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Contact: Tim Robinson on 9725 0167

15 March 2013

The Hon. Donald Page  
Minister for Local Government  
Governor Macquarie Tower  
Level 33, 1 Farrer Place  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Minister

## 2012 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTION

I am writing to advise that Fairfield City Council has completed its report on the conduct of the local government election held in September 2012.

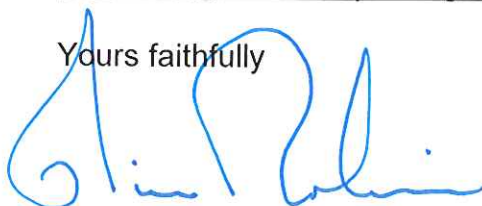
Section 393A(2) of the Local Government (General) Regulation requires that councils who had their election administered by the General Manager, to submit a report within 6 months after the election has been declared, to the Minister for Local Government.

Fairfield City Council was one of those councils and the attached report covers in detail, all the requirements prescribed under Section 393A(2) of the Regulation.

As a component of completing this report, Council has also published the election report on its website.

Should you require any further information, please contact me via e-mail at [trobinson@fairfieldcity.nsw.gov.au](mailto:trobinson@fairfieldcity.nsw.gov.au) or telephone 9725 0836.

Yours faithfully



Tim Robinson  
**ACTING CITY MANAGER**

Encl.

cc. LGNSW GPO Box 7003 Sydney NSW 2001  
Division of Local Government Locked Bag 3015 NOWRA NSW 2541

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## Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to fulfil Fairfield City Council's obligations under Section 393A of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 – General Manager to report on Election.

## Executive Summary

The Fairfield electorate is split into 3 Wards: Parks, Cabravale and Fairfield. Council's elected body comprises of 12 Councillors (4 per ward) plus a popularly elected Mayor. The total number of councillor votes per Ward includes: Parks (37,291), Cabravale (35,376) and Fairfield (36,072).

Fairfield City Council conducted its own election at a total cost of \$820,024.31 as follows:

- Direct cost of \$762,447.27 which includes:
  - an estimate of \$40,000 for a Council Project Manager, representing 50% of her time
  - an estimate of \$7,000 for the time that Council staff spent in the week following the election in finalising the count, marking the declared votes off the rolls.
  - At the date of writing this report, Council had not received invoices from Electoral Commission of NSW (ECNSW) for:
    - \$2,500 for the Pre-poll facility at the Sydney Town Hall
    - \$10,000 for envelopes and forms which were required to be purchased from NSWEC for the declared votes

**Note:** this invoice was received on 13 March 2013.
- Indirect costs of \$57,577.04 which is mainly made up of other Council staff involved in planning meetings and some costs incurred in setting up the contract with the Australian Election Company.

See **Attachment A** for the full costing detail.

See **Attachment B** for the costing detail of the Australian Election Company's contract.

Council's objectives in running its own elections were:

- **Better** - A better run election without long queues with every voter being able to have their vote recorded
- **Cheaper** - To minimise the cost of running the election. The 2008 election cost \$637,496 (plus indirect costs) and based on the indices provided by the ECNSW, it was estimated that the cost of the 2012 elections run by the ECNSW, to be \$925,314. This figure did include a factor for an additional 229 staff to reflect our view that 495 staff would be more appropriate (instead of the 266 used in 2008). The actual cost would have been even more because we actually employed 552 staff in our elections.

- **Faster** - To declare results by the Monday or Tuesday of the week following the election.

The results achieved against the above objectives were:

- **Better** – Council received favourable feedback on the overall outcome of its performance in managing the 2012 elections other than some procedural issues implemented by the Returning Officer. The pre-poll service was well received by the community with 12.1% of votes taken before 8 September. Election Day ran quite smoothly with just a few minor problems being encountered which our Ward Supervisors were able to respond to very promptly by re-deploying election staff from slower booths to the higher volume areas. One of the main problems was the need to deal with a large number of declared votes – where people not on the electoral roll were able to enrol and vote on the day of the elections. The 2012 elections were the first elections where this was allowed.
- **Cheaper** – By Council running its own election, Council was able to save \$162,866.73 on its direct costs than estimated costs for the ECNSW to do this. It is considered that Council would have incurred the same level of indirect costs if the ECNSW had conducted our elections. Council employed 552 people, filling 611 functions for this election which greatly improved the experience for the voters.
- **Faster** – While the vote counting software used by the Australian Election Company was very accurate and effective, it was disappointing that it still took 15 days to finalise the counting and to declare the results, about the same as in 2008. However, the accuracy of the results withstood the rigour of quite robust scrutineering and scrutineers were shown all the ballot papers in question on the computer. While the scrutineers were not always happy with the result of the election outcome, they walked away knowing the results were accurate and could not be disputed any further.

## Clause 393A Requirements

Clause 393A of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 requires that within six months of the declaration of the election the General Manager to provide a written report to the Minister for Local Government on the conduct of each election.

This report must include (but is not limited to) the following information:

- **time spent on the election by the General Manager as a proportion of the General Manager's remuneration**

It is estimated that the City Manager spent about 2% of his time on the election. This equates to about \$6,000. The City Manager would have spent this amount of time on the election irrespective of whether this was managed by the NSW or by the Australian Election Company.

- **time spent on the election by council staff as a proportion of council staff remuneration**

Position	%	Cost	Cost Type
Executive Manager Corporate Support	5	\$9,000	Indirect
Manager Business Services	15	\$20,000	Indirect
Governance Co-ordinator	10	\$10,000	Indirect
Election Project Manager	50	\$40,000	Direct

- **the remuneration of council staff employed specifically for the purpose of the election**

In addition to the Returning Officer, a staff member was appointed to project manage Council's election. It is estimated that she spent about 6 months full time on this project at a cost of \$40,000.

The remuneration cost of all other Council staff who worked on our election is included in the following point.

- **the remuneration, recruitment and training costs of election officials**

Salaries & Wages	\$279,413.59
Overtime	\$22,952.59
Meal Allowance	\$17,421.89
Superannuation	\$11,115.38
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$330,903.45</b>

In addition to the above Council had 5 Council employees working on the finalisation of the count, declared votes and clean up at an estimate of \$7,000. This amount has been included in the direct costs.

The payment to the Returning Officer was included in the Australian Election Company contract, however, he was appointed to start work on the elections before the contract start date at an additional cost to Council of \$8,372.

The Substitute Returning Officer was appointed through Local Government Solutions at a cost of \$44,430.

- **the cost of running any candidate information seminars**

Council ran 2 candidate information sessions. The first was organised by the Election Funding Authority who provided the trainer and all materials. Council provided the venue and tea and coffee at a cost of \$120.

The second session was conducted by the Returning Officer. Council provided the venue and tea and coffee at a cost of \$120. All hand outs for this session were provided by the Australian Election Company and therefore included in the contract price.

- **the cost of hiring venues and equipment for the election, including council venues and equipment and any associated costs**

The cost to hire school halls and community centres was \$15,914.61. Council also appointed the Sydney Town Hall as a Pre-poll place at an agreed cost of \$2,500. While Council has not yet been billed for this service, the cost has been included in the direct cost.

The provision of all election materials was included in the contract with The Australian Election Company.

Further costs incurred by Council were:

Equipment, counting scales	750
Table Hire	1088
Building Trades - delivery and pick up of cardboard from Polling Places	9228.21

- **the cost of any technological support, including the development of any counting software**

The cost of the vote counting software was included in the Australian Election Company contract.

- **the cost of preparing a written report under this clause**

This report was prepared by the Manager Business Services. It took about one week to compile the numbers and write the report at a cost of \$2,500.

- **any electoral services provided to electors**
  - Declared institutions
  - Support to the disabled people – staff going to people's cars to attend voters who were immobile
  - Notices, Ward Maps and where to vote information was sent with the August Rates Notices
  - Translation of materials
  - Translators to assist
  - Queue managers
  - Declared votes

- **any electoral services provided to candidates**

Two candidate seminars and attending to a number of questions and legal issues.

- **operational details of the election**

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- **an overall evaluation of the conduct of the election, including feedback from stakeholders**

Council surveyed all staff who worked on our election. A summary of the responses is included at **Attachment C**.

## Attachment A

	Direct Cost	Indirect Cost	Total Cost
Sundry Income Deposit not refundable	-1625		-1625
Polling Booths – Schools,	9892.79		9892.79
Polling Booths - Community Centres	3840		3840
Polling Booth - PCYC	2181.82		2181.82
Polling Booth - Sydney Town Hall - not yet paid	2500		2500
Salaries & Wages	279413.6		279414
Overtime	22952.59		22952.6
Meal Allowance	17421.89		17421.9
Superannuation	11115.38		11115.4
Extra Count by Council staff afterwards 5 people for 5 days = 175 hours at \$40 per hour	\$7,000		\$7,000
Australian Election Company - 1st Progress Payment	12615.14		12615.1
Australian Election Company - 2nd Progress Payment	189227.8		189228
Australian Election Company - 3rd & Final Progress Payment	57101.09		57101.1
Returning Officer out of contract payments re early start	8372		8372
Substitute RO	44430		44430
Security Guard - Election weekend	1730.45		1730.45
Equipment, counting scales	750		750
Table Hire	1088		1088
Legal Fees - Advice	2084.32	2735.64	4819.96
Advertising	13652.27		13652.3
Travelling Expenses – Manager Business Services and RO to Wallsend		672.4	672.4
External Printing	4647.23		4647.23
Stationery	11249.45		11249.45
Photocopying costs	1294.39		1294.39
Software purchase - Vote tracker		8750	8750
Postage	1497.2		1497.2
Locks for RO Office and rooms	637		637
Refreshments for Election Night	647.5		647.5
Internal Printing - B&W and Colour	6262.2		6262.2
Tea/coffee for Training sessions	1240		1240
Building Trades - delivery and pick up of cardboard from Polling Places	9228.21		9228.21
Standard Financial Performance - Corporate Scorecard - Reference Checks on AEC		419	419
Elections Project Manager	\$40,000		40000



Manager Business Services		\$20,000	20000
Governance Co-ordinator		\$10,000	10000
Executive Manager Corporate Support		\$9,000	9000
General Manager		\$6,000	6000
<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>\$762,447.27</b>	<b>\$57,577.04</b>	<b>\$820,024.31</b>

## ATTACHMENT B

	FULL ELECTION
Polling Officials	
Temporary Assistance	
Planning & Project Management	65,290.00
Returning Officer	34,000.00
Travel Costs	
Premises/Equipment Hire	
Advertising	
Telephones	
Postage	
IT & Count Operations	74,000.00
Computer Equipment	
Pay Contractor	
Materials	62,913.75
Miscellaneous	16,100.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>252,303.75</b>
GST	25,230.37
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>277,534.02</b>

### MATERIAL EX GST

Cardboard Voting Screen	833	15.00	12,495.00
Cardboard Voting Screen - Table Top	168	10.00	1,680.00
Cardboard Ballot Boxes (Large)	263	10.00	2,630.00
Cardboard Ballot Boxes (Small)	45	7.00	315.00
Rolls - Extraction Costs, Reformatting, Production of Certified Lists & Scanning	273		ECNSW
Ballot Papers - Printing	1	24,268.75	24,268.75
Forms - Election Forms, Handbooks, Printing, Stationery Requisites	1	13,000.00	13,000.00
Warehousing / Prep. & packaging and Distribution of materials / payables processing.	1	8,525.00	8,525.00
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>62,913.75</b>

Total GST applicable to Material (plus) \$6,291.37

MISCELLANEOUS EX GST

Freight - Delivery of V/S & equipment	1	9,000.00	9,000.00
Workers' Comp. & Public Liability Ins.	1	300.00	300.00
Liability & Professional Indemnity Insurance	1	300.00	300.00
Candidates Briefings - Supplies	1	250.00	Council
Legal Assistance (Only of required)	1	6,500.00	6,500.00
Security	1	7,000.00	Council
Bins - Rubbish	1	700.00	Council
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TOTAL			16,100.00

Total GST applicable to Miscellaneous (incl Legal Assistance expenditure) (plus) \$1,610.00

## ATTACHMENT C

### Feedback survey from election staff

Following the Local Government Election held in September a survey was conducted to all staff who worked prior to, during and post the election. Two surveys were designed, one for Polling Place Managers (PPMs) and one for standard Booth Staff. The results have provided a greater understanding of how Fairfield Council can improve processes for future elections and pointed out areas of success during the election.

Shown below is a summary of some of the questions asked in the survey and responses received.

### SURVEY SUMMARY

A total of 31 people responded to the PPM survey and 142 responded to the Booth Staff survey.

Over 96% of the PPM respondents and 86% of the Booth Staff attended training. Most felt that they were adequately prepared for Election Day based on the combination of training sessions and previous experience. However, 29% of the PPMs and 9.2% of the Booth Staff did feel that they were not well supported. Some of the feedback received in relation to the training sessions included:

- Better structure
- More intense practice exercises
- Focus on the returns more, especially filling out forms
- Smaller groups
- Provide a test to ensure key topics are understood
- Maintain consistency in Instructions

Most responded that the training manuals were referenced prior to the election and found that the training manuals were relevant and helpful. Some of the comments in relation to the training manuals included; having a better structure/table of contents, focusing more on them in the training, the surplus documentation caused confusion and more detail is required for sorting/counting.

The Returning Officer was ranked on a score of 1-10, with 10 being the highest with an average score of 6.3 from the PPMs and 6.6 from the Booth Staff. Some of the notable comments received about the Returning officer included:

- Helpful and approachable
- Knew the election material
- Lack of professionalism
- Unprepared at training session
- Unorganised
- Difficulty communicating
- Overwhelmed
- Indecisive
- Vague and inconsistent answers
- Lack of confidence
- Elaborate minor points and miss key ones

The same 1-10 ranking system was asked of how Council staff performed with an average score of 8.0 from the PPMs. The notable comments for the staff included:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Very helpful</li><li>• No problem was too big or small</li><li>• Quick replies</li><li>• Provided confidence</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Supportive</li><li>• Great job, but backlogged</li><li>• Returning at the end of the night took too long</li></ul>
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Over 90% of the payments were processed without any issues. The largest concern was from the Booth Staff in relation to the payment being too small, which is not determined by Council.

### **CONCLUSION**

The staff that responded to the survey seemed pleased with the running of the election overall. There are areas that can be improved, most of the issues can be resolved with more in depth training sessions and simplifying the returns. Many felt that there was a lack of organisation and consistency in the training and that it led to confusion when filling out the paperwork in the returns. PPMs received positive remarks from the Booth Staff, with a couple of exceptions.