 and the total number of councillor elections was 309.

The total number of elections held on 13 September 2008 was 332. Of these contested elections, 81.6% were councillor elections; 8.2% mayoral elections and 5.1% each for referenda and polls.

There were 38 uncontested councillor elections and one uncontested mayoral election making a total of 39 uncontested elections.

Table 6: 2008 Local Government Elections, Due, Contested and Uncontested Elections.

	Due	Contested	Uncontested
Councillor elections – Divided councils	223	187	36
Councillor elections – Undivided councils	86	84	2
Councillor elections – Total	309	271	38
Mayoral elections	28	27	1

The number of mayoral and councillor positions available for filling was 1,474. In the 2004 Local Government Elections there were 1,464 vacant positions.¹⁹

Table 7 below sets out vacant positions by type of council.

Table 7: 2008 Local Government Elections, Vacant Council Positions by Metropolitan and Non Metropolitan Councils, Number and Percentages.

Position	Metropolitan		Non Metropolitan	
	Number	%	Number	%
Mayor	12	2.4	16	1.6
Councillor	485	97.6	961	98.4
Total	497	100	977	100

Including all referenda and polls, North Sydney Council had the greatest number of elections (12) followed by Cabonne Shire Council (7) and Lachlan Shire Council (6). Appendix 2 lists the total number of elections for each council.

In the 2008 Local Government Elections four councils ended a period of administration and participated in the elections. These councils were Warringah Council, Tweed Heads Shire Council, Walgett Shire Council, and Liverpool City Council. Eight councils had a mix of either uncontested, contested or by - elections.

In addition to contested elections, Local Government elections can involve uncontested, deferred and by-elections.

Mayoral Elections

Some councils have a “popularly elected” mayor where all electors vote to elect the mayor. A popularly elected mayor holds office for four years. Where not popularly elected, the mayor is elected annually by and from the elected councillors at the first council meeting, which has to be held within three weeks following the election. The NSWEC conducts elections for popularly elected mayors but not those elections where councillors elect mayors.

In the 2008 Local Government Elections there were 27 popularly elected mayoral contests and one uncontested mayoral election. The uncontested mayoral election occurred at the Council of the City of Botany Bay. There were more mayoral elections in rural councils than metropolitan councils, with the total number of mayoral elections distributed across metropolitan and rural councils respectively as 42.9% and 57.1%. Amongst all metropolitan councils, 26.7% have popularly elected mayors. The corresponding figure for rural councils is 15.5%.

The NSWEC website carried details of those councils holding mayoral elections. These councils are listed in Appendix 3. In 2004 the number of contested mayoral elections was 26.²⁰

Councillor Elections

Under section 224 of the Local Government Act 1993, a council must have at least five and not more than 15 councillors (one of whom is the mayor). Where councils have wards, an equal number of councillors are elected for each ward. An elected councillor holds office for four years. The election of a popularly elected mayor and the election of councillors are conducted concurrently, but as separate elections. If a council has a total of ten councillors, and the mayor is popularly elected, it has an election for nine councillors and an election for mayor. The mayoral election is declared first. A person cannot be elected to both positions in the same council area.

Constitutional Referenda

A council may resolve to conduct a constitutional referendum on any of the following issues:

- Determine whether or not the mayor is to be popularly elected;
- Increase or reduce the number of councillors;
- Divide the council area into wards or abolish all wards; and
- To change the method of election of ward councillors.²¹

A referendum is decided by a majority of the formal votes. Voting in a referendum is compulsory for all electors on the roll and the result is binding on the council. If the referendum is passed, the result takes effect at the next council general elections. In the case of referenda passed at the 2008 Local Government Elections, this would be 2012.

15 councils held a referendum in the 2008 Local Government Elections:

Ballina Shire Council	Manly Council
Burwood Council	Moree Plains Shire Council
Cabonne Council	Mosman Municipal Council
Cobar Shire Council	Port Stephens Council
Inverell Shire Council	Snowy River Shire Council
Kempsey Shire Council	Council of the City of Sydney
Ku-ring-gai Council	Weddin Shire Council
Lachlan Shire Council	

The majority of the referenda concerned whether the mayor should be popularly elected and whether the number of councillor positions should alter. On this latter question, seven proposed to reduce the number of councillors. Two councils had more than one referendum question. These were Cabonne Shire Council and Snowy River Shire Council both with two referenda questions.

The nature of the referenda questions is shown below.

Table 8: 2008 Local Government Elections, Referenda, Frequencies. (a)

Referendum Question	Number
Popularly elect the mayor	7
Change number of councillors (all to reduce numbers)	7
Change ward structure (2 to abolish; 1 to introduce)	3
Total	17

(a) Two councils had two referenda. Total number of councils holding referenda was 15.

The results of these referenda are set out in the Results section and the full detail of questions is provided in Appendix 4.

Council Polls

A council may resolve to conduct a poll on any issue for its guidance, for example:

- the introduction of fluoride into drinking water; or
- constructing a roundabout in the main street.

The council may determine that a poll be held in only a specific part of the council area, such as one ward, or in a particular group of streets and as such not all electors may be eligible to vote in a poll. A poll is decided by a majority of the formal votes. Voting in a council poll is not compulsory for electors on the roll and the result is not binding on the council.

Eight councils held a poll. The total number of poll questions was 17. The poll questions concerned a wide range of issues with the majority concerning the council's name, followed closely by environmental matters. Most councils had only one poll but a number had multiple poll questions.

The councils with one poll question were:

- Auburn Council;
- Kogarah Municipal Council;
- Lismore City Council;
- Manly Council; and
- Upper Lachlan Shire Council

The councils with more than one poll questions were:

- North Sydney Council;
- Mid-Western Regional Council; and
- Wingecarribee Shire Council

Only one council, Manly Council held both a referendum and a poll. The full detail of poll questions is provided in Appendix 5.

Uncontested Elections

Uncontested elections occur when there are just sufficient candidates to fill vacant positions or insufficient candidates in which case a by-election is held at a later date. Following the close of nominations and comparison of nominations against available councillor and mayoral positions 15 councils were identified as having either totally or partially uncontested elections due to having a match between the number of positions and the number of candidates. Those councils with insufficient candidates are addressed under 'By-elections' below.

In five councils the number of nominations received for the position of councillor was equal to the number of available positions. These councils included:

- The Council of the City of Botany Bay (six nominations received for six positions);
- Carrathool Shire Council (ten nominations received for ten positions);
- Conargo Shire Council (eight nominations received for eight positions);
- Lockhart Shire Council (nine nominations received for nine positions); and
- Uralla Shire Council (nine nominations received for nine positions).

In 14 wards the number of nominations received for the position of councillor was equal to the number of available positions. These wards included:

- Cabonne Shire Council – Yuranigh Ward (two nominations received for two positions);
- Guyra Shire Council – Ward B and Ward C (two nominations received for two positions in each ward);
- Ku-ring-gai Council – Wahroonga Ward (two nominations received for two positions);
- Tenterfield Shire Council – Ward B and Ward C (two nominations received for two positions in each ward);

-
- Urana Shire Council – Ward A and Ward C (three nominations received for three positions in each ward);
 - Walcha Council – Ward B, Ward C and Ward D (two nominations received for two positions in each ward); and
 - Weddin Shire Council – Ward B, Ward C and Ward E (two nominations received for two positions in each ward).

All candidates who nominated for the above positions were declared elected on Saturday, 13 September 2008 and electors in the uncontested ward or council were not required to vote in the 2008 Local Government Elections (with the exception of electors in Cabonne Shire Council – Yuranigh Ward, Ku-ring-gai Council - Wahoonga Ward and Weddin Shire Council – Ward B, Ward C and Ward E who were required to vote in their council referendum).

The mayoral position for the Botany Bay City Council was uncontested.

By-elections

Some councils received insufficient nominations for the number of vacancies resulting in the need for by-elections.

The three councils with by-elections were Bland Shire Council, Wellington Council and Warren Shire Council (Ward A) with the following number of vacancies:

- Bland Shire Council (Undivided) 2 vacancies
- Warren Shire Council (A Ward) 1 vacancy
- Wellington Council (Undivided) 2 vacancies

The by-elections were held on for 29 November 2008 and are reported in Section 8.

Deferred Elections

There were four councils with deferred elections:

- Broken Hill City Council (councillor and mayoral positions)
- Port Macquarie – Hastings Council (councillor and mayoral positions)
- Shellharbour City Council (councillor positions)
- Wollongong City Council (councillor and mayoral positions)

The dates that these councils were placed under administration during 2008 were Port Macquarie–Hastings Council 27 February; Shellharbour City Council 9 July and Wollongong City Council 4 March. Broken Hill City Council was placed under administration in January 2007.

Voting Systems Applicable to Local Government Elections

The current NSW voting systems for Local Government were carried over from the now repealed Local Government Act 1919. In 2000 and 2002 (prior to the 2004 ordinary elections) the Local Government Act 1993 and the then Local Government (Elections) Regulation 1998 were amended to align Local Government elections procedures in relation to group voting with those applicable to the NSW Legislative Council. These reforms were designed to give voters, rather than political parties, control over preference flows.

The Local Government Act 1993 and the Regulation 2005 incorporating the 2008 amendments set out the requirements for the conduct of Local Government elections.

The two forms of voting available to elect councillors are Proportional Representation and Optional Preferential. The Proportional Representation system applies to 141 councils. This applies when there are three or more councillors to be elected for the area or ward. The Optional Preferential system applies to the remaining 11 as these councils have less than three councillors to be elected per ward.

The system for election of a popularly elected mayor is optional preferential (section 284 Local Government Act 1993).

Under the Optional Preferential system, to be elected, a candidate requires a majority of 50% plus one of the formal votes in the count. If no candidate receives a majority of the formal first preference votes, a process of distributing votes takes place where one by one, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated and those ballot papers are distributed to the remaining candidates according to the next preference shown on each ballot paper. This process of elimination continues until one candidate has a majority of the votes. The method of counting votes under the Optional Preferential system is set out in Schedule 4 to the Local Government (General) Regulation, 2005.

Under the Proportional Representation system, candidates need to obtain a quota to be elected. The quota is determined by dividing the total number of formal first preference votes in the count by one more than the number of candidates to be elected and, after disregarding any fraction, increasing the result by one. Candidates who receive formal first preference votes equal to or greater than this quota (surplus) are elected. Votes above the quota may be transferred to other candidates according to the next preference shown on each ballot paper. If at any stage of the count there are no more surplus votes to transfer but not all councillors have been elected, the candidates with the fewest votes are eliminated and the ballot papers are distributed to the remaining candidates according to the next preference shown on each ballot paper. This process continues until all councillors have been elected. The method of counting votes under the Proportional Preferential system is set out in Schedule 5 to the Local Government (General) Regulation.

Where there are two or more councillors to be elected, candidates have the option of forming a group on the ballot paper and groups have the option of requesting a Group Voting Square for Above The Line voting (as long as there

is more than one request). Voters can vote either 'Above The Line' or 'Below The Line'.

The operational implications of these two voting systems are significant. If there are three or more councillors to be elected and there are Group Voting Squares, specially developed software with a front end data entry module is required to count and distribute preferences. The complexity associated with proportional representation counts where electors have the ability to vote preferentially Above The Line in group voting squares requires the individual preference streams to be tracked separately through the count. The more preferences above the line, the more complex and time consuming the counts become. These counts could not be reliably conducted without appropriate software.

For example, a ballot paper with only three Group Voting Squares has the potential for 15 combinations of preference markings which means each combination would need to be tracked individually through the preference distribution process to ensure that it was exhausted at the appropriate time. Many councils had between five and 12 Group Voting Squares. As a result, there was the potential for thousands of Above The Line voting combinations in a single election.

Unfortunately, the cost of providing this software and supporting it with technical expertise is too much for individual councils. A central Local Government Counting Centre was established for this reason. The software used at this facility was especially designed to identify each 'category' of Above The Line vote and exhaust it at the appropriate time.

As a result of the various types of elections some counts were conducted locally by the Returning Officer, whilst other, more complex counts were conducted at the NSWEC's Local Government Counting Centre in Sydney.

Redistribution of Council Ward Boundaries

Section 211 of the Local Government Act 1993 requires councils to keep ward boundaries under review. If a council becomes aware that the number of electors in a ward differs by more than ten per cent from the number of electors in another ward, and the difference remains at the end of the first year of the next term of office, the council must modify its ward boundaries to correct the discrepancy in the number of electors in each ward.

Councils were required to submit to the NSWEC finalised ward boundaries by 31 December 2007. Each divided council was also required to complete a Ward Boundary Report as a statement of compliance ensuring that legislation requirements had been met. The time frame for submitting boundary changes was 31 December 2007. 34 councils submitted ward changes.

To assist electors locate their council and identify if they were in a divided council, the NSWEC plotted council boundaries, including ward boundaries for the 2008 Local Government Elections onto Google maps. This facility also enabled electors in divided councils to identify their ward and to locate an appropriate polling place. The NSWEC checked the accuracy of these maps

by asking councils to review the maps and verify that the boundaries were correct.

Addresses in all divided councils with altered ward boundaries were geo-coded and checked against the boundary information provided by councils. The geo-coded information was then used as a comparison tool to identify and correct any errors in enrolment details on the electoral roll. This process reduced the risk of electors' names appearing on the wrong council or ward roll.

Undertaking this task means that the NSWEC now possesses a complete set of current NSW ward boundaries increasing the efficiency in adjusting ward boundaries if required for the 2012 Local Government Elections.

The Residential and Non-residential Electoral Rolls

A key service provided to councils is the management of the rolls listing electors for each council area. As voting is compulsory for all electors on the residential roll, it is an important tool for measuring compliance with the mandatory voting requirement.

The roll of electors for each council area or ward is a composite roll, comprising:

- Residential roll; and
- Non-residential roll.

The NSWEC has an arrangement with the Australian Electoral Commission to manage the electoral roll. The NSWEC prepared the residential roll for each council area or ward. All electors enrolled on the Commonwealth/State electoral roll as at 6pm Monday 4 August 2008 appeared on the appropriate council roll for the 2008 Local Government Elections.

The non-residential roll is made up of the roll of non-residential electors and the roll of occupiers and rate paying lessees. The non-residential roll lapses after each election. Therefore any person who appeared on a non-residential roll at a previous election had to re-apply for the September 2008 election. While a person can only appear on the residential roll for one council area, they may, subject to meeting the enrolment qualifications, appear on the non-residential roll of other councils. The enrolment qualifications for the residential and non-residential roll were placed on the NSWEC website.

Inclusion on the non-residential roll of electors is available to electors who pay rates to the council on property they own, but do not occupy as well as people who occupy or lease property. The Local Government Act 1993 assigns the responsibility for the compilation and maintenance of the non-residential roll of electors to the General Manager of the council. General Managers in all councils other than the Council of the City of Sydney were required to prepare certified lists of those potential electors who wished to apply for registration on the non-residential rolls and to provide the lists to the NSWEC. The NSWEC provided councils with relevant details of the necessary

information required while councils handled enquiries regarding properties and entitlements for the non-residential roll.

Voting is not compulsory for electors on the non-residential roll (except City of Sydney where voting is compulsory).

The non-residential roll for all councils contained 1,833 electors at the close of rolls 6pm, Monday 4 August 2008. The council with the largest non-residential roll was Eurobodalla with 421 enrolments that is, 23% of the total NSW non-residential roll. Those councils with a non-residential roll and the number of electors are provided in Appendix 6.

Both the residential and non-residential rolls for the 2008 elections closed at 6pm on Monday 4 August 2008

Non-Residential Roll for Council of the City of Sydney

Management of the non-residential roll for the Council of the City of Sydney differs from that of other councils in that the Electoral Commissioner is required to prepare and certify the non-residential rolls as prescribed in the City of Sydney Act 1988 (section 18A). A new roll had to be prepared as Non-Residential Roll claims made for earlier Local Government elections were not eligible for inclusion in the 2008 Council of the City of Sydney Non-Residential Roll.

The right to be included in the Council of the City of Sydney non-residential roll applies to owners of rateable land, ratepaying lessees and occupiers of rateable land whose primary place of residence are in NSW. Anyone seeking enrolment on the non-residential roll must be eligible to be on the rolls for either the NSW Legislative Assembly or the Federal House of Representatives.

An elector on the Council of the City of Sydney's residential roll cannot be on the non-residential roll and an individual or nominee claimant can only be enrolled on the non-residential roll once. In contrast to the arrangements for other councils, if an elector on the non-residential roll fails to vote, a fine may apply.

There had been a decline of 58.1% between 1999 and 2004 in the number of electors on the Council of the City of Sydney's non-residential roll. This decline in the number of electors between 1999 and 2004 prompted the NSWEC to undertake additional efforts to ensure awareness of the right to be included on this roll.

The NSWEC engaged with potential non-residential electors by:

- an initial mail out of 2,059 letters to those electors enrolled on the non-residential roll for the 2004 Local Government Elections;
- a second mail out letter to over 20,000 unique individuals or corporations with likely eligibility sourced from the City of Sydney ratepayer database; and

- placement of City of Sydney specific non-residential roll advertisements in the national and local press notifying readers of the elections and the potential for eligible people to vote as non-residents.

A call centre was established from 1 July to 8 August 2008 to assist inquirers. Website visits to the NSWEC's Council of the City of Sydney non-residential roll enrolment page numbered 2,401 between May and August 2008. The individual claim form was downloaded 373 times and the Corporation/partner forms downloaded 323 times.

Despite these efforts the number of electors on the non-residential roll continued to decline from 1999 as Table 9 shows.

Table 9: 2008 Local Government Elections, Council of City of Sydney, Non-residential Enrolments.

Year	Non-Residential Roll	Difference	% Change
1999	4,912	-	-
2004	2,059	2,853	58.1
2008	396	1,663	80.8

The residential and non-residential rolls for the Council of the City of Sydney's 2008 elections closed, as did other rolls at 6pm on Monday 4 August 2008. The non-residential roll for the Council of the City of Sydney contained 396 electors or 21.6% of the total NSW non-residential roll at the close of rolls 6pm, Monday 4 August 2008.

Polling Places for Council Elections

A key issue in any election is the location of polling places. In past elections this question has prompted many calls to both councils and the NSWEC. Councils indicated to the NSWEC in the 2007 consultations that as the NSWEC was responsible for the election that assistance to electors to locate the most convenient, accessible polling place location needed to be addressed by the NSWEC. In addition to location, councils also stressed that accessibility of polling places was a major issue.

The establishment of polling places for use in any election always presents challenges. Determining the location of polling places for a Local Government elections is particularly important as electors are not always aware that the differences between State and Local Government elections (such as wards, Local Government area boundaries, and the lack of absent voting) mean that their usual polling place may not be the right one for a Local Government election.

The NSWEC does not own the venues used as polling places and can only utilise facilities available for very short term lease. This means that the control

the NSWEC has over access or other aspects of available venues is very limited.

One of the major projects undertaken by the NSWEC in relation to planning the elections was the review of polling places. Every polling place previously used by the NSWEC was reviewed for its suitability against:

- Estimated number of voters;
- Hiring costs;
- Use in previous Federal and State elections;
- Convenience of location;
- Access for voters including those with disabilities;
- General suitability (car parking, facilities); and
- Potential for use as a multi purpose venue for electors from adjoining councils or adjoining wards.

The mapping facilities of the NSW Department of Lands, current census data information and special mapping software were used to indicate appropriate locations that could be used by the NSWEC. Local intelligence from councils and information gathered from previous elections by Returning Officers, Polling Place Managers and electors, with information from the Australian Electoral Commission were researched before final decisions were made.

In the main, the NSWEC uses public schools as these venues typically have good access. Also, there is a Memorandum of Understanding between the NSWEC and the NSW Department of Education and Training for the use of schools and TAFE NSW facilities providing more certainty for the NSWEC on availability.

In the 2008 Local Government Elections, there were 2,597 polling places of which 1,571 polling places (60.5%) were NSW Department of Education facilities. The remainder were council premises, private schools, community halls, community centres, church facilities and other facilities. All facilities were covered by public liability insurance with the NSW Treasury Managed Fund.

As a general rule in council areas with wards, polling places only issue votes to electors enrolled for the ward where the polling place is located. In recognition that there is no absent voting in Local Government elections, there is provision for some polling places to issue votes for a larger area, such as:

- Principal polling places to issue votes for all wards of the council;
- Multi ward polling places located close to ward boundaries to issue votes for both the ward(s) in which it was located as well as the ward(s) it adjoined; and

-
- Multi council polling places where a single premise served as a polling place for two or more council areas.

There were 65 principal polling places; 152 multi ward polling places for adjoining wards; 62 multi council polling places for two or more council areas and six multi ward and council polling places for two or more council areas and adjoining wards.

Prior to finalising polling places, the NSWEC wrote to all General Managers to provide councils with the opportunity to comment on the proposed polling places, staffing and the projected number of votes. Some councils were unable to respond within the timeframe and their responses were received closer to the election when changes were more difficult to achieve. Feedback and recommendations received from councils within the timeframe in relation to polling places were actioned and the NSWEC responded to subsequent requests to make certain venues multi ward wherever possible. Many councils such as Leeton Shire Council provided valuable feedback which improved the services offered through polling places for the 2008 Local Government Elections.

Council Inquiry and Help Desk

To assist councils to access accurate and timely information on the 2008 Local Government elections, the NSWEC established a Council Inquiry and Help Desk for the exclusive use of council representatives. Experienced NSWEC officers and former Returning Officers staffed this Help Desk. The Council Inquiry and Help Desk was operational from 2 June 2008.

Councils receive many requests from their local communities such as the media, electors or candidates. The NSWEC sought to assist councils by providing each council with a list of the key dates and support services plus contact details for accessing these services.

The Returning Officer's role included being a contact point not just for candidates but also for councils. Returning Officers started in their offices from 21 July 2008 with one of their key initial tasks being to establish liaison with the council(s) as well as the local NSW Police Service, Australia Post, NSW Ambulance and other agencies. Returning Officer offices became open to the public on 28 July and were able to handle queries from the community and any referred from the councils.

The Council Inquiry and Help Desks remained open after the election, closing three weeks after election day. The major queries related to progress on the count and timing for the declaration of the election. The number of calls received is not available.

Rural and Regional Councils share Returning Officers

A range of strategies was implemented to ensure that the 2008 Local Government Elections were run as efficiently as possible. One such initiative was the Regional Returning Officer concept for small councils in rural and remote locations.

Councils representing in excess of 900,000 electors chose the option of sharing a Returning Officer with their neighbouring councils. Typically participating councils were smaller in nature with an average elector base of 11,113 compared to the statewide average of 29,436. Councils sharing a Returning Officer ranged from 872 electors (Urana Shire Council) to 54,520 electors (Blue Mountains City Council).

Sharing a Returning Officer between councils enabled costs such as the salaries for the Returning Officer and other election staff as well as office accommodation for the Returning Officer to be apportioned to participating councils.

Understandably there was reluctance amongst some councils about this strategy. Concerns centred on the possibility of reduced services to each community and the feasibility of one Returning Officer fulfilling the role for a number of geographically dispersed councils. Despite this initial reluctance 23 Regions were formed involving 81 councils and representing 54.7% of the total number of councils with elections. The smallest regions involved two councils; the biggest involved seven councils. The majority of regional groups consisted of three or less councils as shown in Table 10.

Table 10: 2008 Local Government Elections, Size of Regional Groupings, Number of Councils and Percentages.

Number councils in regional Grouping	Number of regions of this size	%
Two	7	30.4
Three	7	30.4
Four	3	13.1
Five	4	17.4
Six	0	0.0
Seven	2	8.7
Total	23	100.0

The region with the largest number of electors was based at Coffs Harbour City Council and serviced Bellingen Shire Council, Clarence Valley Council in addition to Coffs Harbour City Council. The Regional Returning Officer covering the greatest square kilometres was based at Cobar Shire Council and serviced Bogan Shire Council, Bourke Shire Council, Brewarrina Shire Council, Central Darling Shire Council as well as Cobar Shire Council. Appendix 7 provides the detail of the Regional Returning Officer regions.

The NSWEC developed strategies to address the accessibility and logistical difficulties arising from one Returning Officer running several elections concurrently. Alternate arrangements were put in place with councils for example, the taking of nomination deposits from candidates.

Returning Officer Accommodation

The location of Returning Officer's office accommodation is an important issue for candidates, the community and the council from convenience and cost perspectives. Achieving the best location was frequently difficult due to the short leasing period. This is a difficulty that the NSWEC experiences in any election and for many premises.

Office opening hours for Returning Officers were the same as those for the council for which the Returning Officer was conducting the election. These details were available locally as well as from the NSWEC website and any of the call centres. All Returning Officers had secured office accommodation by July 2008.

Returning Officers including Regional Returning Officers closed their offices three weeks after election day. Where possible, some offices were closed earlier. Between election day and office closure, Returning Officers were involved in vote counting and checking; return of material and equipment, declaration of results and administrative matters such as obtaining outstanding personnel information for payment of polling place staff.

Councils' Support of the 2008 Local Government Elections

Some councils undertook on their own accord a number of activities to support the Local Government elections.

In the survey of General Managers (see below) 60 (52.2%) General Managers indicated that their council had undertaken work for the election separate from the services provided by the NSWEC. These activities ranged from development of advertising material for referenda and polls through to publicity for the election, providing information to intending candidates on aspects of the councillor's role, advising residents of boundary changes, advertising which schools or council chambers would not be used as polling places on election day, taking pre-poll votes, advertising the non-residents rate payers' roll, producing advice regarding referenda or polls, providing candidate information seminars and producing newsletters.

In terms of providing assistance to NSWEC election staff, the majority of responding councils (78.8%) had not performed activities at the request of Returning Officers, however, some councils had done so. The activity most likely to be performed on request of a Returning Officer was administrative tasks.

The administrative support provided by councils in response to advice from Returning Officers on placement of statutory advertisements in local newspapers (typically where council had a procurement arrangement in place with the local press), receipt of candidate nomination forms and deposits, provision of postal vote information and application forms in council libraries and offices, pre-poll voting, providing a contact point for Returning Officers particularly in the case of Regional Returning Officers, and responding to queries when the NSWEC Elector Inquiry Centre was experiencing technical difficulties.

Accepting candidate nomination forms and deposits was undertaken typically to support the Regional Returning Officer. Of those General Managers who responded to the feedback survey the minority (38.8%) had undertaken this particular service with the majority (89.7%) reporting that had proceeded without difficulty.

Satisfaction of General Managers with Electoral Services - Feedback

In early November 2008, the NSWEC emailed a debrief survey to the General Manager of each Council as a means of reviewing councils' perspective of the NSWEC's conduct of the 2008 Local Government Elections and of identifying areas for future improvement. Two reminder emails were sent before the survey was closed in early December 2008 and analysis commenced.

Topics covered in the survey included:

- Descriptive data including whether the council had utilised a Regional Returning Officer;
- Summary questions for example on the key result areas such as impartiality;
- Communications from the NSWEC to the council and the community;
- Performance of the Regional Returning Officers and Returning Officers;
- Councils' work to support the election including that undertaken at the request of the Returning Officer;
- Electoral rolls;
- Nominations and voting;
- Results; and
- Election costs.

Respondents numbered 115 or 77.7% of the total number of councils with contested elections. There was an appropriate representation from councils using Regional Returning Officers with 53.7% of respondents indicating that they shared a Returning Officer.

Responding General Managers said that the NSWEC had performed very well on its key objectives:

- Accuracy of results (98.0%);
- Impartiality (97.2%);

-
- Voter participation maximised (75.5%);
 - Electors knew of their obligation to vote (86.8%);
 - Electors were able to exercise their democratic right to vote (89.8%); and
 - Outcomes of the elections were available appropriately (80.6%).²²

The areas where the NSWEC was seen to have performed overall less satisfactorily were timeliness of results and the cost of the elections. In relation to results, 43.0% of the General Managers did not feel that the results had been available in a timely manner. The following comment summarises the views of some General Managers.

The counting of votes was delayed several days in comparison to previous elections. The EC website was not adequate to convey the position with the count to the candidates or public.²³

Some comments by General Managers related to the cost of their elections; some comments to the previous arrangements where elections were conducted largely by councils and other comments to the costs of previous arrangements.

In relation to the cost of the elections, the area of least satisfaction related to the explanation and detail provided by the NSWEC regarding the budget items and their costs (43.2%) however the response of some councils appeared to be related to other financial issues.²⁴

Whilst the budget estimates and invoicing were carried out in a satisfactory manner the cost increases compared to the last election were unreasonable and lacked substantiation. The cost increases also took no account of the revenue raising limitations placed on local government through rate pegging. The cost increases were well above CPI levels.²⁵

It needs to be noted that the feedback from General Managers was obtained well in advance of councils being advised that the overall cost of the elections had been reduced, and their invoice was likely to be lower than advised in August 2008. As a result, responses are likely to be more negative than if General Managers had received this information.

General Managers were asked about the budget estimates provided in 2008 in terms of accuracy; usefulness and timeliness (see Table 11 below). The majority of General Managers reported that the budget estimates were not accurate in terms of cost per item and overall cost. Despite these criticisms, General Managers indicated that they found the NSWEC's advice regarding budget estimates useful for the council's budgeting (76.0%) and provided in a timely manner (67.0%).

Table 11: 2008 Local Government Elections, General Managers on NSWEC Budget Estimates, Percentages. (a)

	% Yes	% No	Responses
Useful for council budgeting	76.0	24.0	100
Accurate in cost per item & overall cost	31.1	68.9	90
Provided in timely manner	67.0	33.0	94

(a) Response rates to each aspect of the question shown in the table.

In terms of the invoicing for the costs incurred by the NSWEC in conducting the elections, the majority of councils were neutral or satisfied with the explanation and detail provided; the variation from indicative estimates provided in June 2008 and the timing of the invoices. Some feedback was received by the NSWEC that councils would appreciate the estimates earlier to accommodate the requirement to exhibit council budgets for a month prior to adoption by 30 June.

Communications with the NSWEC were regarded as satisfactory or better with accuracy, availability, timeliness and consistency all scoring well. 92.4% of General Managers were neutral, satisfied or very satisfied with the communications from the NSWEC in terms of accuracy and consistency. The table below provides the responses of General Managers to aspects of communications with the NSWEC.

Table 12: 2008 Local Government Elections, General Managers on Communications with NSWEC, Percentages. (a)

	% Very Unsatisfied	% Unsatisfied	% Neutral	% Satisfied	% Very Satisfied
Accuracy	1.9	5.7	21.7	56.6	14.2
Availability	1.9	9.4	14.2	53.8	20.8
Timeliness	3.8	10.4	16.0	53.8	16.0
Consistency	3.8	3.8	18.9	59.4	14.2

Note: (a) Response rate of 106

In the feedback from General Managers on the NSWEC's website accuracy in content was rated most highly although all aspects from scope of content through to timeliness of updates rated well as shown below.

Table 13: 2008 Local Government Elections, General Managers on NSWEC Website, Percentages. (a)

	% Very Unsatisfied	% Unsatisfied	% Neutral	% Satisfied	% Very Satisfied
Scope of content	1.0	3.0	13.0	68.0	15.0
Adequacy of information	1.0	6.1	15.2	64.6	13.1
Accuracy of content	2.0	1.0	14.0	67.0	16.0
Content on voting arrangements	1.0	3.0	17.2	63.6	15.2
Timeliness of updates	3.0	8.0	18.0	58.0	13.0

Note: (a) Overall response rate of 100.

General Managers of councils that had used the electoral information brochure were neutral to very satisfied with the brochure's accuracy, content and timing of distribution with cost receiving the greatest neutral rating as set out below.

Table 14: 2008 Local Government Elections, General Managers on NSWEC's Electoral Information Brochure, Percentages. (a)

	% Very Unsatisfied	% Unsatisfied	% Neutral	% Satisfied	% Very Satisfied
Accuracy in content	2.1	0.0	45.8	43.8	8.3
Scope of content	2.1	0.0	43.8	45.8	8.3
Timeliness	2.1	4.2	43.8	39.6	10.4
Cost	6.3	2.1	62.5	25.0	4.2

(a) Response rate of 48 of councils who requested a brochure and who responded to the survey.

With respect to communication on particular election services, the NSWEC was overall perceived to have performed best on consultation regarding advertising, followed by General Manager Bulletins but less satisfactorily on provision of indicative budgets. Even on this latter issue, less than one third (28.5%) of General Managers regarded the performance of the NSWEC as unsatisfactory or very unsatisfactory.

Detail is provided in Table 15 below.

Table 15: 2008 Local Government Elections, General Managers on Communications of Specific Electoral Services, Percentages. (a)

	% Very Unsatisfied	% Unsatisfied	% Neutral	% Satisfied	% Very Satisfied
General Manager Bulletins	4.7	4.7	15.1	60.4	15.1
Indicative budgets	11.4	17.1	25.7	43.8	1.9
Advertising	2.8	5.7	21.7	56.6	14.2
Brochures	2.8	6.6	19.8	57.5	13.2
Candidate seminars	5.7	6.7	18.1	59.0	10.5
Polling places	3.8	12.3	15.1	55.7	13.2

Note: (a) Response rate of 106

Specifically in terms of communication with the Returning Officer, General Managers were also positive with 95.3% very satisfied, satisfied or neutral. As Table 16 shows General Managers generally regarded Returning Officers' performance very highly.

Table 16: 2008 Local Government Elections, General Managers on Performance of Returning Officers, percentages. (a)

	% Very Unsatisfied	% Unsatisfied	% Neutral	% Satisfied	% Very Satisfied
Communication and liaison	1.9	2.8	8.5	40.6	46.2
Reliability	0.9	2.8	10.4	47.2	38.7
Availability to council	1.9	2.9	9.5	41.0	44.8
Knowledge electoral requirements	1.9	1.9	16.0	45.3	34.9
Manner in which work undertaken	0.0	4.7	13.2	46.2	35.8
Quality of work	1.0	0.0	15.2	45.7	38.1
Professionalism	0.0	3.8	14.2	37.7	44.3

Note: (a) Overall response rate of 106.

Over three quarters (77.6%) of General Managers who shared a Returning Officer were prepared to share a Returning Officer in future elections. The NSWEC had indicated to councils that certain benefits would be associated with sharing a Returning Officer and 75.4% of councils with a Regional Returning Officer who responded to the survey, indicated that they were either neutral, satisfied or very satisfied that these benefits had been

delivered. While the vast majority were neutral to positive on whether the shared Returning Officer was appropriately available to all councils (86.2%), 13.8% indicated that there were difficulties with the availability of a Regional Returning Officer for all councils.

The quality of work of Returning Officers was perceived very well by General Managers with only one General Manager (1%) reporting negatively. The professionalism of Returning Officers was also rated very highly with a total of 96.2% of General Managers being very satisfied (44.3%), satisfied (37.7%) and neutral (14.2%) on the matter.

There was a very high level of satisfaction with the number, location and accessibility of venues for both pre-poll and polling places. The location of pre-poll and polling places for example, was found to be very satisfactory, satisfactory or neutral (87.0% and 94.1%) respectively by General Managers.

General Managers' views on the NSWEC's arrangements for pre-poll centres are presented in Table 17 and on polling places in Table 18 below.

Table 17: 2008 Local Government Elections, General Managers on Pre-Poll Centres, Percentages. (a)

	% Very Unsatisfied	% Unsatisfied	% Neutral	% Satisfied	% Very Satisfied
Location	0.0	12.9	5.9	55.4	25.7
Number available	0.0	8.9	12.9	58.4	19.8
Accessibility	0.0	6.9	9.9	58.4	24.8

Note: (a) Response rate of 101

Generally General Managers indicated a higher level of satisfaction with the arrangements for polling places than with pre-poll places.

Table 18: 2008 Local Government Elections, General Managers on Polling Places, Percentages. (a)

	% Very Unsatisfied	% Unsatisfied	% Neutral	% Satisfied	% Very Satisfied
Location	2.0	4.0	9.9	69.3	14.9
Number available	2.0	4.0	9.9	70.3	13.9
Accessibility	3.0	4.0	12.0	67.0	14.0

Note: (a) Response rate of 101

General Managers (62.8%) thought the introduction of call centres for electors and candidates were useful initiatives from the NSWEC.

The NSWEC sought feedback from councils on the ballot papers and management of the electoral rolls. With regard to ballot papers, General Managers did not report any issues relating to errors on the ballot papers but a number (9.6%) raised issues relating to the quantity of ballot papers at polling places.

On the issue of management of electoral rolls, accuracy of the (residential) electoral roll was perceived to be high. 89.3% of General Managers were neutral, satisfied or very satisfied with the accuracy of the electoral roll for their council.

The situation for non-residential rolls was not as clear. The NSWEC sought feedback on the assistance it provided to councils to manage their non-residential rolls. Almost three quarters (73.8%) of General Managers responding to the survey reported having a non-residential roll for the 2008 Local Government Elections. This result was unexpected as all councils are required to have a non-residential roll and perhaps indicates a confusion regarding roles. On the assistance provided by the NSWEC to councils to manage their non-residential roll, this service met with the majority of General Managers' approval but 16.3% were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with the assistance provided.

The suggestions made to improve this aspect of electoral administration included the NSWEC becoming responsible for the management of all rolls to ensure consistency with the overall responsibility of the NSWEC for the elections, better assistance from the NSWEC regarding queries on eligibility for the non-resident roll enrolment, and greater use of plain English in information provided.

Regarding the objectives of impartiality, effectiveness and efficiency in conducting the 2008 Local Government Elections, the NSWEC was seen to have performed strongly. With respect to 'effectiveness' of conducting the elections, 78.5% of General Managers indicated that they were either positive or neutral on this subject. The majority of General Managers were either positive or neutral (53.3%) also on the efficiency of the conduct of the elections but not to the same extent as for 'impartiality' or 'effectively'. Almost all General Managers (97.2%) were positive or neutral on the NSWEC conducting the election impartially.

Section 5: Electoral Services for Candidates, Groups and Political Parties

There are a number of differences between State and Local Government elections. Most striking is the number of candidates and registered political parties who participate.

For the 2008 Local Government Elections nearly 5,000 candidates stood for election and 31 parties nominated candidates. In the 2007 State General Election 870 candidates stood for election.²⁶ The number of candidates at the 2008 Local Government Elections represented more than a fivefold increase over the number of candidates participating in the 2007 State General Election.

The majority of the candidates for the 2008 Local Government Elections were not nominated by a registered political party and the level of support and assistance required from the NSWEC was, as a result, that much higher. Another difference between State and Local Government elections relates to the role played by registered political parties. In Local Government elections registered political parties have no role in postal vote applications as occurs in State general elections.

Registration of Political Parties

To contest Local Government elections as a political party the party must be registered under the Local Government Act 1993. State registered political parties are also eligible to nominate candidates for Local Government elections. Registration of political parties is required under the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912 or the Local Government Act 1993.

The NSWEC is responsible for registering political parties according to the requirements of the legislation. Once registered, political parties are required to provide an annual return to the NSWEC that demonstrates their continued eligibility for registration. The returns must be completed by 30 June each year with parties demonstrating that they still have sufficient members to satisfy legislative requirements. Frequently this can be a lengthy process. The immediacy of the September elections required the NSWEC to commence the annual re-registration process earlier. The NSWEC provided assistance to 34 Local Government registered political parties to assist them to comply with the requirements for ongoing registration. Parties intending to continue registration were able to provide the required information by the due date (30 June 2008). Parties were required to have been registered by 13 August 2007 in order to participate in the 2008 Local Government Elections

Nomination of Candidates by Registered Political Parties

Less than a third (28.8%) of the 2008 candidates were nominated by registered political parties. Three registered political parties each nominated between 300 to 500 of the total 4,620 candidates. These were The Greens with 349 nominations (7.6%), the Liberal Party with 382 nominations (8.3%) and the Labor Party with 422 nominations (9.2%)²⁷. There were two parties

(Australian Democrats and The Fishing Party) who nominated one candidate each. 16 separate parties stood less than ten candidates each.

Ten of the 14 state registered political parties nominated candidates for the 2008 Local Government Elections while 100% of the Local Government registered political parties nominated candidates.

Almost three quarters of candidates (71.2%) standing for the 2008 elections were not nominated by either state or Local Government registered parties. In the 2007 State General Election 78 candidates stood who were not nominated by any registered political party (independent candidates).²⁸ This was not atypical as traditionally Local Government elections have a greater representation from independent candidates than State or Federal Government elections.²⁹

The political parties registered with the NSWEC as at 30 June 2008 and which participated in the 2008 Local Government Elections are set out in Appendix 8 showing the number of candidates nominated and whether the party was registered at either the state or local level.³⁰

Information for Registered Political Parties, Candidates and Groups

Briefing Sessions for Registered Political Parties

Briefings of registered political parties occurred over 28 and 29 July 2008 and were attended by 18 parties with 30 participants. The topics covered included the changes to the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005, the election timetable and electoral arrangements, changes to the electoral funding legislation, counting of the votes, provision of electoral rolls and information for electors.

The NSWEC surveyed those representatives who attended but although the responses were very positive, the response rate itself was too small to be relied upon as representative of the total group.

Candidate Information Seminars

Throughout May and June 2008 the NSWEC conducted 30 information seminars across NSW for people standing for election at the 2008 Local Government Elections. In response to requests from councils the NSWEC provided additional seminars. Around 1,000 people attended these seminars. Appendix 9 provides details.

The seminars were advertised in newspapers and on local radio.

Major topics covered in the seminars included:

- Election timetable;
- Candidate eligibility criteria and how to nominate;
- Groups of candidates and political party names on ballot papers;

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- Mayoral elections;
 - Campaigning (election advertising, 'how-to-vote' material and public scrutiny of candidates);
 - Complaints handling by NSWEC;
 - Voting and counting ballot papers;
 - Scrutineers; and
 - Election funding obligations.

Candidate Information Kit

The NSWEC developed a Candidate Information Kit to assist all candidates especially first time candidates, understand the election process and their obligations. The major forms of assistance in addition to that provided by the Returning Officer were the NSWEC website, an information kit; information seminars and a dedicated inquiry line.

The candidate information kit contained:

- Nomination and grouping forms;
- Nomination refund form;
- Application to register electoral material;
- Candidate handbook;
- Election funding fact sheet;
- Request for list of voters;
- Scrutineer appointment forms;
- Application for registration with the Election Funding Authority as a candidate; and
- Appointment of official agent form.

Candidate Inquiry and Help Desk

To assist candidates gather accurate and timely information on the 2008 Local Government Elections, the NSWEC established a Candidate Inquiry and Help Desk for the exclusive use of candidates.

The Candidate Inquiry and Help Desk was based at the NSWEC head office and was operational from May 2008. It was staffed with the same experienced staff as for the Council Inquiry and Help Desk. The total number

of calls answered from May to September 2008 was 3,483. The bulk of the calls were made in August and September 2008.

The Candidate Inquiry and Help Desk remained open after the elections closing three weeks later. The major queries after the elections concerned count results and complaints arising from election day.

Assistance with New Funding Disclosure Requirements

All Local Government councillors, Members of Parliament, candidates, groups and parties have obligations under the Election Funding and Disclosures Act 1981. These obligations relate to the disclosure of political donations received and expenditure incurred for election campaigns. The legislative changes of 2008 brought considerable change to existing provisions and key provisions entailed:

- Appointing and registering an official agent for a candidate or group;
- Certain procedures for operating a campaign account and receiving political donations; and
- New requirements for reporting both donations received and expenditure incurred.

The amendments imposed a six monthly disclosure for councillors, Members of Parliament, candidates, groups and parties; a uniform political donation disclosure limit of \$1,000; mandatory disclosure of loans; new rules for management of campaign finances; a ban on certain 'in kind' donations over \$1,000; and new offences for failing to lodge a declaration and making a false statement.

Elected members to a local council are required to appoint a person (other than herself or himself) as an official agent before accepting \$1,000 or more in political donations or incurring \$1,000 or more in electoral expenditure during an election period. An official agent had to successfully complete an online training programme provided by the Authority before accepting donations, incurring expenditure or reporting to the Election Funding Authority. Certain prescribed people with accounting qualifications are exempt from training requirements.

Candidates and groups who did not appoint and register a person (other than herself or himself) as an official agent with the Authority could not accept \$1,000 or more in political donations. Candidates and groups who received less than \$1,000 in political donations were not required to appoint an official agent. In the case where a candidate or group did not appoint an agent, the candidate was deemed to be their own agent and, in the case of a group, the head candidate in the group was deemed to be the agent for the group.

Official agents for candidates and groups were required to lodge a Declaration of Political Donations and Electoral Expenditure for the 2008 Local Government Elections for the disclosure period ending 31 December 2008. A 'nil' declaration was required even if the candidate did not receive any

political donations or incur any electoral expenditure. A candidate also had to lodge a declaration even if a part of a group of candidates for a ward or undivided Council area. The declarations had to be lodged between 1 January and 25 February 2009.

Declarations had to be audited by a registered company auditor before being lodged with the Authority unless there was a 'nil' declaration, or the political donations and electoral expenditure were both \$2,500 or less.

The NSWEC produced a 'Funding and Disclosure Guide for Local Government Candidates, Groups and Official Agents' for candidates, groups and their official agents regarding their obligations under the Election Funding and Disclosures Act 1981 and practical information about how to complete and lodge a disclosure form. In addition, the Authority provided an online training programme for prospective agents and receipt books for the use of candidates, groups and their official agents.

The additional advertising undertaken by the Election Funding Authority to communicate these changes also increased the profile of the 2008 Local Government Elections.

Nominating as a Candidate

Candidates including mayoral candidates contesting the 2008 Local Government Elections numbered 4,620 (nominations). The number of individuals standing for election was 4,499 of which 121 stood for more than one position.³¹

In the 1999 Local Government Elections 4,552 candidates stood and in 2004 4,962 candidates stood for election.³² Relative to the 2004 Local Government Elections, in 2008 there were fewer candidates for slightly more positions.³³

Roughly one third (32.8%) of those individuals standing as a candidate could be elected to fill these positions.

In the 2004 elections, five councils each had more than 100 candidates.³⁴ While nominations of this size did not occur in 2008, several outer suburban and regional councils drew a record number of nominees, including:

- Campbelltown City Council (92);
- Newcastle City Council (31)
- Manly Council (29)
- Blacktown City Council (28)
- Fairfield City Council (27)
- Albury City Council (22)
- Blue Mountains City Council (21); and

-
- Auburn Council (20).

Campbelltown City Council with 92 candidates received the largest number of candidates in either a divided or undivided council. The largest total number of candidates for a divided Council was Penrith City Council with 83 candidates.

The smallest number of candidates in an undivided council was nine candidates at Liverpool Plains Shire Council and the smallest for a divided council was three candidates in Cabonne Shire Council (Canobolas Ward). The largest number of candidates in one ward was 38 in Wyong Shire Council A Ward.

A candidate for a mayor or councillor position could be nominated either by a registered political party or by electors: self-nomination is not allowed for either position. In the former case, the political party had to be registered by 13 August 2007 to be eligible to endorse a candidate for the 2008 elections.

When being nominated by electors the requirements differ according to the position and whether the council is divided or undivided. For the position of Mayor, nomination requires at least two electors enrolled in the council area. For councillor positions where the council area is undivided at least two electors enrolled in the council area are required to nominate the candidate. In the case of councils with wards, at least two electors enrolled in the ward the candidate is contesting are required for nomination.

Nominators could not nominate more candidates for councillor roles than the number to be elected in a council area or ward. For the office of mayor a person could not nominate more than one candidate but could nominate a candidate for both councillor and mayoral positions.

The 2008 changes to the Regulation meant that for the first time in Local Government elections, the close of nominations and finalisation of nominations fell on the same day, Wednesday 13 August 2008.

Candidate for “Popularly Elected” Mayor

In an election for mayor, a candidate had to be enrolled in the council area by Monday, 4 August 2008, either as a resident or non-resident elector.

A person could be a candidate for mayor and councillor positions, but could not be elected to both positions. If elected as mayor (the mayoral election was counted first) the person had to accept that office.

In the Council of the City of Sydney, a candidate for Lord Mayor must also be a candidate for councillor. If elected as Lord Mayor the person had to accept that office and could not be elected as a councillor. A person could, if eligible, be a candidate for mayor in more than one council area where the mayor was popularly elected, and could be elected as mayor in more than one council area.

Candidate for Councillor in an Undivided Council

To be eligible for election as a councillor in an area that does not have wards, a person had to be enrolled either on the resident or the non-residential roll in that council area by Monday, 4 August 2008.

Candidate for Councillor in a Divided Council

Although a person can nominate to be a candidate for more than one ward in the same council it is not possible to be a candidate for more than one ward in the council area. All but one nomination had to be withdrawn before the close of nominations at noon, Wednesday 13 August. The provision for both residents and non-resident electors to stand as candidates meant that a person could be a candidate (if eligible) for councillor in more than one council area and could be elected as a councillor in more than one council area.

Where a council has wards, a candidate for election as a councillor had to be enrolled in that council area, (but not necessarily in the ward in which they are nominating as a candidate) either as a resident or non-resident elector. For example, a person could be enrolled in "B" ward of the council area but nominate as a candidate in "C" ward.

Enrolment had to occur by Monday 4 August 2008 as for candidates for councillor positions in undivided councils.

Nomination Process

To be nominated for election as a councillor or popularly elected mayor, a person must be qualified to hold civic office by virtue of being enrolled as an elector in an area and not being disqualified from such office at the time of the election. The Local Government Act 1993 (section 274) sets down the qualifications for holding civic office. Section 275 of this Act sets out those matters which may disqualify a person from holding civic office such as convictions for certain offences and disqualification from managing a corporation under corporations law.

A person elected to civic office can be dismissed if it is subsequently determined that the person was in fact disqualified as a candidate at the time of nomination. The NSWEC is not empowered to determine if a person is disqualified under section 275. The NSW Administrative Decisions Tribunal determines applications for dismissal. These applications can be made by any person.

In the past these conditions and the timeframe for nominations or withdrawal of nominations have caused confusion. To avoid or reduce this, the NSWEC established the Candidate Help Desk as well as ensuring that as much information was available on its website and that the Returning Officer was available to answer queries.

To increase convenience for candidates and efficiencies for councils, the NSWEC undertook the checking of nomination and grouping forms at the local level rather than in Sydney as in 2004.

Nomination forms were available from the Returning Officer, the NSWEC website and the Candidates' Inquiry and Help Desk. The nomination form is prescribed under Schedule 11 to the Regulation.

A nomination for mayor or councillor had to be received by the Returning Officer for the council for which the nomination was made. Separate nominations are required for each position contested. It was a candidate's responsibility to ensure a full and correctly completed nomination was received by the Returning Officer, by noon, Wednesday 13 August 2008. There was a checklist on each nomination form to help candidates provide accurate information.

Where there was a Regional Returning Officer, candidates could deliver their nomination papers and deposit to their local council, which then faxed all the nomination papers to the Returning Officer. The process and options were explained in the NSWEC's 'Handbook for Parties, Candidates and Scrutineers – Local Government 2008 Elections'.

Candidates for mayor or councillor were required to lodge a Candidate Information Sheet as part of the nomination form. If the Returning Officer had not received the completed Candidate Information Sheet by the close of nominations the Returning Officer was required to reject the candidate's nomination.

The Candidate Information Sheet had to contain the candidate's full name and residential address and be signed by the candidate and witnessed by a Justice of the Peace. The Candidate Information Sheet could also contain the candidate's date of birth, occupation, trade and professional qualifications, membership of organisations, the registered party (if any) that has endorsed the candidate, statements as to the candidate's policies and beliefs and other qualifications. (Candidates' personal contact details were only released to the media if candidates had given their consent.)

The Local Government Act 1993 contains provisions that prohibit the use of false or misleading information and allow prosecution in such circumstances. The Candidate Information Sheets were published on the NSWEC and council websites and were available for public inspection in Returning Officers' offices from noon on nomination day at the pre-poll offices and at polling places on election day. The Candidate Information Sheets were displayed as provided to the Returning Officer (only material considered inappropriate could be edited).

A deposit had to be paid as set by section 306 of the Local Government Act 1993 which prescribes it to be one-half of the nomination fee payable under the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act, 1912.

Nominations for mayor or councillor had to be accompanied by a deposit of \$125 for each candidate. When candidates formed a group the maximum deposit was \$625 for a group even if composed of six or more candidates.³⁵

Nominations were rejected if the appropriate deposit in total had not been received by the close of nominations.

Deposits were refunded if:

- the election was uncontested;
- the candidate died before election day or withdrew their nomination;
- the candidate was elected or received at least four percent of the total number of formal first preference votes cast at the election; or
- included in a group for the councillor election, any one of the group was elected or received at least four percent of the total number of formal first preference votes.

The total of candidate deposits was \$0.563 million of which \$0.482 million (85.6%) was refunded to candidates. The number of refunds was 2,309. Any deposit not refunded was forfeited to the relevant council.

Candidates could withdraw their nomination by providing a signed notice to the Returning Officer before the close of nominations. 34 candidates withdrew their nominations. The nominations of five candidates were rejected with the major reason being that either the candidate or nominator was not enrolled in the council or ward as required.

When all nominations had been finalised the Returning Officer formally declared who the candidates were in the afternoon of nomination day. The names of nominees were published on the NSWEC's website.

At this point those elections where there were just sufficient candidates to fill vacant positions and those elections where insufficient numbers of candidates for the available vacancies, were identified. This process enabled the NSWEC to determine the final number of candidates and groups, the type and number of elections for each council and to proceed to finalise decisions regarding the quantity of ballot papers, polling places and election day staff.

The close of nominations marked the beginning of the official month-long election campaign.

Draw for Position on Ballot Paper

Closure of nominations was followed on Wednesday, 13 August 2008 by the draw for position of candidates and groups (where applicable) on the ballot papers. The official draw took place at Returning Officers' offices. In regional arrangements, all announcements of candidates and draws for ballot papers were conducted in the Regional Returning Officers' offices.

Provision of the List of Electors to Candidates

Candidates, upon application to the Returning Officer were entitled to receive a copy of the list of electors for the council area or ward being contested. The NSWEC made the list of electors available to candidates during the week beginning Monday 18 August 2008.

The list of electors contained the name and address of electors entitled to vote in the election but not electors' dates of birth. Candidates were only entitled to use the list of electors in connection with their candidacy for this election, and for monitoring the accuracy of information contained on the list of electors. The NSWEC advised all candidates that there are significant penalties for candidates using the electoral roll for other purposes than those above.

Assistance with Registration and Distribution of Electoral Material

Electoral material, including how-to-vote cards, to be distributed on election day had to be registered by the NSWEC. Unregistered electoral material cannot be distributed on election day. Any party, group or candidate contesting a council election could make an application to register electoral material (including how-to-vote cards). Others, including individuals or organisations or community groups not contesting the election, also could make an application to register electoral material. The same registration requirements apply to material relating to a council referendum or poll that is to be distributed on election day.

To assist candidates in this area, the NSWEC provided a number of aids including a 'Questions and Answers' brochure, examples of acceptable 'How to Vote Material' templates available via the NSWEC website and in the 'Handbook for Parties, Groups, Candidates and Scrutineers - Local Government Elections 2008'.

To better handle the volume of registrations, the NSWEC utilised the Returning Officers for checking and registering electoral material rather than the material being referred to the NSWEC's Sydney office as in the 2004 Local Government Elections or the 2007 State General Election.

The electoral material that was referred concerned material where the Returning Officer had difficulties making a determination. The Sydney office reviewed and registered electoral material submitted by people or organisations who were not candidates at the election, or material where the Returning Officers sought a review.

Approximately 170 items were referred centrally as compared to over 10,000 in 2004. The major reasons for material to be referred to the Sydney office concerned queries relating to rejected 'how to vote' material. There were fewer complaints from candidates concerning incorrectly registered electoral material than in 2004.

Applications and electoral material (including how-to-vote cards) for registration could be lodged from noon Wednesday, 13 August 2008 until 5pm Friday, 5 September 2008.

The Commonwealth Broadcasting Services Act 1992 does not apply to Local Government elections and there was no requirement upon candidates and registered political parties to cease any political advertising on radio or television prior to election day.

Scrutineers and Other Quality Assurance Mechanisms

Both electors and candidates need to feel confident that the voting process and count are conducted accurately and impartially. A provision of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 allows candidates to appoint scrutineers to be present at polling places and locations where votes are counted (section 337).

Candidates cannot witness the voting process or the count of votes. The inclusion of scrutineers provides confidence to candidates that the votes are counted accurately and correct decisions are made concerning formality or otherwise of votes cast. By attesting to the election results, scrutineers contribute to the transparency and impartiality of the process.

Scrutineers have to be enrolled electors in New South Wales and appointed by a candidate. Candidates were advised of the procedure for appointing scrutineers locally, via the website and the handbooks provided upon nomination.

Inclusion of scrutineers occurs not only on election day but also at pre-poll locations as well as Declared Institutions. Scrutineers could not distribute electoral material during these visits. On election day, the Returning Officer briefed scrutineers and election staff on the procedures for conducting the count and formality of ballot papers.

A candidate is not permitted to be a scrutineer for the election they are contesting, nor in relation to any election in the same council area. Also candidates could not attend the Local Government Counting Centre to observe the running of the count for the election for which they stood as a candidate. To assist candidates and their scrutineers understand processes that would occur at the Local Government Counting Centre, the NSWEC prepared a video which was placed on the NSWEC's website for downloading.

During the local counting of votes, the software available locally allowed Returning Officers to print a record of each count and provide that to scrutineers to make their review easier and faster. As it was difficult for rural and regional candidates to send scrutineers to the central vote counting centre in Sydney the NSWEC established an independent Observation Team to monitor the central counting of ballot papers. Comprised of representatives from the Victorian Electoral Commission, the NSW Department of Local Government and the Local Government and Shires Associations, the purpose of the Observation Team was to give candidates, registered political

parties and members of the public confidence in the integrity, effectiveness and efficiency of the centralised counting process.

The Observation Team had six terms of reference covering preparations for the count; the security and set up of the central vote counting centre; communication to councils and candidates regarding the scheduling of counting; the quality control measures in place to ensure there was no mix up in ballot papers or data entry and implementation of the NSWEC's operational plans. These terms of reference are contained in the report provided at Appendix 10. The findings of the Observation Team were very positive about the central vote counting centre:

The Observation Team have no overall concerns with the NSWEC count process in accordance with the terms of reference provided to the team. Clear, precise procedures were in place and seemed to be followed. Ballot paper management and reconciliation, considered to be of the utmost importance by all team members, was well executed and raised no concerns.³⁶

The Observation Team's report was available by early November 2008.

Complaints Concerning Electoral Matters

It is an offence under the legislation for a person, during the regulated election period, to print, publish, distribute or display unauthorised electoral material (clause 356G, Local Government (General) Regulation 2005).

The NSWEC has no investigative powers to determine the truth or otherwise of allegations that may affect the nomination of a candidate or their election. The courts have found that it is not the responsibility of the NSWEC to determine the motives or bona fides of citizens or the issues of eligibility for election. Where evidence comes into the NSWEC's possession that an offence under Local Government elections legislation has been committed, the matter may, on the advice of the Crown Solicitor, be referred to the NSW Police Service for investigation.

The Local Government Act 1993 contains an open standing provision under which any person can apply to the Administrative Decisions Tribunal for an order that a person be dismissed from civic office due to an irregularity in the manner in which the person was elected or if the person is disqualified from holding civic office (section 329). It is a matter for those seeking to impugn the validity of a nomination or an election of a councillor to raise the issue for determination by a court or tribunal. In addition, an individual can approach the NSW Police Service directly to report an alleged offence and the Local Government Act 1993 gives any person the right to initiate proceedings for an electoral offence by way of a private prosecution (section 684).

Frequently concerns are raised with the NSWEC that electoral material is defamatory. The NSWEC however has no power under the legislation to take action on material alleged to be defamatory. The legislation only covers those situations where electoral material contains untrue or incorrect voting

directions or statements that are "intended or likely to mislead or improperly interfere with a voter in the casting of their vote".

The courts have strictly interpreted this rule to cover only statements likely to mislead electors as to how they record a vote on the ballot paper. The legislation does not regulate electoral material in terms of how it may affect voters' political judgements. Nor does the legislation cover falsehoods that may mislead electors in the process of deciding for whom they will vote.

Examples of electoral material likely to "mislead or improperly interfere with a voter in the casting of his or her vote" within the meaning of the legislation include those containing matter which is incorrect or misleading with respect to:

- whether a person is a candidate or endorsed by a political party;
- the name of a party; and
- those with whom a party is or is not affiliated;

or suggest that:

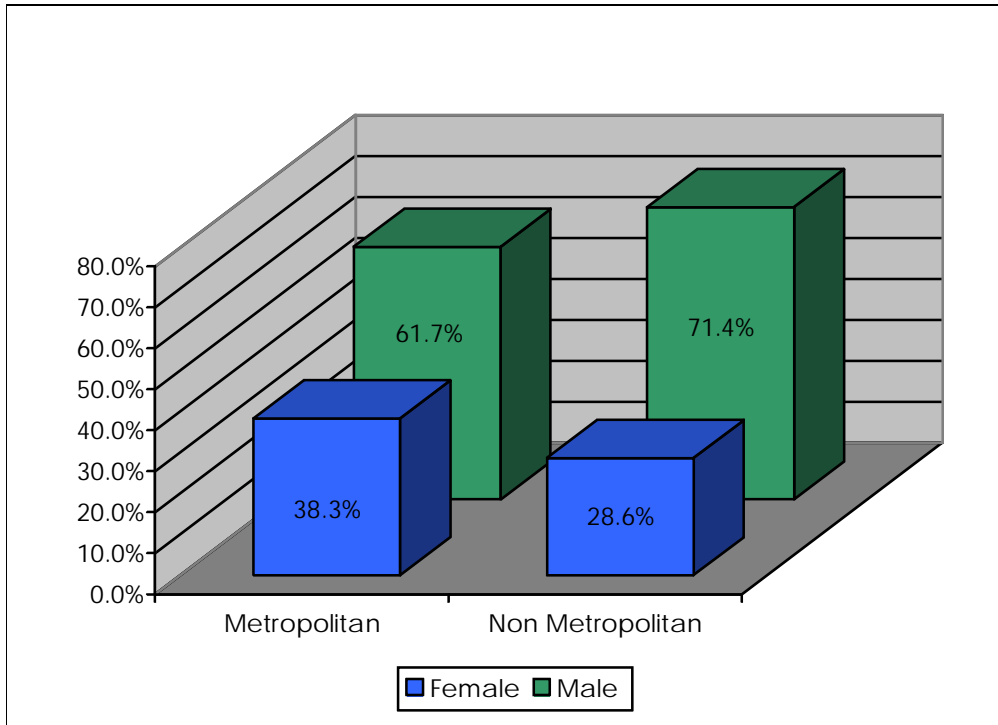
- a vote be recorded in a manner contrary to the Local Government Act 1993, the Regulations or the instructions on the relevant ballot paper; and
- voting is not compulsory.

During the conduct of the 2008 Local Government Elections, 49 substantive matters were raised with the NSWEC concerning electoral material distributed by candidates.

Candidate Statistics

The information provided by candidates during nominating was aggregated to allow analysis of the candidate stakeholder group. The analysis undertaken examined gender representation, distribution across councils and the age range of candidates.

The following graph sets out the gender of candidates by location in either metropolitan or non metropolitan councils.



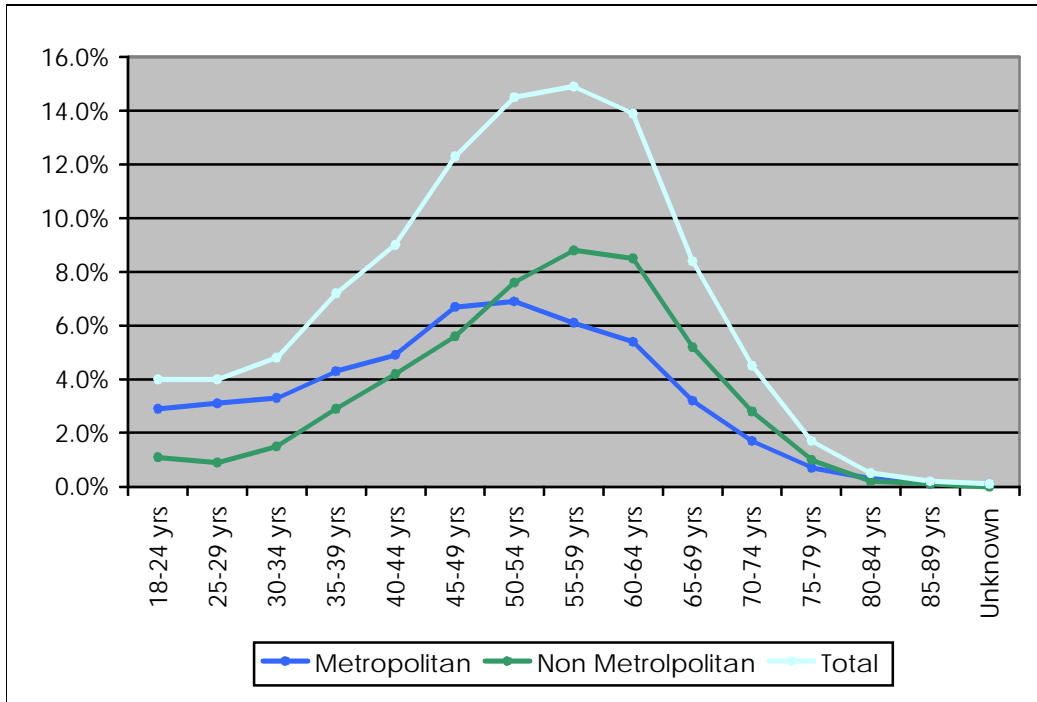
Graph 5: Local Government Elections, Candidates by Council Type and Gender, 2008.

Of those candidates nominating, one third were female (33.4%; 1,543) candidates and two thirds (66.6%; 3,077) were male. More female candidates stood in metropolitan councils. The numbers of female and male candidates by location of the council is provided in the following table.

Table 19: 2008 Local Government Elections Candidates by Gender and Council Location, Number and Percentages.

	Metropolitan Councils		Non Metropolitan Councils	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Female	878	38.3	665	28.6
Male	1,415	61.7	1,662	71.4
Total	2,293	100.0	2,327	100.0

In terms of age, almost three quarters of candidates (73.0%) were between 40 and 69 years. The age range 50 - 59 years comprised almost a third of candidates (29.4%). The distribution of candidates across age categories and metropolitan and non metropolitan councils is shown graphically below.



Graph 6: Candidates by Council Type and Age, 2008 Local Government Elections.

Candidates standing in rural councils tended to be older than their counterparts in metropolitan councils. In rural councils nearly two thirds (65.1%) were between the ages of 50 and 74 years. In metropolitan councils less than half (47.0%) were in this age range. There were a greater proportion of younger candidates in metropolitan councils particularly between the ages of 18 to 29 years (12.1% metropolitan to 4.1% non metropolitan councils). Appendix 11 provides detail.

Satisfaction with Electoral Services of Candidates, Groups and Political Parties - Feedback

The NSWEC undertook two surveys of political stakeholders. The first survey sought feedback on the annual continued registration process for registered political parties. The second was of the candidates who stood for the 2008 Local Government Elections in a local council election – either as a mayor or councillor.

The registered political party survey was conducted in late July 2008. Due to the small sample size and participation rate (33%) no quantitative statistics are presented. In terms of qualitative feedback, the results were positive about the timely advice of registration requirements and the current registration and ongoing registration process. The majority were interested in completing the continued registration process electronically. Almost all of the registered political parties responding were satisfied or very satisfied with the level of NSWEC service.

In terms of feedback from candidates directly, an online survey was made available by email to the 3,077 candidates who had provided a valid email address (72.2% of total candidates).³⁷ A response rate of 42.6% (28.4% of total candidates) was obtained. Candidates from every council responded with the exception of two rural councils. The largest candidate response for any council was 24 from each of Willoughby City and Campbelltown City Councils. The smallest number of candidates responding from any council was one candidate from each of Brewarrina, Lockhart, Walcha and Warren Shire Councils.

The representativeness of the sample of candidates who responded to the NSWEC survey is in keeping with the characteristics of candidates generally although a slightly older group of candidates than the total group of candidates and with a greater representation of rural candidates.³⁸

The majority of respondents were from rural councils (58%) and were aged between 41 and 70 years (81.8%) with over a third (36.4%) aged between 51 and 60 years. The majority (91.7%) had also been born in Australia with 10.1% from a culturally and linguistically diverse background and 1.8% from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background. Table 20 provides greater detail.

Table 20: 2008 Local Government Elections, Background of Candidates Providing Feedback, Numbers and Percentages. (a)

	Number	Percentage
Born in Australia	974	91.7
Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait islander descent	19	1.8
Culturally and linguistically diverse background	107	10.1
Had a disability	40	3.8

Note: (a) response rate of 1,062. Candidates could respond to one or more categories.

For the majority of respondents (52.8%), the 2008 Local Government Elections were the first occasion that the candidates had stood for a civic office. Consistent with this, over two thirds (68.1%) had not held a position of either councillor and/or mayor. Of the respondents, the majority (55.2%) had been unsuccessful in being elected to the position they sought.

Of the total number of respondents, it is estimated 94% had stood for the position of councillor and 6% for the position of mayor.³⁹ Less than 1% had stood for more than one position. The distribution amongst the group of total candidates for positions contested was 95.2% councillors, both councillor and mayor positions 4.3% and a mayoral position 0.4%.

The majority of respondents stood as non affiliated or independent candidates (58.8%).

In terms of candidates' perceptions of Returning Officers' handling of various aspects of the electoral process, responses were very positive with 81.4% of candidates finding the Returning Officer's communication of candidate information satisfactory or very satisfactory (10.9% neutral); 81.4% for the nomination process (12.0% neutral); 80.7% for the conduct of the draw for the ballot paper (14.9% neutral); 75.1% for registration of 'how to vote' material (15.1% neutral) and 78.3% were either overall satisfied or very satisfied with the Returning Officer (14.6% neutral).

The comments from candidates were equally positive. Some comments that summarise the views of candidates are provided below:

"The Returning Officer, was always friendly, helpful and human, as well as being impartial, effective and efficient, and handled problems impeccably."

While most candidates were positive about Returning Officers, some criticisms were received (although significantly fewer than positive comments). One criticism was:

"Earlier training for the Returning Officer, wasn't able to answer questions until he went away and found out the answers."

Some candidates did not regard the introduction of Regional Returning Officers as a positive innovation. The following comment captures the major reasons why some candidates felt this way:

"Considerable inconvenience to the candidate is experienced by candidates accessing information, advise (sic) etc when distant from the location of the Returning Officer."

Over three quarters of candidates (76.7%) were neutral, satisfied or very satisfied with the performance of the NSWEC. On the question of whether the NSWEC had conducted the 2008 Local Government Elections impartially, effectively and efficiently, the majority of candidates responded positively to all three of these questions. Impartiality (91.4%) was seen to be the most highly achieved attribute. Table 21 below provides detail.

Table 21: 2008 Local Government Elections, Candidates on NSWEC's Overall Conduct, Percentages.(a)

	Yes	No	Responses
Impartially	91.4	8.6	1,147
Effectively	76.4	23.6	1,144
Efficiently	62.0	38.0	1,121

(a) Responses to each question are shown in the table.

In terms of candidates who had concerns about the NSWEC's performance, these concerns related in the main to polling place issues including the ability to adequately cover all entrances so as to provide 'how-to-vote' material, queuing and the perceived delay in getting results. A number of candidates commented on the cost compared to when elections were run by the local council.

The majority of candidates successfully gained information they sought. There was overall satisfaction with 84.7% of candidates reporting that they had received sufficient information regarding their election funding and disclosure requirements and 80.6% receiving the information they needed upon contacting the Candidates' Inquiry and Help Desk.

The Candidates Handbook, Candidate Information Seminars and Candidates Inquiry Desk strategies were regarded positively with over 90% being neutral, satisfied or very satisfied with these options. Of those candidates who were unsatisfied the concerns generally related to not being aware that these avenues were available to candidates, inconsistent information provided by either the Returning Officer or Candidates' Inquiry and Help Desk and a failure to communicate clearly the complexities of the forms of voting, how the count would work and also how to develop appropriate 'How to Vote' material.

Candidates were asked for their feedback on election services provided to electors. On the services such as the NSWEC website, Elector Inquiry Centre and advertising, candidates were positive. A high percentage of 'neutral' responses on the Elector Inquiry Centre possibly indicates a lack of knowledge about this service.

On the important area of results information, candidates reported no problems with local counts (87.5%). There was considerable comment however both about how counting was undertaken locally and at the centralised Local Government Counting Centre ranging from concerns about the time taken for counting, experience of staff, perceptions of scrutineers' conduct and concerns about the value of having two different forms of voting.

A minority (11.2%) of candidates attended or had a scrutineer attend the Local Government Counting Centre (candidates could attend the counting centre either to watch the presentation or as a scrutineer for another candidate). Of those candidates who had a representative at the counting centre, 88.8% were satisfied with the information provided and the conduct of the count at this venue. Any criticisms concerned inadequate provision of information about the timetable for the counting and the time taken to declare the election. Overall, 68.6% of all candidates were happy with the information provided about the count and its conduct.

The complexity of results counting in Local Government elections had seen the NSWEC invest a significant amount of work in simplifying information about how the count occurred and to assist all stakeholders' understanding. Candidates were asked about the information provided by the NSWEC to them on this issue.

From the feedback received, it appears that the NSWEC targeted the level of information and its presentation appropriately for candidates. Table 22 provides more information.

Table 22: 2008 Local Government Elections, Candidates on Information on Conduct of the Local Government Centre Count, Percentages. (a)

	% Very Unsatisfied	% Unsatisfied	% Neutral	% Satisfied	% Very Satisfied
Level of detail	4.0	7.3	18.8	54.0	15.8
Ease of understanding	5.2	9.1	22.6	49.2	13.9
Presentation	4.0	7.2	21.6	53.1	14.0

Note: (a) Overall response rate of 1,149 but varies for different aspects of the question.

Almost all respondents (95.9%) to the survey had sought information on the results of their elections from the NSWEC website. This result is not unexpected as both the survey and results were obtained via the NSWEC's website.

Candidates were positive about the results information on the NSWEC website in terms of accuracy, ease of understanding of the information provided and its presentation, but with less positive feedback on the timeliness of result updates on the NSWEC website.

Table 23: 2008 Local Government Elections, Candidates on Results Information on the NSWEC Website, Percentages. (a)

	% Very Unsatisfied	% Unsatisfied	% Neutral	% Satisfied	% Very Satisfied
Ease of understanding	3.5	7.2	17.9	53.8	17.5
Presentation	3.4	6.3	17.4	56.7	16.2
Timeliness of updates	13.6	15.9	21.4	36.7	12.4
Accuracy	2.8	2.5	23.5	51.5	19.7

Note: (a) Overall response rate of 1,150.

In conclusion, taken across all services provided by the NSWEC, registered political parties, groups and candidates were very positive overall about the NSWEC's conduct of the 2008 Local Government Elections.

Section 6: Support for Election Staff

Election officials are the front line in the conduct of elections with responsibilities for the impartial administration of electoral laws, policies and procedures to ensure the integrity of election results. Selection and training are the keys to ensuring the required outcomes.

The front line staff involved in providing an election include Returning Officers, Returning Officers Support Officers, Polling Place Managers, Deputy Polling Place Managers, Election Officials, Office Assistants and Scrutiny Assistants. These staff members undertake the preparatory work for the elections and on election day, manage the polling places, the issuing of votes, the counting of votes and resolving difficulties experienced by electors.

It is not possible for the NSWEC to retain election staff between elections hence recruitment and training of election staff was a major component of preparing for the Local Government elections. For the 2008 Local Government Elections the NSWEC employed 13,684 staff in temporary positions. Of this total figure, 11,258 (82.3%) were employed to deliver voting services on election day itself as either Polling Place Managers, Deputy Polling Place Managers or polling staff. The total number of staff employed in each of the categories of staffing is provided below.

Table 24: 2008 Local Government Elections, Election Official Categories, Numbers and Percentages.

Staff Categories	Number	%
Returning Officer Support Officers	10	0.1
Returning Officers	90	0.7
Office Assistants	2,326	17.0
Polling Place Managers	2,205	16.1
Deputy Polling Place Managers	811	5.9
Polling Staff	7,607	55.6
Scrutiny Assistants	635	4.6
Total	13,684	100.0

Of the staff employed only for election day, 82.5% had worked at an election previously in a variety of roles. In terms of staff employed in polling places, 80.9% had previous polling place experience. Amongst Returning Officers 60.0% had worked at a previous State General election. A comparable figure for Local Government elections was not available.

Responsibilities of Election Staff

Returning Officers play a key role in the conduct of an election. The Returning Officers are appointed by the NSW Electoral Commissioner to be responsible for the conduct of the election in the council areas to which they are appointed according to the Local Government Act 1993 and the directions of the Electoral Commissioner.

Returning Officers are also the front line managers responsible for the oversight of staff distributed in some cases over different towns and over a range of polling places. The Regional Returning Officers' role is more complex again with responsibility for more than one council's elections and all this entails including, in some cases, considerable geographical distances.

Polling Place Managers are responsible for the operation of the polling place on the day of the election day. Key responsibilities are supervising the officers issuing the ballot papers to voters, managing the flow of voters, dealing with silent voters, answering enquiries, monitoring the supply of ballot papers, conducting the count and working with candidates' scrutineers who play an important role in witnessing the transparency and integrity of the election at the polling place.

Polling Place Managers train their team in their duties and therefore need to be fully familiar with all aspects of the electoral processes of election day. As many issues arise on election day, Polling Place Managers must be able to properly instruct election officials and deal with matters raised by electors, scrutineers and party workers. Silent voters are assisted to vote by the Polling Place Manager.

Polling Place Managers in large polling places are assisted by a Deputy Polling Place Manager.

Enquiry Officers manage the queues and answer elector enquiries amongst other duties while Ordinary Vote Issuing Officers issue ballot papers to enrolled electors.

Other categories of polling place staff are the Ballot Box Guards who ensure electors place completed ballot papers in the ballot boxes, monitor the ballot boxes so they are not tampered with and relieve Ordinary Vote Issuing Officers during breaks. Scrutiny Assistants are employed in certain polling places from around 5:30pm to assist in counting ballot papers, taking down voting screens and returning the venue to pre-lease condition.

Recruitment of Election Staff

Election staff as 'on the ground' election administrators are required to be and to be seen as impartial. To ensure the separation of the conduct of the election from those who potentially have an interest in the outcomes, the Returning Officer could not be an employee of the council for whom the election was being conducted. Other election officials however, such as office assistants; polling place managers and polling place staff could be employees of the council.

For the 2008 Local Government Elections, the NSWEC reviewed the performance of staff employed for the 2007 State General Election and built the findings into the selection criteria and training of officials.

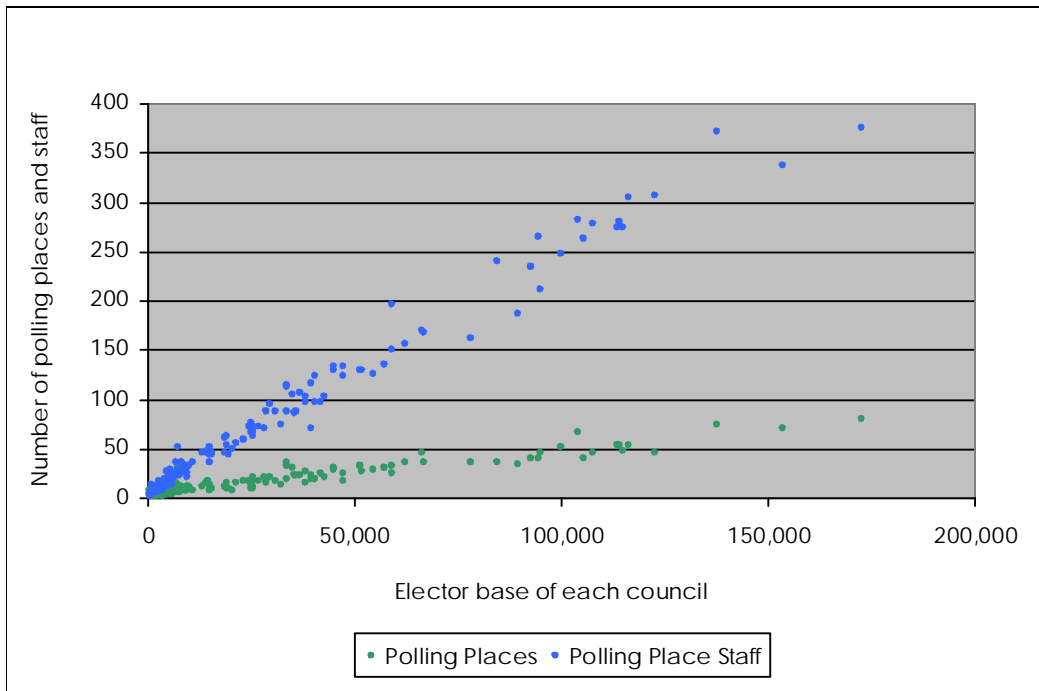
In the interests of achieving the best customer services possible, almost 32,000 previous employees of either the 2007 State Government Election or 2007 Federal Government Election were contacted regarding their interest in working for the 2008 Local Government Elections.

Application by interested individuals was by an online registration system placed on the NSWEC's website on 2 June 2008. Recruitment of election staff commenced with the Returning Officers and Returning Officer Support Officers.

Determining staffing levels for elections is challenging. It is based on the number of electors estimated to attend each polling place. The process is not a science and involves judgement as well as the use of a formula that uses as much historic and current information as possible tempered by local knowledge as well as projections of the expected number of votes to be taken at each venue.

All polling places must have a minimum of two staff, one of whom is the Polling Place Manager. The polling place staffing formula is based on 600 votes per issuing table while the projected number of votes determines the number of issuing tables. The number of tables in turn determines the level (salary) of the Polling Place Manager and the number of issuing tables per polling place determines whether that polling place requires a Deputy Polling Place Manager, a ballot box guard and/or enquiry officer.

Analysis revealed that as the number of electors per council increased so did both the number of polling places and polling place staff. The following graph shows the relationship between the number of polling place staff and number of polling places with the elector base of the council.



Graph 7: 2008 Local Government Elections, Staffing and Number of Polling Places by Elector Base.

Decisions on staffing have significant impacts with miscalculations producing either an under resourced polling place causing inconvenience to electors and difficulties for the Polling Place Manager or over resourcing which results in under utilised staff. This is a subject included in the NSWEC's post elections de-brief.

Returning Officer Support Officers

The NSWEC established a group of ten experienced election officials to provide support and guidance to Returning Officers throughout the election period and to ensure consistency across NSW in implementation of policies and procedures. The Returning Officer Support Officers were drawn from a pool of NSWEC permanent staff and former Returning Officers.

Each of the Returning Officer Support Officers was responsible for a small number of Returning Officers. Each support officer was trained on processes and procedures to be implemented at the 2008 Local Government Elections. The Returning Officer Support Officers answered a total of 12,423 calls from Returning Officers and their staff over the three months July to September 2008. As with the Candidates Help Desk, the bulk of these calls (75.9%) were made in August and September. The bulk of these calls related to operational matters linked to the election timetable while a certain proportion (16.1%) of calls from Returning Officers or their office staff related to information communication technology issues.

Returning Officers

In 2007 the NSWEC conducted a review of the role of Returning Officers in Local Government elections. The findings of this review were incorporated in the 2008 recruitment and training strategies.

The statewide recruitment campaign for Returning Officers commenced in December 2007. Advertisements were placed in local papers and contact made with previous Returning Officers from the 2004 Local Government Elections, council by-elections as well as State and Federal elections to ascertain their interest in working for the 2008 Local Government Elections. Interviews were conducted throughout NSW in early 2008.

There were difficulties in identifying suitable people for all Local Government areas. This shortage of suitably experienced and skilled individuals in parts of NSW was also a catalyst for the introduction of Regional Returning Officers. All Returning Officers were selected by April 2008.

For the 2008 elections, 90 Returning Officers were recruited for 148 council areas of which 40 were metropolitan Returning Officers; 27 stand alone country Returning Officers and 23 Regional Returning Officers. All Returning Officers were fulltime for ten weeks from 21 July to 26 September 2008.

The 2008 Local Government Elections were the first time that all Returning Officers were required to be on duty full time. Previously only metropolitan Returning Officers had been full time. In State General Elections all Returning Officers are full time. There were concerns from some country councils about this change however the Returning Officers' office had to be staffed appropriately to deal with candidate and election official enquiries, postal votes and pre-poll votes. Further, candidates previously had complained about the lack of availability of part time Returning Officers.

The Regional Returning Officer structure reduced the number of Returning Officers required and enabled all Returning Officers to be full time and for full services to be provided to all councils.

Polling Place Managers and Other Election Officials

It was the responsibility of the Returning Officer to recruit staff for the council area. Training was provided to Returning Officers to ensure that people with the right skills are employed and trained to a high standard in the duties required of them.

Interest in working as either an election official or office assistant was high with registrations of interest received from individuals for election official positions (24,787 applications) and for Office Assistant positions (11,763).

Election experience was seen as a beneficial background for Polling Place Managers because of the wide range of challenging incidents that can arise on election day and the need to closely supervise polling day staff issuing ballot papers and counting votes at the close of polls. This was balanced

with the need for a steady flow of new Polling Place Managers to meet emerging challenges.

Office Assistants were employed in Returning Officers' or Regional Returning Officers' offices performing clerical duties. People interested in the office assistant positions required previous work experience in an office environment, high level customer service skills and the ability to undertake tasks quickly and accurately under minimum supervision.

Prior election experience was beneficial for those staff dealing with candidates and assisting Returning Officers with activities that involved sound judgement such as registering 'How-to-Vote' material or checking nominations for candidates against established criteria.

While it was preferred that polling day staff had election experience it was not essential. There was an emphasis upon the skills and abilities to provide excellent customer services and the patience to perform repetitive duties over a long period of time with diligence and attentiveness.

To combine local knowledge and convenience of staff, polling day employees were appointed to polling places as close as possible to their homes. Closeness to home had to be balanced in the case of applicants having a second language with the need for staff who spoke languages common in certain councils. Similarly, indigenous people were appointed to polling places within reasonable travelling distance where it was known there would be high numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander electors attending.

Upon acceptance of any offer of employment the applicant was required to undertake training as preparation for election day and their duties.

Training of Election Staff

The main purpose of training is to improve the quality of services delivered to electors, potential electors, candidates and political parties and to ensure that the election is conducted impartially and accurately.

For the 2008 Local Government Elections, training was conducted by the NSWEC for all election staff:

- Returning Officer Support Officers;
- Returning Officers;
- Polling Place Managers and Deputy Polling Place Managers;
- Office Assistants; and
- Polling Officials.

Training was provided by the NSWEC either centrally in the case of Returning Officers Support Officers and Returning Officers or locally for Polling Place Managers and other election day staff. Returning Officers were responsible

for the training of Polling Place Managers and Polling Place Managers were responsible for the training of election day staff.

The NSWEC has a clear and strong position on appropriate conduct for all election officials concerning impartiality and accountability. These requirements are integrated into the setting of responsibilities and training provided to election staff. The difficulties however of instilling this in staff employed only for one day for regular but infrequent elections or on a 'once only' basis cannot be underestimated.

The risk assessment and management process that the NSWEC undertook as part of the preparations for the 2008 Local Government Elections identified training as a major risk reduction strategy. The major risks that the NSWEC addressed in the training of Returning Officers are impartiality and accuracy in the counting processes, managing relationships with councils, candidates, scrutineers and electors, dealing with the media and undertaking statutory requirements such as advertising.

All Returning Officers received four days of training covering key elements of the Returning Officers' role including all processes in the lead up to election day through to the close of office. Training for groups of Returning Officers occurred over May to July 2008.

A particular challenge for the 2008 Local Government Elections training programme was the uncertainty surrounding the passage of the NSW Parliament of the Bill to amend the Local Government Act 1993 and the Regulation.

For the first time for Local Government elections the NSWEC developed an online e-learning programme for Polling Place Managers in addition to a two hour face to face training session conducted by the Returning Officer. The e-learning module contained extensive training on the responsibilities of the polling place manager, the various types of counts, accounting and reconciling ballot papers and sorting and counting votes as well as the polling place setup and procedures for election day. This training was complemented by the provision of a manual and support by the Returning Officer.

Deputy Polling Place Managers were also required to undertake the home study and face to face training components.

All election official who accepted a position in a polling place was provided with a manual for pre reading and required to arrive at the polling place early on election day to participate in an information session conducted by the Polling Place Managers on their duties and arrangement in the polling place.

Returning Officer Support Officers received one day specific training on their role and then participated in the Returning Officer training programme. Office Assistants due to the role they play in Returning Officers' offices attended two days of Returning Officer training and were provided further training by the Returning Officer on site.

Operational Support of Election Staff

The effective functioning of Returning Officers and other election staff relies upon them having the necessary information and support as well as the right materials at the right time and in the right quantities. To ensure that this occurred, there are extensive communications and supply networks either provided directly by the NSWEC or provided through contracts managed by the NSWEC.

Handbooks and Manuals

In the lead up to the 2008 Local Government Elections the NSWEC completed a review of all election forms and manuals to be used by Returning Officers, clerical assistants and election officials throughout the election. As a result, all forms and manuals were changed to incorporate the amendments to the Local Government (General) Amendment (Elections) Regulation 2008. The delay in passing of the Regulation meant that some of these documents were available later than had been planned. All forms and manuals were available on the NSWEC intranet for staff.

The training was supported by materials such as a Local Government Elections Manual and a Returning Officer Diary itemised for activities by key dates, including council liaison, and the forms that had to be forwarded to the NSWEC by set days. The diary was also used to record any incidents or complaints to ensure a record was maintained in case the NSWEC needed to review the circumstances after the election.

In addition, Returning Officers received regular online bulletins and information sheets plus face-to-face and phone contact from the Returning Officer Support Officers. All Returning Officers' training included the use of the software for conducting a local count and the correct set up and management of a local counting centre. An intranet was set up for the use of Returning Officers providing links to key information and electronic processes such as nominations and groupings.

Manuals and handbooks to provide guidance and factual information were also produced for polling place staff, candidates, parties and scrutineers.

Procurement of Equipment and Materials

Elections use significant amounts of physical resources both specific election materials and standard office supplies. A major component is the production of the ballot papers.

Printing of ballot papers is a large scale logistical exercise with critical deadlines made more complex by the nature of Local Government elections. The NSWEC reviewed its existing practices for printing ballot papers as used in the 2004 Local Government Elections and the 2007 State General Election to improve efficiency and accuracy. To achieve security, quality and economies of scale ballot papers were not printed locally as previously occurred. A printer contracted by the NSWEC printed all ballot papers for all elections. This provided greater security control over the printing and helped ensure that ballot paper production was of a consistent format and quality.

The supplier arrangements were undertaken via a restricted tender approved by the NSW State Contracts Control Board. This strategy recognised the risks associated with such an important aspect of the elections. The operational demands required a supplier experienced in delivering comparable projects with high volume production requirements, the capacity to respond to all contingencies within a short space of time (the actual format of ballot papers are not determined until the close of nominations) and demonstrated experience of an exercise of the proportions and logistical complexity as Local Government elections.

A total of 8,968,000 ballot papers were printed and distributed to the 90 Returning Officer locations. 291 individual ballot paper formats were required for 2008 Local Government Elections. The design of the polls and referenda papers was produced in house and printed externally.

The equipment and material required by field election staff included:

- Office furniture for Returning Officers and staff;
- Polling place materials;
- Cardboard voting materials;
- Election forms – manuals, forms, signage, envelopes;
- Vote counting requirements;
- Computer and communications equipment; and
- Certified lists of electors resident in the council or wards.

Ensuring that election staff have the necessary material support to undertake their roles requires not just the procurement of supplies but also the receipt, packing, distribution and collection of all equipment and physical resources required for the conduct of the election.

The determination of the physical or material resources for Local Government elections is calculated using data on:

- Number of wards;
- Number of electors;
- Number of elections (councillor, mayor, referenda and polls);
- Voting centres – Returning Officer office, Pre-poll, Declared Institutions, Polling Places, Mobile Polling Centres if applicable;
- Projected votes; and
- Staffing levels.

Some of this information for example, number and type of elections was not known in detail till close of nominations on 13 August – a month before the election.

Where councils used a Regional Returning Officer there were less office and material requirements. The difficulties of storage in most Returning Officer offices and the logistics of supplying these quantities meant that distribution was undertaken in three stages. The initial office set up required Information technology equipment and office equipment, nomination and early voting material to be provided first.

The other main paper product purchased for the elections was the cardboard equipment (ballot boxes and voting screens). Approximately 500 pallets of cardboard material were packed and distributed throughout NSW for the elections. Procurement of this material was covered by the contract approved by the State Contracts Control Board for both the 2007 State General Election and the 2008 Local Government Elections.

The ballot paper used had 10% recycled content and the cardboard equipment had 70% recycled content. Around 200 tonnes of cardboard equipment was used at the 2008 Local Government Elections.



Pallets of Equipment and Materials ready for Distribution to Returning Officers, 2008 Local Government Elections.

The total cardboard supply for the 2008 Local Government Elections was:

- 25,815 voting screens;
- 1,025 wheelchair voting screens;
- 1,700 mobile ballot boxes;

-
- 3,199 caution signs;
 - 3,199 litter bins;
 - 5,868 small ballot boxes, and
 - 3,400 large ballot boxes.

There were approximately 160 individual items of election material used by Returning Officers to conduct their elections. The purchasing of items required for polling places commenced in January 2008 and the following list provides a sense of the amount of detail required for the logistics of the elections:

- 450 equipment bags;
- 6,000 chunky pencils;
- 13,500 stationery bags;
- 6,000 magnifying sheets;
- 2,500 cutters;
- 3,500 finger stalls;
- 2,000 folders;
- 6,000 pencil sharpeners;
- 3,500 Post – it note pads;
- 3,00 boxes bands;
- 3,000 scissors;
- 25,000 ballot pencils;
- 16,000 ID pouches;
- 3,500 garbage bags;
- 7,500 plastic bags; and
- 22,000 black pens.

In addition, approximately 260 pallets of election material and information communication technology equipment were distributed to Returning Officers' offices.

The election material distribution containing:

-
- 490,000 forms;
 - 1,910,000 envelopes;
 - 45,100 signs;
 - 25,000 manuals;
 - 35,000 printed labels;
 - 480,000 unprinted labels; and
 - 38,000 plastic security seals

Telecommunications and Computer Support Services

The NSWEC provided telecommunications hardware and software systems and information communications technology support services to all Returning Officer offices across NSW. Rolling out the communications and information technology infrastructure is complex and on a large scale. As part of this support and to improve the efficiency for Returning Officers, the NSWEC undertook further developments to the software 'Election Management Application' for the 2008 Local Government elections. Training and user manuals to assist users of each new module were prepared.

The 'Election Management Application' was introduced at the 2007 State General Election as an internet based application for the use of Returning Officers, office assistants and head office staff. The suite of software modules was developed to assist with managing election processes such as inquiries, election day staffing, candidate nominations, the distribution and return of declaration votes, results and non-voter administration.

Further enhancements to the systems were implemented prior to the 2008 Local Government Elections to refine the developed modules. Additional modules were developed to assist with continued registration and registration of political parties and election resourcing.

The provision of support to Returning Officers regarding information technology issues was important operationally as many election staff were unfamiliar with the NSWEC's customised applications. Around one fifth (16.1%) of calls to the Returning Officer Support Officers were referred onwards within the NSWEC for assistance with the 'Election Management Application' or other information technology issues.

Web Based Payroll

Previously payment and handling of administrative matters associated with the employment of election staff had been undertaken by councils and was a significant burden upon them. This work was undertaken by the NSWEC where all administrative processes were undertaken online including registration for employment, offers of employment and provision of payroll

data. The additional advantage of the online approach was timeliness, provision of information and the ease of conducting payroll audits.

This innovation incorporated an Australian first of online Tax File Number declarations. The Australian Tax Office approved the NSWEC operating this as a pilot scheme on behalf of the Australian Tax Office. It was the first time a totally online approach for tax file declarations had been allowed.

To assist applicants and staff with their queries, a call centre also operated from Tuesday, 3 June 2008. This payroll inquiry centre took a total of almost 2,000 calls of which 90% were answered, with the remainder being received either after hours or abandoned after being queued. The NSWEC also utilised SMS technology to communicate with employees.

Supplier Arrangements

The procurement of supplies and services also entails payment for these. Invoices received included those for lease of office space and voting centres, Returning Officer expense claims, supplier invoices and projects undertaken centrally at the NSWEC such as printing of ballot papers. Payment of invoices was a significant exercise with processing undertaken within the parameters of NSW Government's guidelines.

For the 2008 elections, almost 8,000 invoices were received for payment. Approximately 500 invoices were paid in July; 860 in August; 2,570 in September and a further 4,000 through to the end of 2008. The NSWEC's policy on payment of invoices is 30 days from date of invoice however, the delivery of an election is a time critical event during which the NSWEC needs to engage many new suppliers and upon whom it has a significant dependence. To assist in developing a good relationship with these suppliers and to reduce the risks of non supply of critical materials, the NSWEC did not withhold payment to the last available date. Analysis of payment data against payment due dates found the NSWEC paid on average 8 days before payment due date.

Collection of Materials Post Election

Polling Place Managers returned all voting materials to the Returning Officer on election night. The collection of equipment, furniture and materials was undertaken in groupings of:

- Ballot papers for the LGGC counting centre;
- Certified lists of electors;
- Used and unused ballot papers and used election material;
- Office equipment and unused material; and
- Office furniture.

Cardboard equipment (that is ballot boxes and voting screens) used within Returning Officers' offices, additional pre-poll locations and polling places were either set aside for re-use or recycled.

Due to the legislative provisions applying to used and unused ballot papers and other material such as certified lists, these materials were returned to the NSWEC for security destruction. Approximately 300 pallets of materials were returned to the NSWEC warehouse. Of this number 150 pallets are retained for the legislated period and then all non recyclable material removed and the remainder disposed of via security destruction. This process commenced in March 2009 with approximately 125 pallets of ballot papers (around 100 tonnes) pulped for recycling.

Satisfaction of Election Staff - Feedback

The NSWEC developed with an independent agency an online survey to gain feedback from election staff such as Polling Place Managers and election day staff.⁴⁰ A separate online survey was developed within the NSWEC for Returning Officers.

The surveys covered important operational areas including recruitment processes, training, polling places processes, counting of results and future recruitment as well as customer service issues. These were the areas on which the NSWEC sought feedback to enable it to improve services for future Local Government elections.

Election staff were emailed the survey link on 22 September 2008 and followed up with a reminder email prior to the survey being closed. Of the 11,246 staff emailed the survey link a total of 7,023 election staff participated in the voluntary feedback survey with 94.7% completing the survey.⁴¹ The overall response rate was 62.4% of the total staff employed for election day. Of the respondents, around two thirds were election officials (67.0%), 22.7% Polling Place Managers, 7.3% Deputy Polling Place Managers and 3.0% Scrutiny Assistants.

At the 2008 Local Government Elections 59.9% of respondents had worked at a previous election. Almost two thirds (65.2%) were female and 34.8% male. Of the total respondents 16.5% had been born in a country other than Australia and 1.1% were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.

The age range of respondents varied from 18 to 78 years with the majority of election day staff aged between 50 to 59 years (29.4%). Half (50.1%) were aged between 40 to 59 years.

In terms of recruitment, 96.9% of respondents were very satisfied, satisfied or neutral on the online employment application process.

Both Polling Place Managers and election day officials were questioned on the training received. The training and training materials were well received with the vast majority expressing a high level of satisfaction.

The usefulness of the content of the online Polling Place Manager training module was reported by the majority (87.4%) to be either very satisfactory

(42.8%) or satisfactory (44.6%). Online training was received well by 90.4% of Polling Place Managers with 96.1% very satisfied, satisfied or neutral on the content and 93.1% similarly very satisfied, satisfied or neutral on the usability of the online training.

Polling Place Managers reported that:

- It was clear what was required of them on election day (97.2%);
- The content of their Polling Place Managers Handbook was accurate (93.4%); and
- The quality of information in their Handbook was satisfactory or better (96.8%).

Election day staff also reported that the content of the 'Election Official Handbook was accurate (86.8%) with the quality of the information satisfactory to very satisfactory.

70.2% of election staff felt that the amount of training given to conducting the count was appropriate although 29.8% felt that more time would have been beneficial. On the overall training however, 91.8% felt that quantity of training was appropriate with only 8.2% feeling that more training was required.

The training provided by Polling Place Managers was regarded very positively by 84.2% of election staff with nearly half finding it very satisfactory (46.1%), and over a third finding it satisfactory (38.2%). Only 2.9% thought the training by Polling Place Managers was unsatisfactory and 12.9% neutral. It does appear that the training and materials were comprehensive as 97.1% of election officials reported being able to respond to electors' queries.

The greatest majority of polling place staff felt the organisation of the polling place was satisfactory to very satisfactory (91.2%). In the experience of three quarters (76.1%) of the respondents the busiest time at the polling place was between 8am and 11am. Allowing for the uneven flow of electors through the polling place, 75.8% of polling staff thought the staffing provided for the polling place was sufficient. A similar proportion reported that the longest time at any time during the day that an elector had to queue to vote was ten minutes or less. There were some polling places where there were reports of queues of one hour, but 81.9% of officials reported that they did not receive any complaints from electors about the time they had to queue to vote. Of those who did receive complaints (18.1%), the majority received ten or less complaints.

In terms of accessibility of the polling place, 83.6% of officials did not receive any complaints from electors on this subject. Of the 16% who did receive complaints, the bulk (20%) reported receiving between one to ten complaints on accessibility. Almost all officials (93%) reported electors wanting to vote for other councils than the one in which the polling place was situated.

The operational issues that election officials in polling places raised were the staffing of the polling place especially in areas with a high proportion of

culturally and linguistically diverse communities, staff facilities, some occupational health and safety issues, labelling of ballot boxes, size and colour of ballot papers which caused confusion for staff and electors, availability of excuses and enrolment forms, recycling of 'how to vote' materials provided by candidates to electors, rubbish removal, insufficient electoral rolls, difficulties locating names on iRoll, better maps of boundaries so that electors could be directed to correct polling places.

While many election staff noted that the work on election day was arduous and at times demanding, feedback from election staff indicated a high level of satisfaction with the payment methods (97.8%), speed of payment (94.0%) and amount of payment received (76.1%). A good indication of the satisfaction of election staff in terms of their ability to provide services and their employment conditions can be measured by the number of staff who would work, based on their experience at this election, for the NSWEC again. Of the election staff who participated in the feedback survey 97.1% indicated that they would be interested in working for the NSWEC again with 40.5% interested in taking on a higher role such as polling place manager.

The respondents to the Returning Officer survey (94.4%) provided similar if more positive responses. 90.0% were satisfied to very satisfied with the application process, 93.9% felt that the training better equipped them to execute their role, 100% were very positive about the overall support provided by the Returning Officer Support Officers, a similarly positive response was received in relation to the materials provided by the NSWEC for training and for operational support.

On broader issues such as the NSWEC's conduct of the election, 93.7% of polling place staff felt the election was conducted impartially. An identical proportion of responding Returning Officers also were satisfied or very satisfied with the NSWEC's overall conduct of the election.

Section 7: The Election

Election day ran smoothly overall with voters attending polling places in significant numbers. Most electors voted in the morning, as was the trend at the 2007 State General Election. More metropolitan electors voted in person on the day than in the country where there was less attendance voting.

Voting

The vast majority of votes taken at the 2008 Local Government Elections were ordinary votes cast at a polling place on election day. Of the total formal votes cast statewide 79.9% were cast in polling places across NSW on election day.

Three types of votes are distributed to electors on election day. The type of vote the elector receives is determined by their individual circumstances and includes:

- Ordinary
Issued to an elector whose name and address is on the roll at the polling place.
- Silent
Issued to an elector whose name appears on the roll but their address has been suppressed.
- Section Vote
 - Name Not On Roll
Issued to an elector whose name cannot be found on the roll but claims to be entitled to vote; and
 - Name Already Marked As Voted
Issued to an elector whose name is already marked off as having voted, or whose roll number appears on the Polling Centre report (list of postal voters), but claims not to have voted.

Unlike State and Federal elections, and as legislated in the Act, absent voting is not available at NSW Local Government elections for electors who are outside their council area or ward on election day. This presents some difficulties for the NSWEC as electors are often familiar with the use of absent voting at the State and Federal level and are unaware of the restrictions at the Local Government level. While the NSWEC statewide advertising campaign endeavoured to inform electors of these arrangements, unfortunately some electors still attempted to absent vote outside their council area.

Polling places were open to electors on election day from 8 am to 6 pm. Feedback from election staff indicates that the majority of electors attended polling places in the morning (76.0% of election staff indicated that of the busiest time of the day was between 8 am and 11 am) with a small peak in the hour prior to the close of polls. Quieter periods were experienced generally in the early afternoon.

Vote Counting

Candidates, electors and council management all seek the results within the shortest possible time. There are also legislative pressures in the case where the mayor of a council is to be elected by the councillors from among their number as the Local Government Act 1993 requires that this is to take place at a council meeting within three weeks after the date of the ordinary election (and every September for the remainder of the council term thereafter) (section 290(1)(a)).

The provision covering election of a mayor by councillors has caused problems in the past when the ordinary election result is delayed or a recount or irregularity has occurred. A proposal to change the deadline for the election of the mayor by the councillors to within three weeks after the election is declared rather than from the date of the election was included in the Local Government Amendment (Elections) Bill 2008 introduced into the NSW Parliament but not passed.

The accuracy of vote counting, the timeliness of declaring results and the impartiality of this process are key tenets of electoral administration. To ensure this the NSWEC established place quality assurance systems to cover local counts and at the central vote counting centre in Sydney.

To vote formally for a councillor, electors were required to indicate a first preference for at least half the number of candidates to be elected. To vote formally for a mayor, electors were required to indicate a first preference and could allocate preferences for as many other candidates as they wished. The directions printed on each ballot papers specified the number of preferences required for a formal vote.

Overall, counting was distributed equally across counts conducted locally and those undertaken at the Local Government Counting Centre. The counts conducted locally numbered 167 (106 councillor elections, 27 mayoral elections, 17 referenda and 17 poll questions) and a recount at Leeton. The counts conducted at the Local Government Counting Centre numbered 165 elections plus the Manly Council recount.

Returning Officers and Polling Place Managers were trained in the counting process, the use of relevant software and the procedures to be followed when ballot papers were forwarded to the NSWEC Local Government Counting Centre in Sydney.

All election night counts were verified the next day by a 'check count' at the Returning Officers' offices. Available postal, pre-poll, Declared Institution, silent and section votes were included in this count as well.

The timeframe the NSWEC set to complete the count and declare all elections was:

Saturday 13 September 2008:

Preliminary results from each polling place progressively online from 6.30pm and referenda questions counted.

Sunday 14 September 2008:

Check count to confirm results.

Monday 15 September 2008:

Postal votes and poll questions counted.

Tuesday 16 – Friday 26 September 2008:

Commence distribution of preferences.

Friday 26 September 2008:

Counting to conclude.

Local Counts

Local counts comprised all mayoral, referenda and polls, proportional counts without above the line voting and Optional Preferential Councillor elections. A total of 167 elections and one recount, were counted locally. These consisted of 105 councillor elections (63.3%) for 73 councils, 27 mayoral elections (16.3%), 17 referendum questions (10.2%) for 25 councils and 17 poll questions (10.2%) for eight councils were counted locally under the supervision of the Returning Officers.

Returning Officers were provided with a help desk to assist with any technical or count related issues. Many of the local counts had been completed by the afternoon of Tuesday 16 September 2008 and the last on Wednesday 24 September 2008. All counts were checked and verified before the Returning Officer declared the election results.

Centralised Computer Count

The NSWEC is authorised under clause 351 of the Local Government (General) Regulation to send ballot-papers to a central counting office administered by the NSWEC and counted according to arrangements approved by the NSWEC.

Ballot papers with Group Voting Squares were sent to the NSWEC Local Government Counting Centre for data entry and count.

The NSWEC established an independent Observation Team to observe the NSWEC's preparation, planning and operation of the computer count. The observation team was chaired by a senior staff member from the Victorian Electoral Commission and included nominees from the Local Government Shires Association and the Department of Local Government. The Observation Team reported that:

"The team was impressed with the count process and could not fault it, and feel that scrutineers and candidates should have no concerns regarding process, transparency and integrity of the central count conducted by the NSWEC."⁴²

The Observation Team made five recommendations for consideration in future elections. These included occupational health and safety management, practical design layout, security issues, management of

scrutineers and disaster recovery. The recommendations made will be addressed in future elections. The report of the independent Observation Team is available on the NSWEC website.

The more complicated counts that is, above and below the line voting and Proportional Representation voting were conducted centrally at the NSWEC Local Government Counting Centre using NSWEC vote counting software. These Councils are listed in Appendix 12. The Counting Centre was located in Riverwood, Sydney. 166 elections (including one recount) were counted at the NSWEC Local Government Counting Centre.

The secure transport of ballot papers to the counting centre was ensured through the use of dedicated vehicles with the sealed ballot paper bags transported directly to the Local Government Counting Centre. For country deliveries the sealed ballot paper bags travelled in sealed containers using numbered seals.

The data entry operation at the Local Government Counting Centre consisted of 400 operators dealing with 1.3 million ballot papers working over two shifts each of eight hours. Data entry started Tuesday 16 September and finished Monday 22 September 2008. In 2004 1.4 million ballot papers representing 158 elections were counted centrally with an additional 1.3 million ballot papers containing only a single marking in a grouped voting square were 'bulk entered'. Data entry commenced on 30 March 2004 and finished on 4 April 2004. Twelve full recounts were conducted at the counting centre.⁴³



Data Entry operators at the Local Government Counting Centre, 2008 Local Government Elections.

The quality assurance system for the computerised count entailed all ballot papers being put through two data entry rounds with a comparison between the two sets of data to identify any differences. Where there were mismatches between the data lots, a third verification data entry round was applied to correct mismatches. Before running each count, data entry totals were reconciled against election night figures to ensure totals were complete and correct. As information became available, the NSWEC website was updated on election data entry and count status.

The Local Government Counting Centre schedule was updated twice daily for registered political parties, groups, candidates and councils to reflect changes to the dates of data entry and counting times and posted on the NSWEC's website.

Declaration of Election Results

Uncontested elections were declared on 13 September 2008.

First preference results for every candidate were provided to councils on election night. The first results became available on the NSWEC website at 6.20pm election day for a booth in the Bellingen Shire. Most election night results were posted by 10pm that evening. This was possible through the introduction of a virtual tally room as requested by the NSW Local Government and Shires' Associations. The virtual tally room was a first for Local Government elections with the NSWEC providing regular updates of results on its website, bringing council elections into line with the services provided for State elections.

Results were progressively updated on the website as the count continued through to the declaration of candidates and referenda. Anticipated timings of data entry of ballot papers and running of the results could only be provided to councils and candidates due to the possibility of data reconciliation or other issues occurring that could produce changes to the counting schedule.

Declaration of results occurred after candidates were given 24 hours to consider whether to seek a recount.

Returning Officers provided the Declaration of Poll forms to the Electoral Commissioner, the General Manager of the Council, the Director-General, Department of Local Government and the Secretary of the Local Government and Shires' Associations of NSW. The results were also placed in newspapers throughout NSW.

Recounts

Any candidate can request a recount of ballot papers. Any request must be in writing to the Returning Officer within 24 hours of being notified of the election result, setting out the reasons for the request and signed by the candidate. A deposit to cover the cost of the recount must also be lodged. The Electoral Commissioner can also direct that a recount be undertaken.

Two recounts were sought. These were at Leeton Shire Council and Manly Council. The recount for Leeton Shire Council occurred locally with the outcome unchanged. The results were declared on 22 September 2008.

The first result for Manly was provided on 18 September with the recount occurring on 24 September 2008. The variance between the original and recount tallies was six votes. The recount did not alter the previous outcome. The results were declared on 24 September 2008.

In the 2004 Local Government Elections 12 recounts were undertaken.⁴⁴

Results of Contested Elections

In 2008, just over a third of total candidates (1,598; 34.6%) were nominated by registered political parties. These were 105 Labor party candidates, 93 Liberal and 44 Greens. The number of 'independent' candidates was 3,032 or 71.2%. Of all the candidates standing for election, the number of elected party candidates was 420 (28.5%) of a total of 1,474 vacant positions.

Of the total number of candidates elected, 73.5% were males and 26.5% were females. Of those who stood for election, around a third (35.1%; 1,080) of male candidates standing, were elected. The corresponding figure for female candidates was 24.9% (389).

In the 2008 Local Government Elections, most councils had a large vote for independent candidates.

The full results for each council are provided in Volume 2 to this report.

Results of Referenda

Election officials finalised the counts for any referenda and polls once councillor positions had been elected. All referenda were counted between 18 to 23 September 2008 with the majority being counted on Friday 19 September and Monday 22 September 2008.

Seventeen referenda questions were put to voters. Eleven (64.7%) were successful. The results for each council with a referendum are show below.

Table 25: 2008 Local Government Elections, Councils with Successful Referenda.

Council	Question	Endorsed
Ballina Shire Council	Reduce Councillor numbers	No
Burwood Council	Popularly elect mayor	Yes
Cabonne Shire Council	Abolish wards	No
Cabonne Shire Council	Reduce Councillor numbers	No

Council continued	Question	Endorsed
Cobar Shire Council	Reduce Councillor numbers	No
Inverell Shire Council	Reduce Councillor numbers	Yes
Kempsey Shire Council	Popularly elect mayor	Yes
Ku-ring-gai Council	Popularly elect mayor	No
Lachlan Shire Council	Reduce Councillor numbers	Yes
Manly Council	Reduce Councillor numbers	Yes
Moree Plains Shire Council	Reduce Councillor numbers	Yes
Mosman Municipal Council	Popularly elect mayor	Yes
Port Stephens Council	Popularly elect mayor	Yes
Snowy River Shire Council	Popularly elect mayor	Yes
Snowy River Shire Council	Reduce Councillor numbers	Yes
Council of the City of Sydney	Introduce wards	No
Weddin Shire Council	Abolish wards	Yes

In terms of the nature of the referenda questions, Table 26 following shows the results by question type. Referenda questions proposing changes to ward structures had differing outcomes. Two councils had proposed to abolish wards with one council successful. The endorsed referendum was put by Weddin Shire Council.

Table 26: 2008 Local Government Elections, Referenda Results, Frequencies. (a)

Referendum Question	Number	Endorsed
Popularly elect the mayor	7	5
Change number of councillors (all to reduce numbers)	7	5
Change ward structure (2 to abolish; 1 to introduce)	3	1
Total	17	11

(a) Two councils had two referenda questions. The total number of councils holding referenda was 15.

The referenda become effective at the 2012 Local Government Elections.

Poll Results

The results of polls are not binding upon a council. The feedback obtained by each council who polled their electors can be found on the NSWEC's website www.elections.nsw.gov.au.

Satisfaction with Provision of Results - Feedback

The NSWEC's website was the major source of results information for those interested. 95.7% candidates accessed information about results from the NSWEC website. The satisfaction of these candidates with the results provided on the NSWEC website ranged from 71.3% for ease of understanding; 72.9% for presentation; 71.2% for accuracy and 49.1% for timeliness of updates.

Satisfaction with information provided by NSWEC of how the count was conducted varied from 69.8% for level of detail; 63.1% for ease of understanding and 67.1% for presentation.

A very high proportion (94.1%) of all General Managers did not have any concerns regarding the accuracy of results for their council. A small majority of General Managers (52.6%) who responded to the NSWEC's survey did not have any elections counted at the central counting centre. Of those General Managers who had elections counted locally the majority reported that they had no concerns about the accuracy of the results of the count (98.0%). Those that did have concerns (6 General Managers or 5.9%), the issues raised related to possible undue pressure that may have been exerted by scrutineers, inaccurate information allegedly given to a journalist by a Returning Officer and a mistake that had to be corrected but which was said to remain on the website.

51.9% of General Managers were very satisfied, satisfied or neutral on the timeliness of results with a third (35.3%) unsatisfied and 12.7% very unsatisfied. The concerns that General Managers had in relation to results arose principally from the time taken to declare results. Nearly two thirds of General Managers (64.5%) reported that compared to the 2004 Local Government Elections, their results were declared later, 10.8% indicated that the results were declared earlier and 24.7% stated the timing was the same.

Those General Managers from councils with Regional Returning Officers were unhappier with the timeliness of result than those with single council Returning Officers. 56.4% of General Managers with Regional Returning Officers were very unsatisfied or unsatisfied with time taken to announce results on NSWEC website compared with 38.3% of General Managers with single council Returning Officers. 76.5% of General Managers with Regional Returning Officers said results were announced later than 2004 compared with 50% of General Managers with single council Returning Officers. Despite this, the majority (77.6%) of General Managers stated that they would use a Regional Returning Officer in future Local Government elections if offered.

Of those General Managers who had counts conducted at the central counting centre 67.1% indicated that the information provided by the NSWEC regarding when the count would be conducted was helpful. General Managers were positive about the presentation of the results on the website

and the communication of the results by the Returning Officer as Tables 27 and 28 indicate.

Table 27: 2008 Local Government Elections, General Managers on Election Results on NSWEC Website, percentages. (a)

	% Very Unsatisfied	% Unsatisfied	% Neutral	% Satisfied	% Very Satisfied
Ease of understanding	3.9	5.8	19.4	62.1	8.7
Accuracy	1.0	1.0	15.5	71.8	10.7
Timeliness	12.7	35.3	13.7	29.4	8.8
Presentation	4.9	6.9	21.6	58.8	7.8
Information of method of counting	3.9	10.8	25.5	52.9	6.9

Note (a) Overall response rate of 103

The following table shows the very strong degree of satisfaction expressed by General Managers for the Returning Officers communication of election results for councillor and mayoral elections. The higher 'neutral' response from General Managers on polls, referenda and mayoral elections would reflect that not all councils had these types of elections. All responses indicated that well over 90% of General Managers were either neutral or satisfied or very satisfied with the communication of results by Returning Officers.

Table 28: 2008 Local Government Elections, General Managers on Returning Officers' Communication of Election Results, percentages.(a)

	% Very Unsatisfied	% Unsatisfied	% Neutral	% Satisfied	% Very Satisfied
Councillor elections	1.9	4.9	9.7	64.1	19.4
Mayoral	2.1	0.0	25.0	54.2	18.8
Referenda	3.0	3.0	42.4	42.4	9.1
Polls	3.4	0.0	51.7	27.6	17.2

Note (a) Overall response rate of 103.

In terms of electors over half of the survey respondents (58.1%) looked for results the day after the election. There were however gender differences with males more likely to review the results on election night and the day after while females reviewed them the week after the election. Rural electors indicated that they were more active in using the website to seek results information than urban participants.

Additional feedback from candidates has been reported in Section 5 but in summary candidates were positive concerning the accuracy of the results, and the access to this information.

Section 8: 29 November 2008 Local Government By-elections

Three by-elections were held on 29th November 2008 to fill five vacancies in the Bland, Warren and Wellington Local Government areas that were not contested during the September 2008 general council elections. The vacancies related to areas where there were insufficient nominations received for the positions available for the elections to be declared.

Sufficient number of candidates stood for the by-elections to be conducted. In Wellington, seven candidates stood, in Bland six candidates and in Warren Ward A, two candidates. The gender profile did not vary greatly from that of the elections held earlier in September with one third of the total candidates for the November elections being female and two thirds male. The age range varied from 25 to 74 years. On this occasion, none of the candidates were nominated by a registered political party.

Detail of the by-elections is provided below.

Table 29: By elections by Council, Vacancies, Candidates and Electors, 29 November 2008.

Council	Vacancies	Candidates	Electors	Polling Places
Bland Shire Council	2	6	4,337	8
Warren Shire Council (A Ward)	1	2	443	2
Wellington Council	2	7	5,618	8
Total	5	15	10,398	18

The voting method for all three elections was Optional Preferential as per Schedule 4 of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005. Voters who could not vote in their council area could vote pre-poll at their local council office from Monday, 17 November 2008 up to 6 pm on Friday, 28 November 2008 during normal business hours. Applications for postal voting closed at 5pm on Friday, 24 November 2008. The NSWEC conducted voting at Declared Institutions from Monday, 24 November until Wednesday 26 November 2008.

Key election dates for the by-elections

Electoral rolls closed	Monday, 20 October 2008
Nominations closed	Wednesday, 29 October 2008
Registration of 'how-to-vote' material closed	Friday, 21 November 2008
Pre-poll voting started	Monday, 17 November 2008
Postal voting applications closed	Monday, 24 November 2008

Declared Institution voting commenced	Monday, 24 November 2008
Declared Institution voting concluded	Wednesday, 26 November 2008
Pre-poll voting closed	Friday, 28 November 2008
Election Day	Saturday, 29 November 2008
Return of postal votes closed	Monday, 1 December 2008
Distribution of preferences commenced	Tuesday, 2 December 2008

NSWEC permanent staff served as Returning Officers and travelled to the council area for key events such as close of nominations. The advertising campaign commenced on 8 October 2008 and concluded on 10 December 2008 with the declaration of results.

The NSWEC posted first preference results representing approximately 85% of the ordinary votes cast on the NSWEC website from 6pm Saturday, 29 November 2008. These votes were recounted the next day along with votes cast during pre-polling or at Declared Institutions. Postal votes were accepted up until 6pm on Monday, 1 December 2008 and then included in the count.

The November by-elections were considered as part of the 2008 Local Government Elections as they were sufficiently close to election day on 13 September 2008 to be regarded as part of the four yearly elections. In addition, there were economies of scale for councils if some operations were considered as part of the 2008 statewide exercise.

The successful candidates will hold office until September 2012, the balance of the original four year term. The results of these by-elections are reported as part of the results for the 2008 Local Government Elections in Volume 2 to this report and the expenditure in Volume 3.

Section 9: Post Elections:

The period after the declaration of the election results is characterised by a number of major activities: the conduct of an internal NSWEC debrief and the issuing of penalty notices for failure to vote at the 2008 Local Government Elections.

NSWEC's Internal Debrief:

The NSWEC established an internal debrief process to review key components of the election. This process covered all projects as well as the overall project management. The matters reviewed in the internal debrief of the NSWEC included reports of delays in the counting of votes, long queue lengths and shortages of ballot papers.

Timeliness of Centralised Vote Counting

Some stakeholders believed that sending votes to a central counting centre was a source of delays in the declaration of results.

The NSWEC investigated these claims by analysing the period of time between the date advised for likely commencement of entry of votes into the computerised counting system and when this actually occurred. In addition to identifying average elapsed times for all councils the NSWEC also examined the period of time between close of polls on election day and declaration of results.

This review identified that on average there was a one day difference between advice of when data entry would commence and when it did.

The review also established that there was on average a two day period between completion of the count and result declared including the mandatory 24 hours notice required to allow candidates to consider if a recount was sought.⁴⁵

Finally, there was an average period of nine days from close of polls on election day until the results were declared.

Across all councils the range for time taken from close of polls to results declared was six days to a maximum of 12 days. The councils where results were declared six days after the poll were Blacktown City Council, Camden Council, Hurstville City Council and North Sydney Council. Pittwater Council (Central Ward) was also declared six days after the election.

The councils where the greatest time elapsed before declaration of results were Lithgow City Council, Maitland City Council, Port Stephens Council, Tweed Shire Council, Willoughby City Council and Woollahra Municipal Council. Shoalhaven City Council (Second Ward) and (Third Ward). The results for these councils were declared after 12 days.

While these are average figures and some councils will have had their votes counted either earlier or later, counting for contested elections at the Local

Government Counting Centre finished three days earlier than the NSWEC's indicative schedule estimated.

No information was available to compare in the same rigorous way the elapsed time periods in the 2004 Local Government Elections. From the 2008 elections onwards however, the elapsed time periods will provide benchmarks for future performance measurement.

Polling Place Performance

Local Government elections in NSW are based on 'in attendance' voting with other limited voting options (such as pre-poll and postal voting). In the 2008 Local Government Elections as in previous elections, most votes were cast at a polling place (79.9% of all formal votes).

As a result, the experience of electors at polling places plays a large role in determining their perception of the conduct of elections. Delays in voting or the manner of polling place staff can have a profound impact on these perceptions, hence the NSWEC actively investigates claims of delays and other serious matters that occur at polling places.

The NSWEC received some complaints from stakeholders about polling places running out of ballot papers at various times throughout election day. In addition local media carried such reports. The NSWEC reviewed these reports and surveyed all Polling Place Managers and Returning Officers to obtain authoritative information on what shortages occurred (if any) at what polling places, the time period and how many electors were estimated to have been involved.

This process revealed that statewide, 16 (0.6%) polling places ran out of ballot papers for a period of time on election day. Analysis of responses received from the survey of Polling Place Managers revealed that the shortest time that any elector had to wait was less than 10 minutes up to one and a half hours. The approximate number of electors affected was 800 to 1,000.

Where shortages did occur, the Polling Place Manager advised electors of their options – either to wait for the delivery of ballot papers, seek directions to a nearby polling place where they could vote or to record their name in the Elections Excuse book to ensure they did not receive a penalty notice for failing to vote.

A summary of those polling places where there were shortages of ballot papers and the period of time these shortages existed is outlined in Table 30 following.

Table 30: 2008 Local Government Elections Polling Places with Shortages of Ballot Papers and Time Period.

Council	Polling places	Timing of shortage (minutes)
The Council of the Shire of Baulkham Hills	Thompsons Corner (West Pennant Hills Public School)	10
Blacktown City Council	Quakers Hill (Quakers Hill Public School)	90 over two occasions.
	Quakers Hill North (Barnier Public School)	30
Blue Mountains City Council	Blackheath (Blackheath Public School)	Short period (no time estimate available)
	Faulconbridge (Springwood High School)	
Fairfield City Council	William Stimson (William Stimson Public School)	20
The Council of the Shire of Hornsby	Dural (Dural Public School)	30
Lake Macquarie City Council	Fassifern (Fassifern Public School)	10
Liverpool City Council	Greenway Park (Greenway Park Public School)	20
	Prestons (Prestons Public School)	30 after close of polls for electors in queue at 6pm.
Parramatta City Council	Ermington Central (Rydalmere East Public School) - Elizabeth MaCarthur Ward	20
	Parramatta (Parramatta Town Hall)	Less than 10
Penrith City Council	Cranebrook (Samuel Terry Public School)	15
	Kemps Creek (Kemps Creek Public School)	30
Sutherland Shire Council	Oyster Bay (Oyster Bay Public School)	10
Woollahra Municipal Council	Bellevue Hill (Bellevue Hill Public School)	Short period (no time estimate available)

Having quantified the reports of ballot paper shortages, the NSWEC then examined the causes of shortages of ballot papers and long queues. It was found that contributors to shortages of ballot papers were driven by two primary factors - estimations by the NSWEC of elector turn out and management of the polling place.

Where a polling place had run out of ballot places for short periods, it was not because the NSWEC did not have sufficient numbers of ballot papers but invariably due to communication issues such as delays in the Polling Place Manager notifying the Returning Officer of the need to replenish supplies, delays in transportation or elector turnout far exceeding estimations.

In terms of estimating usage of polling places across NSW, the NSWEC estimated a turnout on election day of 81% of total electors enrolled. The actual turnout was 72%.⁴⁶ This turnout however, was not evenly distributed.

The NSWEC's internal review identified which projections showed the greatest variation from actual turnout. The analysis identified that of the total number of polling places, 4.1% (103) polling places exceeded projections by over 500 votes and 5.2% exceeded expectations by between 250 – 500 votes (129 polling places).

Although under utilisation of polling places is not a cause for delays, the NSWEC also identified those polling places where turn out was below expectations as this affects efficiency. 11.8% of polling places were 500 or more votes under expectations (295 polling places).

Projections were found to be more accurate overall for divided councils compared to undivided councils as shown below.

Table 31: 2008 Local Government Elections, Election Day Turnout Projections for NSW for Divided and Undivided Councils, Projections and Actuals.

	Divided Councils	Undivided Councils	NSW
Total electors	2,857,101	1,374,269	4,231,370
% projected turnout	80	82	81
% actual turnout	73	70	72

While the projections for divided councils were more accurate overall, where there were problems with projections for individual polling places, the variations from projections tended to be larger for divided councils.

Table 32: 2008 Local Government Elections, Variance from Projected Voter Turnout Election Day, NSW, Divided and Undivided Councils, Percentages.

	Divided Councils %	Undivided Councils %	NSW
Projections exceeded by 500+ votes	6.3	0.5	4.1
Projections exceeded by 250 - 500 votes	9.3	1.4	5.2
Projections below by 500+ votes	14.2	7.7	11.8

The results of these analyses will be built into future projection models and quality assurance strategies.

Registration of 'How to Vote' material

The NSWEC reviewed the new decentralised model of registration of 'How-To-Vote' material under which, for the first time, the registration of electoral material was delegated to Returning Officers. The aim was to make the registration process more accessible to applicants and to increase efficiency by spreading the administrative burden over a larger number of election officials.

The review was undertaken to determine whether the decentralised model should be continued and to identify any areas for improvement. A random sample of 32 inner metropolitan Sydney, outer metropolitan Sydney, regional coastal and regional country Local Government areas were selected as the basis for the review.

The internal review concluded that the decentralisation initiative was successful and with some modifications, should be continued for future Local Government elections. These modifications largely relate to revisions of the NSWEC's guides and forms for Returning Officers.

Performance Feedback to Election Staff

Recognising that many election staff are regular employees at election time, the NSWEC undertook a process of providing feedback to Polling Place Managers and election staff on their performance. In the case of Polling Place Managers an example of a function for which feedback was provided was reconciling ballot papers; for election day staff an appropriate example was accuracy in marking the rolls. Staff received feedback on performance against standards of accuracy as part of a staff development programme to be maintained for future elections.

The survey of election staff provided a wealth of information for internal use concerning training, handbooks and other administrative matters useful for streamlining NSWEC's processes and improving services to electors.

Review of Media Strategy

Media attention across the preparations for the elections and the electoral period concentrated on four main themes: council election budgets; candidate information seminars; general electoral issues; and recruitment of election officials. Overall, the NSWEC performed well with the NSWEC media spokesperson rated very highly on provision of information, interviews, availability and responding to inquiries. Dissatisfaction was raised in terms of the timeliness of results updates.

The issue that the NSWEC identified through its internal debrief process was the need to maintain the contact networks with the various forms of the media between elections.

Review of Complaints and Suggestions for Improvement

The NSWEC, like all agencies dealing with millions of customers, receives complaints, compliments, inquiries and suggestions. Typically, complaints comprise the highest proportion of customer feedback and provide opportunities to review services and communication. On some occasions feedback provides challenges as the reason for the complaint is a legislative or regulatory issue. The NSWEC also has limited legislative powers and functions which may constrain it from intervening directly in certain cases where allegations of unlawful activity have been made. Although the NSWEC received many compliments on the conduct of the 2008 Local Government Elections, the focus here is upon complaints received.

All written complaints made to the NSWEC during the elections were registered on the NSWEC Complaints Handling Register. These complaints fell into two broad groups; those which concerned issues of service standards but did not represent a breach of legislative or regulatory provisions; and those where there was an alleged lack of compliance with prescribed election procedures.

A total of 181 substantive complaints were made to the NSWEC during the election period. The complaints received came from across all parts of NSW with no council having a more significant proportion of complaints relative to other councils.

Alleged non compliance with electoral material provisions made up the largest proportion (27.1%) of these complaints, followed by difficulties at pre- or election day polling places for example, inadequate numbers of ballot papers (23.2%), and inappropriate conduct of candidate workers or election staff (12.7%). The remainder concerned a variety of matters from ineligibility of candidates to candidates' access to electoral roll information.

In terms of service standards, the most frequently received complaints concerned polling place locations and access, and staffing at polling places. Complaints were received also from electors about telecommunication difficulties with the Elector Inquiry Centre. Other complaints concerned receipt of postal voting forms and difficulties contacting Returning Officers.

Suggestions for improvement ranged from improving the electoral process, polling locations, assistance for older electors or those with disabilities or

language difficulties, increasing communication about the election by providing more targeted information. Other suggestions concerned changing voting procedures and increasing participation in voting.

Comments by General Managers included:

- Legislative change to ensure for example 'How to Vote' material also included the ward name in divided councils;
- Communication campaign and issues regarding the brochure and newspaper advertisements;
- More multi ward polling places;
- Greater consideration in choosing polling places of the needs of party workers handing out election material;
- Reviewing the method of estimating polling usage so ballot paper allocation is more accurate; and
- Providing councils with details of pre-poll facilities in adjoining councils to allow easier and faster re-direction of intending pre-poll voters.

Of those General Managers who had suggestions on how to improve electoral services the largest number of these suggestions (roughly one third), concerned the cost of the election. Other comments related to the preference for local councils to run their own elections and the need for NSWEC to better support Returning Officers by better information communication technology infrastructure and servicing. Some responses suggested moving to a totally postal vote approach to Local Government elections.

Some of the comments received appear to indicate a lack of understanding about the role of the NSWEC with respect to the legislation.

"Changing the Act and implementing it just before the election was totally unfair to independents with no party to deal with electoral funding changes. I know (sic) of one independent candidate who was unable to contest the elections once they worked out all the additional rules that were required."

The findings of the NSWEC's internal debrief are considered also in Section 11 'Evaluation of Conduct of the Elections' and Section 12 'Future Directions'.

Non-voters and Issuing of Penalty Notices

Another major 'post election' activity is to identify those electors who did not vote and to administer the relevant legislative provisions.

The NSWEC has an obligation under the Local Government Act 1993 to issue penalty notices to electors who failed to vote in Local Government elections and who did not have a valid reason for not voting.

Under the Local Government Act (1993), legitimate reasons for not voting include:

- Death;
- Absence from the area on polling day;
- Ineligibility to vote;
- Religious reasons prevent attendance at a polling booth; and
- Other reason acceptable to the Electoral Commissioner.

The process of identifying non-voters entails the NSWEC scanning the roll marked with the names of those electors who have voted to identify those who appear not to have been marked off the roll and not voted. Using this initial list, the NSWEC identifies those electors who are deceased, moved interstate or very elderly and those who provided an excuse for not voting.

This process ensures that the issuing of penalty notices is targeted to those appear not to have valid reasons as to why they did not vote. The penalty notice provides recipients with the options of:

- Advising, in writing, their reason for not voting;
- Claiming they did vote and providing details of where they voted;
- Paying the penalty; or
- Applying for the matter to be heard by a Court.

The penalty for not voting in a Local Government elections is \$55, higher than the \$25 penalty for failure to vote in a State General election.

Across NSW 672,794 electors failed to vote at the 2008 Local Government Elections or 14.8% as a percentage of the total NSW electoral roll.⁴⁷

The five councils with the lowest non-voter rate against of enrolment were:

- Gundagai Shire Council 10.0%
- Blayney Shire Council 10.5%
- Temora Shire Council 10.7%
- Upper Lachlan Shire Council 10.8%
- Bathurst Regional Council 11.0%

The five councils with the highest non-voter rate included:

- Woollahra Municipal Council 29.4%
- Central Darling Shire Council 29.2%
- Council of the City of Sydney 28.9%
- North Sydney Council 28.5%
- Waverley Council 27.7%

Reminder notices were issued to electors who did not reply to the initial notice or who provided an insufficient reason for failure to vote. Matters which were outstanding, or for which an unacceptable reply had been received, were referred to State Debt Recovery Office for enforcement in early May 2009. The State Debt Recovery Office follows up matters after three attempts by the NSWEC.

The revenue from non voting fines is not provided to the NSWEC. The State Debt Recovery Office forwards these revenues to the NSW Government's Consolidated Fund.

In the 2008 Local Government Elections, 398,489 penalty notices were issued, an increase of 6.9% compared to the 2004 Local Government Elections.

Details of penalty notices issued for the 2004 and 2008 Local Government Elections and the 2007 State General Election follow.

Table 33: Comparative Non-voting Data for Local Government (2004, 2008) and State Government Elections (2007).

	2004 LGE	2007 SGE	2008 LGE
Roll	4.090m	4.374m	4.544m (a)
Non-voters	456,791	318,095	672,794
Excluded	83,857	166,004	274,345
Fine	\$55	\$25	\$55
Notices issued	372,934	152,091	398,489
Penalty notices as % of Roll	9.1	3.5	8.8
Referrals to State Debt Recovery Office	102,769	57,842	130,697

Sources: State Electoral Office Annual Report 2003/04; NSWEC Report on the 2007 State Election'.

(a) The number on Rolls in areas with contested elections was 4.321m

From the above figures, it appears electors are more likely to vote in State election than a Local Government election.

The NSWEC's conduct of the non-voters programme for the 2008 Local Government Elections was included in the NSWEC's internal audit work programme for 2009.

Following previous elections, little analysis had been undertaken of the demographics of non-voters and their reasons for failing to vote. For the first time the NSWEC conducted an analysis of the non-voter demographics to identify any specific groups who are under represented as voters and to be in a more informed position when developing its communication campaigns for future elections.

Table 34: Non-voters by Region and Gender, 2008 Local Government Elections. (a)

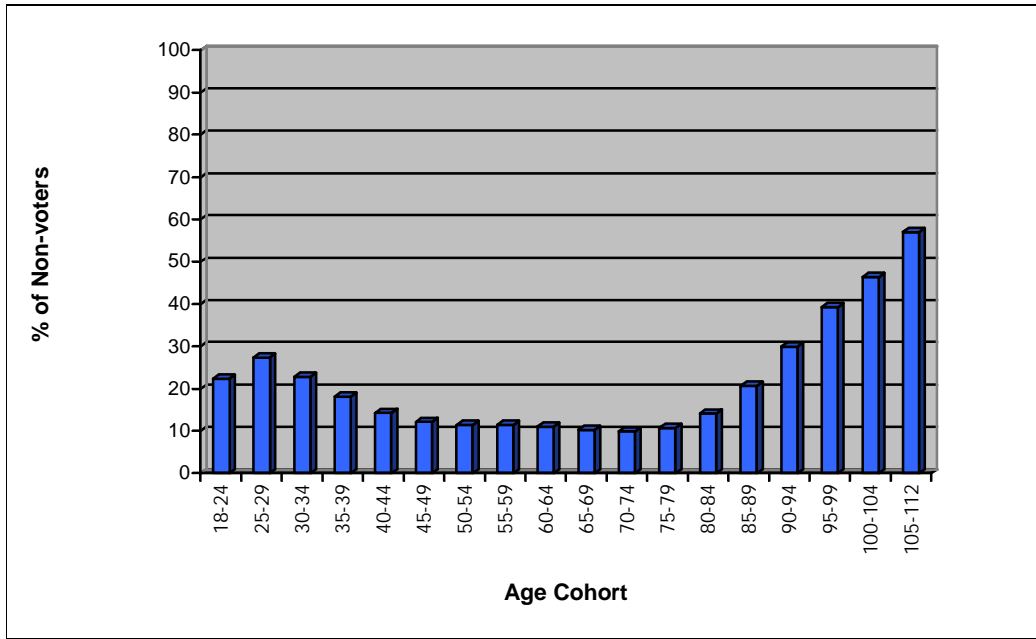
Region	Gender	Number	% Non-voters	Metro/Non-Metro Totals	Metro/Non-Metro % Total Non-voters
Metropolitan	Female	223,255	33.2	457,648	68.0
Metropolitan	Male	234,393	34.8		
Non-Metropolitan	Female	104,325	15.5	215,137	32.0
Non-Metropolitan	Male	110,812	16.5		

(a) Totals exclude 9 non-voters whose gender was not provided; totals do not correspond to 672,794.

Numerically, more non-voters were located in metropolitan councils (68.0%) as would be expected given the distribution of the NSW population. In terms of proportional differences by either location or gender, rural electors were found to be more likely to vote. Overall there was not a great difference amongst non-voters across metropolitan or non-metropolitan locations according to gender.

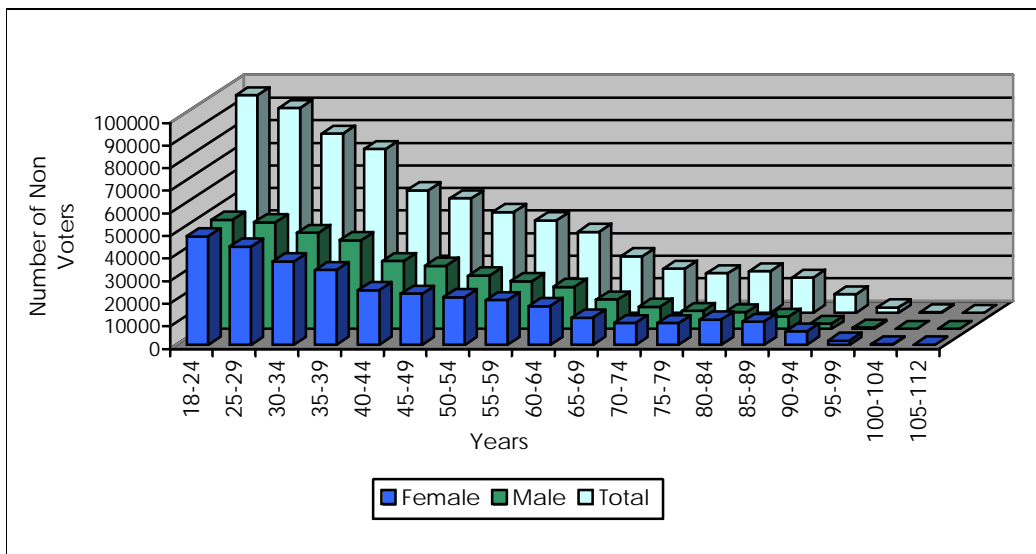
Non voting behaviour varies according to age group. Taking non-voters as a proportional of the total age cohort revealed that the lowest participation occurred in younger age groups particularly the 18 – 24 year old group as shown below.

Older citizens actively participated in the 2008 Local Government Elections with the age group 70 – 74 years having the lowest non voting rate of all age groups. This active participation continued for electors over 80 years with the non voting rate for ages 80 – 84 years being below the average for under 70 year old electors. Only after 90 years does the non voting rate exceed that for the 18 – 24 year old group.



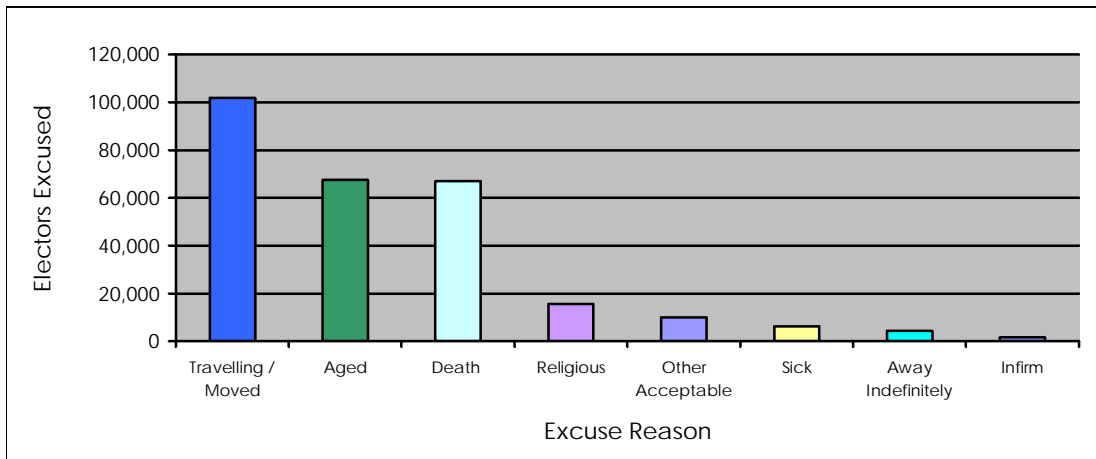
Graph 8: Non-voters as a Proportion of Age Groups, NSW, 2008 Local Government Elections.

On a numerical basis, male electors are more represented in amongst non-voters than female electors. This trend holds until the age group 80 years and over at which point the trend is reversed. For age groups above 80 years, the greater proportion of older women amongst the non-voters groups reflects the greater number of older women than men in the 80 years plus age range.



Graph 9: Electors Who Did Not Vote by Age and Gender, 2008 Local Government Elections.

Analysis of the reasons provided by non-voters as to why they did not vote in the 2008 Local Government Elections showed that the most common reason provided was that the elector was out of the area followed by age and death.



Graph 10: Excuse provided for Not Voting, NSW, 2008 Local Government Elections.

Analysis revealed that the reasons provided by those who did not vote in the Local Government elections, generally did not vary across councils. While most of the councils had similar proportions of types of excuses for not voting that is, travelling/out of area; aged; deceased/no longer on roll in NSW, the Council of the City of Sydney had a higher number of 'deceased/no longer on roll in NSW'.

Section 10: Cost of the 2008 Local Government Elections

The NSWEC is required by law to conduct Local Government elections and councils are required by law to pay for the cost of the elections. This arrangement imposes accountability on the NSWEC for the cost of the elections as well as the standard of services provided.

As part of this accountability the costing model used by the NSWEC was reviewed independently by Walter Turnbull to ascertain whether:

- all relevant projects associated with the 2008 Local Government Elections were captured in the model, and that only relevant project costs had been included;
- appropriate cost drivers had been used in the model; and
- charges were sufficient to recover costs.

The review found that NSWEC had captured all operational costs associated with the 2008 NSW Local Government Elections and apportioned them in a fair and equitable manner. The report was made publicly available via the NSWEC website. The review also found that more than \$7 million of costs related to the running of the Local Government elections were not being recovered from local councils including capital equipment provided from the 2007 State General Election; roll maintenance costs paid annually to the Commonwealth; and development costs for an Election Management Application system that helped collate results.⁴⁸ A copy of the report is at Appendix 13.

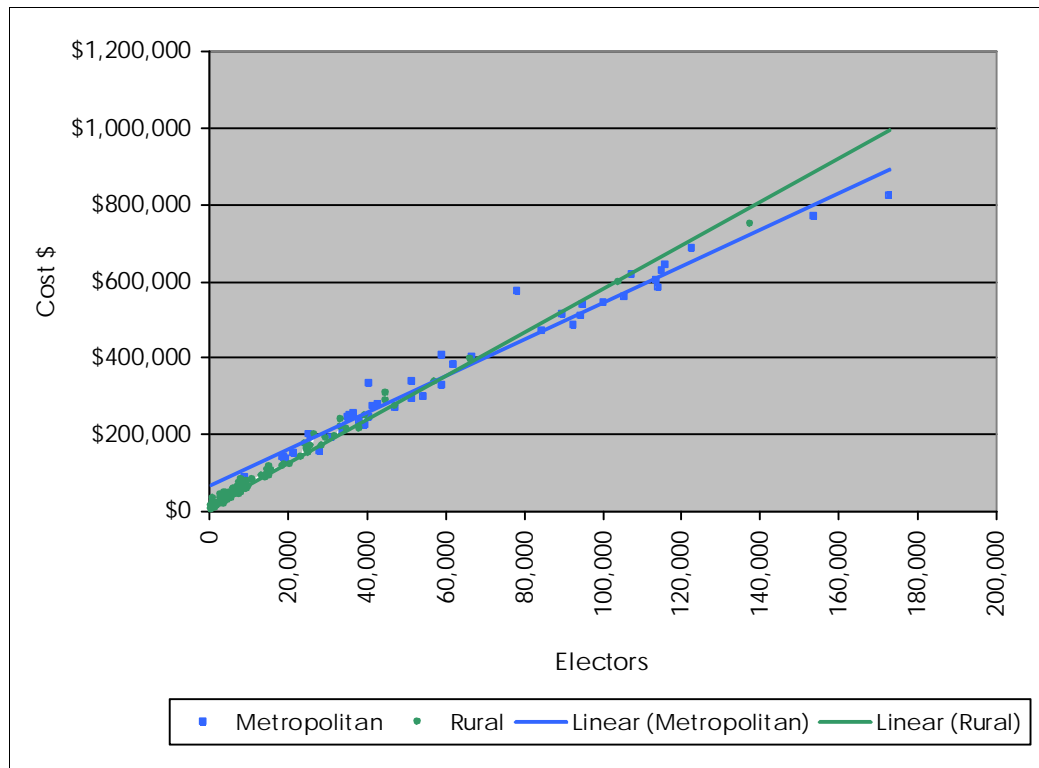
The final total cost of the 2008 Local Government Elections was \$25.9 million with:

- Average cost per elector of \$5.71;
- Average cost per metropolitan council of \$369,550;
- Average costs per rural council of \$92,796;
- Highest actual cost of \$821,700 for Blacktown City Council (114,277 electors and five elections);
- Lowest cost for a council with contested elections was \$8,600 for Jerilderie Council (1,196 electors with one election); and
- Lowest cost for an uncontested election was \$4,100 for Conargo Council.⁴⁹

The final cost of the elections was \$5.2 million less than the budget estimate of August 2008 (16.9% below budget). The total aggregated expenditure for each council is set out in Appendix 14 with Volume 3 providing fully itemised expenditure for all councils.

Analysis of individual council budgets showed that the greater the elector numbers within a Local Government area, the higher the cost of the council's elections.

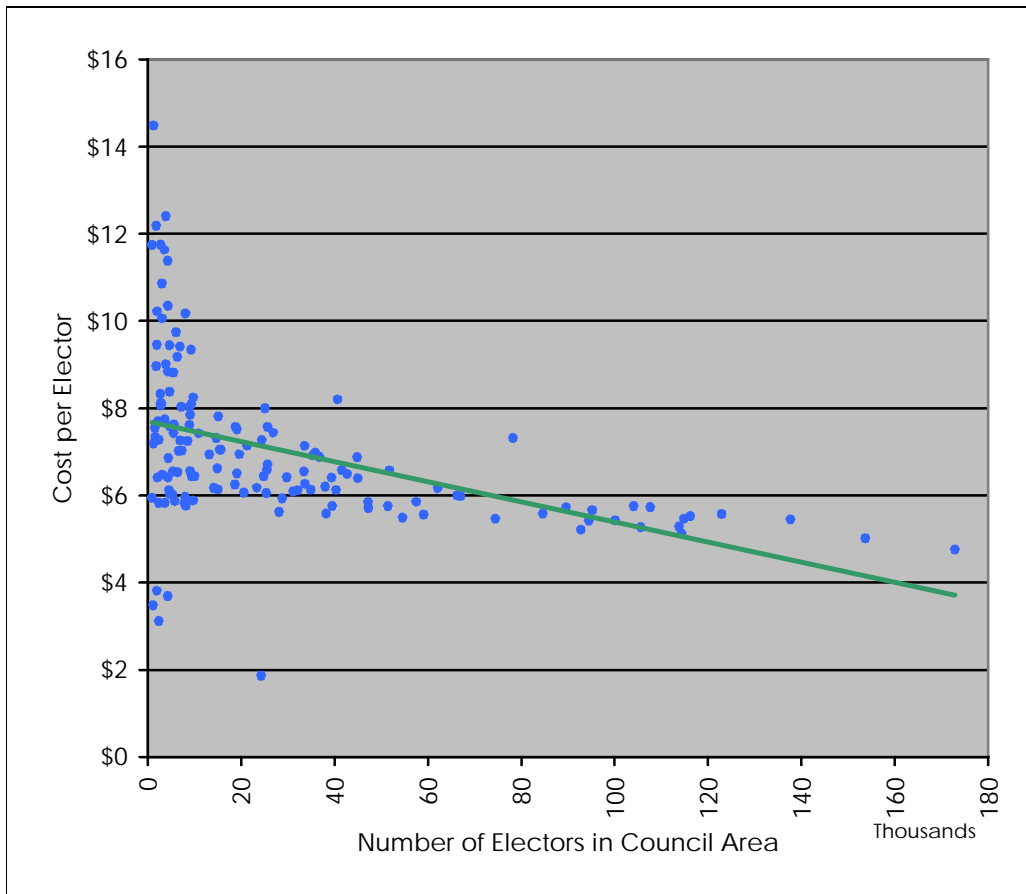
This was the case for both metropolitan and rural councils as shown in the graph below. While the number of elections had some impact upon overall cost to a council, the greater determinant was number of electors within the council.



Graph 11: Election Costs for Metropolitan and Rural Councils by Number of Electors, 2008 Local Government Elections.

In terms of the cost per elector, this measure was in an inverse relationship to size of the council. While the overall cost of the election increased with the number of electors, the cost per elector was higher in smaller councils.

The following graph illustrates this point.



Graph 12: Cost per Elector by Size of Council, 2008 Local Government Elections.

In mid 2007, the NSWEC released estimates of the likely cost of their elections to enable councils to budget for this expenditure. These estimates were provided prior to completion of full activity based costing. This advice was followed in May 2008 with the estimated budget for each council using updated costings and the specific costs of providing electoral services to councils. These estimates provided an itemised budget for around 40 line items of election costs specific to each council. The costs excluded were such items as the cost of any Crown Solicitor's advice that may be necessary in relation to elections within each council.

Comparable costs for the 2004 Local Government Elections are not available as not all costs incurred by all councils and the (then) State Electoral Office were collected to provide a total expenditure figure. Examination of the 2004 costing material available has revealed that the costs included varied from council to council and did not necessarily include all expenses such as a costing of the time provided by council staff. In turn the State Electoral Office did not charge for all costs or the full costs of all expenditure items.

The detailed 'bottom up' budgeting work of the NSWEC for the 2008 Local Government Elections will provide councils and the NSW Government with a reliable total expenditure figure with full itemisation of costs that provide benchmarks for future Local Government elections. These benchmarks include the total cost of the elections, costs of particular projects as well as

average costs across electors and types of councils. The detailed individual council budgets will provide councils with information for planning and budget purposes.

Funding Arrangements

The funding arrangements established for the 2008 Local Government Elections with NSW Treasury involved the NSW Government providing an advance to the NSWEC based upon estimates of the total cost of the elections. The NSWEC is required to repay the advance following invoicing of councils. This advance enabled the NSWEC to commence the forward planning and preparation for the elections including the hiring and training of staff.

In response to the difficulties raised by some councils regarding their ability to pay for the cost of their elections, the NSWEC negotiated with NSW Treasury an arrangement whereby councils could pay their election costs over two years. Councils' applications to pay the NSWEC over the longer timeframe were assessed by the NSW Department of Local Government for demonstrated financial hardship. 15 councils are to pay for their elections over two years.

The Costing Model for the 2008 Local Government Elections

The broad process for developing the budget for the 2008 Local Government Elections and individual council budgets involved four major stages.

First, all 2008 Local Government Elections projects and associated activities were identified and quantified.

Secondly, the budget estimates were developed using a 'zero based' or 'bottom-up' budget methodology involving itemising volume and unit costs for each project, the tasks for each month and identifying the financial years 2007/08 and 2008/09 which were impacted.

Thirdly, substantive testing of these budget items and their estimated costs was undertaken using the most reliable cost schedule available that is the 2007 State General Election.

Fourthly, allocation of the costs for each project to individual councils was completed using the applicable methodology for the activity involved in each project. The three methodologies applied were either:

- Cost per elector:
- Actual costs incurred in specific council areas; and
- Allocation for Regional Returning Officer based on elector numbers.

This enabled equitable sharing of overheads applicable to all councils separately from costs specific to each council.

The model included an administration fee which covered an allocation of NSWEC head office costs including the cost of NSWEC permanent staff. The charge basis was derived as a result of an internal audit review.

This was the first time in general Local Government elections that councils received information on line-by-line budget items. As the budget estimates provided information on costing core services and the costs of additional services, councils were able to advise if changes to discretionary items were sought. The nature of providing elections meant however that these choices did not relate to major cost items such as staffing.

In terms of costs incurred across all councils, the NSWEC introduced strategies early in the process to reduce costs including an online registration process for recruiting election employees. Other measures included online training and online information specifically for election staff.

In addition in response to feedback from councils, the NSWEC undertook further savings strategies to assist councils meet the costs of their elections by reducing the scope of certain projects. The NSWEC was able to reduce expenditure on the following budget items set out in Table 35 following.

Table 35: 2008 Local Government Elections, Reductions in Budget Item Costs.

Budget Item	\$M
IT infrastructure	1.3
Equipment and Materials	1.0
Reduced staffing levels – wages	0.9
Communications/Information Plan	0.7
Back Office support savings	0.5
Centralised vote counting	0.5
Polling places	0.3
Total	5.2

The reduction in the wages budget had some unintended impacts in the case of a small number of polling places where long queues occurred as a result of the actual number of voters greatly exceeded projections.

Regional Returning Officer Model

The NSWEC had introduced the Regional Returning Officer model with a commitment to councils of savings. These savings eventuated for participating councils.

Comparisons of average costs that would be incurred by participating councils under the shared and traditional Returning Officer models were undertaken. This revealed that councils in a Regional Returning Officer arrangement incurred less costs than they would have in opting for their own Returning Officer, for example, the average cost of providing Returning Officers, accommodation and office staffing was less. Specifically under the Regional Returning Officer model, the average cost was \$1.23 per elector as compared to \$4.88 per elector if these same councils had not opted to share a Returning Officer. Costs were cut to less than a third on average for participating councils with savings of \$3.65 per elector accrued to those councils with the shared provision of returning officer services.

Payments by Councils

Recoupment of expenses incurred by the NSWEC in conducting the elections commenced in August 2008 with councils invoiced 85% of their estimated budget. The exceptions to this were councils where the NSW Department of Local Government supported payment over two financial years (these councils will receive two 50% invoices) and those councils with either uncontested or by-elections arising from the September 2008 elections (these councils were issued only a final invoice).

The final invoices were based on actual costs of the elections and issued in March 2009. The actual expenditure outcome saw 63 councils receive a refund. These councils are listed in Appendix 15. Randwick City Council, North Sydney Council and Woollahra Municipal Council received an increase.

For those councils with uncontested elections, only one invoice in March 2009 was forwarded. These councils were not asked to make an 85% deposit payment although the same principles applied for their budget, that is, if costs existed for that council then those costs were allocated to that council. Similarly, those councils with a by-election were not asked to make the 85% deposit and received just the March 2009 invoice.

As at 10 June 2009, \$25.05 million had been recouped from councils with \$1 million outstanding. Three councils had not made any payment and four had only made part payment. These councils are listed in Appendix 16.

Table 36 following sets out payments by councils over the three invoices and the NSWEC refunds.

Table 36: 2008 Local Government Elections, Council Payments and Refunds, June 2009. (a)

	Fully Paid	Part Payment	Outstanding	Total Invoices/ Credit Notes
85% invoice	100	4	0	104
50% invoice	27	0	3	30
Final invoice	48	-	5	53
Final Credit Refunds	61	-	2	63

Note (a) As at 10 June 2009.

Major Budget Components of the 2008 Local Government Elections

The major expenditure items of elections are salaries for election officials, rent for office accommodation and polling places, the communication campaign, and ballot paper production.

In the 2008 Local Government Elections almost four fifths of the budget (79.5%) was composed of seven expenditure items of which the largest was salaries. The major cost items and their proportional contribution to the total 2008 Local Government Elections budget are shown below in Table 37.

Table 37: 2008 Local Government Elections, Major Expenditure Items.

Expenditure Item	\$M	% Total Expend
Election official salaries	10.446	40.3
Ballot paper production	2.468	9.5
Information communication technology	2.126	8.2
Returning Officer accommodation	2.069	8.0
Communication campaign	2.020	7.8
Centralised vote counting	0.757	2.9
Polling place hire	0.742	2.9

Staffing made up 39.3% of the total budget expenditure. Staffing of an election is always a major expenditure item with the largest component being polling place staff (Polling Place Managers; Deputy Polling Place Managers; Polling Staff; and Scrutiny Assistants). The table following provides detail of the expenditure upon salaries.

Table 38: 2008 Local Government Elections, Expenditure on Salaries for Election Officials, \$000's and percentages.

Staff Category Expenditure	\$M	% Election Staff	% Total Salaries
Returning Officer Support Officers	0.259	0.1	2.4
Returning Officers	2.021	0.2	19.3
Office Assistants	3.226	12.0	30.9
Election day staff	4.940	82.2	47.4
Total	10.446	100.0	100.0

Ballot Paper Production

The final cost of ballot paper and printing was \$2.468 million or 9.5% of total budget. In terms of the cost per ballot paper, the cost was 16.3 cents per 'small' ballot paper (usually single column and mayoral papers) and 39.4 cents for each 'large' ballot paper (usually for 'groups above the line' voting). These costs per ballot paper represent total costs and include typesetting, printing, binding and delivery.

The procurement arrangements have been discussed in an earlier section but were in line with the NSW Government guidelines and approved by the NSW State Contracts Control Board.

Information Communication Technology

Expenditure on information technology projects including support for election officials was expended across systems support; information technology infrastructure, website, electoral roll, results and personnel. Of these the major expenditure items were information technology systems support and electoral rolls.

Returning Officers' Office Accommodation

Where possible the NSWEC used council accommodation for Returning Officers' offices. This was not always possible as on occasions the space offered was inappropriate for the multiple uses required that is, as a Returning Officer office, as a pre-polling centre or as a secure storage space for supplies including ballot papers. (The area had to be secure to ensure non authorised individuals did not have access to ballot papers.) In a few cases, the charge to be levied by the council exceeded the budget set by the NSWEC for Returning Officer accommodation and the NSWEC sought alternate accommodation.

Where council premises were not available or were inappropriate, the NSWEC typically used space accessed via the private rental market.

Around a half (48.0%) of Returning Officers' offices were leased from councils. The NSWEC encouraged councils to charge the NSWEC for these premises so that the full cost of the elections could be reported. Four councils chose not to invoice the NSWEC.

Table 39: 2008 Local Government Elections, Type of Returning Officer Accommodation, Percentages.

Accommodation Type	No.	%
Rented from non council source	47	52.2
Rented from council	39	43.3
Council owned, no rent charged	4	4.5
Total	90	100.0

There was not a lot of difference between the cost of Returning Officer accommodation leased from either council or the private rental markets with the exception of rural office accommodation where the rents charged by councils tended to be on average lower than accommodation sourced privately. The average rental charges are shown in Table 40.

Table 40: 2008 Local Government Elections, Average Rental Charges for Returning Officer Accommodation by Source.

	\$ Council	\$ Private Rental Market
NSW average cost	16,594	17,677
Average metropolitan	24,917	24,308
Average rural	6,211	11,998

In terms of the rent charged by councils the average rent across both council and private market premises applied by metropolitan councils was \$24,613 with the average rent charged by rural councils \$10,025.

The three highest rentals were charged by Randwick City Council (\$152,514), North Sydney Council (\$68,313) and Woollahra Municipal Council (\$43,898). The lowest rent charged was by Uralla Shire Council (\$636). The highest rural rental was charged by Tweed Shire Council (\$21,563). The lowest rent charged by a metropolitan council was Wollondilly Shire Council (\$733).

For Regional Returning Officers' office accommodation, the highest shared cost was incurred by Coffs Harbour City Council (\$20,818) with the lowest shared charge incurred by Narrandera Shire Council (\$2,500).

Communication Campaign

The NSWEC's communication campaign had a number of components including the 'Equal Access to Democracy' projects that sought to maximise the participation of people with disabilities in the electoral process. The total expenditure upon the communication campaign undertaken by the NSWEC was \$2.02 million.

The largest component of the communication campaign was the advertising which comprised 76.7% of the total communication expenditure. Selection of the local newspapers and the frequency of placement (over and above that required) was based on the councils' recommendations.

Total spend on statewide and statutory advertisements was \$1.522 million. The total statutory advertisement expenditure was \$0.838 million comprising 55.1% of total expenditure. Statewide advertising totalled \$0.684 million (44.9%). Of the expenditure upon statutory advertisements nearly two thirds (65.7%) was on candidates and polling places and 23.5% was directed to nomination advertisements.

It is estimated that advertising expenditure for culturally and linguistically diverse communities was 16.9% of the statewide advertising campaign. Expenditure on advertising to reach indigenous communities was estimated to be 10% of the same campaign.

Table 41 following provides information on the advertising undertaken by the NSWEC.

Table 41: 2008 Local Government Elections, Advertising Expenditure by Subject, \$000's and Percentage.

Advertisement Content	\$M	%
Enrolment	.185	12.1
Register electoral material	.041	2.7
Postal voting	.253	16.6
Nominations	.196	12.9
Candidates and polling places	.550	36.1
Uncontested elections	.010	0.6
Remember to vote	.205	13.5
Results	.082	5.4
Total	1.522	100.0

The total expenditure upon the election information brochure was \$524,493 with a cost of \$0.56 a brochure, including postage. The original estimate provided to councils on the cost was \$0.63 per brochure.

Additional communication about the elections occurred through the media activities of the NSWEC. It was not possible however to disaggregate the media financial data across the above content areas.

Braille Voting

The cost of Braille ballot papers was \$24,862 excluding staff time in organising and providing Braille voting services and those election information and materials routinely prepared for blind and low vision electors. These exclusions were made to enable a focus on the new expenditure components introduced at the 2008 Local Government Elections. Costs included were the additional expenses required such as Braille ballot papers, postal vote envelopes, voting instructions and other materials. Based on these components the cost per registered Braille ballot paper applicant was \$478. The cost of this service compares favourably with the average cost per vote of \$2,597 for the 2007 Federal Election trial of electronically assisted voting for blind and low vision electors.⁵⁰

Section 11: Evaluation of Conduct of the Elections

In evaluating its performance the NSWEC considered descriptive material from previous Local Government elections; feedback from stakeholders and measures contained in its Results and Services Plan and its Corporate Plan 2008 - 2011.

A search of electoral literature revealed a number of relevant research reports of the experience of electors in elections in New Zealand, Canada, the United States of America and the United Kingdom. There are methodological differences that mean definitive comparisons cannot be made.⁵¹ The absence of specific Australian or international benchmarks on electoral services and election costs reduced the capacity for benchmark comparisons to other elections.

The ability to make comparisons between different Local Government elections is not straightforward due to the lack of comparative data, different definitions and different methodologies used for calculating key measures for example, participation rates. The 2008 Local Government Elections has provided a baseline for future elections both in terms of election costs, feedback from stakeholders and service standards and the introduction of a consistent and documented performance measurement methodology.

Comparisons to Earlier Local Government Elections

The last NSW Local Government elections were held on 27 March 2004. There is considerable variation from election to election in the scale of each election according to the numbers of candidates, contests, referenda and polls as Table 42 following shows.

Table 42: Statistics from 1999, 2004 and 2008 Local Government Elections.

	1999	2004	2008
Total councils with elections due	152	142	148
Total contested elections	167	338 (a)	332
Councils with contested Mayoral elections	21	26	27
Councils with uncontested elections	1	6	5
Candidates	4,552	4,962	4,620
Contested Positions	1,552	1,464	1,474
Deferred elections	24 (b)	17 (b)	14
No. Councils with 100+ candidates	n/a	5	Nil
No. Councils with 50+ candidates	n/a	35	32

Referenda	n/a	18	15 councils 17 qtns
Polls	n/a	9	8 councils 15 qtns
Website hits over 3 months	n/a	343,000	10,769,827

Source: SEO Annual Reports 1999/2000 and 2003/2004.

(a) includes 8 deferred elections and 1 mayoral election held 26 June 2004

(b) elections were deferred pending finalisation of amalgamation proposals.

The above indicators describe the dimensions of each general Local Government elections and give a sense of the logistical challenges. How well elections are undertaken is addressed by using other measures including those contained in the NSWEC's planning documents.

Participation and Informality Rates

Participation and informality rates provide a measure of the engagement of the community with the elections. The overall participation rate for the 2008 Local Government Elections was 83.4%.⁵²

Table 43: Participation and Informality Rates Local Government Elections 2004 and 2008.

	2004 %	2008 %
Participation Rate	85.2	83.4
Informality Vote Rate	7.0	7.1

Compared to the 2004 Local Government Elections the 2008 participation rate appears slightly lower although the methodological issues raised earlier make strict comparisons between elections difficult.

There was a slightly higher voter participation rate in 2008 for rural areas than metropolitan areas (83.6% rural; 82.0% metropolitan). The highest rate for a council was recorded in Gundagai Shire Council (89.1%) and the lowest in Central Darling Shire Council (63.5%). The five councils in 2008 with the highest participation rates as a percentage of the enrolment were:

- Gundagai Shire Council 89.1%
- Temora Shire Council 88.9%
- Upper Lachlan Shire Council 88.6%
- Blayney Shire Council 88.3%
- Mid-Western Regional Council 88.3%

The five councils with the lowest participation rates were:

- Central Darling Shire Council 63.5%
- Woollahra Municipal Council 68.5%
- Council of the City of Sydney 69.6%
- North Sydney Council 70.7%
- Mosman Municipal Council 71.3%

While the NSWEC compares favourably with other jurisdictions when comparing voter participation rates at Local Government elections, such comparisons can only be regarded as indicative due to the differing nature of Local Government voting systems across Australia. While voting in Local Government elections is compulsory in NSW, Queensland, Victoria and the Northern Territory, voting is not compulsory in Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia.

In every election, some votes cast are informal.⁵³ The proportion of informal votes has not changed from the 2004 Local Government Elections (7.0% 2004 compared to 7.1% 2008) however the same methodological caution applies.

Total votes in the 2008 Local Government Elections numbered 3,529,220 with formal votes for councillor elections totalling 3,278,188 and informal votes 251,032.

Statewide formality was recorded at 92.9% with an informality rate of 7.1%. Rural councils were more apparent amongst councils with higher levels of formal votes.

The five councils with the highest formality rates were:

- Hay Shire Council 98.7%
- Murrumbidgee Shire Council 98.4%
- Temora Shire Council 98.3%
- Coonamble Shire Council 98.2%
- Boorowa Council 97.9%

The five councils with the lowest formality rates were:

- Liverpool City Council 87.1%
- Fairfield City Council 87.3%
- Canterbury City Council 88.9%

-
- Griffith City Council 89.1%
 - Warringah Council 89.1%

Significant influences upon informal voting have been reported as including a higher than average number of candidates, a high proportion of citizens from non-English speaking backgrounds, differences between electoral systems and proximity to other electoral events.⁵⁴

Measures from the NSWEC's Planning Documents

Section 1 'What the NSWEC Does' outlined the key performance measures contained in the NSWEC's Results and Services Plan and Corporate Plan 2008 – 2011. Following is an assessment of the NSWEC's performance against these measures.

NSWEC's Results and Services Plan:

- Citizens able to exercise their democratic right to vote

While some polling places ran out of ballot papers, the number and proportion was very small (0.6% of all polling places), and only a small number of electors (estimated 800 – 1,000) were affected. Also, these electors were given other options that would allow them to cast their ballot.⁵⁵ Almost three quarters of General Managers (74.8%) believed that electors were able to exercise their democratic right to vote.

The location of polling places, provision of accurate, comprehensive information and assistance when voting, also influence whether electors are able to exercise their right to vote. In the 2008 Local Government Elections, electors indicated strong satisfaction with the convenience of the polling place location (87.4%), the length of time it took to vote (77.9%) and the manner of polling place staff (89.9%). 85.5% knew without assistance what was required to enable them to vote in the elections.

This compares well with overseas findings for example, in New Zealand 85% of voters rated the convenience of the polling place location as excellent and most voters thought the length of time they spent at the polling place was reasonable. Also, 91% reported not having a difficulty that resulted in them needing to ask for assistance.⁵⁶ 89% of voters in British Columbia, Canada said that they knew what they needed to do to vote on election day and 95% found the location of polling places convenient.⁵⁷

In the United Kingdom, around 92% said that voting was easy and 90% were either 'very' or 'fairly sure' about what to do if they wanted to vote in person at an election.⁵⁸ In the 2008 USA presidential elections, 97% of respondents found the polling places 'easy to get to' and 89% knew exactly where the polling place was located.⁵⁹

- The public and other stakeholders informed of the conduct and outcomes of elections

The NSWEC sought to use its website as the major communication tool in its conduct of the elections. All stakeholders provided positive feedback about the NSWEC's website. It was both well utilised and navigation was reported to be easy with content and presentation rating highly. The most useful web based information for electors was results [51.7%] and information on polling places [46.4%]. Candidates also provided positive feedback with 72.2% being either satisfied or very satisfied with the NSWEC's website.

Feedback from electors showed that the NSWEC's advertising in newspapers, radio and other means was effective in reaching electors and being recalled. 86.1% of electors who received the NSWEC's brochure indicated that the information was useful to them. This compares well with overseas findings when methodological differences are taken in to account. In New Zealand, the majority of voters (83%) recalled seeing or hearing some electoral advertising prior to the election. In British Columbia, Canada three quarters of respondents indicated that in the weeks leading up to the election, they saw, heard or read information of advertising about the election distributed by the electoral commission.⁶⁰

The main topic that participants recalled from the NSWEC's advertising was to remember to vote [30.0%], followed by information on candidates and polling places [21.7%]. The most frequently recalled advertising subject in the New Zealand study was enrolment (28%) followed by advice on voting or how to vote (22.0%).⁶¹

General Managers, candidates and the media were positive about the NSWEC's communication campaign also. The majority of General Managers (70.9%) believed that the outcomes of the elections were made available appropriately. The table below shows General Managers were most satisfied with the accuracy of content and placement of advertisements as well as timeliness of advertising.

Table 44: 2008 Local Government Elections, General Managers on NSWEC Advertising, Percentages.(a)

	% Very Unsatisfied	% Unsatisfied	% Neutral	% Satisfied	% Very Satisfied
Accuracy in content	1.0	2.9	12.6	72.8	10.7
Accuracy in placement	1.0	3.0	11.9	70.3	13.9
Newspaper coverage	2.0	15.7	11.9	58.8	11.9
Radio coverage	2.0	7.9	53.5	32.7	4.0
Timeliness	1.0	6.9	17.6	65.7	8.8

Note (a) Overall response rate of 103.

The area of concern related to newspaper coverage in the council area however it was up to councils to advise the NSWEC where and how frequently advertisements should appear (after the statutory requirements had been met). The large 'neutral' response for radio coverage suggests General Managers may not have had sufficient information to answer either positively or negatively to this question.

The survey of media journalists showed that the vast majority were satisfied with the provision of information and the quality of this information. The NSWEC's provision of information for the media was seen to be accessible, good quality and timely and said to compare satisfactorily to that of the Australian Electoral Commission.⁶²

- Votes counted accurately and in a timely manner

Satisfaction with the accuracy of the count and the impartiality of the process was evident from the feedback of all stakeholders. Confidence in the accuracy of the count was very high amongst General Managers with 94.1% reporting that they had no concerns with the accuracy of the results for their council. Of those that did have some concerns (6 General Managers) these related to different matters including experience of the Returning Officer or the behaviour of scrutineers.

Perceptions of the timeliness of results information were not as positive with the General Managers (48.0%), some candidates (29.5%) and the media expressing some dissatisfaction about the timeliness of updates.

The NSWEC's internal debrief showed that vote counting concluded ahead of schedule and while there were delays in some councils' results, the overall picture was not as late as presented.

The NSWEC however does believe that it could better manage the communication with councils and candidates to advise them of progress in the count and, in the case of centralised counting, when their votes were being data entered, when the results would be run and when results would be declared.

- People eligible to enrol are on the roll

In Local Government elections both the NSWEC and the councils have a responsibility for the management of rolls. The NSWEC was responsible for the residents roll for all councils and the non-resident roll for the Council of the City of Sydney, with councils responsible for their non-residents roll.

The internal debrief conducted by the NSWEC and the feedback from stakeholders has indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the residents roll. In terms of the non-residents roll for the Council of the City of Sydney, the NSWEC notes that despite extra advertising the decline in enrolment numbers has continued. The NSWEC will investigate the reasons for this situation and the development of a strategy to address these for the 2012 Local Government Elections.

73.8% of General Managers providing feedback said that they had a non-resident roll for the 2008 Local Government Elections. Of these, 57.5% were either satisfied or very satisfied with the advice from the NSWEC as to how to manage these rolls. 16.3% reported some difficulties with the major concern being for advice to be in plain English.

- The roll is accurate so people can exercise their right to vote

At the 2008 Local Government Elections the statewide known error rate was calculated as 0.01% of electors incorrectly coded. While this affected 369 electors in 12 council areas it is a satisfactory error rate. The NSWEC identified these errors prior to election day and wrote to each effected elector and notified the councils involved. Each effected elector was provided with their correct enrolment details, information on how to cast a section vote, locations where they could either pre-poll vote or vote on election day and a postal vote application.

In terms of the residents roll, accuracy of personal details was not reported as a problem by either electors or General Managers. Feedback from General Managers indicated that 89.3% were neutral, satisfied to very satisfied with accuracy of the residents roll for their council. In councils with wards, 61.2% of General Managers were satisfied to very satisfied with the accuracy of coding of electors to their correct wards (with 26.5% neutral).

Personal details were correct for almost all electors (96.5%) responding to the survey. For the small proportion (2.9%) where there was a perceived issue, the greatest proportion of electors (28.3%) indicated this was due to their error in not updating their details.

The numbers responding to the survey questions on the non-residents roll were too small to reliably draw conclusion about satisfaction of electors with the processes for enrolling on the non-residents roll for each council.

- People know of their obligation to enrol to vote

The electors' survey indicates that electors did know of their responsibility to enrol to vote however due to cost reasons the survey was not undertaken as a random sample of the community. Consequently, the findings are not reliable as an indicator of those in the community who did not respond to the survey and who may not have known of their obligation to enrol to vote.

General Managers (50.0%) believed that electors knew of their obligation to enrol to vote with 39.6% being neutral on this issue. 60.4% of responding General Managers believed that electors knew of their obligation to vote (26.4% neutral).

- Candidates, groups and parties understand entitlements and responsibilities

In Local Government elections there is no entitlement to public funding as in State General elections, hence the measure needs to be considered in a narrower way that is candidates, groups and parties understanding their responsibilities.

General Managers (61.0%; 29.5% neutral) believed that candidates, groups and parties were informed of their responsibilities.

Candidates (84.7%) were particularly satisfied with the NSWEC’s advertising concerning their election funding and disclosure responsibilities. The majority of candidates were able to obtain the information they required and were satisfied with the materials provided by the NSWEC to assist them in standing as a candidate. The views of candidates ranged from neutral through to very satisfied with the provision of the Candidates Handbook 92.2%, Information Seminars 90.9% and Inquiry Desk 92.4%.

NSWEC Corporate Plan 2008 – 2011:

The NSWEC’s Corporate Plan provided the basis for the measures in the Results and Services Plan but includes in addition, targets for performance.

Overall the NSWEC performed well, meeting the targets for all provisional first preferences counted at 100% of polling places on election night, the establishment of baseline satisfaction measures for stakeholders, correct coding of the electors by electorates, and expenditure coming in under budget. Performance against these targets is shown below.

Table 45: NSWEC Corporate Plan Measures and 2008 Local Government Elections Outcomes.

CORPORATE PLAN MEASURES	OUTCOMES
KRA 1: Conduct of elections	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % polling places where provisional first preferences are counted for the Legislative Assembly and Local Government elections on election night (target = 100%). • Variance rates between count of votes and recount if any (target = <10 votes). • Establish baseline measure of community members’ satisfaction with the NSWEC’s services in enabling them to vote. • Establish a baseline measure of the satisfaction of registered political parties with registration, continued registration and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provisional first preferences counted at 100% of polling places on election night. • Leeton Shire Council, A Ward - no variance in first preference votes on the recount. No change to outcome. • Manly Council – variance 6 votes. No change to outcome. • 74.4% surveyed electors very satisfied, satisfied or neutral on their overall experience of voting. • 78.5% very satisfied, satisfied or neutral with the current registration and ongoing registration process; 100% satisfied

<p>nomination services provided by the NSWEC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a baseline measure of the community's, the media's and registered political parties' satisfaction with the timeliness and accuracy of results. 	<p>with information on requirements; 92.9% satisfied with the level of NSWEC service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 51.9% General Managers, 80.8% media, 70.5% candidates very satisfied, satisfied or neutral with timeliness of results; 94.1% General Managers had no concerns on accuracy of results; 51.7% electors reported election results were most useful information on the NSWEC's website.
KRA 2: Electoral roll management	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of voters' addresses correctly coded to electorates (Target = 100%). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 99.99% of electors correctly coded statewide.
KRA 3: Communication and public awareness	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish baseline measure of the % of surveyed community members enrolled to vote. % of electors aware of the NSWEC's information campaign (Target: 75%). Report on conduct of elections to be completed (Target: within six months from election day for State and Local Government elections). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 99.4% of electors surveyed were enrolled. 65.8% electors surveyed recalled seeing or hearing NSWEC advertisements. Report prepared within nine months.
KRA 4: Organisational development and innovation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of variation from budget for Local Government elections (target: +/- 2% from budget). % costs recovered for Local Government elections (target: 95%). Establish NSWEC's costs per elector and commence comparison with other jurisdictions and previous years' performance. Number of IT business systems failures (target: zero). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget \$31.2M, actual \$25.9M, savings \$5.3M (-16.9% variance). 100% of planned operational costs recovered. Cost per elector = \$5.71. Zero.

Timeliness of Results

The overall schedule set by the NSWEC for declaration of results was met although the results for some councils were not to councils' expectations. The NSWEC acknowledges that it needs to improve its management of communication to councils, parties, groups and candidates about the progress of the count.

For the 2012 Local Government Elections, the NSWEC will establish and communicate clearly to all councils, a schedule for the counting and declaration of results. Performance against this schedule will then be assessed.

Cost of the Elections

The 2008 Local Government Elections came in well under budget. In addition, the savings promised to councils participating in the new Regional Returning Officer model were achieved.

The lack of reliable and verified data on the costs of the NSW 2004 Local Government Elections made cost comparisons impossible. From the 2008 elections onwards however, there will be a fully costed total expenditure figure, expenditure benchmarks for each of the component budget items as well as expenditure base data for each council.

The NSWEC believes that concerns about the cost of the elections were exacerbated by the early estimations provided by the NSWEC to councils in May 2007. These estimates were the best expenditure figures known at the time and were provided with the intention to assist councils' financial planning for the elections. Despite concern about the cost of the elections, the feedback from General Managers revealed that councils found these estimates useful for planning purposes.

Overall Satisfaction

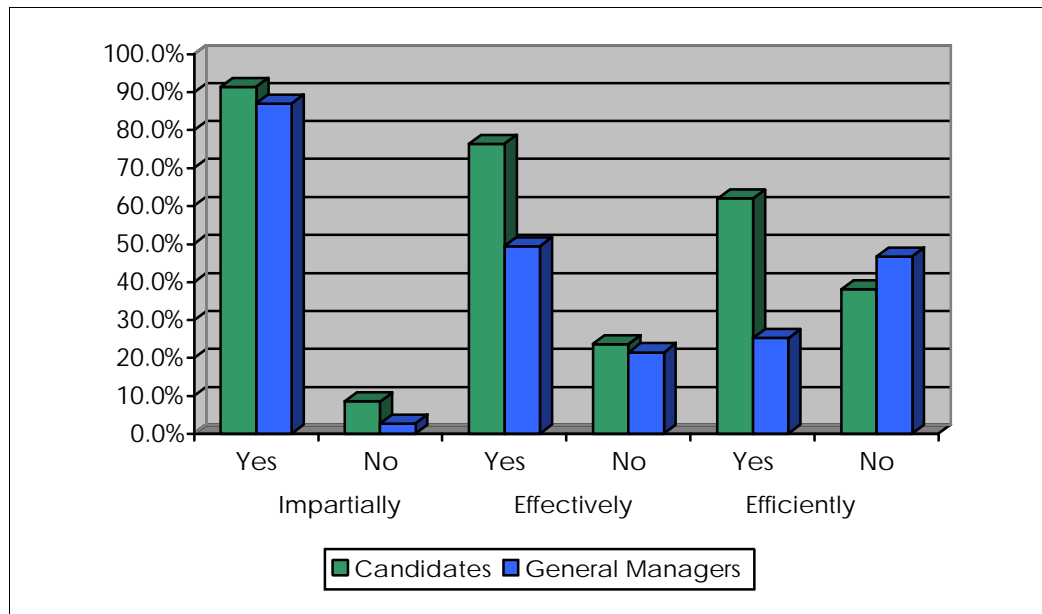
Overall the feedback from electors, the media and polling officials all indicates strong satisfaction with the NSWEC's conduct of the election. A similar response from General Managers was received even though the two areas of cost and timeliness of results were not as well regarded.

The majority of the NSWEC's survey of electors reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the overall process. The aspects that had the highest levels of satisfaction were: privacy (80%) and security of voting (74%). In addition, 97% of staff responding to the survey were interested in working for the NSWEC again.

These responses compare well with those of overseas literature particularly when methodological differences are taken in to account. In the United Kingdom, 96% voters were very or fairly satisfied with the whole experience and 92% found it fairly convenient. 96% classed the electoral system as very or fairly good at allowing people to vote in secret.⁶³ Another report from the United Kingdom found 90% of those who voted were satisfied with the 'actual

process of voting at elections'.⁶⁴ This was higher than the rating provided by the respondents to the British Columbia survey where 84% indicated that they were satisfied with the administration of the election.⁶⁵

The NSWEC asked key participants in the elections, that is General Managers and candidates whether they felt the NSWEC had conducted the 2008 Local Government Elections impartially, effectively and efficiently. The responses are shown below.



Graph 13: General Managers and Candidates on NSWEC's Impartiality, Effectiveness and Efficiency in the 2008 Local Government Elections.

Both candidates and General Managers overwhelmingly said that the NSWEC had conducted the elections impartially. Impartiality is one of the cornerstones of electoral administration in a democratic system. Effectiveness also scored highly though with a larger variation between candidates and General Managers. The same trends were apparent on efficiency with candidates rating the NSWEC's efficiency in conducting the elections more highly than General Managers.

In conclusion, the NSWEC has prepared this evaluation in order to be transparent and accountable in its conduct of the 2008 Local Government Elections. The NSWEC believes that these results demonstrate the advantages of elections being run separately from local councils are:

- Impartiality and independence;
- Consistency of election management with one provider whose core business is conducting elections;

-
- Retention of the focus of Local Government General Managers and staff upon the business of running the council and meeting the service needs of the local community; and
 - Economies of scale.

The 2008 Local Government Elections were the first occasion that the NSWEC has taken full accountability for the conduct of Local Government elections. It is not unexpected that for both the NSWEC and councils there have been some adjustments to make. Notwithstanding this, the 2008 Local Government Elections were appropriately and well conducted. The NSWEC is confident that by addressing the matters identified and by working with councils the benefits of having a separate body conduct the elections, will be recognised.

Section 12: Future Directions

The NSWEC endeavours to be a learning, developing organisation with a focus on continuous improvement. As part of this process, the NSWEC looks at ways to provide smarter and more efficient electoral services to all election stakeholders.

Although the NSWEC is the mandated service provider for Local Government elections, the goal of the NSWEC is that even if councils had the choice, they would choose the NSWEC to conduct their elections.

The key changes the NSWEC will address in its conduct of future Local Government elections are:

- Recommendations for legislative reform
- Consultation with council General Managers on key electoral services;
- Meeting the challenges arising from the changing nature of elections (increasing demand for and use of innovations in voting);
- Ensuring there are sufficient numbers of trained and experienced electoral staff;
- Improving standards of electoral services, and customer and stakeholder satisfaction with the electoral process; and
- Better communicating the role of the NSWEC and educating the community about the NSW electoral system.

Proposed Legislative Changes

The Electoral Commissioner is responsible for administering Local Government electoral provisions for the enrolment of electors, the preparation of rolls of electors, and the conduct of elections. Based on the 2008 Local Government elections experience in administering these provisions, the following is recommended.

Postal Voting

Voting methods for Local Government elections across Australia include:

- Full attendance voting – New South Wales;
- Full postal voting – South Australia and Tasmania;
- Combination of attendance and postal voting – Queensland, Victoria, Western Australia; and
- Combination of attendance and mobile voting – Northern Territory.

Currently in NSW universal postal voting is not available for Local Government elections and limited postal voting is only available as an alternative to 'in attendance' voting. Availability of postal voting relies upon certain criteria being met that is, electors will not be in NSW or within 8 kilometres of a polling booth during polling hours on polling day. It can also be used for electors who are sick, infirm, in advanced pregnancy, in prison, working or otherwise restricted from attending the polling place because of religious beliefs or other preclusions.

Precedents exist for greater use of postal voting in Local Government elections. In addition, the NSWEC received feedback from many electors, General Managers and other stakeholders regarding the need to allow for flexibility in the voting options. A number raised the fact that other Australian States and Territories allow greater use of postal voting.

The NSWEC will raise with the Minister for Local Government the option of providing councils with the choice of either attendance or postal voting, believing this option will be more convenient to electors and more flexible for councils.

Timeframe for Appointment of Mayors by Councillors

The NSWEC intends to make submissions to the Minister for Local Government to revisit the proposal to change the deadline for the election of the mayor by the councillors to within three weeks after the election is declared.

Currently, where a mayor is to be elected by councillors from among their number, the Local Government Act 1993 requires that this election occurs at a council meeting within three weeks after the date of the ordinary election (and every September for the remainder of the council term thereafter) (section 290(1)(a)).

This legislative requirement has caused problems as the result of the election may not be known for some days after election day. A proposal to change the deadline for the election of the mayor by the councillors to within three weeks after the election is declared was included in the Local Government Amendment (Elections) Bill 2008. The Bill was introduced by the Minister for Local Government in early April last year but did not pass Parliament.

Candidate Information Sheets

Local Government candidates are required under the legislation to complete and lodge a Candidate Information Sheet together with the candidate nomination form. The Candidate Information Sheets have always been required to be available to the public for inspection at the office of the relevant Returning Officer or displayed at the relevant polling place. Access to these documents has been enhanced by their publication on the NSWEC and council websites. While this initiative has allowed broader coverage of candidate profiles to the benefit of all stakeholders, it has also brought two recurring areas of confusion into focus: non-endorsed and independent candidates who are members of registered political parties; and candidates who are not residents of the Local Government areas they are contesting.

The NSWEC regularly receives complaints following council elections from the public asserting that they would not have voted for a particular Independent candidate if they had known that person was a member of a registered political party. There is also much confusion as to whether electoral material disseminated by a non endorsed independent candidate is misleading where that material contains matter regarding the candidate's actual party membership or affiliation (without going so far as to suggest endorsement – something that is not permitted under the legislation).

It is recommended that a candidate's membership with a registered political party and whether a candidate has been endorsed by a registered political party are prescribed as matters that must be included in the Candidate Information Sheet. This would provide greater transparency and certainty for electors and assist them in casting an informed vote.

Eligibility for nomination – candidates residing outside of the council areas are contesting

It is often misunderstood that a candidate for election to a local council must live in the council area to be enrolled to vote either on the residential roll or the non-residential roll for the area.

It is recommended that amendments are made so that candidates are required to indicate in their Candidate Information Sheet whether they are qualified to contest an election based on their residential or non-residential status. This initiative will enhance electors' understanding of candidate eligibility, reduce confusion and minimise incidents of misconceived challenges to a councillor's election. The NSWEC is aware of at least one application to the Administrative Decisions Tribunal to dismiss a councillor elected at the 2008 elections who lived outside of the area but who was, nevertheless, an eligible non-residential candidate.

Electoral Material

A new and successful regime for regulating electoral material was introduced under amendments made prior to the 2008 elections. The following additional enhancements are recommended.

Clothing and other items not required to be authorised

In line with Commonwealth elections legislation and that of all other States, it is recommended that certain items are expressly exempted from the requirement that electoral material must be "authorised" (that is, must contain the name and address of the person on whose instruction the material was printed and the name and address of the printer). Such exempted items would include T-shirts, hats, lapel buttons, lapel badges, pens, pencils, balloons and business or visiting cards promoting a candidacy.

Identifying the party/candidate

To avoid confusion and to reduce incidents of potentially misleading material being disseminated on election day, it is recommended that express provision is made that electoral material cannot be registered unless it clearly identifies the person, political party, organisation or group on whose behalf the card is to be distributed. This proposal reflects similar provisions in other jurisdictions that seek to ensure electors are properly informed of who is responsible for the political messages that may be contained in the material.

Operational Practices

All practices and procedures will be kept under review to ensure that the best service is delivered to councils and all Local Government elections' stakeholders. Below are some of the areas which have been identified for improvement.

Timeliness of Results

The NSWEC will review strategies to improve the timeliness of election counts and results information in order to declare the outcomes of elections quickly without compromising the accuracy of the results. Also under review will be the communication of results information to the media, councils, candidates and other interested stakeholders. This will include the management and communication of vote counting schedules and results data.

The options to be examined include establishing Regional Counting Centres rather a single centralised counting centre or develop the system's capacity to do decentralised local counts. Both of these options would be subject to certain decisions being made following cost benefit analyses.

Cost Estimates and Cost Recovery

The NSWEC financial system provided full capture of costs against budget items. This system will allow substantial review of expenses for example, to assess the relative cost advantages of different models of shared service provision for consideration in the planning for the 2012 Local Government Elections.

The NSWEC will improve the provision of budgetary advice to councils for the 2012 Local Government Elections. To ensure that councils are better equipped to budget for the costs of their election, the NSWEC will endeavour to determine those councils participating in a shared Regional Returning Officer arrangement earlier in the process so that budget estimates can be prepared with a higher level of accuracy and provided for council consideration.

Regional Returning Officers

The Regional Returning Officer initiative introduced at the 2008 Local Government Elections was well received and successfully implemented. As with most new programmes, areas for improvement have been identified and will be considered for future elections.

The NSWEC will review the possibility of expanding the Regional Returning Officer initiative.

Council Consultation

The NSWEC acknowledges the importance of relationship building with its stakeholders. Council visits were useful for both the NSWEC and councils to work through the electoral process and discuss any matters for consultation. The NSWEC will continue to provide election information to councils including visiting prior to finalising administrative arrangements for the 2012 elections.

Candidate Information Seminars

To ensure a high level of involvement in the Candidate Information Seminars the NSWEC will consider developing an online expression of interest system in which all potential candidates can register their contact details. The system would allow the NSWEC to directly provide candidates with seminars information and other relevant election and election funding information through an email network.

The NSWEC will continue to operate the Candidate Information Seminars and will offer councils the option of selecting their own session on a fee for service basis.

Polling Places and Staffing

The NSWEC will undertake a review of all voting venues with a view to identifying possible new venues, with a particular focus on larger polling places. An analysis of staffing levels compared with the number of votes taken will be undertaken to determine areas where staffing levels need to be amended with a focus on multilingual staff in areas with large culturally and linguistically diverse and indigenous communities.

Correspondingly, the NSWEC will seek to increase the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the electoral system.

In terms of mobile polling booths, the NSWEC will review the appropriateness of the locations, days and times of operation and the effectiveness of advertising the service.

Vision Impaired Electors

The NSWEC has noted that many of those voters who used the Braille ballot papers in the 2008 Local Government Elections have expressed a desire for the NSWEC to incorporate electronically assisted voting into future Local Government elections. The NSWEC will continue to examine electronic voting to assist electors with a vision impairment cast a private and independent vote. The implementation of electronic voting, either at an electronic voting kiosk or over the internet, is not possible without the support of legislative changes. The NSWEC will also consider the final and recent interim report of the Federal Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters which recommended that electronic voting for visually impaired electors be discontinued.

Training

The NSWEC will expand online training for all electoral staff with more interactive and hypothetical examples based on reported real life situations. The online training programmes will be extended to include Returning Officers and senior office assistants.

The NSWEC will develop internal strategies to identify performance issues and to provide feedback for staff for future elections. The selection, training and operational support of staff is important for risk management and service standards.

Communication of Electoral Services

In terms of communication the NSWEC will look to consider more technological approaches better geared to younger and more electronic oriented members of the community. Also, the differences identified through the elector survey in retention of advertising messages between metropolitan and rural electors will be used by the NSWEC in the development of future election communication strategies.

The NSWEC is aware that there remains a poor understanding of the nature of Local Government elections and of the role of the NSWEC. The NSWEC will examine how it can address the community's understanding of the NSW electoral systems.

Maximising Enrolment

The NSWEC notes the previous report of the NSW Joint Standing Committee of Electoral Matters on enrolment and reports that the Government has provided initial financial support to the project.

Glossary

Absent vote

A vote made at a polling place by an elector who is outside his or her own electoral district on election day.

Absolute majority

More than 50% of the total formal vote.

Australian Electoral Commission (AEC)

The organisation responsible for conducting Federal elections, referenda and maintaining the Commonwealth electoral roll.

Ballot box

The sealed container into which an elector places a completed ballot paper.

Ballot paper

The paper printed for an election which a voter marks to record his/her vote.

By-election

An election held to fill a casual vacancy.

Candidate

A person who nominates for an election.

Check count

On the Sunday after election day the ballot papers are checked and counted again at the Returning Officer's office to ensure accuracy of the figures from the election night count.

Compulsory enrolment

Every person who is entitled to have his or her name placed on the electoral roll must complete an enrolment form and send it to the AEC within 21 days of becoming entitled to enrol. A penalty applies for failing to enrol.

Compulsory voting

Once enrolled to vote, voting is compulsory. A penalty applies for failing to vote without a sufficient reason.

Declaration vote

A vote cast by an elector when the ballot papers are enclosed in an envelope containing a printed declaration signed by the elector. This term applies to pre-poll votes, postal votes, Declared Institution votes, absent votes and section votes.

Declared Institution

A nursing home, hospital or similar facility is appointed by the Electoral Commissioner and visited by election officials for the purpose of taking votes from residents who are unable to attend a polling place.

Declaration of poll

An announcement made by the Returning Officer proclaiming the successful candidate elected as the Member for that district.

Deferred election

Deferred elections occur when the Council is unable to conduct an election at the time of the local government general election. This typically occurs when the council is under administration.

Dual polling place

The term given to a single premise which serves as a polling place for two or more councils or wards.

Election

Selection by vote of a person or persons to hold political office.

Election Funding Authority (EFA)

The Election Funding Authority is the statutory body responsible for administering the provisions of the Election Funding Act 1981. It is made up of the Electoral Commissioner as Chair, a member appointed on the nomination of the Premier, and a member appointed on the nomination of the Leader of the Opposition.

Elector

A person who is entitled to vote at an election.

Electoral Commissioner

The statutory officer appointed to manage the conduct of parliamentary and other elections.

Electoral district

One of the 93 Legislative Assembly electorates.

Election Management Application (EMA)

A computer software application consisting of four modules (staffing, candidates, declaration votes and results) to automate many of the routine tasks otherwise performed by election officials.

Electoral roll

The certified list of persons eligible to vote at an election. The rolls are maintained by the AEC.

Electorate

The population of electors or the region in which electors live. Electorates have clearly defined boundaries which are shown on electoral district maps.

Enrolment

The act of enrolling or having one's name added to the list of electors entitled to vote.

Electors

Those entitled to be placed on an electoral roll and vote in an election.

Formal vote

A ballot paper at an election or referendum, which has been correctly marked according to instructions, and contributes to the outcome of the poll.

How-to-vote card

A simulated copy of the ballot paper showing an elector how to mark the paper to vote for a particular candidate or party.

Independent

A candidate for election to, or a Member of, Parliament or Local Government who is not a member of a political party.

Informal vote

A ballot paper which is either left blank or is incorrectly marked. These ballot papers are excluded from the count and therefore do not contribute to the election of a candidate.

Local Government Area (LGA)

A subdivision of the State into geographical areas that councils are responsible for.

New South Wales Electoral Commission (NSWEC)

The New South Wales Government agency responsible for the conduct of parliamentary, Local Government, industrial, statutory and other miscellaneous elections.

Nomination

The process by which a person applies to become a candidate for election.

Opposition

The party or parties which do not hold sufficient seats in Parliament to lead a government.

Optional preferential voting

A voting system in which an elector shows by numbers, his/her preferences for individual candidates. It is not necessary to indicate a preference for all candidates on the ballot paper for the vote to be formal.

Ordinary vote

A vote recorded in the normal manner at a polling place on election day.

Parliament

The legislative body, consisting of the elected representatives of the people, which determines the laws governing the nation or State. The candidates or political party holding the majority of seats form the Government.

Political party

An organised group with a common political philosophy which seeks to win and retain public office for itself and its leaders. Party organisations support or endorse candidates for elections who, if elected, usually vote as a group for their policies in Parliament. The party with the greatest numbers in Parliament forms the Government.

Poll

Vote taken to allow electors to express their view on a particular subject or issue. Voting on a poll issue is not compulsory. The result of the poll is not binding on council.

Polling place

A building such as a school designated as a place to which voters go during an election to cast their votes.

Postal vote

Electors, who are outside their electoral district on election day, or unable to attend a polling place during polling hours, may send a vote by post. Voters must apply for a postal vote prior to election day.

Preferential vote

A vote for all candidates in order of preference. Preferences of candidates with the least number of votes are then distributed until one candidate has sufficient votes to be elected. This system of vote counting is used in the Legislative Assembly elections where a candidate needs an absolute majority to be elected.

Pre-poll vote

Electors unable to vote on election day for certain specified reasons can vote before election day at the office of a Returning Officer or a designated pre-poll voting centre.

Proportional representation

A system of voting designed to elect representatives in proportion to the amount of support each has in the electorate. This system of voting is used in the Legislative Council elections.

Quota

The proportion or percentage of votes required by a candidate to be elected to the Legislative Council.

Recount

A second or further count of votes in an election.

Redistribution

Changes in boundaries of electoral districts to take into account population changes. The result should be that the number of electors enrolled in each district should be equal, give or take 3%.

Referendum

Vote taken to allow electors to express their view on a particular subject or issue. Voting on a referendum issue is compulsory. The result is binding on council and is put in place at the following election.

Registered General Postal Voter

Electors who are seriously ill or infirm or who live in remote areas of the State may apply to the NSWEC to have their names included on a register of general postal voters. This means that ballot papers are automatically sent to them without the need to apply for a postal vote at each separate election.

Returning Officer

The election official responsible for conducting an election for the council.

Roll

See electoral roll.

Scrutineer

A person appointed by a candidate to ensure that procedures and counting are undertaken in a proper manner.

Section vote

Section votes are those cast on election day by electors whose name cannot be found on the electoral roll but who declare that they are entitled to vote.

Vote

The process of choosing/selecting a candidate for political office.

Ward

Subdivisions, with approximately equal numbers of electors, of a Local Government Area.

Writ

The document by which the Governor (or the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly in the case of by-elections) directs Returning Officers to conduct an election. The Governor issues Writs on the advice of the Government.

Section 14: Appendices and Endnotes

Appendices

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Appendix 1: Languages in NSWEC Advertising Campaign, 2008 Local Government Elections.

Print	Radio	Voting Assistance Language Guides
Arabic	Arabic	Arabic
Chinese	Cantonese	Assyrian
Croatian	Croatian	Chinese
Greek	Filipino	Croatian
Italian	Greek	Greek
Korean	Hindi	Hindi
Indian	Italian	Indonesian
Macedonian	Korean	Italian
Portuguese	Macedonian	Japanese
Spanish	Mandarin	Khmer
Vietnamese	Portuguese	Korean
	Spanish	Lao
	Turkish	Macedonian
	Vietnamese	Maltese
		Persian
		Polish
		Portuguese
		Russian
		Serbian
		Spanish
		Tagalog
		Thai
		Turkish
		Vietnamese

Appendix 2: Conducted Local Government Elections by Council on 13 September 2008.

Council	Total elections held (councillor/mayor/poll/referenda)
Albury City Council	1
Armidale Dumaresq Council	1
The Council of the Municipality of Ashfield	4
Auburn Council	3
Ballina Shire Council	5
Balranald Shire Council	1
Bankstown City Council	4
Bathurst Regional Council	1
The Council of the Shire of Baulkham Hills	4
Bega Valley Shire Council	1
Bellingen Shire Council	2
Berrigan Shire Council	1
Blacktown City Council	5
Bland Shire Council (a)	0
Blayney Shire Council	1
Blue Mountains City Council	4
Bogan Shire Council	1
Bombala Council	1
Boorowa Council	1
The Council of the City of Botany Bay	0
Bourke Shire Council	1
Brewarrina Shire Council	1
Broken Hill City Council (b)	-
Burwood Council	2
Byron Shire Council	2
Cabonne Shire Council	7
Camden Council	3
Campbelltown City Council	1
City of Canada Bay Council	2
Canterbury City Council	4
Carrathool Shire Council	0
Central Darling Shire Council	3
Cessnock City Council	5
Clarence Valley Council	1
Cobar Shire Council	2
Coffs Harbour City Council	2
Conargo Shire Council	0
Coolamon Shire Council	1
Cooma-Monaro Shire Council	1
Coonamble Shire Council	1
Cootamundra Shire Council	1

Council Contd	Total elections held (councillor/mayor/poll/referenda)
Corowa Shire Council	1
Cowra Shire Council	1
Deniliquin Council	1
Dubbo City Council	1
Dungog Shire Council	3
Eurobodalla Shire Council	2
Fairfield City Council	4
Forbes Shire Council	1
Gilgandra Shire Council	1
Glen Innes Severn Council	1
Gloucester Shire Council	1
Gosford City Council	1
Goulburn Mulwaree Council	1
Great Lakes Council	1
Greater Hume Shire Council	3
Greater Taree City Council	2
Griffith City Council	2
Gundagai Shire Council	1
Gunnedah Shire Council	1
Guyra Shire Council	1
Gwydir Shire Council	1
Harden Shire Council	1
Hawkesbury City Council	1
Hay Shire Council	1
Holroyd City Council	4
The Council of the Shire of Hornsby	4
The Council of the Municipality of Hunters Hill	3
Hurstville City Council	3
Inverell Shire Council	2
Jerilderie Shire Council	1
Junee Shire Council	1
Kempsey Shire Council	2
The Council of the Municipality of Kiama	1
Kogarah Municipal Council	5
Ku-ring-gai Council	5
Kyogle Council	3
Lachlan Shire Council	6
Lake Macquarie City Council	4
Lane Cove Municipal Council	3
Leeton Shire Council	3
Leichhardt Municipal Council	4
Lismore City Council	3
City of Lithgow Council	1
Liverpool City Council	3
Liverpool Plains Shire Council	1
Lockhart Shire Council	0

Council Contd	Total elections held (councillor/mayor/poll/referenda)
Maitland City Council	5
Manly Council	4
Marrickville Council	4
Mid-Western Regional Council	4
Moree Plains Shire Council	2
Mosman Municipal Council	4
Murray Shire Council	1
Murrumbidgee Shire Council	2
Muswellbrook Shire Council	1
Nambucca Shire Council	2
Narrabri Shire Council	1
Narrandera Shire Council	1
Narromine Shire Council	1
Newcastle City Council	5
North Sydney Council	12
Oberon Council	1
Orange City Council	1
Palerang Council	1
Parkes Shire Council	1
Parramatta City Council	5
Penrith City Council	3
Pittwater Council	3
Port Macquarie-Hastings Council (b)	-
Port Stephens Council	4
Queanbeyan City Council	2
Randwick City Council	5
Richmond Valley Council	2
Rockdale City Council	5
Ryde City Council	3
Shellharbour City Council (b)	-
Shoalhaven City Council	4
Singleton Council	3
Snowy River Shire Council	3
Strathfield Municipal Council	1
Sutherland Shire Council	5
Council of the City of Sydney	3
Tamworth Regional Council	1
Temora Shire Council	1
Tenterfield Shire Council	3
Tumbarumba Shire Council	1
Tumut Shire Council	1
Tweed Shire Council	1
Upper Hunter Shire Council	1
Upper Lachlan Shire Council	2
Uralla Shire Council	0
Urana Shire Council	1
Wagga Wagga City Council	1

Council Contd	Total elections held (councillor/mayor/poll/referenda)
The Council of the Shire of Wakool	3
Walcha Council	1
Walgett Shire Council	1
Warren Shire Council (a)	0
Warringah Council	4
Warrumbungle Shire Council	1
Waverley Council	4
Weddin Shire Council	3
Wellington Council (a)	0
Wentworth Shire Council	1
Willoughby City Council	5
Wingecarribee Shire Council	3
Wollondilly Shire Council	3
Wollongong City Council (b)	-
Woollahra Municipal Council	5
Wyong Shire Council	2
Yass Valley Council	1
Young Shire Council	1

Note:

(a) Designates a council where a by election was held on 29 November 2008 but which has been regarded as part of the overall reporting for the 2008 Local Government Elections

(b) Designates a council under administration.

Appendix 3: Councils with Mayoral Elections, 2008 Local Government Elections.

Council	Type Election
Ballina Shire Council	Contested
Bellingen Shire Council	Contested
Botany Bay City Council	Uncontested
Byron Shire Council	Contested
Canada Bay City Council	Contested
Canterbury City Council	Contested
Cessnock City Council	Contested
Coffs Harbour City Council	Contested
Eurobodalla Shire Council	Contested
Fairfield City Council	Contested
Greater Taree City Council	Contested
Griffith City Council	Contested
Hornsby Shire Council	Contested
Hunters Hill Council	Contested
Lake Macquarie City Council	Contested
Lismore City Council	Contested
Liverpool City Council	Contested
Maitland City Council	Contested
Manly Council	Contested
Nambucca Shire Council	Contested
Newcastle City Council	Contested
North Sydney Council	Contested
Queanbeyan City Council	Contested
Richmond Valley Council	Contested
Shoalhaven City Council	Contested
Sydney City Council	Contested
Warringah Council	Contested
Willoughby City Council	Contested

Appendix 4: Councils with Referenda, Referenda Question and Results, 2008 Local Government Elections.

Council	Referenda Questions	Result
Ballina Shire Council	Question Currently, Ballina Shire Council has ten councillors (three from each of three wards, plus the mayor). Do you favour the reduction of councillors to seven (two from each of three wards, plus the mayor)?	Not Passed
Burwood Council	Question The mayor of Burwood Council is currently elected by the councillors. Do you favour the election of the mayor by electors for a four year term and without changing the number of councillors from seven, including the mayor?	Passed
Cabonne Shire Council	Question 1 Do you favour Cabonne Council abolishing wards where all electors would vote for all councillors? Question 2 Do you favour reducing councillor numbers from twelve (12) to nine (9)?	Not Passed Not Passed
Cobar Shire Council	Question The mayor of Cobar Shire Council is currently elected by the councillors. Do you favour the election of the mayor by electors for a four year term and without changing the number of councillors from twelve, including the mayor?	Not Passed
Inverell Shire Council	Question Do you favour the number of Inverell Shire councillors being reduced from twelve to nine?	Passed
Kempsey Shire Council	Question The mayor of Kempsey Shire Council is currently elected by the councillors. Do you favour the election of the mayor by electors for a four year term and without changing the number of councillors from nine, including the mayor?	Passed
Ku-ring-gai Council	Question The mayor of Ku-ring-gai Council is currently elected by the councillors. Do you approve of the method of electing the mayor of Ku-ring-gai Council being changed to the method of election by the electors, and of the number of councillors on the council being increased to 11?	Not Passed

Council	Referenda Questions	Result
Lachlan Shire Council	Question Do you favour a reduction in the number of Lachlan Shire Councillors from fifteen where three are elected from each of five wards, to ten where two are elected from each of five wards?	Passed
Manly Council	Question Manly Council currently has twelve councillors, including the mayor. Do you favour reducing the number of councillors to nine, including the mayor?	Passed
Moree Plains Shire Council	Question Do you favour the number of Moree Plains Shire councillors being reduced from twelve to nine?	Passed
Mosman Municipal Council	Question The mayor of Mosman Municipal Council is currently elected by the councillors. Do you favour the election of the mayor by electors for a four year term and without increasing the number of councillors from nine, including the mayor?	Passed
Port Stephens Council	Question The mayor of Port Stephens Council is currently elected by the councillors. Do you favour the election of the mayor by electors for a four year term and a decrease of the number of councillors from twelve to ten (including the mayor) to enable the election of three councillors from the three wards?	Passed
Snowy River Shire Council	Question 1 The mayor of Snowy River is currently elected by the councillors. Do you approve of the mayor being elected by the electors enrolled in the Snowy River Shire Council area for a four year term?	Passed
	Question 2 Currently, Snowy River Shire Council has nine councillors, including the mayor. Do you approve of the number of councillors, including the mayor, in the Snowy River Shire Council being reduced from nine to seven?	Passed
Council of the City of Sydney	Question Currently the City of Sydney is an undivided council with no wards. Do you agree to the City of Sydney being divided into three wards, with each ward electing three councillors?	Not Passed
Weddin Shire Council	Question Currently, Weddin Shire Council is divided into five wards. Do you favour Weddin Shire Council abolishing wards so that all electors would vote for all councillors?	Passed

Appendix 5: Councils with Polls and Poll Questions, 2008 Local Government Elections.

Council	Poll Questions
Auburn Council	<p>Question</p> <p>Are you in favour of Auburn Local Government Area being proclaimed a City to be known as The City of Auburn?</p>
Kogarah Municipal Council	<p>Question</p> <p>Do you support the proposal to rename the Kogarah Local Government Area as the City of Kogarah, thereby granting the area City status?</p>
Manly Council	<p>Question</p> <p>Do you support a 4.4% Climate Change Levy to minimise the impact of climate change on Manly?</p>
Lismore City Council	<p>Question</p> <p>Do you support the inclusion of Local Government in the Australian Constitution?</p>
North Sydney Council	<p>Question 1</p> <p>Do you support the proposal to allow advertising on bus shelters in high-traffic areas only, with the revenue to be reserved for capital projects such as road and footpath renewal, improved sporting facilities and the upgrading of North Sydney's village centres?</p> <p>Question 2</p> <p>Do you support the proposal to allow advertising in the North Sydney CBD on public infrastructure such as bus shelters, multi-function poles or free standing advertising panels, with the revenue to be reserved for capital projects such as road and footpath renewal, improved sporting facilities and the upgrading of North Sydney's village centres?</p> <p>Question 3</p> <p>The Container Deposit Legislation (CDL) system involves a mandatory deposit to be paid by the consumer on certain nominated containers, for example, glass, aluminium, steel or plastic. Anyone who returns a container to the retailer or to a bottle depot receives a refund of between 5 cents and 20 cents. A similar system currently operates in South Australia.</p> <p>Do you support the introduction of Container Deposit Legislation in NSW?</p> <p>Question 4</p> <p>Should council amend its planning instruments to permit one dedicated car space per unit with at least one bedroom, exclusive of visitor parking, in new residential unit developments?</p> <p>Question 5</p> <p>A. Do you support an increase in council's existing Environmental Levy special rate to fund an expansion</p>

	<p>of initiatives to assist residents, businesses, schools and council to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and respond to the challenges of climate change?</p> <p>B. Currently the Environmental Levy is based on an average of \$34.70 per rateable property per year. In the event that there is support for an increase in the levy, would you support an increase to an average of:</p> <p>i) \$50 per year, OR ii) \$60 per year?</p>
Mid-Western Regional Council	<p>Question 1 Do you favour retention of Mid-Western Regional Council as the name of this council?</p> <p>Question 2 In the event that retention of Mid-Western Regional Council is not favoured, would you support changing the name of the council to Cudgegong Regional Council? OR Question 3 In the event that retention of Mid-Western Regional Council is not favoured, would you support changing the name of the council to Mudgee Regional Council?</p>
Wingecarribee Shire Council	<p>Question 1 Do you approve of Council building the Leisure Centre?</p> <p>Question 2 Do you approve of the construction of the Leisure Centre being funded by the sale of the identified properties?</p>
Upper Lachlan Shire Council	<p>Question Do you support the continuing development and construction of wind farm turbines in the Upper Lachlan Council area?</p>

Appendix 6: Councils with Non-residential Electoral Rolls, 2008 Local Government Elections.

Council	Residential Roll	Non-Residential Roll	Total Roll	% of Roll Non-Resident
Albury City Council	32,098	4	32,102	0.01%
Armidale Dumaresq Council	15,443	7	15,450	0.05%
The Council of the Municipality of Ashfield	25,607	8	25,615	0.03%
Auburn Council	38,030	6	38,036	0.02%
Balranald Shire Council	1,593	1	1,594	0.06%
Bankstown City Council	116,154	1	116,155	0.00%
Bathurst Regional Council	24,414	10	24,424	0.04%
The Council of the Shire of Baulkham Hills	114,275	2	114,277	0.00%
Bega Valley Shire Council	23,299	42	23,341	0.18%
Bellingen Shire Council	9,014	2	9,016	0.02%
Blacktown City Council	172,834	4	172,838	0.00%
Blayney Shire Council	4,769	7	4,776	0.15%
Blue Mountains City Council	54,520	8	54,528	0.01%
Bogan Shire Council	2,015	1	2,016	0.05%
Bourke Shire Council	1,797	1	1,798	0.06%
Burwood Council	19,088	20	19,108	0.10%
Byron Shire Council	20,495	61	20,556	0.30%
Cabonne Shire Council	9,109	3	9,112	0.03%
Campbelltown City Council	92,723	2	92,725	0.00%
City of Canada Bay Council	47,253	6	47,259	0.01%
Central Darling Shire Council	1,199	16	1,215	1.32%
Cessnock City Council	33,532	3	33,535	0.01%
Clarence Valley Council	34,916	3	34,919	0.01%
Cobar Shire Council	3,121	1	3,122	0.03%
Coffs Harbour City Council	47,200	2	47,202	0.00%
Conargo Shire Council	1,179	2	1,181	0.17%
Corowa Shire Council	8,026	3	8,029	0.04%
Dungog Shire Council	6,045	1	6,046	0.02%
Eurobodalla Shire Council	26,456	421	26,877	1.57%
Fairfield City Council	122,850	3	122,853	0.00%
Glen Innes Severn Council	6,330	1	6,331	0.02%
Gloucester Shire Council	3,672	3	3,675	0.08%
Goulburn Mulwaree Council	18,633	4	18,637	0.02%
Great Lakes Council	25,663	14	25,677	0.05%
Greater Hume Shire Council	6,970	13	6,983	0.19%
Greater Taree City Council	33,430	3	33,433	0.01%
Guyra Shire Council	3,007	4	3,011	0.13%

Council Contd	Residential Roll	Non-Residential Roll	Total Roll	% of Roll Non-Resident
Gwydir Shire Council	3,892	2	3,894	0.05%
Harden Shire Council	2,791	1	2,792	0.04%
Hawkesbury City Council	41,555	38	41,593	0.09%
Hay Shire Council	2,245	1	2,246	0.04%
Holroyd City Council	59,086	5	59,091	0.01%
The Council of the Shire of Hornsby	107,584	1	107,585	0.00%
Hurstville City Council	51,760	5	51,765	0.01%
Jerilderie Shire Council	1,195	1	1,196	0.08%
Kempsey Shire Council	19,118	1	19,119	0.01%
The Council of the Municipality of Kiama	14,910	4	14,914	0.03%
Kogarah Municipal Council	36,716	4	36,720	0.01%
Lake Macquarie City Council	137,630	1	137,631	0.00%
Lane Cove Municipal Council	21,315	5	21,320	0.02%
Leichhardt Municipal Council	35,283	88	35,371	0.25%
Lismore City Council	29,754	7	29,761	0.02%
City of Lithgow Council	14,163	1	14,164	0.01%
Liverpool City Council	105,603	8	105,611	0.01%
Liverpool Plains Shire Council	5,438	2	5,440	0.04%
Manly Council	25,121	10	25,131	0.04%
Marrickville Council	51,336	88	51,424	0.17%
Mid-Western Regional Council	15,086	14	15,100	0.09%
Moree Plains Shire Council	8,063	2	8,065	0.02%
Mosman Municipal Council	18,776	1	18,777	0.01%
Murray Shire Council	4,634	4	4,638	0.09%
Murrumbidgee Shire Council	1,549	1	1,550	0.06%
Nambucca Shire Council	13,240	1	13,241	0.01%
Narromine Shire Council	4,529	1	4,530	0.02%
Newcastle City Council	104,017	5	104,022	0.00%
North Sydney Council	40,619	11	40,630	0.03%
Oberon Council	3,540	2	3,542	0.06%
Palerang Council	9,415	10	9,425	0.11%
Parkes Shire Council	10,062	1	10,063	0.01%
Parramatta City Council	95,198	2	95,200	0.00%
Penrith City Council	114,816	3	114,819	0.00%
Pittwater Council	40,355	1	40,356	0.00%
Port Stephens Council	44,822	2	44,824	0.00%
Queanbeyan City Council	25,512	1	25,513	0.00%
Randwick City Council	78,180	18	78,198	0.02%
Richmond Valley Council	15,057	6	15,063	0.04%
Rockdale City Council	62,066	8	62,074	0.01%
Ryde City Council	66,975	2	66,977	0.00%
Shoalhaven City Council	66,076	222	66,298	0.33%

Council Contd	Residential Roll	Non-Residential Roll	Total Roll	% of Roll Non-Resident
Singleton Council	14,689	1	14,690	0.01%
Snowy River Shire Council	4,346	3	4,349	0.07%
Strathfield Municipal Council	19,635	6	19,641	0.03%
Sutherland Shire Council	153,649	4	153,653	0.00%
Council of the City of Sydney	89,172	396	89,568	0.44%
Temora Shire Council	4,368	9	4,377	0.21%
Tenterfield Shire Council	4,649	22	4,671	0.47%
Tumbarumba Shire Council	2,418	2	2,420	0.08%
Tweed Shire Council	57,484	10	57,494	0.02%
Upper Hunter Shire Council	9,383	5	9,388	0.05%
Upper Lachlan Shire Council	5,457	11	5,468	0.20%
Uralla Shire Council	4,230	1	4,231	0.02%
Urana Shire Council	872	3	875	0.34%
Wagga Wagga City Council	39,379	1	39,380	0.00%
Walgett Shire Council	3,889	7	3,896	0.18%
Warringah Council	94,448	6	94,454	0.01%
Warrumbungle Shire Council	7,134	3	7,137	0.04%
Waverley Council	39,466	7	39,473	0.02%
Wentworth Shire Council	4,258	4	4,262	0.09%
Willoughby City Council	42,723	25	42,748	0.06%
Wingecarribee Shire Council	31,085	8	31,093	0.03%
Wollondilly Shire Council	28,164	1	28,165	0.00%
Woollahra Municipal Council	35,894	1	35,895	0.00%
Wyong Shire Council	100,122	8	100,130	0.01%
Yass Valley Council	9,743	1	9,744	0.01%
Young Shire Council	8,505	1	8,506	0.01%

Appendix 7: Regional Groupings by Location of Regional Returning Officer, Electors and Square Kilometres, 2008 Local Government Elections.

Regional Grouping	No. Councils	% Total	Sq Kms	Total Electors	Electors per sq km
Albury City Council	4	4.9	13,044	49,534	3.80
Armidale Dumaresq Council	2	2.5	10,502	17,767	1.69
Ballina Shire Council	2	2.5	1,051	49,335	46.94
Bathurst Regional Council	2	2.5	5,345	29,200	5.43
Coffs Harbour City Council	3	3.7	13,218	91,137	6.89
Narrandera Shire Council*	7	8.6	30,252	35,371	1.17
Blue Mountains City Council	2	2.5	5,999	68,692	11.45
Cobar Shire Council	5	6.2	174,595	9,071	0.05
Orange City Council	5	6.2	31,962	55,328	1.73
Gundagai Shire Council	5	6.2	11,248	19,147	1.70
Cooma-Monaro Shire Council	3	3.7	15,395	13,181	0.86
Deniliquin Council*	7	8.6	39,145	21,478	0.55
Dubbo City Council	4	4.9	24,288	35,036	1.44
Eurobodalla Shire Council	2	2.5	9,702	50,218	5.18
Goulburn Mulwaree Council	2	2.5	10,499	24,105	2.30
Greater Taree City Council	3	3.7	10,080	62,785	6.23
Tamworth Regional Council	3	3.7	19,733	51,858	2.63
Kempsey Shire Council	2	2.5	4,871	32,360	6.64
Lismore City Council	3	3.7	7,930	51,227	6.46
Wagga Wagga City Council*	4	4.9	12,747	48,054	3.77
Narrabri Shire Council	3	3.7	47,747	19,912	0.42
Queanbeyan City Council	3	3.7	9,315	44,682	4.80
Young Shire Council	5	6.2	13,362	24,851	1.86
Total	81	100.0	522,030	904,129	1.73

Note: * Councils or Wards with uncontested elections not included in totals.

Appendix 8: Nomination of Candidates by Registered Political Parties, 2008 Local Government Elections.

Registered Political Party	Nominations	%	State/Local Registered
Labor	425	10.0	State
Liberal	385	9.0	State
The Greens	355	8.3	State
Unity Party	56	1.3	State
Community First	34	0.8	Local
Australian Business Party	24	0.6	Local
Shoal Independents	21	0.5	Local
Australia First Party	15	0.4	Local
Eurobodalla First	15	0.4	Local
Residents First	15	0.4	Local
SWI	15	0.4	Local
Country Labor	13	0.3	State
Holroyd Independents	13	0.3	Local
TLC	12	0.3	Local
Liverpool Community Independents Team	11	0.3	Local
OSF	11	0.3	Local
SWAG	11	0.3	Local
Wake Up	11	0.3	Local
Clover Moore Independent	10	0.2	Local
Save Campbelltown Koalas	10	0.2	Local
RAGAA	10	0.2	Local
SOS	10	0.2	State
Socialist Alliance	10	0.2	State
STL	10	0.2	Local
Bob Thompson's Independent Team	9	0.2	Local
Christian Democratic Party	9	0.2	State
Community First Team	9	0.2	Local
Manly Independents	7	0.2	Local
Albury Citizens and Ratepayers Movement	6	0.1	Local
Central Coast First	6	0.1	Local
No Parking Meters Party	6	0.1	Local
Parramatta Better Local Government	6	0.1	Local
RAS	5	0.1	Local
The Parramatta Independents	5	0.1	Local
BCV	4	0.1	Local
Kogarah Residents' Association	3	0.1	Local
Lorraine Wearne Independents	3	0.1	Local
WIP	3	0.1	Local
Y. Bellamy Independents	3	0.1	Local
Australian Democrats	1	0.0	State
The Fishing Party	1	0.0	State
TOTAL	4,620	100.0	

Appendix 9: Location and Number of Attendees, Candidate Information Seminars, 2008 Local Government Elections.

Location	Date	Attendees
Burwood	Wednesday 7 May	32
Wagga Wagga	Saturday 10 May	15
Albury	Saturday 10 May	23
Chatswood	Wednesday 14 May	27
Tamworth	Saturday 17 May	12
Armidale	Saturday 17 May	36
Young	Saturday 17 May	12
Hurstville	Tuesday 20 May	17
Gosford	Wednesday 21 May	27
Goulburn	Wednesday 21 May	14
Kiama	Thursday 22 May	30
Newcastle	Thursday 22 May	78
Narooma	Saturday 24 May	32
Taree	Saturday 24 May	24
Penrith	Thursday 29 May	33
Lismore	Friday 30 May	59
Bathurst	Saturday 31 May	25
Byron Bay	Saturday 31 May	15
Sydney	Wednesday 4 June	27
Liverpool	Wednesday 11 June	45
Parramatta	Wednesday 11 June	33
Dee Why	Thursday 12 June	27
Orange	Friday 13 June	18
Griffith	Saturday 14 June	35
Dubbo	Saturday 14 June	19
Nyngan	Saturday 14 June	4
Tweed Heads	Thursday, 19 June	26
Coffs Harbour	Saturday 21 June	50
Queanbeyan	Saturday 28 June	50
Deniliquin	Saturday 28 June	18
Strathfield	Wednesday 16 July	32
Hurstville	Saturday 26 July	15
Chatswood	Saturday 26 July	39
Randwick	Tuesday 5 August	28
TOTAL		977

Appendix 10: Report of the Independent Observation Team
Local Government Counting Centre, 2008 Local
Government Elections.

Appendix 11: Candidates by Age and Council Type, 2008
Local Government Elections.

	Metropolitan Councils			Non-Metropolitan Councils			Total	
	Freq	Metro %	Total %	Freq	Non-Metro %	Total %	Freq	Total %
18-24 yrs	136	5.9	2.9	49	2.1	1.1	185	4.0
25-29 yrs	143	6.2	3.1	43	1.8	0.9	186	4.0
30-34 yrs	153	6.7	3.3	70	3.0	1.5	223	4.8
35-39 yrs	197	8.6	4.3	135	5.8	2.9	332	7.2
40-44 yrs	226	9.9	4.9	192	8.3	4.2	418	9.0
45-49 yrs	309	13.5	6.7	260	11.2	5.6	569	12.3
50-54 yrs	318	13.9	6.9	352	15.1	7.6	670	14.5
55-59 yrs	284	12.4	6.1	405	17.4	8.8	689	14.9
60-64 yrs	249	10.9	5.4	391	16.8	8.5	640	13.9
65-69 yrs	146	6.4	3.2	241	10.4	5.2	387	8.4
70-74 yrs	77	3.4	1.7	129	5.5	2.8	206	4.5
75-79 yrs	34	1.5	0.7	46	2.0	1.0	80	1.7
80-84 yrs	14	0.6	0.3	9	0.4	0.2	23	0.5
85-89 yrs	4	0.2	0.1	3	0.1	0.1	7	0.2
Unknown	3	0.1	0.1	2	0.1	0.0	5	0.1
Totals	2293	100.0	49.6	2327	100.0	50.4	4620	100.0

Appendix 12: Council Elections Counted at the Local Government Counting Centre, 2008 Local Government Elections.

Council
Albury City Council
Armidale Dumaresq Council
The Council of the Municipality of Ashfield
Auburn Council
Bankstown City Council
Bathurst Regional Council
Baulkham Hills Shire Council
Bellingen Shire Council
Blacktown City Council
Blue Mountains City Council
Burwood Council
Byron Shire Council
Camden Council
Campbelltown City Council
City of Canada Bay Council
Canterbury City Council
Cessnock City Council
Coffs Harbour City Council
Dubbo City Council
Eurobodalla Shire Council
Fairfield City Council
Gosford City Council
Great Lakes Council
Hawkesbury City Council
Holroyd City Council
The Council of the Municipality of Hornsby Council
Hurstville City Council
Kiama Municipal Council
Kogarah Municipal Council
Lake Macquarie City Council
Lane Cove Municipal Council
Leichhardt Municipal Council
Lismore City Council
City of Lithgow Council
Liverpool City Council
Maitland City Council
Manly Council
Marrickville Council
Mid-Western Regional Council
Mosman Municipal Council
Newcastle City Council
North Sydney Council
Orange City Council

Council Contd
Palerang Council
Parramatta City Council
Penrith City Council
Pittwater Council
Port Stephens Council
Queanbeyan City Council
Randwick City Council
Richmond Valley Council
Rockdale City Council
Ryde City Council
Shoalhaven City Council
Strathfield Municipal Council
Sutherland Shire Council
Council of the City of Sydney
Tweed Shire Council
Wagga Wagga City Council
Warringah Council
Waverley Council
Willoughby Council
Wingecarribee Shire Council
Wollondilly Shire Council
Woollahra Municipal Council
Wyong Shire Council

Appendix 13: Review of 2008 Local Government Elections
Pricing – Final Report, July 2008.

Appendix 14: Total Cost of Elections by Council, 2008 Local Government Elections.

Council	Total Cost \$
Albury City Council	196,300
Armidale Dumaresq Council	108,800
The Council of the Municipality of Ashfield	193,900
Auburn Council	235,800
Ballina Shire Council	170,600
Balranald Shire Council	11,700
Bankstown City Council	641,100
Bathurst Regional Council	177,500
The Council of the Shire of Baulkham Hills	585,100
Bega Valley Shire Council	144,200
Bellingen Shire Council	59,100
Berrigan Shire Council	34,000
Blacktown City Council	821,700
Bland Shire Council	38,400
Blayney Shire Council	36,200
Blue Mountains City Council	299,100
Bogan Shire Council	20,600
Bombala Council	18,000
Boorowa Council	16,300
The Council of City of Botany Bay	45,100
Bourke Shire Council	21,900
Brewarrina Shire Council	10,800
Burwood Council	143,600
Byron Shire Council	124,600
Cabonne Shire Council	71,500
Camden Council	211,000
Campbelltown City Council	483,500
City of Canada Bay Council	269,800
Canterbury City Council	472,300
Carrathool Shire Council	7,300
Central Darling Shire Council	17,600
Cessnock City Council	239,200
Clarence Valley Council	214,000
Cobar Shire Council	31,400
Coffs Harbour City Council	275,600
Conargo Shire Council	4,100
Coolamon Shire Council	23,500
Cooma Monaro Shire Council	65,200
Coonamble Shire Council	32,500
Cootamundra Shire Council	41,000
Corowa Shire Council	47,900
Cowra Shire Council	68,300
Deniliquin Council	32,000
Dubbo City Council	153,500
Dungog Shire Council	58,900

Council Contd	Total Cost \$
Eurobodalla Shire Council	199,900
Fairfield City Council	684,100
Forbes Shire Council	46,400
Gilgandra Shire Council	20,000
Glen Innes Severn Council	58,100
Gloucester Shire Council	21,400
Gosford City Council	600,900
Goulburn Mulwaree Council	116,400
Great Lakes Council	172,200
Greater Hume Shire Council	50,700
Greater Taree City Council	218,900
Griffith City Council	110,000
Gundagai Shire Council	22,300
Gunnedah Shire Council	47,300
Guyra Shire Council	32,700
Gwydir Shire Council	48,300
Harden Shire Council	22,500
Hawkesbury City Council	273,500
Hay Shire Council	17,300
Holroyd City Council	328,400
The Council of the Shire of Hornsby	616,000
The Council of the Municipality of Hunters Hill	86,700
Hurstville City Council	340,200
Inverell Shire Council	81,100
Jerilderie Shire Council	8,600
Junee Shire Council	28,400
Kempsey Shire Council	124,300
The Council of the Municipality of Kiama	98,700
Kogarah Municipal Council	252,500
Ku-ring-gai Council	406,500
Kyogle Council	41,800
Lachlan Shire Council	39,300
Lake Macquarie City Council	750,000
Lane Cove Municipal Council	152,200
Leeton Shire Council	51,300
Leichhardt Municipal Council	244,500
Lismore City Council	190,900
City of Lithgow Council	87,400
Liverpool City Council	556,000
Liverpool Plains Shire Council	35,600
Lockhart Shire Council	7,500
Maitland City Council	287,500
Manly Council	201,000
Marrickville Council	295,800
Mid-Western Regional Council	117,900
Moree Plains Shire Council	82,000
Mosman Municipal Council	142,100
Murray Shire Council	28,000
Murrumbidgee Shire Council	11,700

Council Contd	Total Cost \$
Muswellbrook Shire Council	80,200
Nambucca Shire Council	91,800
Narrabri Shire Council	71,300
Narrandera Shire Council	27,700
Narromine Shire Council	27,700
Newcastle City Council	598,400
North Sydney Council	333,400
Oberon Council	41,200
Orange City Council	160,000
Palerang Council	60,600
Parkes Shire Council	64,800
Parramatta City Council	538,600
Penrith City Council	627,000
Pittwater Council	247,100
Port Stephens Council	308,200
Queanbeyan City Council	167,900
Randwick City Council	572,100
Richmond Valley Council	92,400
Rockdale City Council	382,400
Ryde City Council	400,700
Shoalhaven City Council	397,700
Singleton Council	107,400
Snowy River Shire Council	45,000
Strathfield Municipal Council	136,400
Sutherland Shire Council	770,000
The Council of the City of Sydney	512,500
Tamworth Regional Council	213,400
Temora Shire Council	30,000
Tenterfield Shire Council	44,100
Tumbarumba Shire Council	17,600
Tumut Shire Council	45,400
Tweed Shire Council	336,500
Upper Hunter Shire Council	76,000
Upper Lachlan Shire Council	48,200
Uralla Shire Council	15,600
Urana Shire Council	5,200
Wagga Wagga City Council	252,200
The Council of the Shire of Wakool	23,700
Walcha Council	13,500
Walgett Shire Council	35,100
Warren Shire Council	13,100
Warringah Council	511,800
Warrumbungle Shire Council	57,300
Waverley Council	227,300
Weddin Shire Council	22,400
Wellington Council	42,900
Wentworth Shire Council	48,500
Willoughby City Council	277,200
Wingecarribee Shire Council	189,300

Council Contd	Total Cost \$
Wollondilly City Council	158,300
Woollahra Municipal Council	250,300
Wyong Shire Council	543,400
Yass Valley Council	57,300
Young Shire Council	61,600
TOTAL	25,911,000

Appendix 15: Councils Receiving Refunds for Election Costs,
2008 Local Government Elections.

Council	Refund \$
Armidale Dumaresq Council	-11,770
Baulkham Hills Shire Council	-38,500
Bega Valley Shire Council	-7,370
Bellingen Shire Council	-4,730
Berrigan Shire Council	-8,910
Blayney Shire Council	-2,200
Bombala Council	-660
Boorowa Council	-880
Brewarrina Shire Council	-3,630
Campbelltown City Council	-22,660
Canada Bay Council	-20,790
Canterbury City Council	-23,540
Cobar Shire Council	-4,730
Coffs Harbour City Council	-8,030
Coolamon Shire Council	-3,080
Coonamble Shire Council	-11,725
Corowa Shire Council	-3,080
Dubbo City Council	-13,420
Dungog Shire Council	-2,860
Gilgandra Shire Council	-3,850
Glen Innes Severn Shire Council	-2,860
Goulburn-Mulwaree Council	-6,270
Greater Hume Shire Council	-3,300
Griffith City Council	-7,150
Gundagai Shire Council	-2,530
Gunnedah Shire Council	-5,390
Gwydir Shire Council	-3,190
Harden Shire Council	-2,090
Hawkesbury City Council	-1,100
Holroyd City Council	-9,020
Hunters Hill Council	-4,620
Inverell Shire Council	-8,360
Junee Shire Council	-3,520
Kempsey Shire Council	-2,530
Kyogle Council	-2,530
Leeton Shire Council	-1,980
Lithgow City Council	-7,260
Liverpool City Council	-69,190
Liverpool Plains Shire Council	-4,840
Marrickville Council	-7,700
Murray Shire Council	-7,810
Murrumbidgee Shire Council	-1,430
Narrandera Shire Council	-1,980
Newcastle City Council	-18,700

Council	Refund \$
Oberon Council	-6,380
Palerang Council	-1,540
Penrith City Council	-16,500
Greater Queanbeyan City	-3,850
Singleton Shire Council	-1,760
Sydney City Council	-19,030
Tamworth Regional Council	-29,590
Temora Shire Council	-4,070
Tumbarumba Shire Council	-1,650
Tumut Shire Council	-3,740
Upper Hunter Council	-8,580
Upper Lachlan Shire	-330
Wagga Wagga City Council	-3,520
Wakool Shire Council	-6,380
Walgett Shire Council	-2,090
Warringah Council	-12,650
Wingecarribee Shire Council	-9,790
Yass Valley Council	-7,590
Young Shire Council	-3,520

Appendix 16: Councils with Outstanding and Part Payments for Election Costs, 2008 Local Government Elections (as at 10 June 2009).

	Part Payment	Outstanding
85% invoice	1. Ashfield Municipal Council 2. Griffith City Council 3. Lane Cove Council* 4. Tamworth Regional Council	0
50% invoice	0	1. Blacktown City Council 2. Burwood Council 3. Ryde City Council
Final invoice	-	1. Bathurst City Council 2. Bland Shire Council 3. Fairfield City Council 4. Lane Cove Council* 5. Ryde Council
Final Credit Refunds	-	1. Griffith City Council** 2. Tamworth Regional Council**

Note: * Lane Cove Council has made a partial payment to the initial 85% interim invoice and are yet to make a payment to the final invoice sent in 2009.

** Griffith City Council and Tamworth Regional Council refunds will be provided after the receipt of the initial invoice amount.

Endnotes

¹ NSW Department of Local Government, Annual Report 2007 -08 p6.

² NSW Parliament, Local Government in NSW Parliamentary Briefing Paper September 2008.

³ NSW Parliament, Local Government in NSW Parliamentary Briefing Paper September 2008.

⁴ In this report the term 'client' is used to describe the group that pays for the service provided. The term 'stakeholder' is used in relation to those who have an interest in the elections.

⁵ Victorian Electoral Commission, 'Enrolment and Voting Barriers for people with a Disability and People living in Aged Care Facilities', February 2009 and 'Barriers to Enrolment and Voting within the Chinese and Vietnamese Communities: Qualitative and Quantitative Research. Final Report.' February 2009.

⁶ The term 'Braille ballot paper' is used in the report to cover both Braille and large print as the ballot paper developed by Vision Australia incorporated both.

⁷ State Electoral Office, 2003/04 Annual Report, p10.

⁸ State Electoral Office, 2003/04 Annual Report, p10.

⁹ This excludes councils under administration or with uncontested elections.

¹⁰ NSW Electoral Commission, Report on the 2007 State Election, November 2007.

¹¹ NSW Electoral Commission, Report on the 2007 State Election, November 2007.

¹² NSW Electoral Commission, Report on the 2007 State Election, November 2007.

¹³ The number of candidates, the ward structure and the differing types of elections that can occur within one council area makes it prohibitively expensive and logistically very cumbersome to provide absent voting at each polling place throughout NSW.

¹⁴ The NSWEC contracted Tribe Research to develop and administer the survey to ensure responses would remain anonymous.

¹⁵ Tribe Research, NSW Electoral Commission Local Council Election Survey 2008, 2008, p3.

¹⁶ Missing responses were 2.1%.

¹⁷ The NSWEC contacted all of the registered Braille ballot papers users. A few chose not to participate, the views of the remainder could not be gained for reasons of ill health, death or changed contact details.

¹⁸ NSW Parliament, Local Government in NSW Parliamentary Briefing Paper September 2008.

¹⁹ State Electoral Office, 2003/04 Annual Report, p6.

²⁰ State Electoral Office, 2003/04 Annual Report, p6.

²¹ Section 16 of the Local Government Act 1993 provides for a referendum to be held. With regard to the latter point, 'changing the method of election of ward councillors' this refers to election by the electors for the ward or, partly by the electors for the ward and partly by the electors for the whole Local Government area.

²² The percentages include the proportion of General Managers who gave neutral and positive feedback.

²³ Comment from General Manager of a council in the non-metropolitan Council.

²⁴ At the time of completing the survey, councils had only received the August 2008 invoice for 85% of election costs. The final invoice in March 2009 which provided a refund to 63 councils had not been received at that point. The response to this question may be different if the survey was administered when councils knew of the final total cost to them.

²⁵ Comment from General Manager of a council in the Greater Metropolitan Area.

²⁶ NSW Electoral Commission, Report on the 2007 State Election, 2007, p4 with greater detail on p55.

²⁷ The registered abbreviated names of the Liberal Party of Australia (NSW Division) and the Australian Labor Party (NSW Branch) are Liberal and Labor respectively. The registered abbreviated names are how the parties appear on ballot papers and 'How to Vote' material and these abbreviations are used in this report. 'The Greens' do not have a registered abbreviated name, so references to it always appear as 'The Greens'.

²⁸ NSW Electoral Commission, Report on the 2007 State Election, 2007, p55.

²⁹ Antony Green's Election Blog NSW Local Government Elections, September 12 2008. <http://blogs.abc.net/antonygreen/2008/09/nsw-local-gover-html#more>.

³⁰ Four political parties' registrations have been cancelled since the 2008 re-registration process. These were Community Before Developers – Stop Over

Development; Leichhardt Council Community Independents; No Politics; and Roads and Services Action Party. The Roads and Services Action Party's registration was cancelled after the September 2008 elections in February 2009.

³¹ The number of candidates is calculated by deducting from the total number of nominations the number of withdrawn nominations. The number of candidates does not exclude nominations for more than one position. As a result the number of candidates does not equal the number of people who stood for election. This number was 4,499.

³² State Electoral Office, 2003/04 Annual Report, p6.

³³ 2004: 4,962 candidates and 1,464 positions; 2008: 4,620 candidates and 1,474 positions.

³⁴ The councils in 2004 which had more than 100 candidates were Rockdale City Council (121), Randwick City Council (109), Campbelltown City Council (109), Auburn Council (108) and Tweed Shire Council (106).

³⁵ S79 (7A) of the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912 and section 306 (5A) of the Local Government Act 1993.

³⁶ Report on Observation of NSWEC Central Vote Count, October 2008, p9.

³⁷ 3,427 candidates had provided email addresses but 350 survey emails were returned as invalid. The response rate has been calculated as a percentage of both the number of candidates for whom there was every reason to believe had received the email (42.6%) as well as a percentage of the total number of candidates (28.7%).

³⁸ The gender composition of the respondents to the survey was 64.2% of male with 35.8% female and in the total candidates 66.5% male and 33.5% female. In terms of age, the majority of survey respondents (81.8%) were aged between 41 and 70 years with 36.4% aged between 51 and 60 years. Amongst all candidates the corresponding figures were 72.9% and 29.4%. The distribution of survey respondents was rural (58%) and metropolitan (42%) candidates while the representation the total population of candidates was 50.4% rural and 49.6 metropolitan.

³⁹ Respondents had responded to more than one category. This and the wording of the question meant that an exact comparison with the same categories for the total population of candidates was not possible.

⁴⁰ The NSWEC contracted PeoplePulse to develop and administer the on line survey of election staff due to the numbers and the need to preserve privacy of the respondents providing feedback.

⁴¹ Not all staff provided an email address. The 11,246 represents those staff that did provide such an address.

⁴² Independent Observation Team, Report on Observation of NSW Electoral Commission Central Vote Count September 2008 Local Government Elections, 17 October 2008, p9. Available from the NSWEC's website.

⁴³ State Electoral Office, 2003/04 Annual Report, p7.

⁴⁴ State Electoral Office, 2003/04 Annual Report, p7.

⁴⁵ There was an average of four days from the indication of when data entry would commence to result declared.

⁴⁶ Turn out on the day is always less than participation rate as participation rate includes postal and other forms of voting undertaken before election day.

⁴⁷ Calculation of non-voter rate is based on councillor elections and excludes from the total elector base figure, those electors who were not expected to vote for example, uncontested elections. The figure is 15.9%.

⁴⁸ Walter Turnbull Review of Local Government Elections Pricing – Final Report. July 2008, pg 7.

⁴⁹ Uncontested elections are only known at the close of nominations. Until that point, the NSWEC had been undertaking work towards anticipated elections and incurring expenses. Costs for work undertaken to that point are charged to the council concerned.

⁵⁰ Federal Parliament Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, Report on the 2007 Federal Election electronic voting trials. Interim report of the Inquiry into the conduct of the 2007 election and matters related thereto. March 2009 Canberra.

⁵¹ Different methodologies were used in these surveys making comparisons less reliable. The USA, Canadian (British Columbia) and New Zealand studies involved a sample randomly selected and contacted by telephone to participate in a post election interview. NSWEC relied upon self selection, a method which is more likely to attract negative responses as people are more motivated to register their dissatisfaction than satisfaction with services received. The results of the NSWEC's elector survey in particular are only as reliable as the representativeness of the survey and comparisons between different studies using different methodologies is indicative at best.

⁵² In the 2008 Local Government Elections, there were 4,231,370 people on the electoral roll and 313,025 electors in uncontested areas.

⁵³ Australian Electoral Commission, Analysis of Informal Voting House of Representatives 2007 Election, 2009.

⁵⁴ Australian Electoral Commission, Analysis of Informal Voting House of Representatives 2007 Election, 2009.

⁵⁵ If electors were unable to take up these options, their name was recorded to ensure that they were not issued with a penalty notice for not voting.

⁵⁶ Chief Electoral Office, Ministry of Justice, New Zealand Voter/Non-Voter Satisfaction Survey, 15 December 2005.

⁵⁷ Canada, Elections British Columbia, Ministry of Labour and Citizens' Services, Elections Awareness and Satisfaction Performance Measures Final Report August 2005, 2005.

⁵⁸ Rallings, C. and Thrasher, M. LGCC Elections Centre, University of Plymouth, 2007 post election survey – local elections in England – Report to the Electoral Commission, 2007.

⁵⁹ Public Agenda, Voters' Experiences in 2008 and the Future of Engagement, January 2009.

⁶⁰ Canada, Elections British Columbia, Ministry of Labour and Citizens' Services, Elections Awareness and Satisfaction Performance Measures Final Report August 2005.

⁶¹ New Zealand: Ministry of Justice, New Zealand, 'Chief Electoral Office, Minister of Justice Voter/Non-Voter Satisfaction Survey, 15 December 2005.

⁶² The survey was sent out to approx 200 journalists across NSW and along the Victorian border who contacted NSWEC. They were a mixture of radio, TV and print journalists – both commercial and the ABC. There were 30 respondents.

⁶³ United Kingdom, Electoral Commission. Local Elections in England 2008 - Report on the administration of the 1 May 2008 elections, 2008.

⁶⁴ Rallings, C. and Thrasher, M. LGCC Elections Centre, University of Plymouth, 2007 post election survey – local elections in England – Report to the Electoral Commission, 2007.

⁶⁵ Canada, Elections British Columbia, Ministry of Labour and Citizens' Services, Elections Awareness and Satisfaction Performance Measures Final Report August 2005.