

# **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS 2006**

## **CANDIDATE SURVEY**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Previous surveys of Local Council members were designed to provide a “time-slice” of the elected representatives. The 2006 survey also allowed for comparative analysis of membership. But its main focus was on all candidates at the 2006 Council elections, the first such survey to be conducted in South Australia. The data was the basis of an examination and interpretation of the nature, attitudes and activities of the aspirants for election.

### **Sample**

An anonymous questionnaire was sent to each candidate in the 2006 elections. A total of 571 questionnaires were returned, a very satisfactory response rate of almost 47 per cent – high for self-applied postal surveys. Standard tests of the sample showed that it has a high level of representativeness, and hence can be confidently used to describe the total candidates.

### **Analysis**

The survey allowed for the analysis of the characteristics, attitudes and behaviour of the candidates as a group, and for analyses of sub-sets: geographic and demographic types of Councils; first contestants and incumbents; elected and not elected. Hence it also allowed comparative analyses of the membership of the Councils. The sub-samples were all large enough to be representative.

### **Profiles of the Candidates**

The proportion of female members in 1973 was only three per cent. This increased to 25 per cent by 1997, but then plateaued, with 26 per cent in 2004. The 2006 survey found almost 29 per cent of the candidates were female, as were 29 per cent of the elected members. Hence there has been a slight increase. This was essentially brought about by a significant increase in the number of female candidates and successes in the metropolitan area – up to 35 per cent in the large metropolitan Councils. But there has not been an equivalent increase elsewhere.

The most constant trend in Local Government has been the “aging” of the membership. In 2004 only 5 per cent of the members were below 45 years of age, and 44 per cent were over 60. Attracting young people has been a priority. In the 2006 survey, there was an important change: 32.4 per cent of the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants were below 45 years of age. The extent of the change is shown by the fact that only 4.8 per cent of the incumbents were below 45 years. On the other hand, the elected membership after 2006, while “younger” than 2004, still shows that only 17.5 per cent are below 45 years of age. That is, the “age problem” has improved, but it could be better, and will need a further inflow of younger candidates in 2010.

The family structures of the candidates varied little from previous surveys: 77 per cent married, seven per cent *de facto*, nine per cent single, seven per cent separated or divorced. A total of 32.6 per cent had dependant children.

The secondary education level reached continued to show a steady rise over previous surveys. 58.8 per cent of the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants completed year 12, compared to only 37.4 per cent of the incumbent candidates. This pattern was most evident in the metropolitan area and least in the rural Councils. The proportion with post-secondary qualifications was also significantly higher in 1<sup>st</sup> contestants, with 71.3 per cent, compared to 54.2 per cent of incumbents.

34.3 per cent of the candidates were in the paid work force, with 21.5 per cent full-time; 34.3 per cent were employers or self-employed, 23.9 per cent were categorised as professionals, and 24 per cent had retired. These dominating categories showed a marked change from the 2004 membership: an increase in the proportions in the paid work force and employer/self-employed, and a decrease in the proportion who are retired. These changes resulted from the very different profile among the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants than the incumbents, for example: 44.8 per cent in paid work force (26.0 per cent of the incumbents); 16.9 per cent retired (29.5 per cent incumbents). On the other hand, one quarter at least of the membership of each of the geographic and demographic types of Councils were retired.

The occupational profile was skewed, as would be expected, to primary industry among the country candidates, and with a significantly higher proportion of managerial, executive, professional and white collar candidates in the metropolitan Councils. There was a continuing rise in the proportions of managerial, executive and professional occupations in the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants. Candidates from the trade/manual occupations still constitute only a miniscule proportion of Council candidates and members.

There was a marked change in the data on employment sector. While the private sector still dominated, with four fifths of the candidates, and 65 per cent of the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants, almost one quarter, a significant increase, of 1<sup>st</sup> contestants came from the State public sector.

### ***Relations with the Community***

As with previous member surveys, the 2006 candidates showed a broad involvement with the community: of the 571 candidates, 84 per cent were involved with work-related organizations, 72 per cent with school, hospital and advisory groups, 75 per cent with service organizations, and 81 per cent with sports and arts.

A surprising result was that while 48 per cent of all candidates were involved in political organizations, only 30.5 per cent of the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants were. Of the 571 candidates, 74 stated they were a member of a political party, but only 41 of the 1<sup>st</sup> candidates were members. These included 45 Labor members, 52 Liberal, and 20 from minor parties.

**Recruitment**

There were few significant differences in the patterns of recruitment between previous member surveys and the 2006 candidates. However, the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants showed a markedly higher proportion naming an issue as a prime reason for their candidature. There was a kaleidoscope of issues named, with 34 per cent being issues related to governance. One component was heartening: an increase in the proportion of candidates (to 5.2 per cent) who stated that they had become involved as a result of official campaigns.

**Impact of Allowances**

Only 52 per cent of the respondents stated that they were aware of the increases in allowances before deciding to nominate for election. Only four per cent stated that the increase had been a factor in their decision.

**Election involvement**

There were no significant variations in patterns of spending on the elections from previous surveys. The repeated pattern is that very high proportions of the candidates spent very small amounts on their campaigns: 55.4 per cent spent less than \$250; 56 per cent of the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants. On the other hand, the expenditures were at a much higher level in the metropolitan Councils: 48.6 per cent spent more than \$500 in large Council contests; 52.1 per cent in small Councils. There was a clear trend of higher expenditures in the urban areas.

**Assessments of Materials**

The questionnaire asked candidates to rate six sources of information: “So you want to be on Council?” (LGA booklet); Briefing session (LGA/Council); Candidate Handbook (SEO); Nomination Kit (SEO); and information from discussions with Council/Councillors. There were very positive reactions across all sub-sets of the sample, with a higher proportion of usage and positive reactions from the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants. The positive reactions about the three publications and the briefing sessions were above 80 per cent, and about the “discussions” above 70 per cent. The “appreciation rates” were markedly higher among the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants.

**Campaign Methods**

In the metropolitan contests, there was a much higher use of letter-boxing, doorknocking, and street signs than in the country areas. This is an expected result due to the logistics of the areas. The rural candidates were the least users of the seven methods discussed – partly as a result of a dependence on local networks, personal contacts, and the relatively small populations. The highest usage was letter-boxing; the lowest advertising and holding a function.

**Resources**

75 per cent of the total candidates stated they had sufficient resources to run their campaigns, although only 64 per cent of the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants were of that opinion. Of the 128 respondents who stated they did not have sufficient resources, the majority replied “more money”, and a significant minority wanted more media coverage.

**Opinions**

The survey asked candidates a number of questions about issues which were either controversial in the campaign or were important in Local Council elections.

“Are you aware of any action taken by the Council to inform voters about candidates?” 63 per cent stated they were aware, a standard response over the sub-sets of the sample. The majority of a small number of responses about effectiveness were negative, with most of these criticising the voters rather than the Councils. But there was a general comment that “Councils could do more”.

“Do you believe that the ‘specifications’ outlined in the Local Government (Elections) Act 1999, including the ‘illegal practices’ section, were effective in the election in your Council area?” Of the total candidates, 62.5 per cent stated that they were effective, although the metropolitan candidates were less sure (53 per cent). The majority of those who believed the provision was not effective mentioned “Council did not act”, “too complex”, “laws not strong enough”, and “too restrictive, therefore not obeyed”.

“Do you believe the ‘specifications’ relating to the placement of election signs were clear and consistent?” 86.7 per cent of the respondents were satisfied, a level consistent across all sub-sets of the sample. The same proportion were satisfied with their Council’s actions in regard to signage.

Respondents were asked whether “caretaker” provisions should apply to Councils during election campaigns, and whether their Council had “advantaged sitting members”. Of 490 responses, 26.7 per cent stated that they believed that sitting members were advantaged in some way. But only 48 respondents expanded their answers to state “how” the members had been advantaged.

“Would you stand in a supplementary election or the next general elections for your Council?” A total of 67.3 per cent stated that they would stand again; 80 per cent in the metropolitan Councils. The proportion was much lower in the country areas – 60 per cent, but 80 per cent of 1<sup>st</sup> contestants stated that they would stand again. Of those who would not, a high proportion explained “too old; time to retire”.

“Do you have any suggestions which might encourage more people to stand for election to Local Government?” only 138 respondents made suggestions, which included “more publicity, more communication (26 per cent); shorter terms (20.2 per cent, and a strong request for more money/higher allowances.

“Do you have any suggestions which might encourage more people to vote in Local Government elections?” Of the 270 responses, 40 criticised the postal voting system as a disincentive, 20 demanded that political parties should be “kept out”, eleven respondents called for an incentive for participation – including a lottery ticket for voting or discounts on rates. The highest rate of response, often couched in terms of “last resort” was compulsory voting.

### ***Assessments of Participants***

The survey included a major section seeking opinions about the roles played by some key participants in the elections. Four of the 10 participants drew a very low response rate, and a majority of negative comments.

State Public Service/Agencies drew 20 comments, divided equally between “helpful” and “stay out”

Business/Community Organisations (26 responses) drew equal positive and negative comments

31 of the 43 responses concerning Trades Unions stated that they should “stay out”.

The majority response concerning State MPs/Ministers (52) was negative.

Residents'/Ratepayers Associations drew 70 responses, of which 30 were positive and 40 negative – both sets vehement in their opinions.

Political Parties (104 responses) drew one positive response, and 89 which simply stated “should stay out”.

The Local Government Association received 113 responses about its role, of which 97 were very positive.

The Returning Officer/State Electoral Office (148 responses) received 101 positive comments, most of which noted “efficient, helpful, excellent”.

The role of the Media drew the most comments (219), with the responses very much divided between positive and negative, and strongly put, with the major divide being between those who claimed “bias” in some form and those who considered the media was unbiased and fair.

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## INTRODUCTION

The survey was commissioned by the Local Government Association, and was conducted in December 2007.

The questionnaire was designed with advice from the Local Government Association. It was structured to establish a range of issues arising from the 2006 Local Government elections and, in part, to allow some comparative analysis with earlier surveys of elected members.

The key purposes were to inquire into the profiles of the 2006 candidates, the natures of their campaigns, and their attitudes to aspects of the electoral process.

The range of questions included six themes:

- a profile of the candidates under a range of sub-headings of personal characteristics and backgrounds, including family, gender, education, occupation, employment, and identity;
- the nature and extent of the candidates' involvement in their communities;
- the patterns and styles of recruitment, with a focus on the factors which influenced their decisions to nominate for the elections;
- the nature of their campaigns;
- their judgements about the election processes in 2006;
- their attitudes about reforming the electoral process.

Anonymous questionnaires were posted to all candidates, with a covering letter, and a reply-paid envelope.

The response was gratifying, indicating a strong willingness from candidates to provide valuable information. 571 completed questionnaires were returned, a response rate of almost 47 per cent – high in terms of self-applied mail surveys.

There were a number of open-ended questions, especially in the sections concerning attitudes. The “quality” of the responses covered a wide range. Some respondents, especially those with strong feelings, provided very short answers. Others expanded on some issues, with considerable thought and insight. For these questions, this report includes some quotations from the questionnaires to show the “flavour” of the responses.

The question of representativeness of the survey needed to be addressed. To what extent did the sample allow the extrapolation of data to the total number of candidates? Some tests were possible.

The gender content of the respondents was an acceptable “mirror” of the total. The breakdown of all candidates was 73 percent male, 27 per cent female. The survey produced a surprisingly high proportion of respondents who did not provide their gender – 9 per cent. However, of the remaining 519 candidates, 71 per cent were male, 29 per cent female.

A second test was based on Council categories. The total number of Councils in which there were elections were classified under five headings, and the respondents were asked to identify the nature – not the name – of their Council. The result again provided an acceptable level of representation.

<b>Council Type</b>	<b>Actual %</b>	<b>Survey %</b>
metropolitan (above 50 000)	26	21 (n = 118)
metropolitan ( below 50 000)	21	17 (n = 97)
regional City	10	12 (n = 65)
rural/urban	12	16 (n = 90)
rural	32	34 (n = 192)

The third test of representativeness was based on data of elected/not elected. Again, the sample and the total were within acceptable levels.

	<b>Actual %</b>	<b>Survey %</b>
elected unopposed	12	13
elected opposed	49	52
not elected	40	35

The minor under-representation of those who were not elected is to be expected – some defeated candidates may not be “in the mood” to re-live the experience. The comparisons are sufficiently close to allow confidence about the analyses of data based on the categories.

These three tests provide evidence of a high level of representation, and hence an expectation that the sample can be interpreted as an accurate “mirror” of the total candidates.

**Data presentation**

The data from the survey presented in this report include different levels of analysis. The standard form is based on the total responses of the 571 candidates. These tables are then further analysed on the bases of sub-sets of the data.

One subset is based on the types of Councils: metropolitan (above 50 000 population), metropolitan (below 50 000), regional cities, rural/urban, and rural. The purposes of these analyses was to explore the extent of differences in behaviour and attitude based on demography and sociology.

A second sub-set is based on analyses of candidates who contested the elections for the first time compared to those who were either incumbents or the few who had contested previous elections. One reason for these analyses is that there have been intense campaigns to attempt to deal with an under-representation of females and younger people in Local Government. Were these successful in 2006 when there was a significant involvement by “new” candidates?

**First Contests by Type of Council**

	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Content %</b>	<b>Incumbent %</b>
Metro large	24.2	18.4
Metro small	18.0	16.6
Regional	9.4	13.2
Rural / Urban	16.6	16.0
Rural	31.8	35.8
	(n=223)	(n=326)

Where relevant, data has also been analysed on the basis of subsets of elected and not elected candidates, with some reference to a further sub-set of elected (contested) and elected (unopposed).

**First Contests by Result**

	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Content %</b>	<b>Incumbent %</b>
Elected	49.8	75.3
Not Elected	50.2	24.7
	(n = 227)	(n = 324)

Some comparisons have also been made, where relevant, with the results of earlier surveys of the membership of Councils.

The 2006 survey also allowed comparisons with the membership after previous elections through the sub-set of “elected”.

The standard basis of presentation of data and analyses is tabular, and the standard form is percentages (%). In each table, the numbers of respondents or responses on which the percentages are calculated are provided in the form (n = ). The percentages are usually provided to one decimal place. In all tables, some totals of percentages in rows/columns may not add to 100 due to rounding.

In some cases, bar graphs have been used as a visual representation of the data.

## THE PROFILE OF THE CANDIDATES

Over the past 20 years, there have been discussions about the profile of the elected membership of Councils, often in terms of an alleged or actual over-representation of males, people of Anglo-Celtic origin, business people, and older people. These issues have been analysed through surveys of members, especially in surveys conducted in 1997, and 2004. The 2006 survey, for the first time, was extended to all candidates for the elections. This also provided a source of data for further discussions on the profile of members, by means of the subset of “elected”.

The major purpose of these “profile” questions was to establish the characteristics of people who stood as candidates for the Local Government elections in 2006., and especially to explore the extent to which there has been any change in the key aspects of age and gender.

### **Gender**

In 1973, females constituted a meagre three per cent of the total elected membership of Local Government in South Australia. By 1987, this had increased to 16 per cent, and by 1997 to 25 per cent. This was a remarkable rise, evidence of an increasing interest among women about a role in Local Government, of possible increased opportunities to be involved, and of the success of a series of campaigns to encourage women.

After the 2004 elections, however, the proportion of women elected to Local Councils had increased only marginally to 26 per cent. This prompted further efforts to increase the proportion but, on the results of the survey, with little success.

### **Gender Profiles of Candidates**

	<b>Total %</b>	<b>Elected %</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Contest %</b>	<b>Incumbent %</b>
Male	71.2	72.5	73.0	70.5
Female	28.8	27.5	27.0	29.5
(n=)	(519)	(270)	(204)	(305)

These data suggest only little change. The female component of the total candidates was 28.8 per cent. These data included incumbents, and hence reflected to some extent the gender profile from the 2004 and earlier elections.

The new membership elected in 2006 did show a slight increase in the proportion of female members, from 26 per cent in 2004 to 29 per cent. But the key, and disappointing figure is that for 1<sup>st</sup> contest candidates. After major efforts to increase the involvement of women in Local Government elections, only 27 per cent were women.

This general problem was evident across the range of types of Councils, but with significant differences. The metropolitan participation by women, in both large and small Councils, was significantly higher than in the regional and rural Councils.

### ***Gender Profiles of Candidates by Type of Council***

	<b>Metro Large %</b>	<b>Metro Small %</b>	<b>Regional %</b>	<b>Rural / Urban %</b>	<b>Rural %</b>
Male	64.7	68.1	72.8	78.8	73.1
Female	35.3	31.9	27.2	21.2	26.9
(n=)	(105)	(88)	(59)	(85)	(175)

These data suggest that the efforts I to encourage more women to stand have been successful in the metropolitan Councils, but that the efforts must continue in the country areas.

### ***Age***

The most consistent trend for a quarter of a century has been the “aging” of the membership of Councils. In 1987, only one quarter of the members were under 40 years of age; in 1997, the proportion was less than 12 per cent. In the 2004 member survey, only 5 per cent of the respondents were under 45 years of age, and the over-60 group had exploded to 44 per cent, with 76 per cent of the members older than 55.

There was clear evidence of the “ageing” of the membership of Councils, a trend evident across the State, but most evident in rural Councils. Attracting younger people to stand as candidates was clearly a top priority.

### ***Age Profile of Candidates***

<b>Age</b>	<b>Total %</b>	<b>Elected %</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Contest %</b>	<b>Incumbent %</b>
18-29	3.4	3.0	6.7	1.3
30-39	6.4	6.1	6.7	3.5
40-49	15.8	12.0	24.9	9.2
50-59	34.5	36.9	31.5	35.8
60+	40.0	42.1	24.9	51.1
(n=)	(565)	(292)	(225)	(327)

The data for the total candidates in 2006 indicates a continuing low proportion of younger aspirants, but there is some evidence that the ageing trend, unlike that for gender, has begun to reverse. A clear comparison: in 2004, the proportion of members under 45 years of age was a meagre five per cent; in the 2006 survey, 17.6 per cent of candidates were under 45.

The total candidate data includes incumbents, which skewed the comparison toward the older “end”. The data of 1<sup>st</sup> contest, however, showed a considerable improvement. Of the 292 who responded, 32.5 per cent were

under 45 years of age. This is almost the double proportion in this age group of the membership following the 2004 election.

This suggests that the campaign to encourage younger people to stand had some real effect, but there will be a need to continue the “pressure” in future elections. This point is emphasised by a comparison of 1<sup>st</sup> and incumbent candidates in 2006. The former showed a much younger age profile, with 18.7 per cent under 40 years of age, compared to 4.7 per cent for the incumbent group. Equally obvious is the comparison at the other “end” of the age spectrum: the incumbent profile was 86.7 per cent above the age of 50; the 1<sup>st</sup> contest profile was 56.4 per cent.

There is therefore evidence of an improving trend among the candidates. But the profile of the elected membership of Councils shows much less improvement, with only 14 per cent under the age of 45, and 79 per cent over 50, and 42 per cent over 60 years of age. While this is a slight improvement over 2004, the profile of the aging trend of the continuing membership means that efforts to encourage younger candidates must continue.

But the data of members, based on those who were elected in 2006, do not show such a positive trend. Only 14 per cent of the members of Councils after 2006 were under 45 years of age. While this is an improvement on 2004, the data do suggest that the younger aspirants were disproportionately not elected. This was the case. On the basis of the sub-set of “defeated”, almost 10 per cent of the candidates were below 40 years of age. This suggests that there is a trend to younger candidates; all they need is “success”.

The data for the types of Councils reinforces the necessity to maintain the process of attracting younger candidates, especially in rural areas.

These data, based on the total candidates, include the incumbents, hence actually understate the trend toward “younger”.

### ***Age Profiles by Type of Council***

	<b>Metro Large %</b>	<b>Metro Small %</b>	<b>Regional %</b>	<b>Rural / Urban %</b>	<b>Rural %</b>
18-29	8.7	3.1	3.0	3.3	0.5
30-39	7.8	8.3	7.7	3.3	5.2
40-49	17.4	20.6	7.7	17.8	14.1
50-59	29.6	33.0	36.9	38.9	36.5
60+	36.5	35.1	44.6	36.7	43.8
(n=)	(115)	(97)	(65)	(90)	(192)

The metropolitan contests attracted a significantly higher proportion of candidates under 40 years of age: 16.5 per cent and 11.4 per cent respectively in large and small Councils, compared to only 6.6 per cent and 5.7 per cent in rural/urban and rural Councils respectively. The over-50

category is also skewed: 66.1 per cent and 68.1 per cent in the metropolitan areas, but 75.6 per cent and 81.3 per cent in the rural/urban and rural Councils. It is the case that all types of Councils continue to show an over-representation by older people, but it is clear that efforts to improve this must be focussed on the country Councils, which have yet to show any real improvement, where the metropolitan Councils have done so.

### ***Family Structure***

A disincentive to an involvement in Local Government is a young family, with parental responsibilities, and a single-parent even more so. Further, the necessity in the modern economy for both, or the only parent, to have employment, is equally an important factor. This may also be a partial explanation of the proportion of older people.

Of the 2006 respondents, 77 per cent were married, and a further seven per cent were in a de facto relationship. Nine per cent were single; seven per cent were separated or divorced. A total of 26 per cent had dependent children – a quarter of whom had three or more dependent children.

Among the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants, the ratios were higher. A total of 32.6 per cent had dependent children: 13 had children in pre-school, 39 in primary, 25 in secondary, and 11 in tertiary education. Assuming that the first three categories require more parental attention and time than the last, then 77 of 1<sup>st</sup> contestants had major home pressures while seeking to become elected members of Councils, and continuing pressures if elected.

These data reinforce comments made in previous (membership) surveys: that one policy area with the potential to increase the proportion of younger people offering themselves as candidates for Local Government would include provision of child care facilities, and any other means which could make the role of an elected member more attractive.

### ***Education***

The 2006 survey asked three questions about education.

- What level was the final year of full-time secondary education?
- Which type of tertiary institution was attended?
- What post-secondary qualification(s) were achieved?

A total of 9.5 per cent of respondents left before year 10; 45.0 per cent completed year 11; and 45.5 per cent completed year 12.

**Education Level Reached**

	<b>Total %</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Content %</b>	<b>Incumbent %</b>
Year 8	5.2	1.8	7.2
Year 9	4.3	3.2	5.3
Year 10	19.6	14.9	22.4
Year 11	25.4	21.3	27.7
Year 12	45.5	58.8	37.4
(n=)	(556)	(221)	(321)

These data are partially linked to the age of candidates. Those over 50 years of age, and especially the over 60s, would be less likely to have continued to Years 11 or 12. This is emphasised by the data of 1<sup>st</sup> contestants where 58.8 per cent completed year 12.

These data mirror the general trend in society toward more children completing Year 12. But it is noticeable that this trend, which has been evident for well over a decade, was not reflected among the 1<sup>st</sup> candidates until the 2006 elections.

The differing levels of education reached across the types of Councils, and emphasise a further significant difference between metropolitan and country – and especially rural - Councils. Education levels reached are much higher in the metropolitan area.

**Education Level by Type of Council**

	<b>Metro Large %</b>	<b>Metro Small %</b>	<b>Regional %</b>	<b>Rural / Urban %</b>	<b>Rural %</b>
Year 8	5.2	1.1	4.7	2.4	8.9
Year 9	0.9	1.1	9.4	5.9	5.8
Year 10	21.9	10.6	14.1	21.2	24.2
Year 11	19.3	17.0	34.4	24.7	30.5
Year 12	52.6	70.2	37.5	45.9	30.5
(n=)	(114)	(94)	(64)	(85)	(190)

Of the total of 571 respondents, 60 per cent attended a tertiary education institution.

	<b>Total %</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Content %</b>	<b>Incumbent %</b>
CAE	5.4	4.0	6.7
TAFE	20.5	23.3	19.5
University	33.6	44.0	28.0
(n=)	(571)	(227)	(329)

Such data are to be expected, given the changing patterns of continuation to further education of the past generations. In terms of type of Council, the metropolitan candidates showed a significant higher proportion of tertiary attendance.

In terms of qualifications achieved, 37 per cent completed matriculation, 15 per cent completed an apprenticeship certificate, 26 per cent completed a diploma, 23 per cent a first degree, and 14 per cent a post-graduate qualification.

### ***Birthplace and National Identity***

Of the 571 candidates in the sample, 81 per cent were born in Australia, with 88 per cent of these born in South Australia. Of 108 respondents born overseas, 62 per cent were born in Britain, seven per cent in New Zealand, and six per cent in Ireland. A further 11 per cent migrated from Western Europe, three percent each from Asia and the United States, and the remaining eight per cent came from 12 different countries.

In terms of national identity (“How do you regard yourself?”), 93 per cent replied “Australian”, with 35 respondents identifying themselves with a “joint” identity, such as Australian-British, Australian-Dutch, Polish-Australian, Australian-Greek etc.

Only 20 respondents stated that they normally use a language other than English, with German the highest proportion with four respondents.

There were no significant differences between the types of Councils.

### ***Employment, Occupation, Income***

The data which emerged from the question concerning employment status reflected some of the patterns already established above.

<b>Employment Status</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Content</b>	<b>Incumbent</b>
Full time paid	21.5	29.3	15.2
Part time paid	8.0	9.3	7.1
Casual paid	4.8	6.2	3.7
Employer	3.9	3.5	4.0
Self-employed	30.4	26.7	33.8
Retired	24.0	16.9	29.5
Not in paid work	5.3	6.2	5.0
Full-time education	0.9	0.9	0.9
Unemployed	1.1	1.8	0.6
	(n=562)	(225)	(322)
In paid workforce	34.3	44.8	26.0
Emp/Self-Employed	34.3	30.2	37.8
Retired	24.0	16.9	29.5

A comparison of the 1<sup>st</sup> contest and incumbent patterns (in the main table and summarised in italics below) identifies significant differences in the proportions of paid employment, retired, and self-employed categories. The retired category is an indication that the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants are younger, and more in employment. The proportion of 1<sup>st</sup> contestants who are paid employees is significantly higher than the data for incumbents, and the reverse is apparent in the Employee/Self-employed category.

### ***Employment Status by Type of Council***

	<b>Metro Large %</b>	<b>Metro Small %</b>	<b>Regional %</b>	<b>Rural / Urban %</b>	<b>Rural %</b>
Paid employee	52.2	45.4	31.3	29.5	21.1
Emp/Self-employed	12.2	21.6	32.8	21.6	52.1
Retired	28.7	24.7	25.0	42.0	21.6
Other	7.0	8.2	10.9	6.8	5.3
(n=)	(115)	(97)	(64)	(88)	(190)

When the data are subdivided by type of Council, the metropolitan Councils showed a much higher proportion of paid employees. The rural Councils, based in essentially primary production areas, the highest ratio of Employer and Self-employed.

On the other hand, the proportion of retired persons was similar across all types of Councils, with the exception of the Rural/Urban, This may be due to a “sea-change” tendency, of retiring farmers moving to the central towns on retirement.

The data concerning occupation showed patterns which, to some degree, reflected the employment status data.

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Total %</b>
managerial/executive	26.2
teacher/lecturer	6.6
professional/technical	17.3
clerical/ secretarial	7.8
sales/retail	5.3
trade/manual	3.6
primary industry	20.3
small business	11.9
other	0.9
	(n=335)

The dominating components were Managerial/Executive (26.2%), professional (23.9%), Primary Industry (20.3%), and White Collar (13.1%).

When these data are divided into key subsets, there are significant differences.

### ***Occupations by Result and Candidature***

	<b>Total %</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Contest %</b>	<b>Incumbent %</b>	<b>Elected %</b>
Managerial/Executive	26.2	30.2	23.6	27.1
Professional	23.9	28.2	19.6	22.4
White Collar	13.1	13.4	12.7	12.1
Trade/Manual	3.6	4.0	2.9	2.3
Primary Industry	20.3	13.4	27.0	25.7
Small Business	11.9	9.4	14.5	9.8
Other	0.9	1.3	-	0.5
(n=)	(235)	(149)	(174)	(168)

The comparison of 1<sup>st</sup> contestants and incumbents shows a much lower proportion of candidates from primary industry and small business, and a higher proportion from managerial and professional. This suggests a significant change in the patterns of candidatures.

Among the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants, 71.8 per cent were in Managerial, Professional, or White Collar occupations, compared to 55.9 per cent of incumbents. This shift in the occupation pattern was reflected in the membership (“elected”) after the 2006 election: 61.6 per cent in these occupational groups, compared to 54.9 per cent after the 2004 elections.

The trend is further emphasised by a comparison of the members after the 2004 elections and the 2006 candidates who were defeated.

### ***Occupations by Result***

	<b>Not elected 2006 %</b>	<b>Members 2004 %</b>
Managerial/Executive	25.4	23.8
Professional	26.3	21.4
White Collar	14.4	9.7
Trade/Manual	5.9	4.9
Primary Industry	10.2	22.3
Small Business	16.1	15.5
Other	1.7	2.4
(n=)	(118)	(206)

It is clear that there was an important shift in the nature of the candidates in 2006. The pattern evident among the defeated candidates shows a much higher proportion of Managerial/executive, Professional, and White Collar occupations than in the Council membership after the 2004 elections. As noted in earlier data, there does seem to be a significant change in the 2006 candidates which needs only further election success for major changes to occur in the membership of Councils.

The patterns of occupation across the types of Council showed some differences. The concentration of primary industry in the rural/urban and rural sectors is logical and, as a result, these Councils show a lower “content” of professional and white collar candidates.

	<b>Metro Large %</b>	<b>Metro Small %</b>	<b>Regional %</b>	<b>Rural / Urban %</b>	<b>Rural %</b>
Managerial/Executive	29.4	28.4	26.3	24.5	24.3
Professional	32.3	41.7	28.9	28.9	6.8
White Collar	25.0	12.0	7.9	7.6	9.7
Trade/Manual	1.5	-	7.9	9.4	2.9
Primary Industry	-	4.5	5.3	30.1	44.7
Small Business	10.3	10.4	23.7	9.4	11.7
Other	1.5	3.0	-	-	-
(n=)	(68)	(67)	(38)	(53)	(103)

The three largest sectors of occupation are managerial/executive, professional and primary industry across all subsets of candidates. What was evident was the higher levels of executive/managerial and professional within the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants, suggesting a changing pattern.

Private sector employment was dominant, although there was an increased involvement from the public sector in 2006 among 1<sup>st</sup> contestants, compared with incumbents.

<b>Source</b>	<b>Total %</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Contest %</b>	<b>Incumbent %</b>	<b>(Elected 2004 %)</b>
Private	72.3	65.1	80.2	(73.7)
Public-Commonwealth	4.9	7.9	2.2	(3.2)
Public – State	18.2	22.4	13.8	(16.1)
Public – Local	4.0	4.6	3.8	(5.5)
(n=)	(346)	(152)	(182)	

This trend is emphasised by the comparison with the members elected in the 2004 elections. Local Government candidates seen increasingly to come from the public sector, especially from the State sector.

**Income**

The income of the candidates encompassed a wide range, although there was little difference between the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants and incumbents

<b>(\$'000)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Contest</b>	<b>Incumbent</b>
0-15	13.4	15.9	12.1
16-25	13.0	8.0	16.1
26-35	12.0	10.9	11.8
36-45	13.4	17.4	11.1
46-55	13.2	11.9	14.3
56-65	8.5	8.5	8.6
66-75	7.7	10.0	5.7
76-85	3.2	2.5	3.6
86-100	5.3	7.5	3.9
over 100	10.3	7.5	12.9
(n=)	(494)	(201)	(280)

## INVOLVEMENT WITH THE COMMUNITY

There are two different components in the relationship of an elected member with the local community. First, the member will be involved in the process of representation of the citizens. This is a two-way process. The citizens will approach the member for advice, assistance, an argument, a request, or a range of other reasons; and the member will seek to retain contacts with the community to establish what are the issues of the moment, and as a canvassing tactic for the next election.

Second, elected members will usually be involved with many local organizations. In many cases, this would have preceded election to the Council, and reflect the personal interests of the individuals. But there is also pressure on members to widen their involvement. Some local groups will seek to have members of the Council involved with them in the hope of better understanding and, perhaps for some, a hope that such involvement may improve the “benefits” flowing to the group from the Council.

A focus on candidates in this survey includes many of these components. A key question is to what extent is there a difference between the entrenched, long-term members and the “first-attempt” candidates?

The respondents in 2006 were asked to state their membership in a range of organizations. There was the opportunity to name more than one organization, hence the basis is the per cent of responses.

### *Work Organisations*

	<b>Total %</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Contest %</b>	<b>Incumbent %</b>
Business	23.1	21.6	24.3
Professional	32.2	36.8	30.2
Rural	14.7	11.0	18.0
Trade Union	29.9	30.4	27.5
(n=)	(481)	(263)	(367)

Although the differences are not large, the first contest candidates had a lower rate of membership of business and rural organizations, but a higher rate of membership of professional organizations and trades unions. This reflects to some degree the data (above) concerning occupation and employment sector. The greatest difference is in regard to rural organizations, but this is explained by the occupational bias in the rural/urban and rural areas noted above.

On the other hand, if the association with work organizations is calculated on the basis of respondents, rather than responses, then the incumbents with 47.1 per cent were much more involved than the 1<sup>st</sup> contest candidates with 31.7 per cent.

### **Public Bodies**

	<b>Total %</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Contest %</b>	<b>Incumbent %</b>
School	54.3	59.2	46.5
Hospital	16.3	13.4	20.3
Advisory	29.4	27.5	32.9
(n=)	(411)	(142)	(310)

Involvement with the local school dominated in all three sets of data, although it is interesting to note that the strongest involvement was among the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants.

### **Political organizations**

	<b>Total Respondents%</b>	<b>Responses %</b>
Party	22.2	58.0
Pressure Group	2.1	5.5
Residents/Ratepayers	13.7	35.6
Environment	0.4	0.9
	(n=571)	N=219)

The question concerning membership of political organizations also allowed respondents to select more than one answer. In the total sample, 206 of the 571 candidates, 36.1 per cent, stated that they were members of one or more of a political party, a pressure group, and a residents'/ratepayers' group. Of the responses, the majority stated membership of a party.

Of the incumbents, 159 (48.3 per cent) stated that they were members of a political organization, while 70 (30.5 per cent) if the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants were members. In the society at large, the membership of political parties is at an all-time low – estimated to be around five per cent of the adult population. Further, membership and participation in pressure groups is also falling, to the point where many organisations – not only political – have trouble attracting new members. In Local Government, membership of residents' and ratepayers associations are generally small and moribund, except where a local issue has galvanised public opinion, either for or against.

The involvement of political parties in Local Government in South Australia has been a contentious issue for some time. Unlike most other states, parties do not play a formal, “disciplined” role in Councils. Although elected members can and are members of parties, there was no evidence in the past that these memberships have resulted in party bloc behaviour within the Councils. In recent years, however, there have been signs of increased party activity at the local level, with parties, especially the Labor party, using Local Government as a “training ground”. Further, there have been some suggestions, in some Councils, that party “bloc” behaviour has increased.

**Which party?**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Total %</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Contest %</b>	<b>Incumbent %</b>
Liberal	44.5	41.5	35.1
Labor	37.8	34.1	51.4
Green	4.2	12.2	-
National	4.2	2.4	5.4
Family First	3.4	4.9	2.7
Other	5.9	4.9	5.4
(n=)	(119)	(41)	(74)

Of the party members among the 2006 candidates, the majority were members of either the Labor or Liberal parties. Only 17 respondents mentioned minor party membership.

A total of 74 of the 329 incumbents ( 22.5 per cent) stated that they were party members, compared to 41 of the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants ( 18.1 per cent). Among the former, the Labor party had the highest proportion of the members, while the Liberal party had most members from the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants. The conventional wisdom has been that it is Labor that has involved itself more heavily, especially in the metropolitan area.

On the other hand, when the analysis focuses on the types of Councils, it is the case that the Labor party does have its “base” in the metropolitan Councils, while the Liberal party members are more spread among all five types.

**Party Membership by Type of Council**

(These data are shown as numbers)

	<b>Metro Large %</b>	<b>Metro Small %</b>	<b>Regional %</b>	<b>Rural / Urban %</b>	<b>Rural %</b>
Labor	19	15	6	1	4
Liberal	8	9	4	10	21
Green	1	1	0	2	1
Democrat	0	1	0	2	0
National	0	0	0	3	2
Family First	0	1	0	1	2
Other	0	0	0	1	2
Total (n)	28	27	10	20	32
Total (%)	23.7	27.8	15.3	22.2	16.7

There has been much debate over time about the involvement of political parties in Local Government. Unlike the eastern states, South Australia has not seen the formal involvement of parties in local elections and in local affairs as disciplined blocs. But there have been party members in Local Government for decades.

In recent years, however, there has been a growing tendency for some political parties to use Local Government as “cadetship” for potential candidates for state and federal elections, and some suggestions that party is playing a more powerful role in Local Government affairs.

The data above show that 120 of the 571 candidates in the 2006 election were members of parties, 46 of whom were Labor and 54 Liberal. The analysis by type of Council shows an expected division: the metropolitan areas is the “home” of the Labor party involvement, while the Liberal and National members are in the rural area in a majority, but with a strong involvement in the city.

### ***Service organisations***

Service organization membership

	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
CFS	28.6	13.3
Rotary	18.8	8.8
Lions	18.0	8.4
SES	6.0	2.8
Red Cross	5.3	2.5
Environment	4.1	1.9
Other (25 groups)	24.2	5.2
(n)	(317)	(571)

Previous surveys of members revealed a high and broad membership of service organizations. This was repeated in the candidate survey.

The answers to the question, which allowed for membership of more than one organization, mentioned 31 separate service organizations. A number had only one or two mentions, for example: SA Families, PROBUS, Scouts, Zonta, JCEES, and Watch SA. The dominant organizations in terms of numbers were CFS, Rotary, Lions, Apex, SES and Red Cross which, combined, accounted for 225 of the 266 responses.

On the other hand, this broad membership involved only 142 of the 571 respondents, a feature which reinforces the modern trend away from Australians being “joiners”. The following table shows the pattern of involvement on the basis of the 142 candidates who were members, and the total of 225 responses.

As in previous surveys, the 2006 candidate study revealed a very high level of involvement in service organizations in the community – very high in comparison with the growing attitude of “non-joiners” in the general population. But as the per cent of the total respondents shows, this is by no means a high proportion of the total candidates. The data does indicate that, in comparison with the whole population, involvement in service groups reflects one of the most common reasons given for involvement in Local Government – service to the community.

### ***Sporting and Arts***

	%
Sporting	66.3
Arts	14.3
Music	12.3
Motoring	5.3
Other	1.7
	(n=463)

The questionnaire asked for details of membership of “sport/leisure groups”, mentioning sporting, music, arts and motoring, but allowing an open-ended answer.

The responses indicated the “national character” of involvement with sport, with 267 of the 571 candidates nominating it.

## RECRUITMENT

Of the 571 respondents, 227 (39.6%) were contesting their first Local Government election. 329 (57.6%) were sitting members. 15 (2.6%) did not answer the question.

### *Incumbent and Elected Candidates Previous Service on Council*

<b>Service Years</b>	<b>Incumbent %</b>	<b>Elected unopposed %</b>	<b>Elected opposed %</b>	<b>Total elected %</b>
1-4	28.3	34.1	24.0	26.0
5-8	28.6	34.1	29.2	30.2
9-12	17.7	13.6	20.5	19.1
13-16	6.4	4.5	7.0	6.5
Over 16	19.1	13.6	19.3	18.1
(n=)	(283)	(44)	(171)	(215)

Of the incumbents, 28.3 per cent had served one term at the time of the 2006 elections, 28.6 per cent had served between 5 and 8 years, 17.1 per cent had served between 9 and 12 years, and 25.5 per cent more that 13 years. The fact that 42.6 per cent of the members had served for more than 9 years could suggest a strong incumbency factor, and a loyalty to members among many voters. On the other hand, it could suggest a lack of competition for incumbents in uncontested elections.

The 227 who were contesting their first election established a solid proportion of new aspirants, and provided an opportunity to analyse differences between the incumbents and the newcomers in terms of backgrounds, recruitment, campaign styles, and attitudes.

### ***Attraction to stand***

It was noted above that one of the serious problems facing Local Government is the age profile of members. Seeking some explanation for this, previous surveys of members have asked the question: "What first aroused your interest in becoming a Councillor?" This was an "open-ended" question, allowing respondents to provide more than one factor. The table reports the findings of the 1997 and 2004 survey of members, and the 2006 survey of candidates.

**Incentive to Stand - Total responses**

	Members			Candidates	
	1997%	2004%	2006%	Total	1 <sup>st</sup> Contest
				2006%	2006%
Asked by friends	26.7	23.8	27.0	28.5	31.5
Existing Councillor	23.6	27.7	39.8	32.7	21.6
Specific Issue	13.3	15.8	12.1	16.2	22.1
Family Tradition	7.0	10.1	6.8	5.6	4.2
Asked by organisation	5.3	5.8	1.9	2.5	3.3
Business reasons	1.7	3.3	4.3	3.8	2.8
Official campaign	0.9	2.0	1.5	2.9	5.2
Other	21.4	10.6	6.5	7.6	9.4
(n=)	(699)	(467)	(322)	(550)	(322)

The “other” category in these data contained a major component of answers which were in general terms along the lines of “service to the community”, expressed by one respondent in passionate terms:

*An unavoidable passion to right injustice and repair systems that are not functioning, and to facilitate solutions and problems in Local Government.*

Over 60 per cent of the responses in the 2006 candidate survey (column 4) named “friends” or “councillor” as the basis for their decision to stand. This was a common result across the member surveys of 1997 and 2004, the total candidates in 2006, and the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants and incumbents. It is a pattern which can be assumed to be entrenched. On the other hand, the “family tradition” reason has declined, especially among 1<sup>st</sup> contestants in 2006.

There is some positive news in regard to the lift in the proportion of 1<sup>st</sup> contest candidates who decided to stand on the basis of the official campaigns.

The 2006 survey involved a supplementary to this question in an attempt to explore further the “issue” and “organisation” answers. Respondents were asked to specify details in both cases.

A total of 134 respondents – almost one quarter of the sample of 571 - named a specific issue. The analysis of the answers identified 52 specific issues, some of which were idiosyncratic and/or related to a specific local area or Council. However, there was a high proportion of issues named which fell into more general categories. 34 per cent of the responses named an issue which could be subsumed under the heading of governance within the Council. 20 per cent named an issue related to the environment. A further 19 per cent named an issue related to infrastructure. And 12 per cent named rates as one of their reasons for nominating.

The “other” category included a range of issues, often idiosyncratic – including wind farms, graffiti, tourism, health, less government, youth, aged care, new Council chamber, and a lack of women. As an indication of the kaleidoscope of answers, the “governance” collection included “dysfunctional Council, bad accountability, Council decision-making wrong, Council secrecy, Mayor dominates”. And the single responses covered a wide range of issues, including: “sale of assets, Civic Centre, high rise, services, IR laws, equal treatment, and library”.

The following quotations from the questionnaires indicates the flavour of the (issue) responses.

- Town improvement, better infrastructure, streets, footpaths
- Rates and roads management
- Lack of good management by Council
- Non-action by Council on sub-division
- Unhappy with Council infighting
- Dense housing development with loss of trees, gardens and neighbourhood character and amenities
- Ratepayer for 25 years. Never seen a Councillor. The current Council appeared to be self-interested rather than community focussed
- I have been disturbed by the disfunctionality of Local Government in the Council meetings in recent years – particularly with factions.

One component decreased in importance. In the member surveys of 1997 and 2004, over five percent of total responses mentioned “asked by an organization”. In the 2006 candidate survey, these responses fell to only 1.9 per cent of the total. Of those who did give this answer, the majority named a residents’ or ratepayers’ group.

A total of 70 respondents also ticked the “other” box. Of these, 40 stated that their decision was based on wanting to do something positive for their community, while 12 respondents decided on the ground that their Council or current member was “inadequate/ biased/ lazy”.

### ***Allowances***

Prior to the 2006 elections, the members of Local Councils had been awarded a significant increase in allowances. The questionnaire explored any impact of this on the candidates. Surprisingly, only 52 per cent of the respondents stated that they were aware of the increase before they decided to nominate. However, the incumbent candidates were more aware, with 68 per cent, while the awareness among the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants was only 29 per cent. Only 4.7 per cent stated that the increase had been a factor in their decision to nominate, with little difference between 1<sup>st</sup> and incumbent candidates, and no significant difference in this pattern across the types of electorates.

## ***ELECTION INVOLVEMENT***

This section of the questionnaire explored issues such as money and time spent on the campaign, and attitudes to some of the components of the campaign.

### ***Expenses***

Respondents were asked to state their personal expenditure on their campaign, and the total expenditure. The answers suggest that there is little difference between the two amounts, hence for most candidates, there was little input from sources other than their own finances.

<b>Amount Spent</b>	<b>Personal %</b>	<b>Total %</b>
Less than \$250	55.8	55.4
\$251 - 500	15.0	15.7
\$501 - 1,000	11.4	10.8
\$1,001 - 2,000	8.9	9.0
\$2,001 – 4,000	5.1	5.4
\$4,001 – 7,500	2.1	2.2
Over \$7,500	1.7	1.5
(n=)	(528)	(537)

The analysis following is based on the total expenditure reported.

In comparison with State and federal elections, the majority of the contests in Local Government are clearly run on a “shoe-string”. Over half of the respondents outlayed less than \$250 on their campaign, and over 80% spent less than \$1 000. These data reinforce the conclusion that Local Government election campaigns are based on a personal commitment, with no significant support, and in most cases no support at all, from parties, groups and other outside organizations.

The comparison of 1<sup>st</sup> contestants and incumbents showed little difference between the two groups in terms of total expense, although the “big spenders” were mainly incumbents.

**Total Expense by nature of Candidates**

	<b>Incumbent %</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Contest %</b>
Less than \$250	54.2	58.8
\$251 – 500	13.9	17.7
\$501 – 1,000	11.1	10.2
\$1,001 – 2,000	8.4	9.3
\$2,001 – 4,000	6.5	3.2
\$4,001 +	5.9	0.9
(n=)	(308)	(215)

There were significant differences between the types of Councils.

	<b>Metro Large %</b>	<b>Metro Small %</b>	<b>Regional %</b>	<b>Rural / Urban %</b>	<b>Rural %</b>
Less than \$250	32.1	29.8	55.6	57.0	84.1
\$251 – 500	16.5	22.3	15.9	20.9	8.8
\$502 – 1,000	18.3	14.9	19.0	5.8	3.5
\$1,001 – 2,000	13.0	19.1	4.8	9.3	2.4
\$2,001 – 4,000	11.3	4.3	3.1	7.0	1.2
\$4,001 +	8.7	9.6	1.6	-	-
(n=)	(115)	(94)	(63)	(86)	(170)

The candidates in the rural Councils spent the least on their campaigns – 84 per cent spent less than \$250. The regional and rural/urban campaigns also showed a majority who spent less than \$250. The patterns were very different in the metropolitan areas, with a much higher level of election spending.

However, for the overwhelming proportion of the candidates, the amount spent was miniscule in comparison with State election candidates. Given this, the question arises that for most candidates, there is little opportunity to inform the voters sufficiently for them to make an informed choice. This may be one factor explaining the low turnout at local elections – voters who have had no real opportunity to inform themselves about the candidates and their policies may well decide not to participate.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that many voters had very little, if any information about the candidates they were asked to choose between. When the levels of expenditure are compressed, this issue is emphasised.

<b>Total Spent</b>	<b>Metro Large %</b>	<b>Metro Small %</b>	<b>Regional %</b>	<b>Rural / Urban %</b>	<b>Rural %</b>
Less than \$1,000	66.9	67.0	90.5	83.7	96.4
\$1,001 – 2,000	13.0	19.1	4.8	9.3	2.4
More than 2,000	20.0	13.9	4.7	7.0	1.2
(n=)	(115)	(94)	(63)	(86)	(170)

Metro Metro Regional Rural Rural

The majority of candidates in all categories spent less than \$1 000 on their campaigns. This was strongest in the regional, rural/urban and rural Councils, partly due to less necessity to use expensive methods of campaigning. The smaller populations and, in the rural Councils especially, the personal contacts and use of networks often was sufficient for a campaign.

But in the metropolitan areas, there was significantly higher expenditure, deemed necessary by those candidates who could afford it. In fact, in some cases, the populations of the metropolitan Councils are much larger than State electorates, hence the issue arises of what is a sufficient resource level to adequately communicate with the voters.

***Time spent on Campaign***

<b>Weeks %</b>		<b>Days per week %</b>	
1	7.9	1	22.5
2	15.1	2	25.4
3	16.9	3	20.6
4	21.0	4	13.8
5-9	30.0	5	6.9
10-15	5.4	6	3.2
16+	3.6	7	7.6
(n=390)		(n=378)	

The majority of the candidates took their campaigns seriously, but for many their opportunity to campaign full-time was restricted by commitments to work and family.

For almost eight per cent of the candidates, one week or less was deemed sufficient for campaigning. In fact, some respondents claimed “no formal campaign”, and others stated “spent one day”. Almost 40 per cent spent between one and four weeks on their campaigns. At the other “end”, almost 10 per cent of the candidates claimed that they spent more than 10 weeks on the campaign trail.

In both 1<sup>st</sup> contestants and incumbent candidates, there was evidence that work/family commitments were limitations on the time available for campaigning. Almost one quarter of the candidates spent only one day per week, and almost half a maximum of two days.

## ASSESSMENTS

The 2006 survey included questions asking respondents to assess materials which were made available to them by the Local Government Association and the State Electoral Office. These materials were:

- “So you want to be on Council?” (LGA booklet)
- Briefing session (run by Council or LGA)
- Candidate Handbook (SEO)
- Nomination Kit (SEO)
- Information from discussions with Council.

The respondents were asked to rate the value of these sources to them, using a scale:

- 1 = excellent, invaluable
- 2 = valuable; more than just useful
- 3 = useful
- 4 = of limited value
- 5 = very little value at all
- 6 = did not use

The level of the response “did not use” was high. In some cases, it was clear from the questionnaires that a number of sitting members, especially long-term incumbents, had no need for such information. Further, those elected unopposed would have not needed to use more than the Nomination Kit.

The first point is clear from comparing the “did not use” answers by incumbency.

<b>Did not use</b>		
	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Contests %</b>	<b>Incumbents %</b>
Booklet	9.2	26.0
Briefing	27.2	38.8
Handbook	7.3	16.8
Kit	3.2	11.0
Discuss	15.0	26.2
(n=)	(218)	(296)

The incumbents were much lower-level users.

**Rating of sources**

Rating	Booklet %	Briefing %	Handbook %	Kit %	Discuss %
Excellent	12.9	9.7	11.8	13.2	16.7
Valuable	22.7	18.8	26.3	31.6	19.8
Useful	33.3	24.0	34.7	33.3	24.6
Limited	7.4	8.1	9.5	9.4	10.9
Little value	4.7	5.5	5.3	5.0	6.9
Did not use	18.9	33.8	12.5	7.5	21.1
(n=)	(528)	(494)	(527)	(531)	(521)

When the “did not use” data are excluded, the patterns indicate a very positive response to all five factors, which was uniform across the geographic subsets of the data.

**Positive Rating of Sources by Type of Council**

(“excellent” + “valuable” + “useful”)

	Metro Large %	Metro Small %	Regional %	Rural / Urban %	Rural %
Booklet	86.8	84.9	72.5	92.4	86.4
Briefing	82.9	79.1	71.8	84.0	71.3
Handbook	88.7	90.7	69.8	81.4	82.2
Kit	88.0	89.0	83.6	85.5	81.6
Discuss	70.9	82.7	79.1	71.9	77.4
(n=)	(114)	(93)	(61)	(80)	(171)

The strong positive reaction was common across 1<sup>st</sup> contestants and incumbents, with the former being consistently more positive.

	Total %	1 <sup>st</sup> Contest %	Incumbent %
Booklet	85.0	89.9	80.3
Briefing	79.6	87.0	73.2
Handbook	82.9	88.1	78.5
Kit	84.6	87.3	82.4
Discuss	77.6	79.7	75.5
(the n varies for each cell in this table)			

This is a congratulatory set of data for both the Local Government Association and the State Electoral Office, in that the resources prepared by them have been an obvious success. It is also clear that the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants, for whom these materials would have been most valuable, took up the offers and appreciated them.

Respondents were asked to offer suggestions for the improvement of these resources. Only 31 of the 571 respondents did so, perhaps a comment on the quality of what was offered to them in 2006.

Of those who did comment, the requests were various, but were only peripherally related to the resources: more briefings on the roles of candidates (seven respondents), better enforcement of signage regulations (3), more simplified processes (3), the materials in languages other than English (2), and all material on-line(2). Single responses included: media training for candidates, more forums for candidates, free copy of the roll to all candidates, and “more money”.

Two quotations from the questionnaires were examples of many of the requests.

*Council briefing session discussed only nomination processes etc. Needs also to discuss Council issues, meetings, time, commitment etc. Workshops for potential candidates are needed to inform them of the size of their commitments.*

### **Campaign methods**

Respondents were asked to specify which campaign methods they used.

<b>Method</b>	<b>% yes</b>
Worked with community groups	77.2 (n=295)
Door-knocked	68.3 (n=262)
Letter-boxed	88.3 (n=352)
Media releases	77.3 (n=291)
Street Signs	50.4 (n=210)
Advertising	57.5 (n=233)
Attended “meet the candidate” function	67.6 (n=256)

43 respondents mentioned other methods, including: radio (8 respondents), shopping centres (5), internet/email (5), street corner conversations (5), and telephone canvassing (5).

When these data are unpacked by the types of Councils, two significant differences emerged

<b>Method</b>	<b>Metro Large %</b>	<b>Metro Small %</b>	<b>Regional %</b>	<b>Rural / Urban %</b>	<b>Rural %</b>
Worked groups	55.9	43.3	38.5	40.0	28.1
Door-knocked	50.0	52.6	27.7	27.8	12.5
Letter-boxed	84.7	83.5	60.0	44.4	24.0
Media releases	40.7	41.2	56.9	44.4	30.2
Street signs	38.1	21.6	21.5	15.6	4.6
Advertising	28.0	20.6	23.1	33.3	18.2
Function	28.2	52.6	27.7	36.7	17.2
(n=)	(118)	(97)	(65)	(90)	(192)

The metropolitan candidates utilised canvassing (door-knocking) at double the rate of the candidates in the regional and rural areas, with the rural candidates the lowest users. This was also evident in the proportion who letter-boxed. Both methods are more suited to closely-settled urban situations.

The rural candidates were, by far, the least users of all seven methods. Some of this is explained by the geography and demography of the rural areas – canvassing, letter-boxing, street signage and forums would be more difficult to organise. Further, many rural candidates utilise networks and personal contacts as a key part of their campaigns.

The following table includes two sub-sets of data, and the total candidate set. The comparison of the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants and incumbents shows very little difference in usage of these campaign methods. The “tried and tested” methods are obvious relatively equally accepted by both groups.

The comparison of the second set of data – elected/not elected – provides an interesting result, the interpretation of which is that strong efforts in campaigning are not a guarantee of success. In every category, those not elected were much more active and involved, especially in door-knocking, letter-boxing and media releases.

	<b>Total %</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Contest %</b>	<b>Incumbent %</b>	<b>Elected %</b>	<b>Not Elected %</b>
Worked groups	39.8	39.2	38.9	38.8	41.6
Door-knocked	31.2	30.4	29.4	25.7	41.6
Letter-boxed	54.3	53.7	51.7	45.2	71.6
Media releases	39.4	45.8	33.4	33.2	51.3
Street signs	18.6	16.7	18.0	16.6	22.3
Advertising	23.5	23.3	22.7	20.3	29.4
Function	30.1	34.4	26.7	26.7	36.5
(n=)	(571)	(227)	(344)	(374)	(197)

## **Resources**

It was noted above that Local Government election candidates spend significantly less on their campaigns than State election candidates. Respondents were asked: “Did you have enough resources to inform the community well?” A total of 75 per cent (of 509 responses) stated that they did have sufficient resources. However, of the 201 responses from 1<sup>st</sup> contestants, only 64 per cent stated that they did have sufficient.

Of the 128 who stated that they did not have sufficient resources, only 40 gave an answer to the question: “what did you need?” The most common request was for more money (23 respondents), and 12 complained about the lack of media coverage for their campaigns. Other requests included public funding, truth in advertising leave from work, and access to photocopying.

Not surprisingly, there was a marked difference between the proportion of elected candidates who stated they had sufficient resources (87 per cent), and the 51 per cent of not elected candidates.

One respondent put an impassioned view which was echoed by many others

*The local media to help without slugging us an arm and a leg to advertise. Small-time candidates do not have the money to compete with well-known business people. We need a level playing field.*

## **Information provided**

A corollary question asked candidates if they were “aware of any action taken by the Council to inform voters about candidates”? If “yes”, respondents were asked if it was effective. A total of 63.1 per cent (of 540 responses) stated that they were aware of the efforts by their Council. The level of awareness was relatively similar across the types of Councils, and across the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants and incumbents.

The majority of the comments (from only 40 candidates) concerning the effect of these actions by Councils were either negative, or suggested improvements. Only eight respondents gave positive assessments, such as the information was well done, well promoted and/or that the Council web-site was “good”.

The negative comments emphasised the views: “the voters did not read the information; there is too much public apathy; there should have been information in languages other than English” . Few of these negative comments were directly related to the question. 13 respondents considered that their Council had not done enough to inform voters. Only six respondents commented positively: including “good website”, “well promoted/well done”.

The following quotes are generally representative.

- *Considering the resources of our Council, the information provided was very adequate.*
- *The Council displayed candidate profiles on the web-site, and many voters found this invaluable*
- *Council stuck the names of the candidates on the inside of glass doors so people could view them after hours.*

### ***“Illegal Practices”***

The survey included the question: “Do you believe that the ‘specifications’ outlined in the Local Government (Elections) Act 1999, including the ‘illegal practices’ section, were effective in the election in your Council area?” A total of 62.5 per cent (of 483 responses) stated that they believed that the provisions were effective. The range across the types of Councils was from 72.0 per cent in rural Councils to 51.7 per cent in Metropolitan (small) Councils, and 55.3 per cent in Metropolitan (large). A total of 68.6 per cent of the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants, and 58.3 per cent of the incumbents agreed that the specifications were effective. As one candidate put it: “Inappropriate and illegal practices were carefully monitored and protocols adhered to”.

Although 302 respondents stated that the provisions were effective, only 20 provided a comment as requested. The majority of these implied problems with their Council, rather than reasons why the system was effective. Some respondents complained that their Council “did not act”, or “needed to follow up complaints better”. Others complained that some candidates “broke the rules” but were not penalised. Some complained that the regulation needed to be “clearer and more sensible” and “simpler”. The positive comments were general – along the lines of “carefully monitored” and “worked well”.

Of the respondents who answered “not effective”, almost every person provided their reason for the assessment.

Why not effective?

	%
Council did not act/ignored it	33.9
Too complex/needs to be simpler/hard to follow	28.9
Laws not strong enough/unable to deal with problems	20.6
Too restrictive, hence not obeyed	12.8
Other	3.9
	(n=180 responses)

## ***Signage***

The issue of signage became a significant component of the campaign in many Council areas. To explore this, the survey asked the question: “Do you believe the specifications relating to the placement of election signs were clear and consistent?” Of the total of 571 respondents, 482 provided an answer. Of these, 86.7 per cent stated that they were satisfied with the clarity and consistency. This level of satisfaction was common across the types of Councils, ranging from 90 per cent in rural/urban to 80.3 per cent in metropolitan (large), and at 84.4 per cent and 88.6 per cent among 1<sup>st</sup> contestants and incumbents respectively.

Only 19 respondents ticked the “no” box, expressing dissatisfaction. Four stated the policy was simply “not clear”; two stated they were too complex. The remainder commented on matters other than the clarity and consistency of the regulation: that there needed to be more time for the signs to be up; that the laws were not applied; and that all signs should be banned.

A corollary question was asked: “Do you believe the enforcement by your Council of policies relating to the control of election signs was timely and impartial?” The responses from 482 of the 571 candidates produced 86.7 per cent who were satisfied with the actions of their Council, a pattern repeated across the various sub-sets of the data. Of the 64 respondents who disagreed, only 19 gave their reasons. The main allegations included: “the policy was not policed”; “slow/poor response to complaints”; “advice given by the Council was ambiguous/ not clear; “Council staff were not impartial”.

Overall, while the issue of signage made headlines in some contests, there was evidence from the survey that the clear majority of the candidates were satisfied with both the policy and the manner it was enforced.

## ***“Caretaker” policy***

The questionnaire explored an issue which has been under considerable discussion in all three levels of government – the meaning and application of a caretaker mode during election campaigns. The question asked was: “Some Councils have ‘caretaker’ policies similar to ‘caretaker conventions’ for other government agencies about what a Council may or may not do during the election period. Do you consider your Council (in formal Council meetings or through its administration) advantaged sitting members of Council in the election?”

Of the 490 responses, 26.7 per cent of the candidates answered “yes” – the sitting members were advantaged. However, only 48 of the 490 answered the supplementary question: “How?” This is surprising. Given that nearly 131 candidates considered that there had been an advantage for sitting members

through the actions of a Council, it would be expected that many more than 48 would specify in what way the advantage was given.

Of the 48 responses, 17 gave the general answer that their Council favoured sitting members during the campaign, 12 accused their Council of “pork-barrel” behaviour, nine accused their Council of unfair publicity in favour of sitting members, six accused Council members of using Council facilities, including offices, during the campaign, three claimed that their Council signed contracts during the campaign ( a breach of “caretaker”, but not necessarily favouring incumbents).

The following quotations show the “flavour” of the comments.

- *We dealt with major issues before caretaker came into effect. We were kept informed at all times about what we could and couldn't do.*
- *[Broken] by releasing communications promoting what Council has done and having photos of sitting members associated with the articles.*
- *Our Council implements caretaker role some 8 weeks before the election – seems to work very well.*
- *Council distributed promotional literature on Council paper re a capital project.*
- *Council made any decisions that should have been left until after the election. No Council meetings should be held during the election period after nominations.*
- *We had to continue the business of being elected members. I went to civic events. Any Council hosts events – all candidates were invited to come, but like in the other levels of government you have an advantage as an incumbent. I don't believe we made decisions which bought votes.*

## ASSESSMENTS OF PARTICIPANTS

The survey included a series of questions asking the candidates for any comments about the roles of the participants or potential participants.

Of these ten, three were formal participants: the Council, the Local Government Association, and the Returning Officer/State Electoral Office. The remainder were organizations and/or individuals who may have played a role in the campaigns.

The questions were open-ended, allowing the respondents to make their own comments. As a result, there was a kaleidoscope of responses which have been condensed to logical “collectives” in the following tables.

The response rates in regard to each participant varied markedly. In fact, the overall response rate was lower than expected. Given that the respondents were given the opportunity to comment on components which may have affected their campaigns and success, surprisingly few took the opportunity to do so.

This may be due to a number of factors. Many of the candidates may not have had any relationship at all with some of the participating organizations, some candidates may not have been affected at all by the activities of these “outside” groups. For some respondents, a “no comment” could be an expression of opinion that the group or organization did not play an important role in the elections. Certainly the response rates concerning some participants were low.

Participant	Response rate (n of respondents)%
The Media	219
Your Council	148
The Returning Officer/State Electoral office	131
The Local Government Association	113
Political Parties	104
Residents'/Ratepayers' Associations	70
State members of Parliament/Ministers	52
Trade Unions	43
Business/Community Organisations	26
State Public Servants/Agencies	20

However, despite the low response rate, many of those who did comment showed strong feelings.

Only 20 respondents offered a comment about the role of State Public servants/agencies. These were divided equally into “should stay out” and “were helpful”.

The responses to the roles of “Business/ Community Organisations” brought only 26 responses. The positive responses (13) included “assisted me/helpful/OK”. The negative responses were dominated by the simple assertion: “should not be involved”, and four respondents claimed that “business” was biased and practicing “undue influence”.

The role of trades unions elicited 43 responses, only two of which were positive – “they supported me”. Of the negative responses, 31 simply stated “should stay out” of local elections. There were five accusations of “intimidated me”, and one respondent criticised the letter to candidates on IR matters as “not relevant”.

In regard to the involvement of State MPs and/or Ministers, only 52 respondents provided a comment. Of these, 43 simply stated that these people should stay out of Local Government elections. Other comments included: “should not fund local candidates”, “had too much influence”, “helped only if their party”, “Liberals opposed to Residents’ Associations”.

Comments concerning the roles of Residents’/Ratepayers’ Associations showed a clear division of opinion. Of the 70 respondents who provided a comment, 30 were vehement about a positive role played in the campaign: “supportive”, “very active and positive”, “excellent advice”, “crucial”, “created interest”. The other 40 were equally vehement about the negative components: “personal attacks”, “too much influence”, “too much self-interest”, “too aggressive/intimidating/bullying”, “not accountable”, “pushed minority view”. One explanation of the division of opinion could be based on whether the candidate was supported or opposed by the Association concerned.

The following quotations from the questionnaires express the range of opinion.

- *Useful because without residents telling you what they want you have no direction.*
- *Can be intimidating when asked to attend their meetings. Meetings often become “councillor bashing”.*
- *Very active, gave all candidates the opportunity to be heard and sorted the information form all candidates.*
- *Local Government should try to avoid biased pressure groups – Councils must work for all ratepayers.*

An overwhelming negative reaction was prompted by the assessments of the role of political parties. Of 104 responses, only one was positive. A total of 89 respondents gave a simple and straightforward comment: “stay out/should be banned” in local elections. The remainder of the comments included: “Labor too powerful”, “too much influence”, “too covert”, “unfair use of party data-bases”, “parties provided money”.

The following quotes are representative.

- *Parties have an enormous influence by using the electoral data base to write personal appeals to electors. Unfair to independent candidates.*
- *One of my attractions to Local Government is that it is a-political, and I hope it remains so*
- *Hate political parties in Local Government elections.*
- *Stay out!*

The Local Government Association drew comments from 113 respondents, of which 97 were positive and only 16 negative. The latter were characterised by “little help, ineffective, nothing for rural contests, bland campaign/publications dull, not very visible”. But the positive reactions were overwhelming. In summary (respondents), “significant positive role/fantastic/excellent (32), helpful (29), good advertising/publicity/publications (12), tried to raise interest (11), website excellent (4)”.

I think the considerable effort by the LGA has resulted in a healthy interest.  
A sterling effort to gain more interest in the election  
Excellent promotion and encouragement for residents to be involved

The role of the Returning Officer/State Electoral Office brought comments from 131 respondents. The positive comments (101) far outweighed the negative (30). The latter included “too slow to act on complaints/questions” (11), “toothless” (7), “confusing/contradictory” (4), and three respondents made the comment that the Returning Officer should not come from the Council staff.

- *The Returning officer was very helpful in the manner he handled my inquiries.*
- *The SEO was very strict about what candidates could say in election material.*
- *The RO was very fair and helpful.*

The positive comments were dominated by a set which included words such as professional, helpful, excellent (66 respondents), and a set of 30 respondents who made the general comment of “helpful”. Some commented on an “excellent briefing” and “excellent nomination kit”.

A total of 148 respondents provided an assessment of the role of their Council, 103 positive and 45 negative. The positive comments were divided between general and specific. The former included: “good, OK, superb, helpful, appropriate, excellent advice”. The specific positive comments included “impartial, tried to get turnout up, professional, website good, proactive, window notices good, media publicity excellent, ran forums, produced magazine”.

- *Very helpful – could not have done more.*
- *Was impartial and was seen to be impartial.*

The negative comments were also divided between general and specific. The former included: “poor, needed to be proactive, too reactive, should have been more involved, no real help”. The specific comments included: “ too partisan, favoured sitting members, did not enforce rules, should simplify rules, poor website, needed ‘caretaker’ applied, lacked courage to act, needed more promotion. One respondent simply said that the Council should play no part in the campaign.

The role of the media brought the highest proportion of responses, and also elicited vastly different opinions, most of which were forcefully put. Of the 571 respondents, 219 provided a comment – by far the highest response for any of the categories. Of these, opinions were almost equally divided positive and negative. Some negative comments were idiosyncratic, such as “misquoted me”, “concentrated too much on the Mayor”, “nothing about our contest in the Advertiser”.

On the positive side, general comments (61 responses) included: “good, fair, kept voters informed, keen interest, low-key but good”. A specific theme (58) was that the media were “unbiased”. Three respondents put the personal assessment: “supportive of me”.

On the negative side, the highest rate of response concerned alleged bias (58 respondents), and a general comments included that the coverage was “sensationalised, limited coverage, bare minimum, little interested, too hyped, little depth, trivialised, did not do homework”. Eight responses referred to a personal aspect: “demanded advertisements from me, too late with my material, press was Ok but radio was not, misquoted me”.

The following quotations are representative.

- *Unfair bias towards new candidates.*
- *Failed to provide balance reporting.*
- *Constructive in providing information regarding all candidates.*
- *Local paper played a most effective role informing the electors of the elections and the candidates.*
- *Published statements by each candidate accurately.*
- *Very helpful to candidates by doing stories and ;profiles.*
- *It would be fine if it was more factual.*
- *Have their own agenda in knocking Local Government on many issues. Lack of understanding of the role of Local Government.*
- *Incredible lack of any coverage – most weeks only one half page was devoted to the election.*
- *Overall very poor.*

Overall, the proportion of respondents – a solid majority in all of the cases – who did not make any comments may be an indication of satisfaction, but there is also the possibility that these issues are not of great concern to the majority of the candidates.

## THE FUTURE

The questionnaire concluded with important questions.

Candidates were asked: “Would you stand in a supplementary election or the next general elections for your Council?” Of the 444 who responded, 299 (67.3%) stated that they would stand, but only 153 of these gave a reason for their decision. Of those who did, the responses of over half (92) stated that they wished to make a contribution to their local area. Eighteen said that one term was not enough for them to complete their agenda, and 14 named specific issues which needed to be resolved. Of the remainder, four argued the case for more females in Local Government, six named governance issues which they wished to resolve, and three simply called their experience on Council as “fantastic/stimulating”.

- *I enjoy being of service to my community, and improving the standards and facilities.*
- *I am passionate about this community*

The proportion stating they would stand showed a significant difference across the types of Councils. In the two metropolitan categories, 80.0 per cent of the candidates for the large Councils stated they would stand again, but only 69.4 per cent of the small Councils were so inclined. 68.3 per cent of the regional Council candidates would stand again; 61.8 per cent of rural/urban Councils, and 59.7 per cent of the rural Council candidates. The last two reflect the high proportion of older candidates who stated that they were “too old” or “it was time to retire”. A total of 84.8 per cent of the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants were willing to stand again, compared to only 55.6 per cent of the incumbents.

Of the 145 who stated that they would not stand again, 80 explained. 63 stated that they had reached an age where retirement from Council was an attractive option, or that they had served long enough. “I have reached my expiry date” wrote one. Ten respondents claimed that the allowance was not sufficient, and/or the 4-year term was too long. Seven commented on negative governance issues.

Success rate in 2006 made little difference. On the respondents who were elected unopposed, 69 per cent stated that they would stand again. The proportions were similar in the group who were elected in a contest (67 per cent) and the defeated candidates (66 per cent).

The questionnaire asked for “suggestions which might encourage more people to stand for election to Local Government”. Only 138 candidates responded. Two suggestions were prominent. More publicity and better communication about the role of a councillor constituted over one quarter of the responses (26.1%), and 28 candidates (20.2%) stated that shorter terms would be an encouragement. The latter issue emerged in other parts of the survey – the 4-year term is seen by a significant proportion as a disincentive.

Eleven respondents suggested more forums to encourage candidates, and 31 proposed higher allowances, public funding and more resources. Smaller Councils, better meeting times, and the provision of child care were also proposed by a few respondents.

The quotations below cross the various opinions stated.

- *Local Government must attract the interest of the community with more media releases and more efforts by members and staff.*
- *Negative comments by State politicians and commercial media not helpful.*
- *The importance of Local Government is not given proper consideration in the school curricula.*
- *Better community engagement by Council throughout the full term of the Council so that people feel more involved.*
- *I think the Council needs to: reach out to the public more actively; be more proactive in presenting career opportunities; break down perceived us/them barriers.*
- *A long bit of 4 by 2!! Usually the people who should be on are those who are successful in business and too busy to devote the 12 or so hours a week needed to be a decent Councillor.*
- *Attend a few Council meetings – see what it is all about.*
- *Shorter terms – two years, with half the Council changing each election.*
- *Child care – or carer’s assistance is a big issue in the larger areas. Times of meetings is also a challenge to be fair to all.*
- *4-year term is too long. Allowance does not reflect the responsibility and commitment needed.*
- *Child care services need to be available at the Chamber for meetings.*
- *A shorter period of time i.e. 2 years max. We are only volunteers.*
- *Some kind of reward or incentive package (books, trees, solar panels, scholarship) when there is an improvement in a Council area.*
- *Go back to 2 years – 4 years are a deterrent.*
- *Need to send promotional teams out to community groups – with positive views on the role of a councillor.*

One question related to an issue which is a constant in local Government elections – the relatively low level of turnout. The candidates were asked: "Do you have any suggestions which might encourage more people to vote in Local Government elections?" A total of 270 responded, some mentioning more than one suggestion. The issue of postal voting was mentioned by 27: the period was claimed to be too long, the envelope was claimed to be too much like "junk mail", and 16 respondents believed that the system should return to booth voting. Twenty responses were emphatic that if parties were kept out, then turnout would rise. Eleven candidates suggested incentives, including a deduction from rates for voting, even a "lottery ticket" as a "prize". Other responses included the necessity to attract more female candidates, internet voting, all elections in Australia to be held on the same day, and that sitting members should be "less negative".

A total of 67 responses focussed on a range of components under the general heading of “more/better publicity/education”. They called for more information to voters, more information about the candidates, involvement of education in schools, and more promotion.

The strongest response, however, was the call for “compulsory voting”. A surprisingly high number of 128 responses simply stated that this was the only solution (although some stated that they saw it as a “last resort”).

The following quotations contain the breadth of opinion.

- *Have an incentive of 5% rate reduction for voting*
- *The general consensus among residents I spoke with that that they were not prepared to vote if they did not know anything about the people standing*
- *To the 70% who don't vote, you subject them to a few “grim reaper” ads along the lines that if you don't vote you only get the Councillors you deserve, and therefore there is no reason to grizzle re Council actions or inactions.*
- *Local Government and its involvement in any community should be taught in all schools. Every student should be compelled to attend at least one Council meeting.*
- *Make compulsory voting for 3 levels of government or make voluntary for all. People see LG representation as marginal because they don't have to vote.*
- *Continuous communication, Council to keep electorate aware of issue.*
- *Incentive could be by the way of a small discount or rebate on rates if envelope is returned.*
- *Incentives may work – payment to Councils from State government on a sliding scale relative to the % of votes cast.*
- *Ballot papers were thrown away with the junk mail – must be more “visible”.*
- *Very hard to overcome apathy.*
- *LC councillors still suffer from a poor image.*
- *CV would encourage more people to think about the candidates and what their Council does for them.*
- *Postal vote is not a good idea – many thought it was junk mail.*
- *Having booth voting makes people feel they are part of the election.*

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## **APPENDIX 1: 1<sup>ST</sup> AND INCUMBENT CANDIDATES SUMMARY COMPARATIVE PROFILE**

### 1<sup>st</sup> Contestants and Incumbents

For any real change to occur in the profile of the members of Local Councils, there must be significant changes in the nature of the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants. The two entrenched problems in Councils have been the low proportions of females and younger people. But there are other aspects which may change, following the emergence of different patterns in the society, such as increasing education levels, a trend to professional and white-collar occupations, the involvement of more non-Australian born, and significant trends of change in family structures.

The following provides a summary comparison – based on significant aspects of the 1<sup>st</sup> contestant candidates in the 2006 elections, and of the incumbents who re-nominated.

The gender balance has hardly changed after 2006. Only 27 per cent of 1<sup>st</sup> contestants were women, compared to 29.5 per cent of incumbents.

The age profile has improved. 18.7 per cent of the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants were under 40 years of age; only 4.8 per cent of the incumbents. If this trend continues, it could transform the age profile of Council membership over time.

Education levels are increasing rapidly. 58.5 per cent of the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants completed year 12, compared to 37.4 per cent of incumbents. This trend is also strongly evident in post-secondary qualifications, with 71.3 per cent of 1<sup>st</sup> contestants and 54.2 per cent of incumbents.

The patterns of employments status are shifting in favour of full-time and overall paid employment: 44.8 per cent of 1<sup>st</sup> contestants and 26.0 per cent of incumbents. There is a decreasing component of retired candidates – 16.9 per cent of 1<sup>st</sup> contestants and 29.5 per cent of incumbents.

Occupational patterns are also changing. Significantly higher proportions of 1<sup>st</sup> contestants than incumbents are in Managerial /Executive positions (30.2 and 23.6 per cent respectively), and professional occupations (28.2 and 19.6 per cent). The primary industry sector, a natural component of the country Councils, has declined to 13.4 per cent of 1<sup>st</sup> contestants with 27.0 per cent of incumbents.

The employment sector profile has seen major shifts: away from the private sector (although it still dominates) with 65.1 per cent of 1<sup>st</sup> contestants and 80.2 per cent of incumbents; and a rise in State public sector employment – 22.4 per cent and 13.8 per cent respectively.

There is little difference in the patterns of involvement with the community between 1<sup>st</sup> contestants and incumbents

There was a surprising result in terms of membership of political parties. The conventional wisdom is that parties are playing an increasing role in Local Government. However, only 41 (18.1 per cent) of the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants were party members, compared to 74 (22.5 per cent) of incumbents. Party membership of the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants was 17 Labor, 14 Liberal, 10 other, and for the incumbents 26 Labor, 38 Liberal and 10 other. Overall, the lower level of membership of parties among the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants was an unexpected result.

Recruitment patterns showed significant differences. Of the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants, 21.6 per cent named “councillor” as their prime reason for nominating, while 39.8 per cent of incumbents did so. There was almost twice the proportion of 1<sup>st</sup> contestants who stated that an issue was their main reason: 22.1 per cent compared to 12.1 per cent for incumbents

Patterns of expenses of the campaign were relatively uniform over both groups.

The 1<sup>st</sup> contestants were significantly more positive about the resources offered to them in the campaign by the Local Government Association and the State Electoral Office.

In terms of campaign methods the only significant difference was that the 1<sup>st</sup> contestants placed a much higher importance on the use of media releases than the incumbents.

Some of these differences have an impact on the membership of the Councils. For example, in the factor of age, the Councils elected in 2006 show a slight improvement in the younger age profile, but the overall profile remains a problem.

	Surveys			
	1987%	1997%	2004%	2006%
Under 40	24.9	10.8	6.6	9.1
Over 60	19.1	21.3	43.8	42.1

There has been a slow improvement in the gender profile over time: 16 per cent female members in 1987, 25 per cent in 1997, 26 per cent in 2004, and 29.3 per cent in 2006. But this 2006 increase was not due to an influx of new women into the election contests. In fact, the gender ratio of 1<sup>st</sup> contestants was lower than the incumbents.

That change in the profile of members is slow is emphasised by the patterns of employment and occupation. Despite a significant increase among 1<sup>st</sup> contestants of paid employment, professional and white collar occupations, and a decrease in the proportions of retired people, the changes in the membership after the 2006 elections are minor.

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	<b>Surveys</b>	
	<b>2004%</b>	<b>2006%</b>
Paid employment	28.2	32.4
Retired	28.2	24.4
Employer/self employed	37.0	37.9
Professional	21.4	22.4
White Collar	9.7	12.1
Primary Industry	22.3	25.7