

LOCAL GOVERNMENT — ELECTIONS

1516. Hon TJORN SIBMA to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Electoral Affairs:

I refer to the recent local government elections.

- (1) What was the cost to the state government and the Western Australian Electoral Commission for conducting the elections?
- (2) How many WAEC staff were employed during the election period?
- (3) What specific training and preparation did the WAEC undertake to implement the state government's tranche of legislative changes?
- (4) Were any problems encountered during the vote-tallying process, and were there any delays to the timely declaration of results?
- (5) What would these problems be attributed to?

Hon DARREN WEST replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. On behalf of the Minister for Electoral Affairs, I have the following answer, which I provide on behalf of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Electoral Affairs.

- (1) The Western Australian Electoral Commission has not yet finalised reconciliation of all invoices incurred for the 2023 ordinary local government elections held on 21 October 2023.
- (2) The commission engaged approximately 1 435 staff for the local government elections. As with all elections, the commission's permanent workforce of around 45 staff was supplemented by contract and temporary personnel staff.
- (3) The commission undertook its usual planning processes for the 2023 local government ordinary elections as well as training for returning officer liaison officers and returning officers, including a two-day face-to-face workshop. An online learning management system, manuals and video instructions were also available to returning officers. Returning officers were provided with materials for training count staff for their local government election. Additional online training was provided closer to the election for the count and results.
- (4)–(5) The commission always applies the principle of accuracy over speed to the counting of votes, and took a cautious approach to the results phase of the 2023 ordinary local government elections, noting the introduction of new voting and counting methods. The Electoral Commission provided advice to local governments and candidates in the lead-up to the elections that results might not be available until the Monday or Tuesday. This advice was also published on the WAEC website. The majority of local government election results were declared by close of business on Monday, 23 October 2023. It is acknowledged that the commission's cautious approach contributed to some delays in communication with returning officers, to allow them to finalise counts. This has been identified in debrief workshops and will be addressed for future local government elections.