

Aboriginal Elector News

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16. Introduction

Welcome to the third edition of Aboriginal Elector News. As part of the commitments in the New South Wales Electoral Commission's (NSWEC) Aboriginal Elector Information Strategy, this newsletter aims to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander electors, Aboriginal consultants, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Aboriginal Land Council with key election information in the lead up to the 2008 Local Government Elections.

We encourage you to disseminate this newsletter through your established community networks and organisational newsletters. We appreciate feedback to enable us to be more effective in communicating with stakeholders.

17. Remember to vote

The NSW Local Council Elections are on Saturday 13 September 2008. Whatever you're planning for this weekend, you need to plan to vote.

You can vote any time between 8am and 6pm, but only in your council area or ward. Voting is compulsory wherever a council election is being held. Details of your local candidates and polling places have recently appeared in the local press. If you can't vote in your council area or ward on election day, you may be able to vote beforehand at your local pre-poll voting centre. Remember voting is compulsory.

Why it is important to use your compulsory vote.

By voting in your local council election you will:

- Influence local issues
- Choose who you want to represent you in council
- Avoid being fined \$55 if you fail to vote

For locations where you can vote visit www.elections.nsw.gov.au or call 1300 135 736.

For hearing and speech impaired enquiries, call our telephone typewriter (TTY) (02) 9247 3568.

18. How to cast a valid vote

Different voting systems are used in local government elections depending on the number of vacancies to be filled, and whether candidates form into groups on the ballot paper.

To cast a formal vote you must follow the instructions on the ballot paper.

Electing one councillor or the Mayor

You must place a “1” in the square next to the candidate of your choice. You may vote for other candidates by giving preferences starting with “2” and consecutively numbering as many other candidates as you wish.

Electing two councillors

In an election where there are two or more vacancies, candidates can form into groups on the ballot paper and have a group voting square for ‘above the line voting’, if two or more groups request it. In this case you can either vote above or below the line.

To vote above the line, you must place the number “1” in a group voting square for the group of your choice. You may allocate preferences for other groups, starting with the number “2”.

To vote for individual candidates below the line, you must place a “1” in the square next to the candidate’s name of your first choice. You may allocate preferences starting with “2” to other candidates of your choice.

Electing three or more councillors

The number of preferences required is at least equal to the number of vacancies as shown in the ‘Directions for Voting’ on the ballot paper.

Where there are group voting squares on the ballot paper you can vote above the line by placing the number “1” in one group voting square. You may allocate preferences starting with “2” for other groups of your choice.

By placing a “1” above the line in only one group voting square, you have indicated 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.

If you vote above the line and give your first preference to Group A, your second to Group B and third to Group F, and each group has seven candidates - you have given preferences 1–7 to the candidates in Group A, 8–14 to the candidates in Group B, and 15–21 to the candidates in Group F. In this case the vote stops with the last candidate in Group F and preferences do not continue to any other candidates on the ballot paper.

Alternatively, you can vote below the line for individual candidates by consecutively numbering from “1” in the order of your choice for at least half the number of vacancies. You may continue numbering as many other candidates as you choose to give them your preferences.

The ballot box

When you finish marking the ballot papers fold them so the votes cannot be seen and place the ballot papers in the appropriate ballot boxes as you leave the polling place.

Information to assist you to vote in 24 community languages is also available on the NSWEC website at www.elections.nsw.gov.au.

19. Employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Inlander election officials

We have run a targeted campaign to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to register interest in working as an election official. At the end of July 2008, we had received 19,843 applications to work as election officials. Of these applications, 344 were from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Returning officers have taken a personal interest to ensure that offers of employment were made to applicants who, in addition to knowing or being able to learn the duties of an election official were from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background. Thank you to everyone who expressed their interest in working at the elections.

20. After election day

We are interested in capturing your feedback on our conduct of the 2008 Local Government elections. You will be able to provide feedback on issues such as enrolment, availability of election information, polling place location and accessibility and general voting matters.

After election day, please give us your feedback by completing the online survey at www.elections.nsw.gov.au.

Important election dates and times

Election day	8am to 6pm, Saturday, 13 September 2008
Pre-poll voting	From Monday, 1 September 2008 Until Friday, 12 September 2008
Postal voting	Postal vote applications close: 5.00 pm, 8 September 2008 Return of postal votes must be received by: 6.00 pm, Monday, 15 September 2008
Results	Election night results: From 6pm with most results becoming available by 7pm Check count and Declaration Vote results: From Sunday 14 September 2008 Distribution of preferences: Starts Tuesday 16 September 2008



Colin Barry
Electoral Commissioner