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Reference:
SC5094 – 26/30125

2 April 2026

The Hon Peter Primrose MLC
Committee Chair
Electoral Matters Committee

Re: Inquiry into the Display of Electoral Posters and Other Electoral Signage at Voting Centres

Kiama Municipal Council welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Committee's inquiry into the display of electoral posters and other electoral related signage around voting centres in NSW (including early voting centres). Council's Compliance Team has consistently faced significant operational challenges during Federal, State and Local Government election periods relating to the unlawful placement of electoral material on Council-owned, public or Crown land and on public infrastructure.

These issues have persisted despite regular communication with candidates and campaign teams, and the problem continues to consume substantial Council resources while diminishing public amenity and, in some cases, creating safety risks.

For ease of understanding our submission we have prepared it based on the terms of reference.

a) The areas around voting centres within which the number/size of posters and other electoral signage should be limited, considering the variety of settings in which voting centres are located (including enclosed grounds such as schools) and an exceptions for buildings or uses within those zones;

An ongoing issue that Council encounters during every election cycle (regardless of election type) is the unauthorised placement of electoral signage.

During every election cycle, candidates or campaign volunteers place posters, corflutes and other promotional materials on:

- Nature strips, footpaths and verges
- Council-owned or managed land
- Crown land within Council's management responsibility
- Public infrastructure, including light poles and similar assets

Despite Council's proactive engagement before each election, including issuing written guidance to all registered candidates, non-compliance remains widespread.

It is Council's recommendation that buffers should be restricted to land boundaries with no campaign material to be placed on footpaths or road related areas around polling locations.

b) The persons and/or groups who should be permitted to display posters and other electoral signage within these areas, and whether the display of posters and other electoral signage should be limited to candidates, or candidates and parties;

It is Council's recommendation that signage limits should apply to candidates as this will assist with reducing waste across the election.

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- c) *The number/size of posters and other electoral signage that should be permitted to be displayed by each person or group, and whether the limit should apply severally or collectively for associated people and groups;***

It is Council's recommendation that signage limits should apply collectively for people and groups. This will assist with reducing waste across the election.

- d) *Whether there should be specific poster and other electoral signage limits for Assembly general elections and periodic Council elections and by-elections;***

It is Council's recommendation that specific poster and other electoral signage limits apply equally to all election types.

- e) *The period within which any limits should apply;***

It is Council's recommendation that the period within which any limits should apply is during early voting up to and including on polling day.

- f) *The implied freedom of political communication under the Commonwealth Constitution;***

Nil comment.

- g) *Appropriate mechanisms for the enforcement of restrictions;***

Before each election, Council distributes detailed guidance reminding candidates of the requirements under:

- *Commonwealth Electoral Act*
- *State Environmental Planning Policy (Exempt and Complying Development Codes) 2008*
- *Local Government (General) Regulation 2005*

Key elements include:

- Political signage may only be displayed from the official opening of the election until seven (7) days after polling day.
- Council does **not** grant landowner consent for electoral material on Council-managed land, except designated pre-polling locations.
- Signage on private land must comply with Subdivision 13 of the SEPP for exempt development.
- Non-compliant signage may be removed, impounded or disposed of, and fines issued.

Despite issuing this guidance consistently, candidates regularly dispute the rules and continue to install signage unlawfully.

Given the persistent issues and the clear regulatory framework, Council will continue to:

- Impound electoral signage installed unlawfully on Council-owned or managed road reserves (verges, footpaths, nature strips, utility poles)
- Issue fines for breaches of applicable legislation
- Impound and issue fines where candidates have not obtained required State agency approval for signage on State-managed roads or Crown Reserves

These actions are necessary to protect public safety, ensure consistent urban amenity, and uphold legislative requirements.

It is Council's recommendation that local Councils are provided with clear and constant enforcement powers including ability to fine and cost recovery.

h) Any other related matter.

Council endorsement

At the July 2025 Council meeting there was a resolution (25/230OC) that Council:

1. Acknowledges community concerns regarding the increasing use of soft plastics and bunting used at pre-poll and polling centre locations across the local government area at Federal, State and Local elections.
2. Notes that a significant amount of waste is generated as a result of election events and is managed and processed by Council's waste services.
3. Delegates to the CEO to formally lodge a motion with Local Government NSW (LGNSW) as part of the LGNSW 2025 Annual Conference, as suggested on page 151 of the agenda: *"That the LGNSW calls on the NSW Electoral Commission and the Australian Electoral Commission for appropriate electoral reforms to reduce and manage the level of signage and election materials during election periods at all levels of government."*
4. Advocate for one week of pre poll only.

Environmental considerations

The NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water partnered with the NSW Environment Protection Authority on a three-year study, [the Broadscale Microplastic Assessment](#), which includes a report card and full technical report on microplastics in coastal waterways.

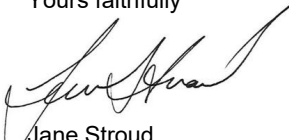
The study found that microplastics were detected in every waterway that was sampled with the findings showing that urbanisation strongly increases microplastic contamination.

Kiama Council acknowledges the study's findings that the Minnamurra River had very high plastic contamination, reflecting the local urbanised environment of Kiama, and is committed to ongoing action to prevent microplastics entering waterways.

Crooked River and Werri Lagoon were found to have high levels of microplastic concentration. Around two thirds of the state's waterways had moderate or high levels, according to the research study. Limiting the size and number of posters and electoral signage for elections will assist in reducing waste including microplastics.

Council appreciates the Committee's attention to this matter. Strengthening the regulatory framework and improving compliance will significantly reduce the burden on local government, maintain public amenity and safety, and ensure fairness across election campaigns.

Yours faithfully



Jane Stroud
Chief Executive Officer