

INQUIRY INTO PROPOSALS TO INCREASE VOTER ENGAGEMENT, PARTICIPATION AND CONFIDENCE

LGNSW Responses to Questions on Notice

Review of Electoral Commission Report

The CHAIR: Just to wrap up Mr James's question I ask all witnesses: Following the NSW Electoral Commission doing its report into the local government elections, would you favour this Committee doing a review of that report and the elections?

The CHAIR: If LGNSW could take that on notice, that would be great.

PENNY PEDERSEN: We will. Thank you.

LGNSW Response:

LGNSW would welcome the Committee conducting a review of that the NSW Electoral Commission report on the 2024 council elections. It would be complementary to this Inquiry.

Election Costs

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: On a similar issue when talking about providers for elections, as a ballpark figure—and you might have to take this on notice—what is the cost involved for councils for having an election? What cost sits on your books every four years for an election? I appreciate that you might need to take it on notice if you don't have it.

PENNY PEDERSEN: I might have to take the actual amount on notice.

ANTHONY McMAHON: I have a suggestion. I think it would be relatively easy—and I hope I'm not dropping anyone in it too much here—for LGNSW to ask as many of the councils as possible to provide their figures on what the last three elections have cost. I know that I could generate that data in the space of 20 minutes here. Potentially, LGNSW could put a call out for who can provide their data in whatever time frame you're asking. Whoever is able to can provide it. You may then be able to do a comparison on what those cost escalations over that period look like relative to the rate peg over the same period. I think that will give you a message about the gap.

The CHAIR: Maybe LGNSW could take that question from McMahon on notice.

SHAUN McBRIDE: We could. I would also add that the Office of Local Government would probably have that data to hand.

Mr STEPHEN BALI: Or the NSW Electoral Commission, since they're charging you.

The CHAIR: Councillor Pedersen, you could take on notice the issue and then come back to us?

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: Or even just a few examples. Obviously Blacktown is going to be more expensive than Hunters Hill. Then maybe throw in a regional council as well

LGNSW Response:

LGNSW has been advised that the actual council costs for the 2024 local government elections remain “commercial in confidence”. However, LGNSW has been able to establish indicative cost ranges:

- Metropolitan council costs range from around \$1 million to \$2.5 million
- Regional council costs range from around \$300 thousand to \$700 thousand
- Rural councils cost are around \$50 to \$100 thousand.

The Committee may have the power to request more detailed information from the NSW Electoral Commission.

The wide range appears to be largely driven by population.

Election Material

Mr TIM JAMES: It would be remiss of me not to touch upon the motion presented on page 4 of your submission brought to you by Willoughby City Council in relation to electoral materials, recognising that this was a motion passed by Local Government NSW in 2022. It may be that this is something we could deal with in more detail should we have the opportunity to go about a broader review of the recent local government elections. I invite your comment on the matters raised here. Did you see an improvement, if you like, in NSW Electoral Commission information for voters along the lines of that which is outlined or sought in this motion of Willoughby City Council? Was there more information or material, whether at polling places or online, including in other major languages? Did you get a sense for more polling booth officials having language skills that would suit electors in a range of areas? Those three points would be good to reflect on. I wouldn't be doing my job as a local member if I didn't drill in a bit to the motion raised by my local council.

PENNY PEDERSEN: I think we might have to take that on notice. I'm guessing that feedback will be available to us at some point.

LGNSW Response:

The Annual Conference resolution originating from Willoughby City Council in 2022 remains the current policy position of the LGNSW, along with the other four related conference resolutions presented in the LGNSW submission. LGNSW would welcome the Committee conducting a broader review of the recent local government elections to assess whether there have been any improvements in the electoral process along the lines advocated by LGNSW under its policy positions.