

**SUBMISSION ON IPART REVIEW OF
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTION COSTS**

No.	QUESTION	RESPONSE
1	<p>Do you agree with IPART's proposed approach for this review? Are there any alternative approaches that would better meet the terms of reference or any other issues we should consider?</p>	<p>QPRC strongly recommends that IPART should extend its terms of reference to examine the benefits of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Electronic voting (iVote) - Universal postal voting <p>Both these methods of voting would significantly reduce the costs to all parties by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No need for physical polling booths to be set up anywhere - No requirement for secure lock-up of votes cast - Reducing the need for recruiting and training polling booth staff - One central base to receive and count all votes - Voting can be done 24/7 at the voters' convenience within the designated election period <p>Apart from the tangible financial benefits listed above, both methods of voting have intangible benefits as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensuring that voters only vote once in an election - Automatic proof of identity - Proof of eligibility as a voter - No risk of "losing" votes at a polling station - Electronic tracking of votes - Significantly reduced risk of informal voting (particularly with iVote through mandatory fields)
2	<p>When would a council prefer to use a private provider, rather than the NSWEC, to conduct its elections?</p>	<p>In response to Qs. 2, 3, 4 and 5:</p> <p>QPRC is a large regional council. The boundaries of the Council encompass both regional and rural centres. To engage private providers offering election services, QPRC would require the provider to know the locations and facilities (booths) available particularly in outlying areas. Significant importance would need to be placed on communication options for those communities that do not hold standard internet services. The AEC currently has this knowledge through services to both current State and Local Governments. QPRC would need to ensure services for rural centres were continued at least to the existing levels of service or better if a private provider was in place. If private providers were allowed to enter the market, it is possible that the overall overhead cost would be increased to cover those councils that were not financially viable to private providers.</p>
3	<p>What scope is there for private providers to offer councils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The full range of election services currently provided by the NSWEC? - A more limited range of election services? 	<p>See above</p>
4	<p>To what extent would the range of services offered by private providers vary by a council's geographic location (i.e. metropolitan, regional or rural) or size (i.e. small, medium or large)?</p>	<p>See above</p>

5	What are the barriers to competition in the provision of election services to councils?	See above
6	What factors might lead to changes in the costs incurred by the NSWEC and over what time period are these changes likely to occur?	In the QPRC general election in 2017, it used 17 booths (including Town Hall). Nine of the booths were located within Queanbeyan's postcode of 2620. The smallest booth only received 409 votes. One option for reducing costs would be to reduce the number of polling booths in regional town centres and consolidate them in two or three super centres.
7	Is a base level of service provision to all councils appropriate? For what types of election services offered by the NSWEC might councils opt for a different level of service?	Constitutional referenda and/or polls conducted in conjunction with elections.
8	How should we assess the efficient costs of providing election services to local councils? Do stakeholders support our use of a 'building block' approach to calculate the NSWEC's efficient costs and revenue requirement? If not, what alternative method would be appropriate?	QPRC sees the benefit of utilising the building block approach to cost recovery and supports this methodology.
9	What firms or industries are comparable to the NSWEC in terms of their exposure to market risk? What percentage of debt rather than equity would an efficient provider of election services be able to sustain to finance its assets (i.e. the gearing level)?	NA
10	Do you agree that NSWEC's direct costs should be allocated between the State Government and councils using the impactor pays principle (i.e. those that create the need for the cost to be incurred should pay the cost)?	QPRC agrees with using the impactor pays principle for direct costs.
11	Should the NSWEC's indirect costs be allocated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using the impactor pays principle - With a focus on putting NSWEC on an even footing with private providers (i.e. ensuring its indirect costs are allocated to councils where they would be incurred by an efficient competitor to the NSWEC, or - On some other basis (and if so, what)? 	If private providers are allowed to enter the market, market forces will drive the private providers to metropolitan councils because less infrastructure would be required. If a significant number of metropolitan councils move to a private provider, the remaining councils that are not serviced by private providers will face increased indirect costs, as there would be fewer councils to allocate the infrastructure costs to.
12	Do you consider the allocation of NSWEC's costs to councils should be made with reference to incremental costs (lower bound), standalone costs (upper bound), or somewhere in between this range?	Between
13	How should indirect costs (e.g. centralised locations for collating ballots ready for data entry and	QPRC considers using the number of electors in each council to be a reasonable basis for splitting indirect costs.

	councils' share of the costs that are common to State and local government elections) be shared between councils? For example, should they be allocated on a 'per elector' or some other basis?	
14	Are the costs involved in conducting elections substantially different for metropolitan, regional and rural councils? If yes, what are the drivers for those differences?	Yes, QPRC has a number of booths in rural centres that receive limited votes (e.g. Majors Creek took 106 votes). If booths were not available at Majors Creek then those voters will have to travel 17 km to the closest voting centre i.e. Braidwood, which took 936 votes. As each polling booth must have a baseline staff level, which is then proportionally increased depending on predicted voters.
15	Do you agree with our proposed approach for assessing the impact of our recommendations on stakeholders? Are there any other issues we should consider?	QPRC agrees with the proposed approach for assessing the impact of recommendations based on metropolitan, regional and rural councils. Other issues for assessment would be the size of population in each rural and regional town.