Murray Shire Council Report

2008 Local Government Elections

electoral
commission NSW

General Manager
Murray Shire Council
PO Box 21
Mathoura NSW 2710

Dear General Manager

I am pleased to present to you a report on the conduct and administration of the 2008 Local Government Elections held for Murray Shire Council.

Yours sincerely

Colin Barry
Electoral Commissioner

31 August 2009

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Murray Shire Council

2008 Election Summary

Enrolment

Total Electors	4,638
Female Electors	50.9%
Male Electors	49.1%

Polling Booths

Pre-poll Voting Centres	2
Polling Places	4
Election Officials	13

Voter Participation

Formal Votes	3,491
Informal Votes	246
Total Votes	3,737
Voter Participation	80.6%
Rate of Informality	6.6%

Voting Methods
Electors used

Ordinary	2,879
Postal	121
Pre-poll	488
Declared Institution	0
Section	1
Silent	2

Councillor Election

Total Candidates	12
Female Candidates	4
Male Candidates	8

Successful Candidates

SHARP, Brian
WEYRICH, Thomas
SHIELLS, Graeme

MURPHY, Betty
CALDWELL, Bob
MacFARLANE, Di
HOSKING, Phillip
POCKLINGTON, John
DOCKREY, Bill

The 2008 Local Government Elections

Background

Local Government elections in New South Wales (NSW) are conducted on a quadrennial basis. On Saturday, 13 September 2008, elections were held for 148 councils across NSW with councils ranging in enrolment size from 875 (Urana Shire Council) to 172,838 (Blacktown City Council) electors and in area from 5.8km² (Hunters Hill Council) to 53,511km² (Central Darling Shire Council).

Local Government elections provide individuals with the opportunity to be involved in the democratic process at a community level as candidates and electors.

The 2008 Local Government Elections were a major event for the New South Wales Electoral Commission (NSWEC) involving many months of preparation and planning to provide councils, candidates and electors with high quality election services. The NSWEC conducted the election in accordance with the legislation and introduced new services to improve the election process and operations for all stakeholders. The Elections also represented the first time that elections at the Local Government level have been brought to the standard experienced, and expected, by stakeholders at State and Federal elections.

Over 4.5 million electors were enrolled to vote at the 2008 Local Government Elections across NSW, with 4,638 enrolled within Murray Shire Council's area.

This is the first time that the NSWEC has provided councils with a comprehensive report on their election. It is an important analysis of key services and administrative arrangements and will provide useful planning material for the 2012 Local Government Elections.

This report reviews the practices and electoral processes undertaken at the 2008 Local Government Elections and provides a detailed review of the election conducted for Murray Shire Council.

Election Snapshot

The conduct of Local Government Elections across NSW presented significant logistical challenges for the NSWEC. As part of the 2008 Local Government Elections the NSWEC:

- assisted the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) in the management of the electoral roll for 4,544,395 electors;
- dealt with 4,620 candidates for 1,474 mayoral and councillor positions;
- conducted 332 individual elections;
- managed 2,597 polling places;
- assisted electors to cast 3,529,220 votes;
- managed 90 Returning Officers in the field; and
- employed 13,684 election staff.

A total of 309 councillor elections were due to be conducted across NSW in 2008 (86 in undivided councils, 223 in divided councils). Of these, 271 councillor elections were contested (84 in undivided councils, 187 in divided councils). Twenty-eight mayoral elections were due to be conducted, however, due to The Council of the City of Botany Bay mayoral election being uncontested, 27 mayoral elections were conducted.

The following table sets out the councillor and mayoral elections of the 2008 Local Government Elections.

Table 1: 2008 Local Government Elections Due, Contested and Uncontested

	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

Referenda were conducted for 15 councils (with two councils holding two referenda) and 17 polls were conducted for eight councils.

Four councils were returned to democracy at the 2008 Local Government Elections (Liverpool City Council, Tweed Shire Council, Walgett Shire Council and Warringah Council) while four councils under administration did not go to election (Broken Hill City Council, Port Macquarie-Hastings Council, Shellharbour City Council and Wollongong City Council).

NSWEC Initiatives

The NSWEC introduced a number of initiatives at the 2008 Local Government Elections to provide increased access to election services and information for stakeholders. These initiatives specifically included:

- a meeting between NSWEC and council staff to explain administrative arrangements for the elections;
- an Elector Inquiry Centre;
- dedicated council and candidate information help desk;
- redesign of the NSWEC website to include dedicated 2008 Local Government Elections information;
- candidate information seminars throughout NSW;
- mobile pre-poll voting in remote areas;
- Braille ballot papers for electors with a vision impairment;
- an Aboriginal Elector Information Strategy;
- election information brochures;
- printed and online voter information available in 24 community languages;
- independent review of the cost allocation methodology;
- an independent observation team to review the centralised count of the ballot papers;
- a Virtual Tally Room with updated results from election night until the declaration of the poll;
- a report to the NSW Parliament on the overall conduct of the elections; and
- individual reports to councils on the conduct of their elections.

NSWEC Historical Involvement in Local Government Elections

1987

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

These changes 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

1987 – 1991

The 1987 and 1991 elections were conducted using Town and Shire Clerks as Returning Officers but under the direction of the Electoral Commissioner.

1993

1993 saw introduction of the new Local Government Act (1993). Town and Shire Clerks became General Managers and were placed on contracts.

1995 – 2004

Independent Returning Officers were appointed by the SEO for the 1995 elections with elections conducted from council premises and utilising council resources to assist and support Returning Officers. Formal training of Returning Officers was minimal and undertaken with the assumption that Returning Officers would be supported by experienced council staff. The costs of some services provided were offset by the use of council resources including accommodation and staff, and were not always separately identified. Councils were charged only for actual goods and an administration fee. As a result the true cost of elections was not clear for individual councils or for NSW overall.

Legislation

Local Government elections in NSW are conducted in accordance with the provisions set out in the Local Government Act 1993 (the Act) and the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 (the Regulation). Under the Act the NSW Electoral Commissioner is responsible for the conduct and administration of all NSW Local Government elections in an accountable, impartial and independent manner.

In mid 2008 amendments were made to the Regulation 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:

- the Electoral Commissioner rather than the council became responsible for election advertising;

- Local Government elections advertised more broadly including on the NSWEC and council websites;
- transfer of various advertising functions from councils and Returning Officers to the Electoral Commissioner;
- allowing nomination proposals and withdrawals, certain applications and other materials to be facsimiled or emailed;
- changing the date for the close of nominations and time by which nominations must be lodged or withdrawn;
- allowing silent electors to vote by post as well as allowing silent electors, pregnant electors or electors with disabilities to pre-poll vote;
- 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.

Full Cost Recovery

All Local Government elections are conducted by the NSWEC on behalf of councils. In 2003/04 the NSW Government decided that all elections, other than the State election, were to be funded by full cost recovery. The NSWEC is required by law to provide Local Government elections and councils are required by law to pay for the cost of running their elections. The NSWEC is not provided with funding from the NSW Government to cover costs associated with Local Government elections other than receiving an advance to cover expenses incurred until recoupment of costs from councils enables repayment of the advance.

The Local Government Elections on Saturday, 13 September 2008 saw for the first time full cost recovery applied across NSW.

Further information on election costs is provided in the Election Costs section.

Election Timetable

The date on which the Local Government elections are to be held was previously set in the Act as the fourth Saturday in September every four years. In 2008, this date was Saturday, 27 September, however, due to a conflict with the start of the school holidays, and under the direction of the Minister for Local Government, election day was brought forward by two weeks to be held on Saturday, 13 September 2008.

Key election dates at the 2008 Local Government Elections are listed below:

Activity	Date
Close of rolls	Monday, 4 August 2008
Close of nominations	Wednesday, 13 August 2008
Pre-poll voting starts	Monday, 1 September 2008
Registration of how-to-vote material closes	Friday, 5 September 2008
Postal voting applications close	Monday, 8 September 2008
Declared Institution voting commences	Monday, 8 September 2008
Declared Institution voting concludes	Wednesday, 10 September 2008
Pre-poll voting finishes	Friday, 12 September 2008
Election day	Saturday, 13 September 2008
Return of postal votes closes	Monday, 15 September 2008
Distribution of preferences commences	Tuesday, 16 September 2008
Declaration of the poll for Murray Shire Council	18 September 2008

The Local Government Area of Murray Shire Council

Murray Shire Council occupies an area of 4,345 square kilometres and is surrounded by Deniliquin, Conargo, Berrigan and Wakool Councils.

The following tables give the demographic breakdown of the Murray Shire Council area[1].

Age	Number	%	NSW %
0–17	1,450	22.6	24.0
18–29	648	10.1	15.7
30–44	1,170	18.2	21.7
45–59	1,362	21.2	19.9
60–74	1,225	19.1	12.0
75 or over	563	8.8	6.7
Total	6,418	100.0	100.0

Weekly individual income	Number	%	NSW %
Negative/Nil	317	6.7	8.6
$1–$399	2,082	44.0	37.1
$400–$799	1,407	29.7	25.4
$800–$1,299	636	13.4	16.4
$1,300–$1,599	136	2.9	5.1
$1,600–$1,999	67	1.4	3.0
$2,000 or more	90	1.9	4.5
Total	4,735	100.0	100.1

Schooling: highest year completed	Number	%	NSW %
Did not go to school	22	0.5	1.25
Year 8 or equivalent or below	562	12.1	7.4
Year 10 or equivalent or below	1,863	40.1	37.6
Year 11 or equivalent	859	18.5	6.6
Year 12 or equivalent	1,336	28.8	47.2
Total	4,642	100.0	100.1

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[1] Source: 2006 Australian Bureau of Statistics census data

Birthplace	Number	%	NSW %
Australia	5,625	94.0	74.4
Overseas	356	6.0	25.6
Total	5,981	100.0	100.0
Top 5 birthplaces other than Australia			
1. United Kingdom	175	2.9	4.4
2. New Zealand	39	0.7	1.8
3. Netherlands	23	0.4	0.3
4. Germany	16	0.3	0.5
5. Italy	8	0.1	0.9

Language spoken at home	Number	%	NSW %
English only	5,967	98.2	78.7
Speaks language other than English	110	1.8	21.3
Total	6,077	100.0	100.0
Top 5 languages other than English			
1. Italian	21	0.3	1.4
2. Australian Indigenous Languages	20	0.3	0.0
3. Cantonese	13	0.2	2.1
4. Greek	10	0.2	1.4
5. Vietnamese	8	0.1	1.2

Religion: top 5 responses	Number	%	NSW %
1. Catholic	1,722	30.0	31.3
2. Anglican	1,490	25.9	24.2
3. No Religion	1,096	19.1	0.6
4. Uniting Church	800	13.9	5.1
5. Presbyterian and Reformed	288	5.0	3.7

2008 Murray Shire Council Elections

Election of Councillors

Murray Shire Council is an undivided council with nine councillors elected for a period of four years. At the 2008 Local Government Elections 12 candidates contested the election for the position of councillor. Details of the candidates who stood for election at the 2008 Local Government Elections can be found at Appendix 4.

Councillors commence their role on the day that the election is declared and hold the position for a period of four years, until the day of the next Local Government elections.

Election of the Mayor

Twenty-seven councils in NSW held an election for the popularly elected mayor at the 2008 Local Government Elections, 16 were in rural councils and 11 in metropolitan councils. At the 2008 elections there was one uncontested mayoral election in The Council of the City of Botany Bay.

Upon election the mayor holds office for a period of four years, until the day of the next Local Government elections.

Council Elected Mayor

The mayor of Murray Shire Council is elected by the elected councillors in a council meeting shortly after election day. The NSWEC plays no role in the conduct of this election.

Referendum

Councils must seek the approval of the electors by holding a constitutional referendum prior to amending certain arrangements associated with the council structure. Voting on a referendum issue is compulsory for all electors enrolled in the Local Government Area.

Issues to be decided by constitutional referendum include:

- the division of the council area into wards or the abolishment of wards;
- the election of the mayor by electors or by the elected councillors;
- increases or decreases in the number of councillors; or
- to change the method of election of ward councillors.

Councils are bound by constitutional referendum outcomes until a change is approved at a subsequent constitutional referendum. At the 2008 Local Government Elections 15 councils conducted a referendum with a total of 17 referenda questions. Two councils had two referenda questions. 11 referendum questions were endorsed. For metropolitan councils, three of the five councils were successful in the questions

put to their communities.   The corresponding figure for non metropolitan councils was seven of ten councils.

In terms of the nature of the referenda questions, the following table shows the results by question type.

Table 2: 2008 Local Government Elections, Results of Referenda Questions, Frequencies.

Referendum Issue	Number	Number endorsed
Popularly elected 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

At the 2008 Local Government Elections Murray Shire Council did not hold a referendum.

Poll

Councils may seek direction from electors on any matter by conducting a poll. The results of polls do not bind council to any action but provide the council with information to assist in their decision making processes.

Eight councils across NSW conducted a poll at the 2008 Local Government Elections.

At the 2008 Local Government Elections Murray Shire Council did not hold a poll.

Method of Voting

Councillor Election

Section 285 of the Act prescribes that the voting system in a contested election of a councillor or councillors is to be:

- optional preferential if the number of councillors to be elected is one or two;
- proportional representation if the number of councillors to be elected is three or more.

The election of councillors for Murray Shire Council at the 2008 Local Government Elections was Proportional Representation (PR).

Proportional Representation
Proportional representation voting is used when three or more candidates are to be elected.

To Elect Three or More Candidates
In proportional representation voting electors are required to mark their preferences for at least the number of candidates equal to half the number of vacancies.

In an election where there are three or more councillors to be elected, candidates can form a group on the ballot paper and can have a group voting square for above the line voting.

Where there are group voting squares on the ballot paper, electors can vote above the line by placing the number '1' in one group voting square and can place consecutive numbers beginning with '2' in as many other group voting squares as they wish. Placing a '1' above the line in only one group voting square indicates preferences for all the candidates in that group, in their order on the ballot paper. The vote stops with the last candidate in that group and preferences do not continue to any other candidates on the ballot paper. Placing a '2' and following consecutive numbers in group voting squares indicates preferences for the candidates in these groups in their order on the ballot paper.

Alternatively, electors can vote for individual candidates below the line by placing preferences next to the candidates of their choice for at least half the number of vacancies. The number of preferences required is shown in the directions for voting on the ballot paper. They may then continue numbering preferences to the extent they choose.

Where there are no group voting squares, electors can vote for individual candidates by placing preferences next to the candidates of their choice for at least half the number of vacancies. The number of preferences required is shown in the directions for voting on the ballot paper.

Mayoral election

The election of the popularly elected mayor is determined by Optional Preferential voting. Electors are required to mark their ballot paper by placing a '1' in the square next to the candidate of their choice and may, if they wish, vote for other candidates by giving preferences for as many other candidates as they wish.

Referendum or Poll

For a referendum or poll electors are required to write 'Yes' or 'No' on their ballot paper.

Murray Shire Council Results Summary

Murray Shire Council election resulted in the election of the following candidates to the position of councillor:

> SHARP, Brian
> WEYRICH, Thomas
> SHIELLS, Graeme
> MURPHY, Betty
> CALDWELL, Bob
> MacFARLANE, Di
> HOSKING, Phillip
> POCKLINGTON, John
> DOCKREY, Bill

Election Preparation

Initiatives for the 2008 Local Government Elections

The NSWEC implemented a number of initiatives in 2008 which have previously not been available at Local Government elections. These initiatives proved to be positive introductions and beneficial to both the NSWEC and a variety of stakeholders throughout the election process.

NSWEC Visit with Council

Between Monday, 6 August and Monday, 29 October 2007 the NSWEC visited all councils in NSW having an election. The visits were designed primarily to:

- provide councils with information regarding the levels of service the NSWEC would be providing, including the initiatives NSWEC would be putting in place;
- give councils the opportunity to have input into the level of services provided and to provide a clear understanding of the cost of those services; and
- provide councils with information on election costing; and timing of a fully itemised budget estimate.

On Wednesday, 26 September 2007, NSWEC staff met with staff from Murray Shire Council to discuss election services for the 2008 Local Government Elections.

Issues discussed at the meeting included the total service approach to be adopted by the NSWEC and a range of practical proposals, such as council's provision of office accommodation and the optional election information brochure, to reduce the cost of the election. A list of agenda items is available at Appendix 1. The areas which involved in-depth discussion at the majority of councils were the proposed budget, the appointment of the Returning Officer, the provision of Returning Officer accommodation and vote counting.

Elector Inquiry Centre

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 enquiries made to councils.

The Elector Inquiry Centre was operational from Monday, 28 July 2008 to Monday, 29 September 2008 with peak periods coinciding with the distribution of election information brochures and the NSWEC advertising campaign. In the three weeks leading up to election day 81% of the total calls were received with high volumes 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.

Some technical problems were experienced with the telecommunications which resulted in some calls not being answered or recorded with a reason for the call or call outcome.

Over 106,955 calls were made to the Elector Inquiry Centre during its operation. Of the operator answered calls, 19 came from postcodes within Murray Shire Council area.

The five councils with the highest proportion of calls to the Elector Inquiry Centre were:

- 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 five 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%

Calls per day peaked at 5,673 on Friday, 12 September 2008. The peak calls per hour of 720 also occurred on Friday, 12 September 2008, between 9.30am and 10.30am. The following graph provides an overview of the call topics over the operating period.

Graph 2: 2008 Local Government Elections Elector Inquiry Centre, Nature of Calls
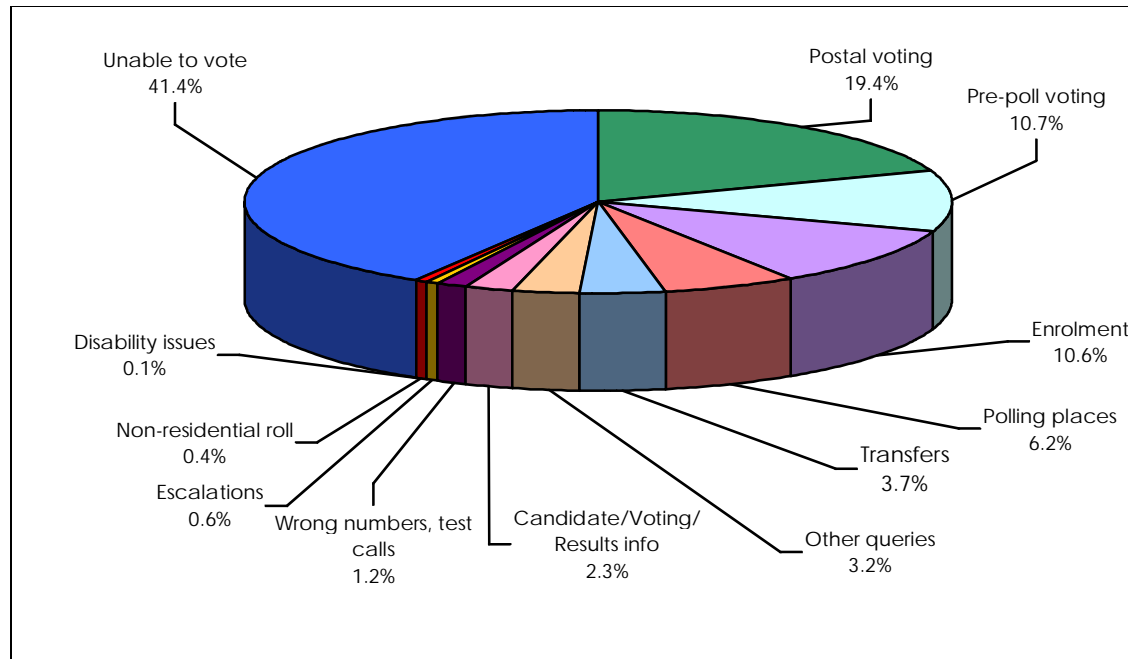
Council and Candidate Help Desk

The NSWEC established a help desk for the exclusive use of candidates and council representatives. Candidates and councils seeking advice on areas such as nominations, how-to-vote materials, election funding and election results were able to call the help desk throughout the election period. The introduction of the help desk led to a reduction in calls to the Returning Officer and more consistent and accurate distribution of information to candidates and council representatives.

The Council and Candidate Help Desk was based at the NSWEC head office with calls answered by experienced election staff and was operational from Monday, 2 June 2008 until three weeks after election day.

Candidate Information Seminars

Candidate information seminars were conducted by the NSWEC to assist all candidates in their preparation for the 2008 Local Government Elections. The initial programme contained seminars throughout May and June 2008. In response to requests from councils the NSWEC extended the programme with the final seminar held on Tuesday, 5 August 2008. Seminars were conducted in 30 locations across NSW and were attended by almost 1,000 prospective candidates and interested stakeholders.

The seminars provided prospective candidates with the opportunity to clarify any issues with senior NSWEC staff. Major topics covered in the seminars included:

- the election timetable;
- candidate eligibility criteria and how to nominate;
- groups of candidates and political party names on ballot papers;
- 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.

The seminars were advertised in statewide newspapers and on local radio. Appendix 2 provides the dates, locations and number of attendees at the seminars.

Mobile Pre-Poll Voting

Providing voting services to electors in rural and remote NSW remains a challenge for the NSWEC with electors in isolated rural communities often experiencing difficulties in getting to a polling place because of the significant distances to be travelled. They are also often unable to lodge a postal vote due to irregular mail services in isolated locations.

Amendments made in 2008 to the Regulation enabled the NSWEC to implement mobile voting in remote Local Government areas. This was the first time that mobile pre-poll voting was available. It usually takes a few elections for electors to become accustomed to a new service. Consequently, elector take up is initially limited.

The NSWEC provided mobile pre-poll services for residents in eight regional areas in the far west and northern NSW including:

- Balranald Shire Council (Hatfield) 10 am to 3 pm, Friday, 12 September;
- Bourke Shire Council (Fords Bridge) 10am to 3 pm, Sunday, 7 September;
- Central Darling Shire Council (Emmdale) 11 am to 4 pm, Saturday, 6 September;
- Hay Shire Council (Booligal) 10 am to 3 pm,Wednesday, 10 September;
- Hay Shire Council (Maude) 10 am to 3 pm, Thursday, 11 September;
- Narrabri Shire Council (Bellata) 10 am to 2 pm, Monday, 1 September;
- Narrabri Shire Council (Gwabegar) 10am to 2pm, Thursday, 4 September; and
- Narrabri Shire Council (Pilliga) 10am to 2 pm, Friday, 5 September.

Braille Ballot Papers

Amendments to the Regulation in 2008 allowed for the introduction of Braille ballot papers for electors with a vision impairment at the 2008 Local Government Elections. The availability of Braille ballot papers was advertised on the NSWEC website, in the NSWEC Equal Access to Democracy newsletters, on print handicapped radio and through the Vision Australia networks. Electors requiring Braille ballot papers were able to cast a postal vote, pre-poll vote or ordinary vote at a polling place on election day.

Electors requiring a Braille ballot paper were required to register with the NSWEC between Monday, 14 July and 5 pm Wednesday, 13 August either in writing (fax, post or email) or verbally. A total of 52 electors registered to vote using Braille ballot

papers comprising of 31 requests for postal voting, 3 requests for pre-poll voting and 18 for voting at a polling place. Bankstown City Council and Burwood Council had the greatest number of electors using Braille ballot papers each with four requests. No electors enrolled in Murray Shire Council registered to vote using Braille ballot papers.

Electors using Braille ballot papers who required information on candidates in their council area and/or ward could contact the NSWEC Elector Inquiry Centre if they needed candidate information sheets read to them.

While the NSWEC advertised the availability of Braille ballot papers on print handicapped radio (2RPH) most participants found out about the option of Braille ballot papers through the networks of organisations associated with vision impairment including Vision Australia, Blind Citizens Australia and Guide Dogs.

As an important initiative introduced at the 2008 Local Government Elections, the NSWEC sought feedback from electors who used the Braille ballot papers. The NSWEC conducted a telephone survey of 71.2% electors who applied to use Braille ballot papers[2]. Overall, high levels of satisfaction were recorded with the various aspects of the process.

Table 3: 2008 Local Government Elections Braille Ballot paper, Elector Satisfaction – NSW (%)

	Very unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Neutral	Satisfactory	Very satisfactory
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
Communication on arrangements	5.6	2.8	8.3	41.7	41.7
Instructions on how to mark the ballot papers	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

While 63.9% of users did not experience any problems when marking the ballot papers, comments were made concerning the requirement to mark the ballot paper using a pencil and the fact that it was not possible to check that the vote was correct without sighted assistance. Comments were also made that people with vision impairment are not necessarily familiar with writing numbers (on ballot papers) or text (in case of a referendum).

62.2% of participants believed that voting using a Braille ballot paper improved the privacy of their vote and 72.2% agreed that their independence when voting was improved. Some respondents, however, pointed out that the low numbers of Braille

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[2] 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

ballot paper users per council meant that their privacy was lessened as a Braille ballot paper stood out against other non Braille ballot papers.

Survey participants were asked to provide comments or suggestions that they thought would assist in improving services to electors with vision impairment in the future. While electors were supportive of the initiative and saw it as a positive start, there was a preference for online voting as used by the AEC at the 2007 Federal Election. Participants also commented that candidate information and other background election material in Braille would be useful at future elections. The Braille ballot papers were produced using Grade 1 (uncontracted) Braille, however, 71.9% of participants indicated a preference for the use of Grade 2 (contracted) Braille. It was noted that Grade 1 was useful for electors with vision impairment who were not as experienced with Grade 2 Braille.

The overall feedback indicated that 80.6% would choose to cast their vote using Braille ballot papers at future elections.

Equal Access to Democracy

The NSWEC's Equal Access to Democracy Plan was reviewed, in consultation with the Equal Access to Democracy Reference Group, prior to the 2008 Local Government Elections. The Plan focused on ways to improve services to, and participation in, the democratic process for people with a disability.

Building on the successful strategies used at the 2007 State General Election and taking into consideration feedback from the reference group, the 2008 Equal Access to Democracy Plan contained strategies which were possible under the legislation and delivered real, practical improvements.

Key improvements made to the 2008 Equal Access to Democracy Plan included:

- the provision of Braille ballot papers upon request for electors who are vision impaired;
- increased consultation with NSW government organisations such as the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care;
- increased website accessibility, including a page with information for electors with a disability;
- development of a train the trainer module for the 2008 Local Government Elections; and
- review of the Returning Officer guidelines to include information on assisting electors who have vision impairment, mental illness or intellectual disability.

Aboriginal Elector Information Strategy

The NSWEC reviewed its Aboriginal Elector Information Strategy to further develop practical and achievable strategies specifically for the 2008 Local Government Elections.

A major focus for the NSWEC was a focused recruitment drive for the 2008 Local Government Elections. Activities undertaken in the lead up to the 2008 Local Government Elections included:

- participating in the Aboriginal Yabun festival on Saturday, 26 January 2008 where details were collected of people wishing to work at the 2008 Local Government Elections. The NSWEC subsequently wrote to those electors advising how to register an expression of interest;
- advising Aboriginal organisations of employment opportunities including the Aboriginal Employment Strategy;
- launching the Aboriginal Electors section of the NSWEC website with links to the employment page and Aboriginal Elector newsletters;
- train the trainer module developed for Aboriginal electors was trialled with Walgett Council and provided to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs; and
- increased consultation with peak Aboriginal bodies such as the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the NSW Aboriginal Land Council.

Services for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Electors

For the 2008 Local Government Elections the NSWEC further developed strategies to increase access to information and services for electors from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds to ensure all members of the public had access to a full range of election services.

Three major initiatives for CALD electors were introduced for the elections:

- the introduction of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse News newsletters distributed through the Community Relations Commission network;
- the development of the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse electors' page on the NSWEC website; and
- the NSWEC prepared material for CALD electors including a multilingual voting assistance guide with election information in 24 community languages which was available at all pre-poll voting centres and polling places.

The NSWEC made available access to a telephone translating service through the Department of Immigration and Citizenship's Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS). Call volumes through the translating service were significantly higher than average during September with over 600 calls taken in the month. Electors requiring translations in 27 different languages used the service with the majority of callers in September requiring assistance in Mandarin (26.0%) or Cantonese (23.2%).

Graph 3: 2008 Local Government Elections TIS National calls received by language. July – December 2008
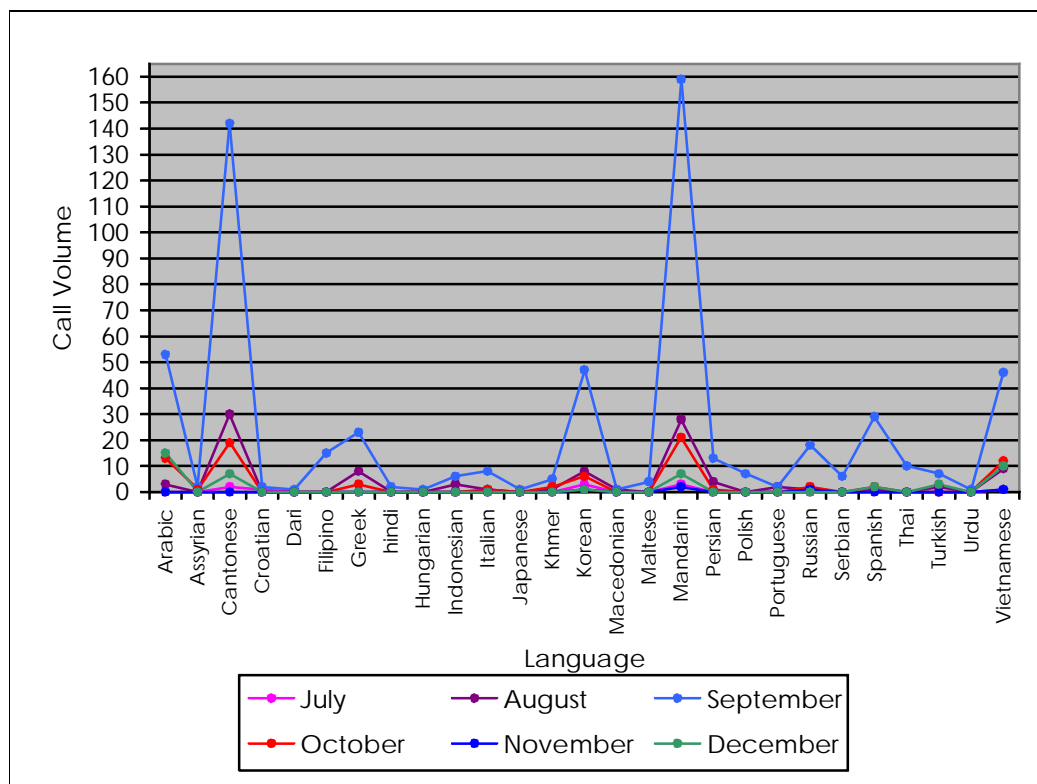
Virtual Tally Room

The NSWEC introduced a Virtual Tally Room (VTR) as requested by the Local Government and Shires Associations to provide election stakeholders with regular updates of all election counts across NSW. The VTR was successfully introduced at the 2007 State General Election and its introduction at the 2008 Local Government Elections brought council elections into line with State elections by providing electronically first preference results for 148 councils on election night.

Results became available from approximately 6.30 pm on election night and were updated throughout election night until all first preferences results were recorded by the Returning Officers. The VTR was continuously updated in the weeks after election day until all 332 election results were known.

Election Management Application

The Election Management Application (EMA) 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 enquiries, election day staffing, candidate nominations, the distribution and return of declaration votes, results and non-voter administration.

Further enhancements to the EMA system were implemented prior to the 2008 Local Government Elections to refine the developed modules. Additional modules were also developed to assist with election resourcing.

Ward Boundary Changes

Section 211 of the Act requires councils to regularly review their ward boundaries to ensure that all wards have an approximately equal number of electors with a variance of not more than 10%.

Prior to the election, the NSWEC requested that all councils with wards review their internal ward boundaries in order to comply with the legislative requirements for the 2008 Local Government Elections. Councils were asked to have their ward boundaries finalised and approved by Monday, 31 December 2007.

A website was developed by the NSWEC to assist councils with the task and included information on how and when to alter ward boundaries, identified those councils outside the 10% variance and provided enrolment information to assist councils in creating their new ward boundaries.

Councils were required to complete a ward boundary report and submit a copy of the finalised ward boundaries, once approved by council, to the NSWEC. This ward boundary report ensured councils had correctly completed their ward boundary review and assisted the NSWEC and AEC correctly code electors to their new ward.

The finalised ward boundaries were published on the NSWEC website using Google Maps and were used as an information tool for electors to identify their ward and possible polling places.

The Returning Officer

Recruitment

In December 2007 the NSWEC placed advertisements in local newspapers inviting expressions of interest for work as a Returning Officer at the 2008 Local Government Elections. Interviews with successful applicants were conducted over a three week period in February and March 2008.

The training of Returning Officers commenced in May 2008 with Patricia Harris appointed as the Returning Officer for Murray Shire Council.

Returning Officer Duties

The Returning Officer had a number of responsibilities which were central to the running of the election. Operational duties included:

- set up and decommissioning of a temporary office;
- training of office staff and polling place managers;
- making arrangements for voting at polling places and Declared Institutions;
- issuing and processing postal and pre-poll votes;
- dealing with enquiries and complaints from candidates and the public;
- processing candidate nominations and how-to-vote material; and
- counting of votes and declaring the result of the election.

The Returning Officer's Office

Finding suitable office accommodation presents challenges in the lead up to elections as Returning Officers are required to lease an office with sufficient space to store materials and conduct the counts, in a location that is convenient for the public and available on a short lease.

The Returning Officer's office for Murray Shire Council was located at:

371 George Street
Deniliquin NSW 2710.

All Returning Officers were in their offices from Monday, 21 July 2008 with offices across NSW open to the public from Monday, 28 July 2008. It was necessary for the Returning Officer's office to be open from July in order to ensure that all stakeholders, including councils, candidates, media and electors, had access to election services and information in the week prior to the close of rolls and opening of nominations set for Monday, 4 August 2008.

The office accommodation is a significant cost driver during an election. The average cost charged for office accommodation for metropolitan councils was $24,612 with the cost in regional areas averaging $10,025. Average costs incurred for council owned premises and privately leased premises did not vary significantly with the average expenditure for privately owned locations being $17,677 and for council owned premises $16,594. Almost a half (48.0%) of Returning Officers' offices were leased from councils. (Where councils provided office accommodation at no cost, the total budget figure for the 2008 Local Government Elections includes an estimate

to cover this accommodation although no charge was made to council when recouping the cost of their elections.)

As part of the debrief process Returning Officers were asked to rate their satisfaction with their office in terms of location, security, size and cost. All areas were well rated with almost three-quarters rating the location of their offices as very satisfactory.

Table 4: 2008 Local Government Elections Returning Officer Office Satisfaction – NSW (%)

	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very satisfied
Location	0.0	1.2	4.7	20.0	74.1
Security	1.2	1.2	8.2	37.6	51.8
Size	1.2	5.9	5.9	28.2	58.8
Cost	0.0	3.7	15.9	40.2	40.2

Regional Returning Officers

The NSWEC identified an area of potential saving by introducing a regional model for the Returning Officer role for councils in regional and remote areas. By utilising a Regional Returning Officer, costs for the Returning Officer, office staff salaries and office accommodation fees were shared by each council.

As this was an initiative by the NSWEC, and a first for councils, the NSWEC invited councils to participate in sharing a Regional Returning Officer. In some areas the process was delayed as councils considered the benefits of involvement in this initiative. These delays caused difficulties in finalising arrangements for other councils who had already agreed to participate.

Councils representing in excess of 900,000 electors opted to share a Returning Officer with their neighbouring councils. A total of 23 regions were established involving 81 councils. The smallest regions involved two councils; the biggest involved seven councils. Typically these councils were smaller by nature with an average elector base of 11,113 compared to the statewide average of 29,436. Councils that chose to share a Returning Officer ranged from 875 electors (Urana Shire Council) to 54,520 electors (Blue Mountains City Council).

For councils with a Regional Returning Officer the average cost of providing the Regional Returning Officer, office staff and office accommodation was $1.23 per elector. A comparative cost for these same councils had they not opted to share a Regional Returning Officer would have been $4.88 per elector. Costs were cut to less than a third on average for these councils. Appendix 3 includes a breakdown of councils by Regional Returning Officer groups, the number of electors per group and the area of the regions.

Feedback from the councils with a Regional Returning Officer was positive with 77.6% stating that they would be prepared to use a shared Returning Officer at the 2012 Local Government Elections based on the experience at the 2008 Elections. Councils noted their satisfaction of the benefits promoted by the NSWEC as having been seen by council (75.4% neutral, satisfactory or very satisfactory) and satisfaction with the availability of the Regional Returning Officer to council (86.2% neutral, satisfactory or very satisfactory).

Some councils raised concerns with the distance required to be travelled to the Regional Returning Officer's office by electors and candidates. The NSWEC was faced with challenges when determining the most appropriate Regional Returning Officer office location. Unfortunately, with only one office location, there will always be some stakeholders who are required to travel greater distances than others to visit the Returning Officer. The NSWEC will review this aspect of the initiative prior to future elections by assessing other means of communication with the Regional Returning Officer and to minimise unnecessary travel.

Murray Shire Council shared a regional Returning Officer with six councils including Balranald Shire Council, Berrigan Shire Council, Conargo Shire Council, Deniliquin Council, Jerilderie Shire Council and Wakool Shire Council. The Returning Officer for the Deniliquin region was located in Deniliquin.

Feedback on Returning Officers

Returning Officers were, on the whole, well regarded by the General Managers with particular satisfaction noted with their communication/liaison with council (95.3%), quality of work (99.0%) and professionalism (96.2%) (all including very satisfactory, satisfactory and neutral).

Processes conducted by the Returning Officers (including communication of candidate information, the nomination process, the conduct of draw for ballot paper position and the registration of how-to-vote material) were rated highly by candidates across the State with an overall satisfaction rate of 92.9% (14.6% neutral, 43.9% satisfied, 34.4% very satisfied).

Returning Officers Contact with Council

Feedback was received from Returning Officers on their contact with councils and the areas where council assisted.

The Returning Officer for Murray Shire Council advised that contact was made with council during the election period. The main reasons for contacting the council were :

- advertising
- polling places
- results

Returning Officer Support Officer

A Returning Officer Support Officer (ROSO) was appointed to each Returning Officer in order to provide support on electoral matters and procedures in the conduct of the election. The appointed ROSOs were experienced former Returning Officers and NSWEC staff.

Any issues on which the Returning Officer required assistance were directed to the ROSO to ensure that all electors, council staff and other stakeholders were provided with consistent, accurate information. Each ROSO had responsibility for up to ten

Returning Officers. The ROSOs answered a total of 12,423 calls from Returning Officers and their staff over the three months July to September 2008.

Carol Cope was appointed as the ROSO for Murray Shire Council. All ROSOs were based in the NSWEC head office which allowed direct access to NSWEC head office staff when required.

Training

Returning Officers

All Returning Officers participated in a four day training programme scheduled between Tuesday, 6 May 2008 and Friday, 4 July 2008. The training covered key elements of a Returning Officer's role in the lead-up to election day and through to the close of office. The training included sessions on:

- appointing of polling places;
- advertising strategy;
- media strategy;
- financial processes;
- nomination process;
- election staffing;
- IT communications set-up;
- counting the votes;
- voting arrangements;
- results management;
- registering electoral material;
- election day processes;
- declaration of the poll; and
- close of office.

Feedback from the evaluations undertaken immediately after the training and after the election, indicated that participants found the content of the training session satisfactory or very satisfactory and that the programme was professionally presented.

A high level of satisfaction was recorded in all categories for the manual, topics covered in training and follow up on training, with almost 70% reporting that the ongoing support was very satisfactory. 93.9% of Returning Officers stated that the training assisted them to be better able to undertake their work in the office.

Table 5: 2008 Local Government Elections Returning Officer Training Satisfaction – NSW (%)

	Very unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Neutral	Satisfactory	Very satisfactory
Training manual	0.0	2.4	7.3	45.1	45.1
Topics covered in training	0.0	3.7	7.3	52.4	36.6
Follow up on training	0.0	2.5	25.0	50.0	22.5
Ongoing support	0.0	1.2	3.7	24.7	70.4

Areas covered in the comments for future improvements included the availability of the training manuals and all computer modules at an earlier date and increased training on computer based programmes including EMA and VoteCalc.

Training materials provided to Returning Officers for the training of clerical assistants and polling place managers were rated satisfactory.

Polling Place Managers

The polling place manager training programme was developed by the NSWEC to assist polling place managers in the understanding of their duties and responsibilities during voting hours and when conducting the count on election day. Polling place managers attended a training session at the Returning Officer's office and completed an online training programme.

The 2008 Local Government Elections were the first time online training has been utilised by the NSWEC. The online module allowed for a review of the role of a polling place manager, the various types of votes, counting and reconciling ballot papers and sorting and counting of the votes. The online training also required participants to complete exercises to assist in preparing for election day.

Feedback received from polling place managers indicates a high level of satisfaction with the quality of information provided in the polling place manager handbook (96.8%) and with the usability (84.3%) and usefulness of the content (87.3%) of the online polling place manager training module.

Face to face training for polling place managers was conducted by the Returning Officer in the weeks prior to election day.

Training, both through the Polling Place Managers Handbook and the online training, was well received by polling place managers with the vast majority expressing a high level of satisfaction.

Table 6: 2008 Local Government Elections Polling Place Manager Satisfaction with Training – NSW (%)

	Very unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Neutral	Satisfactory	Very satisfactory
Usability of the online polling place manager training module	1.7	4.3	9.8	42.7	41.6
Quality of information provided in the polling place manager handbook	0.1	0.9	2.1	48.1	48.7

Election Officials

Returning Officers provided all election officials with the Election Officials Manual prior to election day. The Handbook contained an overview of election officials'

responsibilities, voting processes, tasks undertaken before voting started, instructions on how to issue ordinary votes and election night activities including reconciliation of ballot papers and counting of the votes. The manual also contained a series of exercises to complete prior to election day and occupational health and safety advice for all election officials.

Training received through the Handbook and from the polling place manager was well rated by election staff in the feedback survey. The areas in the following table received a very high level of satisfaction.

Table 7: 2008 Local Government Elections Election Official Satisfaction with Training – NSW (%)

	Very unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Neutral	Satisfactory	Very satisfactory
Training in their duties by the polling place manager	0.8	2.1	12.9	38.2	46.1
Quality of information provided in the election official handbook	0.3	1.0	6.8	50.6	41.4

Candidates

Part of the NSWEC's communication role is providing information, training and support to candidates in the lead up to and during an election. As part of the training of candidates the NSWEC conducted Candidate Information Seminars before the election and produced a handbook for parties, groups, candidates and scrutineers to assist them in participating in the elections by explaining the processes and procedures involved in the elections.

Candidates who participated in the feedback survey after the elections expressed satisfaction with information provided to them by the NSWEC through the candidates handbook, information seminars and inquiry desk. A high level of satisfaction was also noted by candidates with general election services.

Table 8: 2008 Local Government Elections Candidate Information Satisfaction – NSW (%)

	Very unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Neutral	Satisfactory	Very satisfactory
Candidates handbook	3.1	4.7	19.4	54.2	18.7
Candidates information seminars	4.3	4.8	35.8	39.5	15.6
Candidates inquiry desk	3.7	4.0	36.3	39.1	17.1

Advertising

The 2008 Local Government Elections advertising campaign consisted of a general statewide election campaign, council specific statutory advertisements and an election information brochure.

Statewide Campaign

The NSWEC statewide advertising campaign provided stakeholders with generalised election information. Advertisements appeared in Sydney metropolitan and selected regional publications and on selected radio across NSW. Topics covered by the statewide campaign included:

- enrolment;
- voting arrangements;
- remember to vote; and
- registration of electoral material.

Statutory Campaign

Prior to the election the NSWEC consulted Murray Shire Council to determine in which local newspapers the statutory advertisements, required under the legislation, were to be placed. The NSWEC also requested that council provided information about the number of times the advertisements were to appear in the newspapers and also if they would like to arrange composite advertisements with surrounding councils sharing the same newspapers.

At previous Local Government elections, the General Manager had been required to advertise for the non-residential roll twice in the sixty day period prior to election day. Due to changes to the Regulation, General Managers were no longer required to conduct any advertising with the NSWEC undertaking these advertising responsibilities.

Processes covered by the statutory advertisements included the following:

- nominations information;
- declaration of uncontested elections (where required);
- candidates and polling place information; and
- election results.

There were in excess of 250 individual newspapers across NSW which councils nominated for the placement of the statutory advertisements. The majority of these advertisements were placed by the Returning Officer. Murray Shire Council requested that the statutory advertisements be placed in the following press:

- Echuca Riverine Herald
- Deniliquin Pastoral Times
- Barham Bridge Koondrook Times

Advertising costs

The cost of a newspaper advertisement is based on the size of the advertisement and the rate charged by the newspaper. The NSWEC could not budget for the cost of the statutory advertisements for two main reasons:

- a number of councils had commercial arrangements with the nominated newspapers. The NSWEC was not privy to the council's rates; and
- the size and therefore cost of each advertisement varied depending on the information required for each council, candidate numbers and variations in the typesetting by individual newspapers.

The total advertising spend for the statewide advertising campaign was $1,521,388. The table below illustrates the components and costs of the statewide and statutory advertising campaign.

Table 9: 2008 Local Government Elections NSWEC advertising expenditure, $M – NSW

Advertisement	NSW $M	NSW %
Enrolment	0.185	12.2
Register electoral material	0.041	2.7
Postal voting	0.253	16.6
Nominations	0.196	12.9
Candidates and polling places	0.550	36.1
Uncontested elections	0.010	0.6
Remember to vote	0.205	13.5
Results	0.082	5.4
TOTAL	1.522	100.0

More than half (57.6%) of the participants in the elector feedback survey indicated that they had heard about the elections from newspapers. The three topics most frequently recalled by participants from the NSWEC advertising campaign were:

- 'Remember to vote' (30.0%);
- 'Candidates and polling places' (21.7%); and
- 'Enrolment' (19.0%).

While there were no significant differences between males and females in how electors learnt of the elections, rural respondents were more likely to have heard from newspapers and from NSWEC advertising while less likely to have been advised of the elections from candidate material.

Election Information Brochure

In October 2007 the NSWEC wrote to all councils advising them of the availability of a brochure that could be sent to electors within their council area. Councils were provided with three options which included:

- a household brochure mailed to each household in the Local Government area where one or more electors was enrolled; or
- an elector brochure mailed to each elector in the Local Government area; or
- no brochure.

The brochure was customised for each council and served as a direct communication with electors. The brochure contained information such as key election dates, voting options and information specific to council including Returning Officer details and a list of pre-poll voting locations and polling places.

A positive response was received from 61 councils who confirmed their interest in the brochure as a communication piece for their constituents. The majority (53) of councils accepting the brochure opted for the household brochure with eight councils choosing an elector brochure.

Murray Shire Council opted not to have a brochure sent to electors.

Statewide 940,806 brochures were produced at a cost of $0.56 per brochure (including postage).

Of those electors who received a brochure and completed the NSWEC elector survey online, 86.1% indicated that the brochure partly covered the information they required or that the information in the brochure clarified everything.

Participants were asked to nominate which areas of the brochure they found most useful and were able to nominate one or more areas they considered appropriate. The three areas of information on the brochure found to be most useful to those who received it included:

- election timetable (56.5%);
- location of where to vote on election day (47.8%); and
- information on which council area and/or ward they were enrolled in (37.6%).

NSWEC Website

The NSWEC website is utilised by all election stakeholders as a quick and efficient way to acquire up to date and accessible election information. In readiness for the 2008 Local Government Elections the NSWEC undertook a review of the Local Government section to bring the content to a higher level of sophistication and to refine the site navigation.

As part of the new structure the NSWEC created a Local Government page from which stakeholders could source information on:

- the election timetable;
- election employment opportunities;
- enrolment requirements and online enrolment confirmation;
- council structures;
- information on referenda and polls;
- methods for voting;
- Local Government political parties;
- candidates;
- polling place lookup facility; and
- election results.

An enrolment search facility was placed on the NSWEC website to assist electors verify their enrolment information including their council and, where applicable, ward information. Polling place information provided on the website included accessibility information for electors with a disability.

To ensure availability of election information to council stakeholders the NSWEC requested that all councils provide a link on their websites to the NSWEC site.

Conduct of the Elections

Pre-election day

Electoral Roll Management

Residential Roll

In NSW enrolment and voting are compulsory at all Federal, State and Local Government elections. The NSW electoral roll is managed by the AEC in conjunction with the NSWEC. Any person in NSW who met the enrolment criteria below was required to be enrolled for the 2008 Local Government Elections:

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

Legislation provides that for Local Government elections the electoral roll closes on the fortieth day before the day of the election. At the 2008 Local Government Elections the NSW electoral roll closed to new enrolments and changes to enrolment details at 6 pm on Monday, 4 August 2008.

At the close of rolls 4,544,395 electors were enrolled in NSW with 4,231,370 electors in areas with contested elections and 313,025 electors in areas with deferred or uncontested elections. The largest number of electors in a single contested area (that is an undivided council, excluding larger councils with wards) was Gosford City Council (113,763) with the smallest contested area being Urana City Council – B Ward (304).

There were a total of 4,634 electors on the residential electoral roll for Murray Shire Council.

The NSWEC's Corporate Plan 2008-2011 addresses enrolment as a key measure of the overall health of the electoral system. A Key Result Area in the Corporate Plan focuses on electoral roll management, specifically the accurate address coding of electors (Target = 100%). At the 2008 Local Government Elections the statewide known error rate of electors incorrectly coded was calculated as 0.01%. While this affected 369 electors in 12 council areas this is regarded as a satisfactory error rate. The NSWEC identified these errors prior to election day which allowed the NSWEC to formally write to each affected elector and notify the councils involved. Each affected 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 the Murray Shire Council region four electors were incorrectly coded to the wrong council area. The NSWEC has notified the Australian Electoral Commission to ensure that the electors are correctly coded for future elections.

Non-residential Roll

The non-residential roll of electors is a means to allow people who pay rates to a council for property they own, but do not occupy, to participate in the democratic process for that area. The non-residential roll lapses after each election. Electors must make a fresh application to appear on the roll for each election.

While the NSWEC undertook steps to promote non-residential enrolment as part of the advertising campaign, the responsibility of compiling the roll was with the council General Manager. All General Managers were required to prepare and certify a list of the potential electors who applied for the non-residential rolls and provide the list to the NSWEC.

Once the lists were received by the NSWEC, confirmation of electors was undertaken and successful applicants merged into the residential roll to produce the combined roll for each ward/area.

At the close of rolls 1,833 electors were on non-residential rolls across NSW. The council with the largest non-residential roll was Eurobodalla Shire Council with 421 electors (representing 1.6% of the total Eurobodalla roll). In Murray Shire Council, four electors were on the non-residential roll. This represents 0.09% of the total enrolment for Murray Shire Council.

Nomination Day

Nominations

Due to an amendment of the Regulation, for the first time at the 2008 Local Government Elections the close of nominations and nomination day fell on the same day Wednesday, 13 August 2008. At previous Local Government elections close of nominations was 5 pm, two days prior to nomination day in order to allow candidates the chance to withdraw their nomination for election once all nominations had been received.

In order to nominate, candidates must be nominated by either a registered political party or by at least two electors enrolled in the council or by at least two electors enrolled in the ward where applicable.

For a nomination to be accepted by the Returning Officer candidates were required to complete a nomination form and a Candidate Information Sheet. Compulsory fields on the Candidate Information Sheet included the candidate's full name and enrolled address. Candidates were provided with the option of providing further personal information such as date of birth, occupation, trade and professional qualifications, organisation memberships, political party endorsement and a statement of policies. All Candidate Information Sheets were published on the NSWEC website and were made available for public inspection at the Returning Officer's office.

As part of the nomination process, candidates were also required to pay a nomination deposit to the Returning Officer at the time of nomination. The nomination fee of $125 was applicable to all candidates, however, groups with five candidates or more were required to pay a maximum of $625 for the group to nominate.

The nomination deposit is refunded to candidates if:

- a candidate is elected or receives at least 4% of the total first preference votes; or
- in a group, any one of the group is elected or receives at least 4% of the total first preference votes; or
- the election is uncontested.

Where a candidate does not qualify for a refund, the deposit is forfeited to the council.

A total of 12 nominations were received for Murray Shire Council by close of nominations.

Across NSW five candidate nominations were rejected. Nominations may be rejected for two main reasons:

- the candidate is not on the electoral roll in the council area; or
- the nominators are not on the electoral roll in the council area/ward.

Statewide 34 nominations were withdrawn, with no nominations withdrawn in Murray Shire Council.

The following table illustrates the statewide election arrangements as at close of nominations.

Table 10: 2008 Local Government Elections Election Arrangements – NSW

Election Arrangements	Number
Total number of individual elections	332
Contested council elections	140
Uncontested whole councils	5
Uncontested wards	14
Insufficient candidates - by-election required	3

The draw for ballot paper position, held at 12 noon on nomination day, was conducted by the Returning Officer at the Returning Officer's office. Candidates, local media, council representatives and any interested members of the public could attend. Ballot papers are shown at Appendix 6.

Candidates

A total of 4,620 candidates stood at the 2008 Local Government Elections of which 4,466 were candidates for councillor positions and 154 for mayoral positions. As a candidate can run for mayor and councillor, of the total candidates, 272 represents candidates standing for both positions (138 individual persons). 12 candidates stood for the Murray Shire Council elections.

The largest number of candidates in an undivided council was 92 (Campbelltown City Council, 15 positions vacant) and for a divided council was 83 candidates over three wards (Penrith City Council, 5 positions vacant in each ward). Over half (55.6%) of candidates were aged between 45-65 with 8.0% under 30 years of age and 6.9%

aged over 70 years. The distribution of candidates across age categories as a statewide picture is shown below.

Graph 4: 2008 Local Government Elections Age Range of Candidates
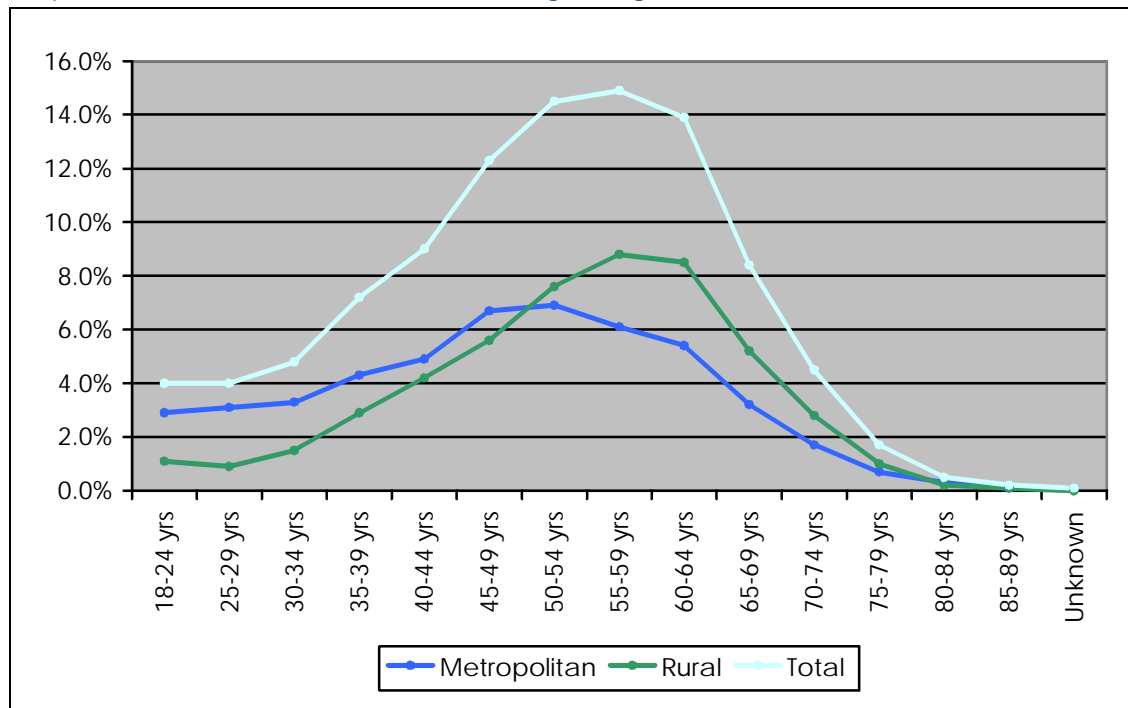
Males represented the majority of candidates at the 2008 Local Government Elections with 66.6% (3,077 candidates). Females represented the remaining third with 1,543 nominations. A higher proportion of male candidates stood in rural councils. Almost three-quarters of candidates elected were male (73.5%, 1,080) with females filling the remaining 389 positions (26.5%).
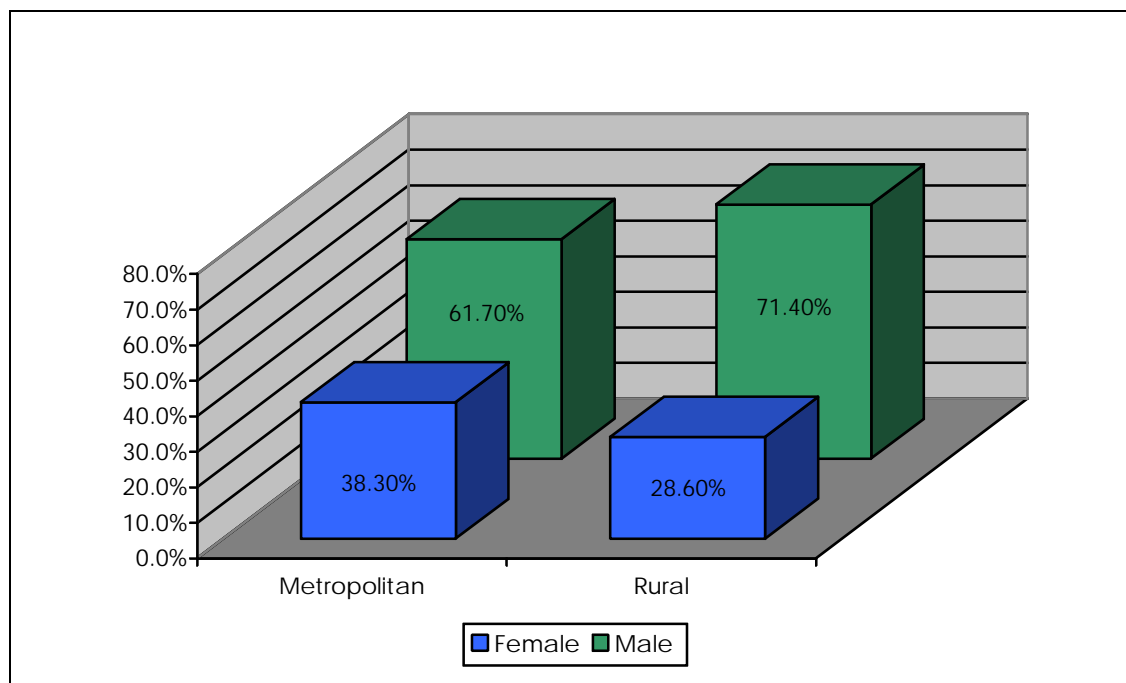
For the councillor elections 1,588 candidates were affiliated by a registered political party while the remaining 3,032 candidates stood independently. The largest group of candidates affiliated by a registered political party were nominated by the Australian Labor Party (NSW Branch) (425) with the smallest number of candidates nominated by a party from the Australian Democrats (NSW Division) and The Fishing Party each with one candidate.

Table 11: 2008 Local Government Elections Statewide Candidates by Registered Political Party

Registered Political Party	Number of candidates	%
Independent	3,032	71.2%
Labor	425	10.0%
Liberal	385	9.0%
The Greens	355	8.3%
Unity Party	56	1.3%
Community First	34	0.8%
Australian Business Party	24	0.6%
Shoal Independents	21	0.5%
Australia First Party	15	0.4%
Eurobodalla First	15	0.4%
Residents First	15	0.4%
Shire Watch Independents	15	0.4%
Country Labor Party	13	0.3%
Holroyd Independents	13	0.3%
Totally Locally Committed Party	12	0.3%
Liverpool Community Independents Team	11	0.3%
Our Sustainable Future	11	0.3%
Shire Wide Action Group	11	0.3%

Registered Political Party	Number of candidates	%
Wake Up Warringah	11	0.3%
Clover Moore Independent Team	10	0.2%
Community Development "Environment" Save Campbelltown Koalas	10	0.2%
RAGAA	10	0.2%
Save Our Suburbs	10	0.2%
Socialist Alliance	10	0.2%
STL	10	0.2%
Bob Thompson's Independent Team	9	0.2%
Christian Democratic Party (Fred Nile Group)	9	0.2%
Russell Matheson Community First Team	9	0.2%
Manly Independents	7	0.2%
Albury Citizens and Ratepayers Movement	6	0.1%
Central Coast First	6	0.1%
No Parking Meters Party	6	0.1%
Parramatta Better Local Government Party	6	0.1%
Roads and Services	5	0.1%
The Parramatta Independents	5	0.1%
Burwood Community Voice	4	0.1%
Kogarah Residents' Association	3	0.1%
Lorraine Wearne Independents	3	0.1%
Woodville Independents	3	0.1%
Yvonne Bellamy Independents	3	0.1%
Australian Democrats	1	0.0%
The Fishing Party	1	0.0%
TOTAL	4620	100.0%

Local Government Areas Requiring a By-election

In areas where the number of nominations received was less than the number of candidate positions available a by-election was conducted after election day. At the 2008 Local Government Elections three councils received less than the required number of nominations. These councils included:

- Bland Shire Council (seven nominations received for nine positions);
- Warren Shire Council – A Ward (two nominations received for three positions); and
- Wellington Council (seven nominations received for nine positions).

The candidates who nominated for the positions were declared elected on Saturday, 13 September 2008 and a by-election was held on Saturday, 29 November 2008 to fill the remaining positions.

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. The age range varied from 25 to 74 years. On this occasion, none of the candidates were nominated by a registered political party.

Details of the by-elections are provided below.

Table 12: By-elections by council, vacancies, candidates and enrolled electors, Saturday, 29 November 2008

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

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 6pm 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 such as hospitals and nursing homes from Monday, 24 November 2008 until Wednesday, 26 November 2008.

Key election dates for the by-elections were:

Event	Date
Close of electoral rolls	Monday, 20 October 2008
Close of nominations	Wednesday, 29 October 2008
Pre-poll voting starts	Monday, 17 November 2008
Registration of 'how-to-vote' material closes	Friday 21 November 2008
Postal voting applications closes	Monday, 24 November 2008
Declared institution voting commences	Monday, 24 November 2008
Declared institution voting concludes	Wednesday, 26 November 2008
Pre-poll voting finishes	Friday, 28 November 2008
Election Day	Saturday, 29 November 2008
Return of postal votes closes	Monday, 1 December 2008
Distribution of preferences commences	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. This enabled containment of by-election costs.

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 such as hospitals and nursing homes. 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 Saturday, 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.

Uncontested Elections

Elections are uncontested when the number of candidates nominated for election is equal to the number of councillors to be elected to the council or ward. Similarly, if there is only one nominee for the election of a mayor then that nominee is elected to the position of mayor without an election being conducted.

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 - Wahroonga Ward and Weddin Shire Council – Ward B, Ward C and Ward E who were required to vote in their council referendum).

Deferred Elections

There were four councils which did not have elections in September 2008 due to being placed under administration. The councils involved were:

- Broken Hill City Council;
- Port Macquarie-Hastings Council;
- Shellharbour City Council; and
- Wollongong City Council.

These councils were placed under administration in early 2008, with the exception of Broken Hill City Council which was placed under administration in January 2007. Broken Hill City Council will return to democracy on Saturday, 5 December 2009 while the remaining council elections have been deferred until 2012.

Ballot Paper Printing

Unlike practices in previous years where some councils arranged for the printing of their own ballot papers, for the 2008 elections the NSWEC centrally arranged the printing of all ballot papers by a contracted printing company. This ensured greater quality control and consistency in the ballot paper formats and styles.

A total of 291 unique ballot papers were produced for the various election contests with 8.9 million ballot papers printed at a cost of $0.16 per small ballot paper (generally single column and mayoral election ballot papers) and $0.39 per large ballot paper (generally above the line voting ballot papers).

Ballot papers for Murray Shire Council can be found at Appendix 6.

Staffing

Staffing is a significant cost driver for elections and as such the NSWEC recognises the importance of accurately predicting the number of required staff while taking into consideration the associated costs without compromising the level of service to electors.

The level of staffing required at the Returning Officer's office varied during the different phases of the election. These staff were employed to administer a variety of tasks including:

- office setup;
- engaging polling place staff;
- packing materials for each polling place;
- registration, distribution and receipt of postal votes;
- operation of pre-poll voting;
- visits to Declared Institutions;
- counting of the votes; and
- office pack-up.

The required number of election officials to work at polling places on election day is calculated through a formula based on the predicted number of electors who will attend the polling place. Accurately predicting the number of required staff presents challenges to ensure the appropriate number of staff without over resourcing which can result in unnecessary increases in costs. Estimating the number of electors who will attend each polling place is not an exact science.

The changing of council ward boundaries can have some negative impacts on the staffing estimates as predicted vote numbers previously allocated to polling places need to be redistributed with minimal data available to base decisions.

All polling places must have a minimum of two staff, one of whom is the polling place manager. Staff roles at polling places are:

- Polling place manager:
    - manages the polling place and all polling place staff.

- Deputy polling place manager:
    - employed in some larger polling places.

- Ordinary vote issuing officer:
    - issues ballot papers to enrolled electors (ordinary voters).

- Ballot box guard:
    - guards the ballot boxes;
    - ensures electors place completed ballot papers in ballot box before leaving the polling place;
    - indicates the exit for voters leaving the polling place; and
    - relieves ordinary vote issuing officers during breaks.

- Enquiry officer:
    - controls queue and flow of electors to issuing tables;
    - deals with elector enquiries;
    - assists voters who need help;
    - keeps the polling place in a clean and tidy condition;
    - relieves ordinary vote issuing officers during breaks; and
    - assists the polling place manager to issue 'Name not on roll' and 'Name already marked as voted' votes.

- Scrutiny assistant:
    - employed after 5.30pm;
    - deconstructs voting screens;
    - assists in counting ballot papers; and
    - assists in returning the venue to pre-lease condition.

While prior electoral experience is not necessary to work at an election, 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. People recruited to work in polling places needed excellent customer service skills and the patience to undertake repetitive duties accurately over a long period.

In Murray Shire Council, the NSWEC appointed 13 election officials to work at the 4 appointed polling places and the Returning Officer's Office. The statewide ratio of polling place staff (working between 8am and 6pm on Election Day) to electors was 1:398. For Murray Shire Council the ratio was 1:357.

Murray Shire Council polling places on average took 74% of the votes projected. This is lower than the state average of 91% of projected votes and the average of 86% for

Predicted votes at polling places are available in Appendix 5.

A staffing breakdown for Murray Shire Council can be found in the table below. The Returning Officer and Returning Officer Support Officer are in addition to these staff.

Table 13: 2008 Local Government Elections Categories of Election Staff – NSW and Murray Shire Council

Staff Categories	NSW	Murray Shire Council
Office assistants	2,326	0
Polling place managers	2,205	3
Deputy polling place managers	811	1
Election officials	7,607	8
Scrutiny assistants	635	1
TOTAL	13,584	13

The NSWEC endeavoured to recruit election officials from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to work on election day to provide language assistance to electors where required. Statewide, 14.0% of election day staff indicated that they spoke a language other than English. The NSWEC recognises that there were insufficient staff from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to assist in some areas with diverse communities. The NSWEC will re-assess recruitment strategies to further engage election officials from diverse backgrounds.

Of the election day staff who participated in the feedback survey 75.8% indicated that the number of staff was sufficient to deal with the uneven flow of electors throughout election day. Some election officials did, however, indicate that additional staff members to work at the polling place would be beneficial to minimise congestion within the polling place. The vast majority of participants indicated that there was sufficient staff after the close of polls to assist with sorting and counting ballot papers.

Early Voting

Pre-poll Voting

At the 2008 Local Government Elections pre-poll voting was available to those electors who met at least one of the following criteria set out in the legislation:

- were not within the ward or area for which the election was being held on election day;
- were not within 8 kilometres of any polling place within their council area or ward on election day;
- were travelling under conditions that prevented them from attending a polling place to vote;
- were unable to attend a polling place to vote for religious beliefs;
- were caring for another person who requires his or her care for medical reasons and so were prevented from attending at any such polling place to vote; or
- were working throughout the hours of voting on election day.

Electors meeting the above criteria were provided with the opportunity to cast their vote in the two weeks prior to election day with pre-poll voting open from Monday, 1 September 2008. Pre-poll voting closed in all locations at 6 pm on Friday, 12 September 2008.

197 pre-poll voting centres were available across NSW in the lead up to election day, of which 78.2% (154) were fully wheelchair accessible. Two pre-poll voting centres were open for electors in Murray Shire Council. Pre-poll voting centre hours of operation were the same as council hours.

Table 14: 2008 Local Government Elections Pre-poll Voting Centre Details

Pre-Poll Venue Name	Pre-poll Address	Hours of Operation	Accessibility
Murray Shire Council Offices	21-25 Conargo Street, Mathoura	Mon 1 Sept to Thur 11 Sept 9.30am to 4pm; Fri 12 Sept 9.30am to 6pm	Yes
Murray Shire Council Service Centre Moama	6 Meninya Street, Moama	Mon 1 Sept to Thur 11 Sept 9am to4pm; Fri 12 Sept 9am to 6pm	Yes

A total of 308,735 (8.7% of the total votes cast) pre-poll votes were cast across NSW of which 488 were cast in Murray Shire Council.

After election day General Managers were asked to respond on the selection of pre-poll voting centres in their area in terms of the location, number available and accessibility for electors with a disability. A high level of overall satisfaction amongst the General Managers was achieved as illustrated in the below table.

Table 15: 2008 Local Government Elections Satisfaction with Pre-poll Voting Centres – NSW (%)

Pre-Poll	Very unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Neutral	Satisfactory	Very satisfactory
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: The percentages in the above table may not add to 100 as the missing responses were not reported.

Of the electors who participated in the feedback survey, one third (33.1%) indicated that they knew about pre-poll voting because they voted using pre-poll at a previous election. Other major ways participants found out about pre-poll voting was from the NSWEC website (23.1%) or newspaper advertisements (23.1%).

Pre-poll participants rated their satisfaction with a variety of areas as listed in the following table.

Table 16: 2008 Local Government Elections Satisfaction with the Pre-poll Voting Process – NSW (%)

	Very unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Neutral	Satisfactory	Very satisfactory
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: The percentages in the above table may not add to 100 as the missing responses were not reported.

Postal Voting

Postal voting services were provided to those electors who were unable to cast their vote on election day at a polling place for any of the following reasons prescribed in the legislation:

- will not be within the ward or area for which the election is being held on election day;
- will not be within 8 kilometres of any polling place within their council area or ward on election day;
- will be travelling under conditions that prevent them from attending a polling place to vote;
- due to illness, disability or approaching maternity are prevented from attending a polling place to vote;
- are unable to attend a polling place to vote for religious beliefs;
- incarcerated;
- caring for another person who requires his or her care for medical reasons and so will be prevented from attending at any such polling place to vote;
- will be working throughout the hours of voting on election day; or
- a silent elector.

Electors who are registered as a Registered General Postal Voter at the State level are not required to register again for Local Government elections and were therefore automatically sent postal vote ballot papers. Electors wanting to become Registered General Postal Voters could apply up until 6pm, Monday 4 August 2008.

Applications for postal voters opened on nomination day with electors able to obtain applications from the NSWEC website, the NSWEC head office or the Returning Officer's office. Postal vote applications closed on Monday, 8 September 2008.

In order to be admitted to the count postal votes needed to be received by the Returning Officer by 6 pm, Monday, 15 September 2008. Statewide 134,802 votes were cast by electors who voted by post at the 2008 Local Government Elections. This represents 3.8% of the total votes cast at the 2008 elections. A total of 121 postal votes were admitted to the count for Murray Shire Council. A proportion of those returned were unable to be admitted to the count for reasons including late return, an incomplete or incorrect declaration or the declaration not being signed by the elector.

Of the electors who participated in 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 found out about postal voting from the NSWEC website. Postal voting participants rated their satisfaction with a variety of areas, which are listed in the following table.

Table 17: 2008 Local Government Elections Satisfaction with Postal Voting Process – NSW Overall (%)

	Very unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Neutral	Satisfactory	Very satisfactory
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: The percentages in the above table may not add to 100 as the missing responses were not reported.

Declared Institutions

The Electoral Commissioner has the authority to appoint hospitals, nursing homes, retirement villages and like facilities as Declared Institutions to assist the residents and/or patients of these facilities who are unable to attend a polling place on election day.

In the lead up to the election the NSWEC wrote to all Declared Institutions used at the 2007 State 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 Declared Institutions across NSW from Monday, 8 September until Wednesday, 10 September 2008.

A total of 9,421 votes were cast in Declared Institutions across the State (0.3% of total votes cast). Zero of these votes were cast at the Declared Institutions in Murray Shire Council.

From the feedback survey of electors undertaken on the NSWEC's conduct of the elections, less than 1% indicated that they voted at a Declared Institution.

Statistically, this figure is too small to be able to use to draw meaningful and valid conclusions.

Mobile Voting

Mobile voting was trialled in five council areas encompassing nine remote locations in far west and northern NSW from Monday, 1 September 2008. Further information on mobile pre-poll voting is available on under the Election Preparation section.

Of those respondents who participated in the elector survey, less than 1% voted using mobile polling booths. Statistically, this figure is too small to be able to use to draw meaningful and valid conclusions.

Election Day Voting

Voting

The vast majority of votes cast at the 2008 Local Government Elections were ordinary votes cast at a polling place on election day, Saturday, 13 September 2008. Of the total formal votes cast statewide 79.9% (2,821,087) were cast in polling places across NSW on election day. In Murray Shire Council 77.0% of the total votes were cast at polling places available to electors.

Three types of votes are distributed to electors on election day. The type of vote the elector receives is determined by their individual circumstance 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, 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 better inform electors of the arrangements, unfortunately some electors still attempted to absent vote outside their council area.

Statewide, 103 (4.1%) polling places exceeded the number of predicted votes by over 500 votes, 129 (5.2%) polling places exceeded projections by between 250-500 votes and 295 (11.8%) polling places were 500 or more votes below the predicted number of votes. The predicted and actual number of votes cast at polling places in Murray Shire Council on election day is available at Appendix 5.

Polling Places

The establishment of polling places for election day is a major component of the election preparation for the NSWEC and the Returning Officers. It is a difficult balance to select the number of polling places to meet the needs of the community

while keeping costs to a minimum. These issues present the NSWEC head office and the local Returning Officer with challenges that cannot be met through an exact science but are determined by a series of formulas.

Prior to determining a draft list of polling places for council's review, the NSWEC undertook a full review of polling places across NSW. Every polling place previously used by the NSWEC was re-assessed for its suitability using historical polling place data, mapping data, census data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and existing reports and other relevant information sourced from previous elections.

In the lead up to the election the NSWEC provided Murray Shire Council with a draft list of proposed polling places to be used for the election. The list contained polling places similar to those used at the NSW State General Election in 2007. Murray Shire Council was asked to consider the list and provide the NSWEC with comments on additional or alternative venues or comments on polling places that they believed were not required. Comments from Murray Shire Council received by the NSWEC were taken into consideration prior to the final selection of polling places.

On election day 2,597 polling places were available across NSW with four available to the electors of Murray Shire Council. In addition to ordinary polling places, this total could include hospitals, multi ward and multi council polling places.

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.

Statewide 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 multi council polling places (for two or more council areas and adjoining wards).

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 as polling places and this provides more certainty for the NSWEC about availability. At the 2008 Local Government Elections, 60.5% (1,571) of polling places used by the NSWEC were NSW Department of Education and Training facilities. The remainder were sourced from private schools, community halls, community centres, church facilities and other facilities.

Where possible, the NSWEC leased wheelchair accessible venues as polling places. While the NSWEC does not own any of the venues used for voting it is committed to providing the best possible voting facilities for electors with a disability and understands the importance of providing accurate accessibility information to the public.

The NSWEC undertook an audit of the accessibility status of all polling places against information supplied by the AEC. Polling place accessibility information was provided to the Returning Officers for review at the local level along with a list of criteria used by the AEC in assessing accessibility from the car park to the voting area but not including items such as wheelchair accessible toilets. All criteria provided to the Returning Officer were required to be met for a polling place to be deemed fully accessible. Statewide 549 (21.1%) of polling places had full wheelchair access and 1,103 (42.5%) had partial wheelchair access. Murray Shire Council had no accessible polling places and three with assisted access.

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 (75.9% of election staff indicated that 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.

Feedback from electors who participated in the survey and who voted at a polling place on election day indicates that people most frequently choose their voting location based on past elections (56.8% "Voted same place as I always go") followed by those who knew where to go from a newspaper advertisement (19.4%).

Almost three-quarters of the participants (72.2%) reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied or neutral with the overall process while areas that rated particularly well included:

- convenience of polling place location (87.4%);
- accuracy of polling place accessibility information (84.2%); and
- manner of staff (89.9%).

The following table illustrates the levels of satisfaction with the listed areas on a statewide basis.

Table 18: 2008 Local Government Elections Electors' Satisfaction with Polling Place Voting – NSW (%)

	Very unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Neutral	Satisfactory	Very satisfactory
Convenience	8.8	3.1	5.9	35.0	46.5
Length of time	15.1	6.0	5.7	33.1	39.1
Information	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 accessibility	8.3	4.5	23.3	36.5	24.4
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: The percentages in the above table may not add to 100 as the missing responses were not reported.

In their feedback survey, General Managers were asked to respond on the selection of polling places in terms of the location, number available and accessibility for

electors with a disability. Statewide, a high level of overall satisfaction was achieved in all areas illustrated in the below table.

Table 19: 2008 Local Government Elections Satisfaction with Polling Places – NSW Overall (%)

Polling Place	Very unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Neutral	Satisfactory	Very satisfactory
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

The NSWEC received some complaints from stakeholders about polling places running out of ballot papers at various times throughout election day. Subsequent to receiving these complaints, the NSWEC undertook an assessment of polling place managers to determine actual figures on the number of polling places without ballot papers, the length of time a polling place was without ballot papers and the approximate number of electors affected. Statewide, 16 (0.6%) polling places ran out of ballot papers for a period of time on election day.

In Murray Shire Council no polling places ran out of ballot papers.

How-to-vote material

All electoral material to be distributed by candidates or their representatives on election day must be registered by the NSWEC. Registration does not apply to posters, whether they are displayed before or on election day, nor is it required for material to be distributed before election day.

Candidates were required to provide an application form and a copy of each item to be registered to the Returning Officer by Friday, 5 September 2008. The NSWEC provided candidates with guidelines to assist them to meet the registration requirements.

All Returning Officers had the authority to register how-to-vote material that met the requirements. In the circumstance where the Returning Officer was unsure if the material was appropriate for registration the material was referred to the NSWEC head office for resolution.

Election Day Issues

Polling place managers were required to complete an incident report for any major incidents occurring in or outside the polling place involving electors, party workers or election officials. These incidents generally include any accidents or confrontations. This assists the NSWEC in managing occupational health and safety issues at the polling place and ensures that, where accidents arose, an appropriate record was taken.

Post Election Day

Counting the Votes

The accuracy of vote counting and the impartiality of this process are key tenets of electoral administration. The counting of results is a complex process, prescribed by legislation, to ensure accuracy in the results.

Across NSW 332 election contests were held at the 2008 Local Government Elections which included 271 councillor elections (84 undivided council areas, 187 wards), 27 mayoral elections, 17 referenda (17 questions for 15 councils) and 17 polls (17 questions for eight councils).

The method of counting votes for Local Government elections is set out in the Regulation. Votes for Murray Shire Council election of councillors were counted using the Proportional Representation (PR) method.

Timetable for Counts

The time taken to count results varied from council to council depending on the size of the council, voting system and timetable position (for counts conducted at the LGCC). Counting at the Local Government Counting Centre for the 2008 Local Government Elections was completed three days ahead of schedule.

Local Counts

All elections using Optional Preferential voting were counted locally at the Returning Officer's office. Some councillor elections, all mayoral elections, all referenda and all polls were counted locally by the Returning Officer. Statewide, 106 councillor elections, 27 mayoral elections, 17 referendum questions, 17 poll questions and a recount at Leeton Shire Council were counted locally by the Returning Officer.

On election night all polling places conducted an initial count of first preference votes. On the Sunday, 14 September 2008 the Returning Officer conducted a check count of all the ballot papers counted on election night. The check count was conducted at the Returning Officer's office with scrutineers able to attend. Final distribution of preference counts conducted locally commenced on Tuesday, 16 September 2008.

Local Government Count Centre (LGCC) Counts

The NSWEC established a Local Government Count Centre (LGCC) at its Riverwood warehouse to conduct the count of ballot papers for councils using the Proportional Representation voting system. A total of 165 elections (plus the Manly Council recount) were counted at LGCC.

All councils counted at the LGCC were scheduled to be counted between Tuesday, 16 September and Monday, 22 September 2008. The data entry schedule and count status for each council was placed on the NSWEC website.

For the count to commence ballot paper information was entered into a computer programme by approximately 400 data entry operators, working over two eight hour shifts per day and managed by senior NSWEC staff.

To increase accuracy in results, all ballot papers were put through two data entry rounds and, where any discrepancies arose, a third verification round was applied. Before running each vote count, data entry totals were reconciled against election night figures to ensure totals were complete and correct.

Observation Team

The NSWEC established an independent Observation Team to observe the operations of the LGCC. The Observation Team was established to give candidates, registered political parties and members of the public confidence in the integrity, effectiveness and efficiency of the centralised count of ballot papers.

In July 2008 the NSWEC established six Terms of Reference against which the Observation Team reported. The Team was provided with detailed briefings on all aspects of the central count operations and copies of all documentation relating to the counting operations and visited the central count operation during the data entry process.

In October 2008 the Observation Team reported back to the NSWEC and concluded the following:

> "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".

The Team provided a series of recommendations for the NSWEC's consideration for future elections. The recommendations covered areas such as:

- occupational health and safety management;
- practical design layout;
- security issues;
- management of scrutineers; and
- disaster recovery.

Referenda

Referenda were counted on Saturday night in each polling place with postal ballot papers and pre-poll votes included in the count in the week after election day. Once finalised the referenda results were posted on the NSWEC Virtual Tally Room.

Polls

Polls were counted on election night with all postal and pre-poll votes included in the count in the week following election day. Once finalised the poll results were posted on the NSWEC Virtual Tally Room.

Recounts

Once a result is declared by the NSWEC, candidates have a twenty-four hour window to request a recount of the ballot papers for the council or ward if they wish to dispute the outcome. Scrutineers are permitted to be present at a recount and can challenge the formality of any ballot papers for the Returning Officer's final determination (at the discretion of the NSWEC).

Recounts were held for Leeton Shire Council - A Ward and Manly Council (at the request of The Greens and paid for by The Greens) with no change to the results for either council.

Some enquiries were received by the NSWEC from candidates requesting recounts. The Electoral Commissioner determined that the recounts were not necessary and therefore did not agree to cover the associated costs. The requesting candidates also did not agree to cover the costs and subsequently recounts were not undertaken.

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.

Results

Participation

A total of 3,529,220 votes were cast in councillor elections across NSW with formal votes for councillor elections totalling 3,278,188 and informal votes 251,032. Voter participation is a measure of the total number of votes cast for the councillor elections as a percentage of the eligible enrolment (that is the number of electors in areas with contested elections). The statewide voter participation at the 2008 Local Government Elections was 83.4%. This figure is slightly lower than the 2004 Local Government Elections participation rate (85.2%[3]).

Table 20: 2008 Local Government Elections Voter Participation

	NSW	Murray Shire Council
Number of electors enrolled to vote in contested areas	4,231,370	4,638
Votes (councillor elections only, including all types)	3,529,220	3,737
Participation rate	83.4%	80.6%

For Murray Shire Council voter participation was calculated to be 80.6%.

The highest voter participation rate for a council was recorded in Gundagai Shire Council (89.1%) and the lowest in Central Darling Shire Council (63.6%).

The five councils 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   63.6%
- Woollahra Municipal Council   68.5%
- Sydney City Council   69.6%
- North Sydney Council   70.7%
- Mosman Municipal Council   71.3%

There is no significant variation in the comparative participation levels when assessing rural participation (average 83.6%) against metropolitan participation (average 82.0%).

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[3] Methodological issues make strict comparisons between the 2004 and 2008 Local Government Elections difficult.

While the NSWEC compares favourably with other jurisdictions when comparing voter participation rates at Local Government elections, it is unreliable to compare participation trends in Australia due to the nature of the different voting systems. While voting in Local Government elections is compulsory in NSW, Queensland, Victoria and the Northern Territory, voting is not compulsory at the Local Government level in the remaining jurisdictions.

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.

Councillor Election Results

All councillor ballot papers for Murray Shire Council were counted at the RO Office. The 9 candidates who received sufficient votes for election were declared elected to Murray Shire Council by the Returning Officer. A list of elected councillors is available at Appendix 7.

Of the formal votes cast for the councillor elections some:

- 488 were cast in a pre-poll voting centre;
- 121 were cast as a postal vote;
- none were cast at a Declared Institution; and
- 2,879 were cast in a polling place on election day.

Statewide formality was recorded at 92.9% with an informality rate of 7.1%. From the total votes cast in the Murray Shire Council councillor election 93.4% were formal (3,491) with the remaining 6.6% deemed informal (246).

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%

The 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.

Feedback on Results

Over 95% of candidates that participated in the feedback survey indicated that they reviewed the results on the NSWEC website. High levels of satisfaction were recorded with over 70% rating the presentation (72.9%) and accuracy (71.2%) as satisfactory or very satisfactory. Presentation of the results and accuracy of the results were also rated highly. The timeliness of updates was rated less well.

Table 21: 2008 Local Government Elections Results information satisfaction – NSW (%)

	Very unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Neutral	Satisfactory	Very satisfactory
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

Of the electors who participated in the feedback survey 1,556 participants indicated that they sought results information. Slightly more than half of the participants (51.3%) found out the results on the NSWEC website followed by the newspaper (19.5%). Of the participants who viewed the election results on the NSWEC website over half (58.1%) said they reviewed the results the Sunday after election day.

Declaration of the Poll

On 18 September 2008, the Returning Officer, Patricia Harris, declared the results of the Murray Shire Council election.

Once the declaration paperwork had been signed, the Returning Officer provided copies of the paperwork to the Electoral Commissioner, the council General Manager, the Director General of the Department of Local Government and the Secretary of the Local Government and Shires Associations. In addition, the Returning Officer advised all candidates either by phone, email or SMS that the election results were available on the NSWEC website. Election results were also published in local press and appeared on the NSWEC Virtual Tally Room.

Some council General Managers expressed a level of dissatisfaction at the time taken for the Returning Officer to declare the results for their council area. The count is conducted in a highly legal environment and involves varying levels of complexity depending on the type of count. At the 2008 Local Government Elections the NSWEC centralised the count of ballot papers using the proportional representation system, in an effort to make the process more efficient in order to deliver the election results faster. Further information on the LGCC is available under the section titled Counting of the Votes.

Failure to Vote

Under electoral legislation, the NSWEC was required to issue 'failure to vote' notices to those electors whose names were not marked off the electoral roll as having voted or as having provided a valid excuse. All electoral rolls marked at polling places and in the Returning Officer's office were scanned after election day to

create a list of non-voters for each council area. The penalty for failing to vote without a valid reason at the 2008 Local Government Election is $55.

Across NSW some 672,794 electors failed to vote at the 2008 Local Government Elections. Of these, 833 electors failed to vote in Murray Shire Council of which 592 were issued with a penalty notice. Penalty notices provide the elector with the option 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 five councils with the lowest non-voter rate as a percentage 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%

Table 22: 2008 Local Government Elections Non-voter Statistics Comparisons

	2004 Local Government Elections	2007 State General Election	2008 Local Government Elections
Roll	4.091M	4.374M	4.544M[4]
Non-voters	456,791	318,095	672,794
Exclusions	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%
State Debt Recovery Office referrals	102,769	57,842	130,697

At previous elections little research has been undertaken into the reasons and demographics of electors who fail to vote. As a first for the NSWEC, following the 2008 Local Government Elections the NSWEC undertook an evaluation of non-voter demographics focusing on age, location and gender in order to identify any specific groups who are under represented in the voting process. By identifying these groups the NSWEC will be in a more informed position when addressing advertising needs at future elections.

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[4] 4.231m in contested areas

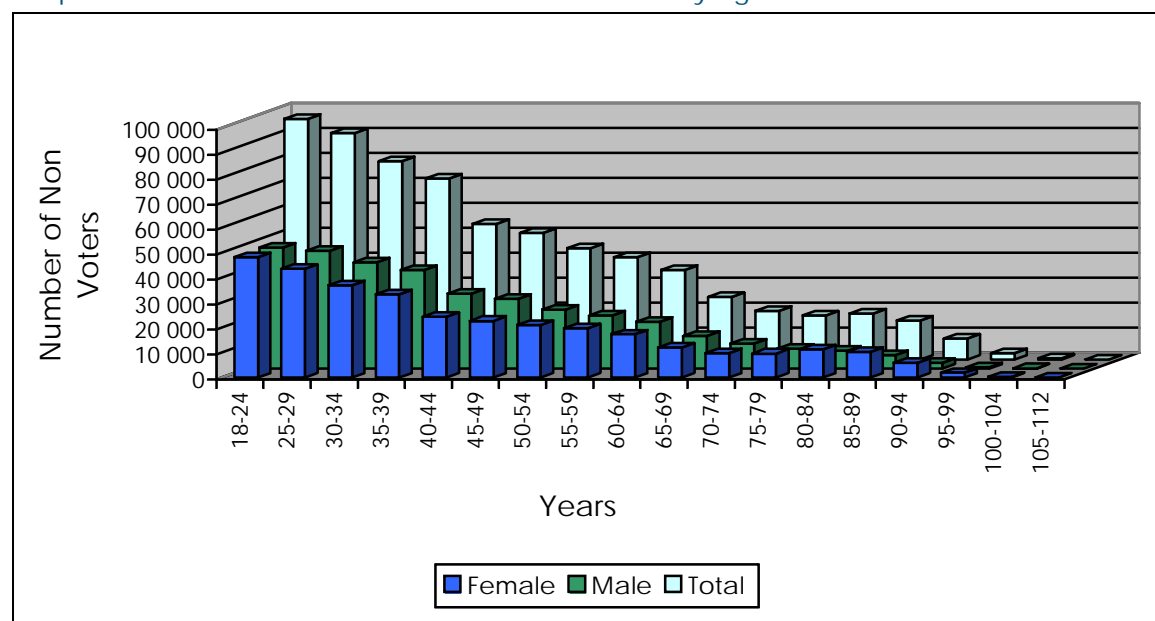Table 23: 2008 Local Government Elections Non-voters by Region and Gender

Region	Gender	Absolute Number	% of NV	Metro/Rural Totals	Metro/Rural % of NV
Metropolitan	Female	223,255	33.2	457,648	68.0
Metropolitan	Male	234,393	34.8		
Rural	Female	104,325	15.5	215,137	32.0
Rural	Male	110,812	16.5		

On a numerical basis, male electors are more represented 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.

Non-voting behaviour varies according to age group. Taking non-voters as a proportion 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 6: 2008 Local Government Elections Non-Voters by Age and Gender – NSW
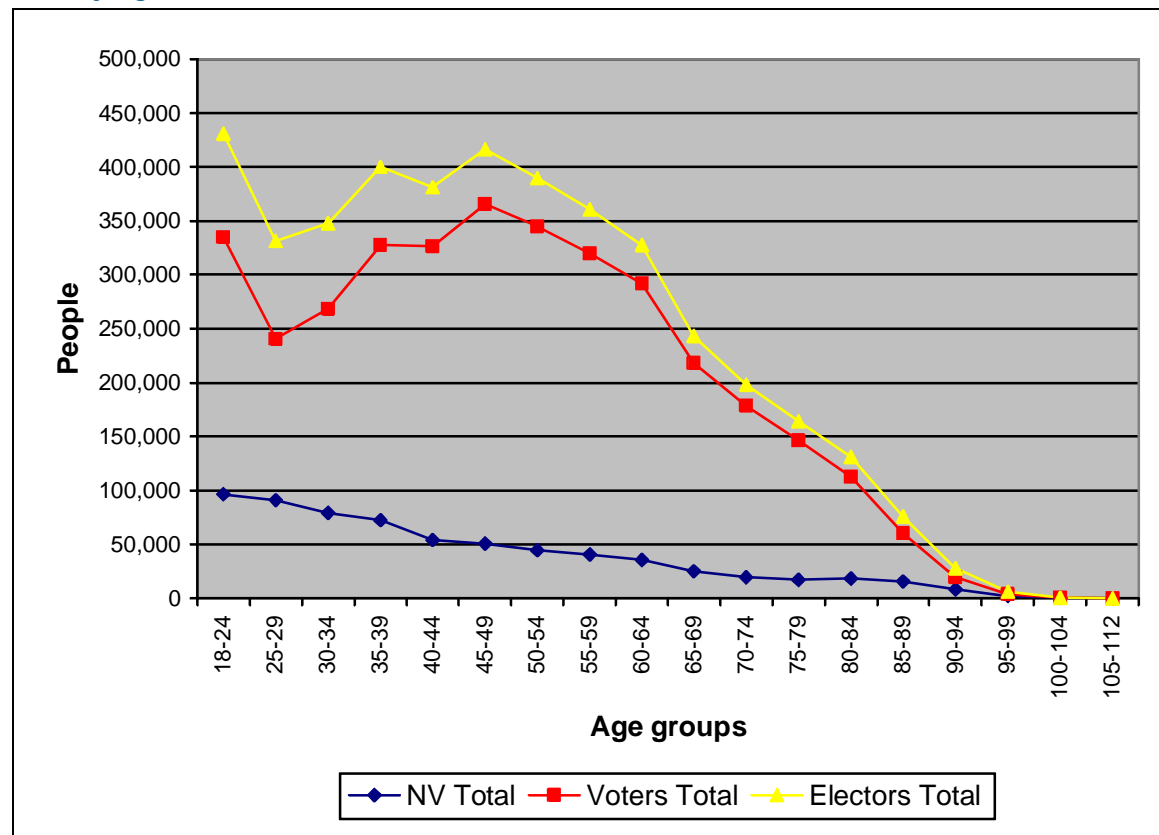
The reasons why electors failed to vote are recorded in the non-voters database. The three valid reasons most frequently recorded across NSW included out of the area, aged and deceased/no longer on the NSW roll. Review on an individual council basis found little variation in the trend with the exception of the Council of the City Of Sydney which recorded a much higher number of non-voters in the category of deceased/no longer on roll in NSW.

The following graph illustrates the number of valid excuses for failing to vote at a State level.
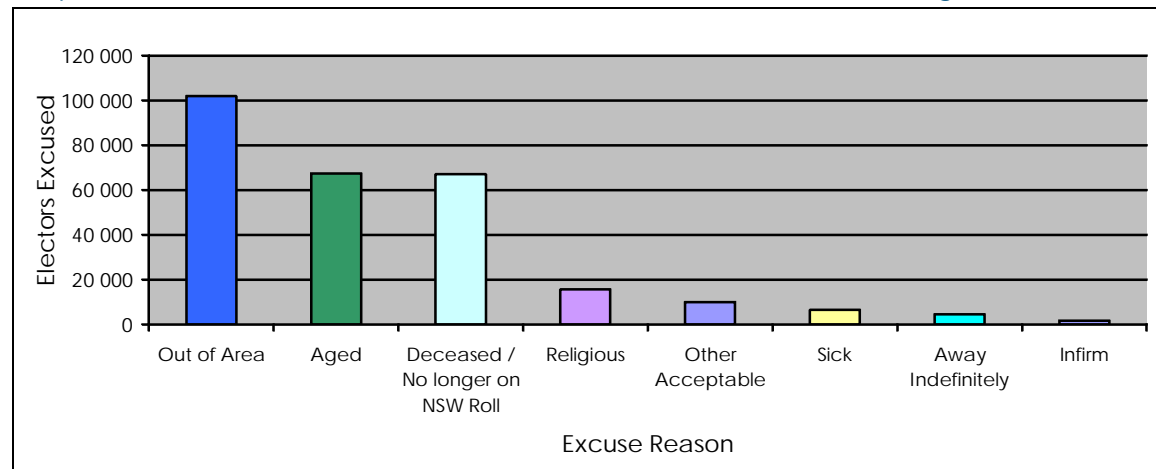
The NSWEC received some reports of incidents where electors who claimed to have voted, received a penalty notice from the NSWEC. Unfortunately, the roll scanning process is not without minor errors. Where an election official marked a name on the roll too faintly or did not mark the line correctly the elector can be scanned as not having voted. While it is an inconvenience to electors who receive incorrect penalty notices, the electors are not penalised and are excused. These errors occur on an infrequent basis.

Election Conclusion

Media Strategy and Debrief

High levels of local media interest surrounded the 2008 Local Government Elections in the lead up to, during and post election day. Local newspapers and radio stations followed with interest the electoral process and candidate activities throughout the period.

The NSWEC endeavoured to provide all media with accurate and timely election information throughout the election. A Media Liaison Officer responded to numerous high level media enquiries and conducted more than 100 live radio interviews and prepared and distributed 64 media releases containing important election information. A media protocol was developed by the NSWEC to assist Returning Officers with handling media enquiries and to manage the flow of information from Returning Officers and the NSWEC head office.

A survey of 30 regional, rural and suburban press and radio outlets recorded a high level of satisfaction with the NSWEC's provision of information as illustrated in the following table. The surveyed media outlets had either daily or weekly contact with both the Returning Officer (75.8%) and media spokesperson (71.4%).

Table 24: 2008 Local Government Elections Media Information Satisfaction – NSW (%)

	Very unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Neutral	Satisfactory	Very satisfactory
Access to information	3.3	10.0	6.7	43.3	36.7
Quality of information	0.0	10.0	10.0	53.3	26.7
Timeliness of information	3.4	6.9	10.3	51.7	27.6
Content of media releases	3.3	3.3	13.3	56.7	23.3
Media page on NSWEC website	0.0	10.0	23.3	40.0	26.7

Debriefs

Background

As part of the NSWEC's commitment to provide high quality, value for money election services, the NSWEC conducted an internal election debrief to assess its performance and the satisfaction of key stakeholder groups including councils, electors, registered political parties, candidates and election staff.

The NSWEC has a responsibility under Priority S8 of the NSW State Plan to measure, report and improve customer satisfaction with Government services. The content of all surveys was structured around the Key Results Areas of the NSWEC's Corporate

Plan 2008-2011 to assess the NSWEC's performance and satisfaction with the services it provided.

Services assessed included the following:

- ordinary, pre-poll and postal voting services to the general public;
- registration, continued registration and nomination services for registered political parties;
- candidate nomination process;
- elector and candidate inquiry centres;
- services provided centrally from Sydney to:
    - General Managers of local councils; and
    - Regional Returning Officers, Returning Officers and polling officials.
- services provided by Regional Returning Officers, Returning Officers;
- effectiveness of communication programmes for the voting public and specific groups about enrolment, compulsory voting, nomination, election results; and
- internet based information via website.

In order to minimise expenses, an online debrief approach was adopted by the NSWEC for all stakeholder groups with the exception of the survey of electors who used Braille ballot papers where a telephone survey was conducted.

Participation

Participation in stakeholder surveys was satisfactory with the highest level of participation seen in the Returning Officers with a 94.4% response rate followed by General Managers (77.7%). The following table outlines statewide participation in the surveys and the response rates for Murray Shire Council.

Table 25: 2008 Local Government Elections Survey Participation

Stakeholder Group	NSW Participation	% Response Rate	Murray Shire Council Participation
General Managers	115	77.7%	1
Electors	2,044	0.04%	
Candidates	1,312	28.4%	8
Returning Officers	85	94.4%	1
Election day staff	7,023	62.4%[5]	9

Survey Content Areas

General Managers

In early November 2008, the NSWEC emailed a survey to General Managers as a means of gaining feedback. Two reminder emails were sent before the survey closed in early December 2008 and analysis commenced.

The General Manager survey covered matters across the entire election period including:

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[5] Not all staff provided an email address. The participation represents the percentage of staff who completed the survey and who did provide such an address.

- overall satisfaction with election processes;
- the Returning Officer;
- communication with the NSWEC;
- election information;
- enrolment;
- nominations and voting;
- results; and
- election costs.

Electors

A feedback survey of electors who voted at the 2008 Local Government Elections was undertaken in the two weeks following election day. The NSWEC engaged an independent survey company to assist in developing the survey content, collect survey responses and provide an independent report on the collated feedback on the full range of election matters.

The NSWEC made the survey available to all electors through a link on the NSWEC website homepage. The survey was accessible from election day until Tuesday, 7 October 2008. Electors were advised of the survey's availability through leaflets distributed at polling places on election day along with a section in the NSWEC election information brochure.

An online approach was adopted to most cost effectively and efficiently assess issues concerning electors such as:

- enrolment (both residential and non-residential rolls);
- usefulness and availability of election information;
- methods of voting (prior to and on election day);
- results information; and
- overall satisfaction with electoral processes.

Returning Officers

Feedback was sought from all Returning Officers on the operations and processes they were involved in throughout their period of employment. Returning Officers were asked to complete the survey in an impartial and open manner in order to ensure that the feedback could be used to assist the NSWEC improve its operations and services at future elections.

Areas covered in the Returning Officer survey included:

- recruitment;
- training;
- office accommodation and equipment;
- NSWEC and ROSO support;
- candidates;
- council;
- advertising and media;
- Election Management Application;
- ballot papers, rolls and voting furniture;
- voting and counting of the votes; and
- future improvements.

Returning Officers were also provided with access to an online Issues Log which they were able to access at any stage throughout the election to note any issues that arose which could be acted on at future elections.

Election Day Staff

After election day, all polling place managers and election officials who provided the NSWEC with an email address were emailed a link to an online survey on the operations and processes in the polling place in which they worked on election day.

The survey covered important operational areas including:

- recruitment processes;
- training;
- processes in the polling places;
- counting of results; and
- future recruitment.

Candidates

After the election, feedback on election processes and procedures was sought from candidates who participated in the election. The survey covered candidates' views on:

- the administrative processes;
- election services provided by the NSWEC;
- availability of candidate information;
- the provision of results information; and
- the overall satisfaction and perspective of the conduct of the elections.

Overall Satisfaction

General Managers

Of the General Managers who participated in the survey 97.2% found the NSWEC's conduct to be impartial (87.0% = Yes, 10.2% = Neutral) and 78.5% found the elections to be conducted effectively (49.5% = Yes, 29.0% = Neutral). General Managers indicated lower levels of satisfaction with the efficiency of the election at 53.2% (25.2% = Yes, 28.0% = Neutral).

A high level of satisfaction with the NSWEC's overall communication with councils was recorded in terms of accuracy (92.5%), availability (88.8%), timeliness (85.8%) and consistency (92.5%) (all including very satisfactory, satisfactory and neutral).

Electors

Almost three-quarters of the participants (72.2%) reported that they were neutral, satisfied or very satisfied with the overall voting process. The aspects that had the highest levels of satisfaction were privacy (90.3%) and security of the vote (88.1%). The aspect that had the highest level of dissatisfaction was the NSWEC administration of the elections. These findings were consistent amongst the gender and regional comparisons.

Returning Officers

Returning Officers were the stakeholder group with the highest level of overall satisfaction, as illustrated in the following table.

93.7% of responding Returning Officers were satisfied or very satisfied with the NSWEC's overall conduct of the election (35.4% satisfied, 58.3% very satisfied). The Murray Shire Council Returning Officer rated the overall conduct as very satisfactory.

Table 26: 2008 Local Government Elections Returning Officer Satisfaction – NSW (%)

	Very unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Neutral	Satisfactory	Very satisfactory
Advertising	0	0	6.2	51.9	42.0
Candidate queries	0	1.2	9.9	51.9	37.0
Council issues	2.5	0	14.8	43.2	39.5
EMA	0	0	4.9	46.9	48.1
Finance and Payroll support	0	1.2	3.7	40.7	54.3
Intranet	0	0	3.7	48.1	48.1
IT and Tele-communication support	0	0	8.6	44.4	46.9
Office accommo-dation	1.2	2.5	9.9	43.2	43.2
Polling places	0	3.7	8.6	58.0	29.6
Registration of How-to-Vote materials	0	3.8	5.0	53.8	37.5
Returning Officer bulletins	0	2.5	1.3	38.0	58.2
ROSO	0	0	0	27.8	72.2
Staffing	0	6.3	10.0	43.8	40.0
Overall satisfaction	6.3	0	0	35.4	58.3

Election Day Staff

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 for the NSWEC again. Based on their experience at this election, an outstanding 97.1% of the election staff that participated in the statewide feedback survey, 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. Of the election staff that participated in the feedback survey and worked in a polling place in Murray Shire Council, 100% (9) indicated that they would be interested in working for the NSWEC again.

In terms of impartiality, across NSW, 93.7% of election day staff indicated that they felt the election was conducted impartially (of election officials who worked in a

polling place in Murray Shire Council, 77.78% (7) felt the election was conducted impartially).

Candidates

Statewide, candidates' responses to the survey indicated a high level of overall satisfaction with the NSWEC's conduct of the elections (42.1% satisfied, 18.5% very satisfied and 16.1% neutral).

Of the survey participants, 91.4% had confidence that the elections were conducted impartially, 76.4% had confidence that the elections were conducted effectively and 62.0% had confidence that the elections were conducted efficiently. As the survey numbers are small, the information has not been provided for each council.

NSWEC Head Office Debrief

NSWEC head office staff participated in debrief sessions where each project manager presented a summary of the aims of the project, the challenges faced, the strengths of the projects and what, in hindsight, needed to be strengthened.

All major projects were reviewed and improvements identified.

In addition to the full staff debrief the NSWEC Management Committee further evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the projects and the overall management of the elections. The project reviews assisted in the development of areas for improvements which are further discussed under Future Directions.

Review of Complaints and Suggested Improvements

The NSWEC recognises the importance of feedback, both positive and negative, to assist in delivering improved election services to stakeholders. With such a large number of stakeholders it is unrealistic to expect that all stakeholders will be completely satisfied with their experience. While overall satisfaction levels were high, the NSWEC did receive a number of complaints concerning the electoral process and the conduct of the elections.

All written complaints made to the NSWEC regarding the 2008 Local Government Elections were registered in the complaints handling register and actioned by NSWEC head office staff. A total of 181 substantive complaints were made to the NSWEC during the election period. The majority of the complaints received concerned the activities of candidates with some concerning services provided by the NSWEC. The three most frequently received complaints concerned electoral material (27.1%), pre-poll voting centres and polling places (23.2%) and the conduct of candidates, candidate workers, election officials and participants in electoral process (12.7%).

The complaints received came from across all parts of NSW with no council having a more significant proportion of complaints relative to other councils. Of the substantive complaints received by the NSWEC, no complaints were relevant to elections conducted in Murray Shire Council.

A number of improvements can be made by the NSWEC as a result of the feedback received through complaints. The major areas for future improvements are covered later in the report under Future Directions.

Election Costs

Election costs for the 2008 Local Government Elections

As prescribed in the Act the Electoral Commissioner conducts Local Government elections on behalf of councils on a full cost recovery basis. The NSWEC is not funded by the NSW Government for the conduct of the elections.

Key cost drivers for the 2008 Local Government Elections included:

- election official wages;
- office accommodation for Returning Officers;
- information and technology support;
- polling places;
- number of electors in council area;
- number of elections held;
- mayoral, referendum and polls;
- newspaper and radio advertising; and
- Elector Inquiry Centre.

The process for developing the budget for the 2008 Local Government Elections and individual council budgets involved four major stages:
1. Identification of all 2008 Local Government Elections projects and associated activities;
2. Development of the final estimates using a 'zero based' or 'bottom-up' budget methodology involving itemising volume and unit costs for each project, the tasks for each month and financial year;
3. Substantive testing of budget items and estimated costs using the most reliable cost schedule, that is the 2007 State General Election; and
4. Allocation of the costs for each project to individual councils was completed using the applicable methodology for the activity involved in each project.

To assist with council budgeting in mid 2007 the NSWEC provided all councils with estimates of the cost for the conduct of their Local Government elections. This early estimate was a simple allocation based on the number of electors.

Some feedback from councils was received by the NSWEC regarding the timeliness of this estimate. While the NSWEC provided the estimate to the councils as a guide only it is understood from feedback received that councils would appreciate the estimates earlier in order to meet the requirement to exhibit council budgets for a month prior to adoption by 30 June.

In May 2008, the NSWEC provided all councils with an itemised budget for election costs specific to each council. Murray Shire Council was given a total budget estimation of $41,300.

Recoupment of expenses incurred by the NSWEC commenced in August 2008 with councils invoiced 85% of the estimated budget. The exceptions to this were councils where payment was supported by the Department of Local Government to be spread over two financial years (the first invoice for 50%) and where the election ballot was uncontested.

In March 2009 the NSWEC issued final council invoices based on actual costs. The actual expenditure outcome saw 63 councils receive a refund while three councils received an increase.

The total cost for conducting the 2008 Local Government Elections was $25.9 million with the cost per elector $5.71. The average cost per metropolitan council was $369,550 while the average cost per rural council was $92,796. The highest cost of conducting the election was $821,700 for Blacktown City Council with the lowest cost for a council with contested elections $8,600 for Jerilderie Shire Council. The lowest cost for an uncontested election was $4,100 for Conargo Shire Council[6].

For Murray Shire Council the total cost was $28,000. A full breakdown of costs for Murray Shire Council is available at Appendix 8.

The major cost items for the 2008 Local Government Elections and their contribution to the total State and council budgets are shown below.

Table 27: 2008 Local Government Elections Major Expenditure Items for NSW and Murray Shire Council.

Expenditure Item	NSW $M	NSW %	Murray Shire Council $
Election official salaries	10.446	40.3	14,370
Ballot paper production	2.468	9.5	1,040
Information communication technology	2.126	8.2	2,300
Returning Officer accommodation	2.069	8.0	1,660
Communication campaign	2.020	7.8	1,620
Centralised vote counting	0.757	2.9	
Polling place hire	0.742	2.9	1,040

Analysis of individual council budgets shows 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 following graph. While the number of elections had some impact upon overall cost to a council, the greater determinant was number of electors within the council.

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[6] 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.

Graph 9: 2008 Local Government Elections Election costs – Number of Electors by Location
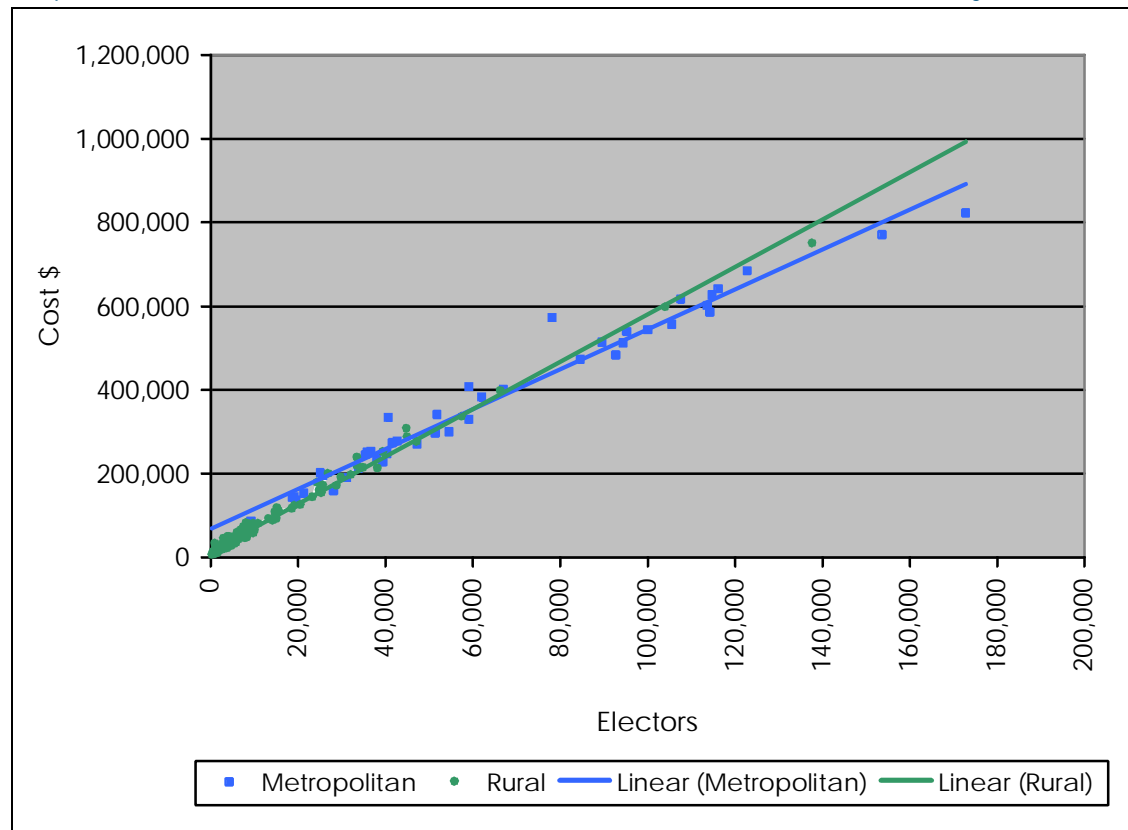
The final statewide invoiced cost was $5.2 million less than the budget estimate of May 2008, a variation of 16.9% below budget. The reduced expenditure was achieved from savings made in the following areas:

- IT infrastructure - borrowed equipment $1.3M
- Equipment and Materials supplied to Returning Officer offices $1.0M
- Wages - reduced staffing levels $0.9M
- Communications/Information plan $0.7M
- Back office support savings $0.5M
- Centralised vote counting - finished earlier $0.5M
- Polling Places - usage of public versus private spaces $0.3M

The main issue raised by General Managers in the feedback survey concerned election costs. Election costs were a contentious issue in the lead up to and throughout the election period. The NSWEC endeavoured to deliver high quality election services to all election stakeholders in the most cost efficient manner. In the lead up to the election the NSWEC examined ways to minimise costs in high cost areas and introduced initiatives never before used in NSW at the Local Government level.

As part of the NSWEC's internal audit programme the NSWEC engaged Walter Turnbull to undertake a review on the NSW Local Government Elections pricing model. In July 2008 Walter Turnbull presented its report on the review and found that the NSWEC apportioned all costs associated with the 2008 Local Government Elections in a fair and equitable manner. The review also contained

recommendations arising from the audit which the NSWEC addressed by making changes to the cost model in areas which would directly impact on the costs associated with the elections.

The NSWEC administration fee also raised some queries from General Managers. The administration fee included in the costing model captured an allocation of head office costs including the cost of NSWEC permanent staff. The charge basis was derived as a result of an internal audit review.

Further information on the cost recovery model is available in the NSWEC's report to on the 2008 Local Government Elections.

Election Costs for By-elections

The November by-elections were considered as part of the same 'delivery package' of elections that covered both the statewide elections and the three by-elections. There was no differentiation of costs as associated with the run-up to the Saturday, 13 September elections as opposed to the Saturday, 29 November by-elections.

The date of the by-elections was close to the election date and there were economies of scale for some operations to be considered all part of the same package. These councils received just one final invoice in March 2009.

Election Costs for Uncontested Elections

Councils with uncontested elections only received a final invoice in March 2009 and were not required to make an 85% deposit payment. The invoicing policy was based on councils being allocated costs incurred for that council, until the point that it was known that the elections were uncontested.

Performance Measurement

The assessment of performance is integral in determining the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery and stakeholder satisfaction. Measuring stakeholder satisfaction provides the NSWEC with critical performance data to be assessed in terms of:

- general services (those designed for a general audience) such as information about electoral requirements and entitlements, provision of information, communication of results;
- specific services (the experience of the individual/group user) such as accessibility of polling place used, length of time queueing, courtesy of staff, knowledge of staff and difficulties with enrolment;
- complaints received concerning the elections;
- expectations of future service delivery; and
- measures drawn from the 2008-2011 Corporate Plan and other sources.

The NSWEC is continuously reviewing areas for improvement in performance and its accountability to stakeholders. The 2008 elections presented an opportunity for the NSWEC to set benchmarks for future Local Government elections and allowed the NSWEC to measure current performance in a manner open to scrutiny.

After the 2008 Local Government Elections the NSWEC undertook performance evaluations through online surveys to assess stakeholders' satisfaction with the conduct of the elections. The surveys contained questions to provide the NSWEC with both quantitative and qualitative material to assist in reporting on the provision of the elections. Following the completion of the surveys the NSWEC began an assessment of responses to review how well tasks were undertaken and areas where improvements could be made.

The following table outlines the NSWEC targets and the outcomes from the 2008 Local Government Elections.

Table 28: NSWEC Corporate Plan Measures and 2008 Local Government Elections Outcomes

CORPORATE PLAN MEASURES	2008 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS OUTCOMES
KRA 1: Conduct of elections	
- % polling places where provisional first preferences are counted for the Legislative Assembly and Local Government elections on election night (target = 100%).	- Provisional first preferences counted at 100% of polling places on election night.
- Variance rates between count of votes and recount if any (target = <10 votes).	- 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.

CORPORATE PLAN MEASURES	2008 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS OUTCOMES
• Establish baseline measure of community members' satisfaction with the NSWEC's services in enabling them to vote.	• 74.4% surveyed electors very satisfied, satisfied or neutral on their overall experience of voting.
• Establish a baseline measure of the satisfaction of registered political parties with registration, continued registration and nomination services provided by the NSWEC.	• 78.5% very satisfied, satisfied or neutral with the current registration and ongoing registration process; 100% satisfied with information on requirements; 92.9% satisfied with the level of NSWEC service.
• Establish a baseline measure of the community's, the media's and registered political parties' satisfaction with the timeliness and accuracy of results.	• 94.1% General Managers have no concerns re accuracy of results; 51.9% General Managers, 80.8% media and 70.5% candidates very satisfied, satisfied or neutral with timeliness of results; 51.7% electors reported election results was most useful information on the NSWEC's website.
KRA 2: Electoral roll management	
• % of voters' addresses correctly coded to electorates (Target = 100%).	• 99.99% of electors correctly coded statewide.
KRA 3: Communication and public awareness	
• Establish baseline measure of the % of surveyed community members who are enrolled to vote.	• 99.4% of electors surveyed were enrolled.
• % of electors aware of the NSWEC's information campaign (Target: 75%).	• 65.8% electors surveyed recalled seeing or hearing NSWEC advertisements.
• Report on conduct of elections to be completed (Target: within six months from election day for State and Local Government elections).	• Report prepared to timeframe of NSW Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters.
KRA 4: Organisational development and innovation	
• % of variation from budget for State and Local Government elections (target: +/- 2% from budget).	• Budget $31.2M, actual $25.9M, savings $5.3M (-16.9% variance).
• % costs recovered for Local Government elections (target: 95%).	• 100% of planned operational costs recovered.
• Establish NSWEC's costs per elector and commence comparison with other jurisdictions and previous years' performance.	• Cost per elector = $5.71.
• Number of IT business systems failures (target: zero).	• Zero.

Future Direction

The NSWEC endeavours to be an evolving, 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.

A review of the 2008 Local Government Elections allowed the NSWEC to reflect on the processes and operations that were successful but also allowed for an assessment of the areas requiring improvement.

Operational Practices

All practices and procedures will be kept under review to ensure that the best service is delivered to all Local Government election stakeholders. Below are some of the areas which have been identified for improvement.

Timeliness of Results

The NSWEC will further review ways to develop the election counts and results information in order to provide the results in a timely manner without compromising the accuracy of the results information. 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 results counting schedules and actual results data.

Cost Estimates and Cost Recovery

To ensure that councils are better equipped to budget for the costs of their election, the NSWEC will endeavour to determine council budgets earlier in the process so that budget estimates can be prepared and provided to councils earlier and with a higher level of accuracy.

As a result of the NSWEC capturing all costs at the 2008 Local Government Elections, councils will be in a better position to budget for their elections in 2012.

Regional Returning Officers

The Regional Returning Officer initiative introduced at the 2008 Local Government Elections was well received and considered to be successfully implemented. As with most new programmes, areas for improvement have been identified and will be consideration for future elections.

The NSWEC will review the possibility of expanding the Regional Returning Officer initiative in consultation with Councils.

Council Visits Programme

The NSWEC acknowledges the importance of relationship management 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 visits 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 seminar 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.

Location of Voting Venues and Staffing Levels

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 the staffing level 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 communities.

Electors with Vision Disabilities

The NSWEC has noted that many of those electors who used the Braille ballot papers at 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 undertake research into 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 legislative changes.

Training

The NSWEC will look to further extending online training for election staff with a view to reducing face to face training hours. The online training programmes will be extended to include Returning Officers and senior office assistants.

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 on enrolment and reports that the Government has supported the 'smart roll' concept by providing appropriate funding for the project. It is anticipated that this project will result in additional electors being enrolled and more accurate enrolment for the 2012 Local Government Elections.

Proposed Legislative Changes

Based on the experience of the 2008 Local Government Elections it is recommended that consideration be given to the following proposals which are based on the 2008 Local Government Elections experience.

Postal Voting

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, in their ward/council area or within eight 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. 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 NSW Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters and the Minister for Local Government the option of providing councils with the choice of either attendance or postal voting, believing that 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.

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) (s.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 particular 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 they 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).

Envelopes for Pre-poll and Declared Institution Ballot Papers:

The NSWEC has previously recommended dispensing with the requirement to cast pre-poll and Declared Institution ballots in envelopes bearing written declarations of eligibility. Streamlining and simplification of the Local Government pre-poll process by replacing traditional methods with a more efficient process is warranted.

The Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters has recommended in its report "Administration of the 2007 NSW Election and Related Matters" (May 2008) that State legislation is amended to allow electors in Declared Institutions to cast an ordinary vote if the Declared Institution is in the elector's home district.

It is recommended that similar amendments are made to Local Government legislation and that the proposal is extended to also dispensing with envelopes for pre-poll voting.

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.

Appendices

Appendix 1   NSWEC Council Visits Agenda Items

Agenda Items

1. Council's Election Budget and Election Costs
2. Redevelopment of NSWEC's Election Management Software (EMA)
3. Returning Officer Appointments and Training
4. Returning Officer Accommodation
5. Provision of Election Equipment and Materials (Returning Officer and Polling Places)
6. Polling Places, Pre-poll Offices and Declared Institutions
7. Election Advertising
8. Equal Access To Democracy Plan
9. Recruitment and Payment of Election Officials and Office Assistants
10. Candidate Information Seminars
11. NSWEC and Council Websites
12. NSWEC Call Centre
13. Printing Ballot Papers
14. Electoral Rolls and 'iRoll'
15. Vote Counting Arrangements
16. Display and Declaration of Election Results
17. Post Election
18. Other Matters Raised

Appendix 2   Location of Candidate Information Seminars

Location	Date	No. of Attendees
Albury	Saturday, 10 May 2008	23
Armidale	Saturday, 17 May 2008	36
Bathurst	Saturday, 31 May 2008	25
Burwood	Wednesday, 7 May 2008	32
Byron Bay	Saturday, 31 May 2008	15
Chatswood	Wednesday, 14 May 2008	27
Chatswood	Saturday, 26 July 2008	39
Coffs Harbour	Saturday, 21 June 2008	50
Dee Why	Thursday, 12 June 2008	27
Deniliquin	Saturday, 28 June 2008	18
Dubbo	Saturday, 14 June 2008	19
Gosford	Wednesday, 21 May 2008	27
Goulburn	Wednesday, 21 May 2008	14
Griffith	Saturday, 14 June 2008	35
Hurstville	Tuesday, 20 May 2008	17
Hurstville	Saturday, 26 July 2008	15
Kiama	Thursday, 22 May 2008	30
Lismore	Friday, 30 May 2008	59
Liverpool	Wednesday, 11 June 2008	45
Narooma	Saturday, 24 May 2008	32
Newcastle	Thursday, 22 May 2008	78
Nyngan	Saturday, 14 June 2008	4
Orange	Friday, 13 June 2008	18
Parramatta	Wednesday, 11 June 2008	33
Penrith	Thursday, 29 May 2008	33
Queanbeyan	Saturday, 28 June 2008	50
Randwick	Tuesday, 5 August 2008	28
Strathfield	Wednesday, 16 July 2008	32
Sydney	Wednesday, 4 June 2008	27
Tamworth	Saturday, 17 May 2008	12
Taree	Saturday, 24 May 2008	24
Tweed Heads	Thursday, 19 June 2008	26
Wagga Wagga	Saturday, 10 May 2008	15
Young	Saturday, 17 May 2008	12
TOTAL		977

Appendix 3   Regional Returning Officer Groups

Group	Councils	Total Electors	Total Area (km²)	Electors (per km²)
1.	Albury City Council Corowa Shire Council Greater Hume Shire Council Tumbarumba Shire Council	49,534	13,044	3.8
2.	Armidale Dumaresq Council Walcha Council	17,767	10,502	1.7
3.	Ballina Shire Council Byron Shire Council	49,335	1,051	46.9
4.*	Balranald Shire Council Berrigan Shire Council Conargo Shire Council Deniliquin Council Jerilderie Shire Council Murray Shire Council Wakool Shire Council	21,478	39,145	0.6
5.	Bathurst Regional Council Blayney Shire Council	29,200	5,345	5.4
6.	Bega Valley Shire Council Eurobodalla Shire Council	50,218	9,702	5.18
7.	Bellingen Shire Council Clarence Valley Council Coffs Harbour City Council	91,137	13,218	6.9
8.*	Bland Shire Council Carrathool Shire Council Griffith City Council Hay Shire Council Leeton Shire Council Murrumbidgee Shire Council Narrandera Shire Council	35,371	30,252	1.2
9.	Blue Mountains City Council Lithgow City Council	68,692	5,999	11.5
10.	Bogan Shire Council Bourke Shire Council Brewarrina Shire Council Central Darling Shire Council Cobar Shire Council	9,071	174,595	0.05
11.	Bombala Council Cooma-Monaro Shire Council Snowy River Shire Council	13,181	15,395	0.9
12.	Boorowa Council Cowra Shire Council Harden Shire Council Weddin Shire Council Young Shire Council	24,851	13,362	1.9

Group	Councils	Total Electors	Total Area (km^2)	Electors (per km^2)
13.	Cabonne Shire Council Forbes Shire Council Lachlan Shire Council Orange City Council Parkes Shire Council	55,328	31,962	1.7
14.	Coolamon Shire Council Cootamundra Shire Council Gundagai Shire Council Junee Shire Council Temora Shire Council	19,147	11,248	1.7
15.	Dubbo City Council Gilgandra Shire Council Narromine Shire Council Warren Shire Council	35,036	24,288	1.4
16.	Goulburn Mulwaree Council Upper Lachlan Shire Council	24,105	10,499	2.3
17.	Gloucester Shire Council Great Lakes Council Greater Taree City Council	62,785	10,080	6.2
18.	Gunnedah Shire Council Liverpool Plains Shire Council Tamworth Regional Council	51,858	19,733	2.6
19.	Kempsey Shire Council Nambucca Shire Council	32,360	4,871	6.6
20.	Kyogle Council Lismore City Council Richmond Valley Council	51,227	7,930	6.5
21.*	Lockhart Shire Council Tumut Shire Council Urana Shire Council Wagga Wagga City Council	48,054	12,747	3.8
22.	Narrabri Shire Council Walgett Shire Council Warrumbungle Shire Council	19,912	47,747	0.4
23.	Palerang Council Queanbeyan City Council Yass Valley Council	44,682	9,315	4.8

Note: * Councils or Wards with uncontested elections not included in totals.

Appendix 4   Murray Shire Council Candidates

Councillor Candidates

CALDWELL, Bob
DOCKREY, Bill
GRAHAM, Fran
GRAY, Helen
HOSKING, Phillip
MacFARLANE, Di
MURPHY, Arthur
MURPHY, Betty
POCKLINGTON, John
SHARP, Brian
SHIELLS, Graeme
WEYRICH, Thomas

Appendix 5   Murray Shire Council Polling Places

UNDIVIDED

Polling Place	Projected Votes	Actual Votes
Bunnaloo Public School	200	113
Deniliquin Scout Hall	200	127
Mathoura Shire Hall	600	528
Moama Sporting Complex	2600	2325

BALLOT PAPER FOR

Held on 13 September 2008

ELECTION OF 9 COUNCILLORS

MURRAY SHIRE COUNCIL

DIRECTIONS FOR VOTING

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

Place the numbers "1", "2", "3", "4" and "5" in the squares next to 5 candidates in order of your preferences for them. If you wish to vote for any more candidates, place consecutive numbers starting with "6" in the squares next to those candidates in order of your preferences for them.

CANDIDATES

GROUP A	GROUP B	
☐ SHARP, Brian	☐ WEYRICH, Thomas	☐ MURPHY, Betty
☐ SHIELLS, Graeme	☐ GRAY, Helen	☐ MURPHY, Arthur
☐ MacFARLANE, Di		☐ POCKLINGTON, John
☐ DOCKREY, Bill		
☐ HOSKING, Phillip		
☐ GRAHAM, Fran		
☐ CALDWELL, Bob		

YOU MUST NOT TAKE A BALLOT PAPER OUT OF THE POLLING PLACE

electoral commission NSW

Appendix 7   Murray Shire Council Election Results

Elected Councillors

SHARP, Brian was elected first
WEYRICH, Thomas was elected second
SHIELLS, Graeme was elected third
MURPHY, Betty was elected fourth
CALDWELL, Bob was elected fifth
MacFARLANE, Di was elected sixth
HOSKING, Phillip was elected seventh
POCKLINGTON, John was elected eighth
DOCKREY, Bill was elected ninth

Breakdown of voting methods - Councillor

Method elector used to vote	Electors	Percentage of total
Ordinary	2879	77.0%
Postal	121	3.2%
Pre-poll	488	13.1%
Declared Institution/Silent/Section	3	0.1%
Electors who voted Informally	246	6.6%
TOTAL	3737	100.0%

Appendix 8   Murray Shire Council Final Expenses Summary

Final Expenses for Murray Shire Council
2008 Local Government Election(s)

Item Description	Amount
Local Government Elections Programme Management	
Project Management	170
Performance Evaluation & Reporting,	310
Candidate Support, Legal	
NSWEC Administration Fee	2,480
Programme Management Total	2,960
Finance Services	
Budget Management	30
Payroll Processing	320
Payables Processing	100
Mail Services	130
Finance Services Total	580
Election Services	
Council Visits	30
Candidate Info Sessions	80
De-brief Programme for Returning Officers	10
Centralised Vote Counting	-
Voting Centres (Incl. pre-poll, DIs & polling places)	1,040
Election Materials	1,770
Training Programme	300
Returning Officer Support Centre	280
Wages -Returning Officers	4,760
Wages -Office Assistants	3,930
Wages -Election Officials	5,680
Returning Officer Accommodation	1,660
Registration of How-to-Vote Material	-
Printing Ballot Papers	1,040
Election Services Total	20,580
Election Information Services	
Equal Access to Democracy	150
Elector Info Campaign -NSWEC Campaign	770
Elector Info Campaign -Brochure	-
Elector Information	90
Info Kit	
LG Profiling	
Elector Enquiry Centre	350
Website & Education Services	260
Election Information Services Total	1,620
Information Technology	
Systems Support	460
IT Setup	1,000
Website (dynamic)	90
Rolls	400
IT Personnel	210
Results	140
Information Technology Total	2,300
Total Expenses	28,000

Note: All amounts listed are GST Exclusive

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