

LGOIMA

When releasing responses to previous LGOIMA requests, names of individual requestors may be withheld to protect their privacy.

Information requested by the media, from public sector organisations and MPs will always be published while information specific to an individual or their property will not generally be published.

Request

from: Radio NZ

For: Local Body Elections – Voter Engagement

Response

by: Mary Birch
Manager Governance and Support Services

Venus Sood

From: Mary Birch
Sent: Friday, 10 January 2020 3:17 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: LGOIMA Response - Voter turnout and engagement
Attachments: Nelson City Council Elections - Voter Engagement.xlsx

Kia ora [REDACTED],

Many thanks for your email of 28 November 2019, requesting information relating to election expenditure and voter engagement.

You requested:

"1. The total amount spent by the Council that went into promoting the election, and increasing voter turnout - for every council election since 2000."

Please see attached spreadsheet for the total spend for Nelson City Council for promoting the election and increasing voter turnout for the 2013, 2016 and 2019 elections. All other expenditure was included within business as usual costs.

Expense documentation prior to the 2013 Election is not held electronically and hardcopy records would need to be retrieved from archives and collated. Therefore, your request for information relating to the elections prior to 2013 is refused under Section 17 (f) of the Local Government official Information and Meetings Act 1987, in that the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

"2. A breakdown of the spending that went into promoting the election and increasing voter turnout (e.g. through comms, publ campaign, education campaign) - for every council election since 2000 (just for the 2016 and 2019 election)."

Please see attached spreadsheet for the total spend for Nelson City Council for promoting the election and increasing voter turnout for the 2013, 2016 and 2019 elections. All other expenditure was included within business as usual costs.

Expense documentation prior to the 2013 Election is not held electronically and hardcopy records would need to be retrieved from archives and collated. Therefore, your request for information relating to the elections prior to 2013 is refused under Section 17 (f) of the Local Government official Information and Meetings Act 1987, in that the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

"3. An outline of the strategy that was used by the Council to promote voting in this election."

Nelson historically has a higher than average voter turnout, a trend that we are proud of and Council is very keen to continue. Our strategy for this election was to encourage a diverse range of candidates to stand, engage the public with the importance of voting, promote voter enrolment and voter turnout. We wanted to achieve this in the most cost effective way possible, using our existing communications channels and internal resources.

With a reduction in locations to physically post in votes, the council identified that creating 'one stop shops' for enrolment and voting would be beneficial. The Council set up stands at the local market, liaised with the local language school to engage with migrants new to Nelson and made libraries election hubs for information and voting. We promoted the services via our online and traditional channels. This resulted in a significant number of voters using this service to enrol and cast their vote.

Nelson was fortunate to have several key organisations host and stream live candidate debates which we promoted via Council's communications channels.

We utilised social media as fully as possible creating three videos to increase awareness/engagement and encourage voter turnout. We also posted several times each week as key deadlines approached.

With a staff of 300+, staff engagement was incorporated as another part of Council's strategy encouraging staff to enrol and vote themselves, understand what was happening to be able to champion the value of voting to friends and family. This was done via regular promotion through our internal channels (posters, intranet, team meetings) and some friendly rivalry with other councils via the #voteoff campaign and daily vote count messaging.

"4. A list of new initiatives thought up by the Council this year that would promote voter turnout and voter engagement."

New initiatives to promote voter turnout and engagement for the 2019 election were as follows:

- One stop shop – Nelson Market – Council staff, together with Electoral Commission staff had a stall at the Saturday Nelson market over the three week voting period. Voters were able to check they were on the electoral roll, update their addresses, enrol to vote and complete a special vote
- One stop shop – English language School - Council staff, together with Electoral Commission staff worked with language school tutors to enrol and issue a special vote for new migrants to Nelson
- All customer facing staff wore bright orange tee shirts during the pre-election period (July to October 2019) which included the logo "Stand Vote in the place that you love". This raised awareness for the voters that the nomination and voting periods were happening
- Vote off challenge – participated with five other councils in a challenge to increase voter turnout which was included in our social media promotion
- Library involvement – Libraries were involved. Library staff were sworn in as electoral officials and able to engage with voters locally. Election displays and ballot boxes were made available at all libraries, making it easier for voters to participate and vote.
- The candidate information evening was live-streamed and available on the website
- Details of meet the candidate events were available to the public via the website
- Voter turnout visual displayed on the Council website in the voting period countdown
- Instagram – Council posted election images on our Instagram page
- Email footer used by all staff in email correspondence "VOTE 2019 – VOTE IN THE PLACE THAT YOU LOVE"
- Candidates were given the opportunity to respond to a couple of questions – their responses were made available on the website

Enhanced initiatives to promote voter turnout and engagement for the 2019 election were as follows:

- Social media videos – an increase in the number of videos created and promoted through social media compared to the 2016 election.
- Social media posts – a total of 28 posts were created to help engage the public in the election, 10 of which were boosted.
- Enhanced communications programme – increased focus on promoting candidate enrolment, voter enrolment and voter turnout through Council's existing channels, internal and external
- Poster campaign – Stand Vote in the Place that you Love posters were displayed in Council buildings and public noticeboards

"5. Evidence of efforts made by the Council to encourage and increase voter engagement e.g. a "meet the candidates" event, a Mayoral debate, working with local news outlets to increase election coverage"

Please see the following for evidence of the efforts that were made:

- Nelson City Council website: <http://www.nelson.govt.nz/council/elections-2019/>
- The online version of Our Nelson <https://our.nelson.govt.nz/>
- Nelson City Council facebook
- Nelson City Council Instagram

If you are not satisfied with our response regarding voter turnout and engagement, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this response. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or Freephone 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi,

Mary

Mary Birch

Manager Governance and Support Services
Kāwanatanga Kaiwhakahaere me ngā Ratonga Tautoko

Nelson City Council | Te Kaunihera o Whakatū

P 03 546 0391 M [REDACTED]
nelson.govt.nz

Election Breakdown of Expenditure

	Design	Candidate Events	Social Media Boosts
2013		1175.00	
2016	141.96		
2019	1032.5		346.02

Non-Resident Ratepayer Engagement	Radio Advertising	Printing	Nelson Market
411.19	500.4		
485.05	6908	1743.82	50.43

				Total	
Advertising					
	Tee Shirts			1175.00	
	304			1357.55	All other expenditure
		1062.91	1000	12628.73	was part of BAU

Venus Sood

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Thursday, 28 November 2019 5:13 PM

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: LGOIMA Request: Council spending on election promotion and voter engagement

Categories: 4 Hours

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am looking for information regarding how much the Council spent, and what sort of initiatives went into promoting turnout and voter engagement, for the recent council elections in October, compared with previous elections?

Please supply the following information under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act (LGOIMA).

In particular, I am looking for:

- The total amount spent by the Council that went into promoting the election, and increasing voter turnout - for every council election since 2000
- A breakdown of the spending that went into promoting the election and increasing voter turnout (e.g. through comms, publicity campaign, education campaign) - for every council election since 2000 (- if the information exists. If it is too time-expensive, then can I request the information just for the 2016 & 2019 election).
- An outline of the strategy that was used by the Council to promote voting in this election
- A list of **new** initiatives thought up by the Council this year that would promote voter turnout and voter engagement
- Evidence of efforts made by the Council to encourage and increase voter engagement e.g. a "meet the candidates" event, a Mayoral debate, working with local news outlets to increase election coverage

Can the information please be collated into a spreadsheet - with rows divided by year, and columns divided by: total spend and breakdown of expenditure into separate categories. Please note the examples listed for categories in point 2 are not exhaustive.

I understand that a decision on a request for information under the LGOIMA should be made within 20 working days of receiving that request.

If you need any more information from me, please let me know as soon as possible. You can get in touch with me either via email, or on 04 474 1928.

Many thanks,

Harry

[REDACTED] | RNZ Reporter

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<https://www.rnz.co.nz/>

[REDACTED]

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