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## Administrator Minute – 19 July 2023

The next Local Government Elections for the Wingecarribee Shire will be held on Saturday, 24 September 2024\*. Council has engaged the services of the NSW State Electoral Office to conduct the election.

Over recent weeks I have been discussing the Shire's Councillor return pathway with the Office of Local Government (OLG) and the Administrators of Balranald and Central Coast Councils, with a view to developing a formal program for candidates as distinct to the elected Councillor induction, which is really a matter for the General Manager.

Balranald, Central Coast and Wingecarribee Shires were all subject to independent Public Inquiries with recommendations from Commissioners that all public offices be declared vacant and other recommendations in relation to education and training. The OLG has indicated that Administrators need to play a key role in supporting a Council to transition back to elected civic leadership.

The OLG sees participation of Administrators in candidate information sessions to talk about the leadership failures that led to the previous Councils dismissal and the steps taken to address these failures while under Administration as something that will contribute to the success of that transition.

Local Government elected service is not a profession and electors should have confidence that their representation comes from a sense of civic and community service and pride and not, what in my view happened previously at Wingecarribee, entitlement, ego and personality.

Following a meeting with the OLG last week, it has been agreed that they will oversee and assist in facilitating Councillor return pathways and it has also been agreed that a program involving the three Councils to independently develop content with each partly making a contribution of approximately \$10,000.

Good Governance in local government is about representing the whole Shire, and being a contributing and active member of the governing body and the Local Government Act is very clear in this regard. In my view, the Wingecarribee Public Inquiry provides evidence that this did not occur with the previous Council.

An initial public session for intending candidates will be held in mid-late October 2023 with three formal sessions conducted in April, May and June 2024. While roles and responsibilities will no doubt be at the forefront, financial responsibilities, managing conflicts, governance, interaction with Council staff, social media and how to make a positive impact and work cohesively as the elected Council will be addressed as part of the program.

Importantly, the lessons from the disfunction of the previous Council (both political and administrative) will be addressed in all sessions, to ensure that the reputational, social and financial costs, not to mention stagnation and loss of opportunity to benefit the Shire, are not repeated.

It is proposed to also invite participation of successful past and present Councillors from within NSW local government, to provide their input and share their experience on being an effective elected representative and how to make a positive impact in the local community.

In the case of Wingecarribee I propose to publish before the elections the names of those candidates who participated.

As I said earlier, the post election induction of Councillors will be a matter for the General Manager and in that regard work has already commenced to ensure that elected members can hit the ground running and to ensure that the lessons of the Wingecarribee Public Inquiry are learnt.