



## **IPART review – Local government election costs**

**Submission on Discussion Paper released 15 April 2019**

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## Response to the discussion paper

Blacktown City Council appreciates the opportunity to comment on IPART's proposed approach to the review of local government election costs.

We welcome the review and broadly support the methodology proposed by IPART. We consider this to be a sound approach.

We note also that Local Government NSW has provided a more detailed submission to IPART on behalf of the sector.

Council looks forward to receiving and commenting on the draft report from IPART in due course.

Commentary is provided on a number of specific matters in the Discussion Paper in the following table:

Section and specific matter		Comment
<b>1. Introduction</b>		
<b>1.1 What has IPART been asked to do?</b>		
Point 2 Limit the amount charged by NSWEC to the direct and unavoidable costs of conducting a council's election.		Supported. Noting that NSWEC should be permitted to allocate corporate overheads proportionally.
<b>1.4 Issues on which we seek comment</b>		
Points 2 – 4 Use of private providers, rather than the NSWEC, to conduct elections or provide related services.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We do not support private service providers being used to conduct local government elections. The NSWEC is the appropriate public body for this purpose.</li><li>• There may be scope for private providers to offer some supporting services, but not to replace NSWEC in the core role.</li><li>• There is a public liability concern for a General Manager rather than the Electoral Commissioner to undertake the conduct of an election. General Managers do not have the training, skills and resources of the Electoral Commissioner.</li></ul>

Section and specific matter	Comment
Point 8 'Building block' approach to calculate the NSWEC's costs.	Supported.
Point 10 Allocation of NSWEC costs using the impactor pays principle.	As with 1.1 above – Supported, but noting that NSWEC should be able to allocate corporate overheads proportionally.
<b>2. Context for the review</b>	
<p>Noted that the information provided in this section is for context and that these matters are not directly within the scope of this review.</p> <p>Notwithstanding, we take this opportunity to provide comment on a number of important matters.</p>	
<b>2.2 Local government elections can be run by the NSWEC or a private provider</b>	
Paragraph 2 Change in costing methodology (introduced in 2008) increased costs of elections to councils	The NSW rate cap formula administered by IPART should be appropriately adjusted to reflect this increase in costs to councils.
Paragraph 3 Option for councils to engage NSWEC or a private service provider to conduct an election.	As noted in section 1.4, we have a clear view that the NSWEC is the appropriate body. Notwithstanding, we are not seeking an amendment to this provision, as each council can make its own determination.
<b>2.3.2 Funding models in other jurisdictions</b>	
Paragraph 4 Postal voting and non compulsory voting (in Western Australia)	Council's position is that mandatory universal postal voting or e-voting are not demonstrated to be adding value to the electoral process at this stage.
<b>2.4.1 Inquiry into the 2012 local government elections</b>	
Paragraph 2 Introduction of a countback system to fill casual vacancies when they arise within 18 months of the original election.	The provisions of current legislation should be maintained.
<b>2.4.2 Inquiry into preference counting</b>	
Paragraph 1 Introduction of the WIGM (fractional transfer) method of preference counting.	Supported.

Section and specific matter		Comment
<b>4. Identify the election services and assess the level of competition for providing these services</b>		
<b>4.1 What are the election services the NSWEC provides to councils?</b>		
Paragraphs 1 -3 Services currently provided by NSWEC.	It is important that nothing is done to remove or reduce the efficiency of centralised functions provided by NSWEC, e.g. the electoral roll.	