

in council polls



Popular: Sandra McCarthy takes a break from the council campaign at Kiama's Surf Beach. She will be returned as town mayor. Picture: ORLANDO CHIODO



Mock poll: Graham Larcombe "votes".
Picture: ORLANDO CHIODO

Activists get chance to lodge protest

WOLLONGONG

By VERONICA APAP

WOLLONGONG residents had a chance to vote despite not having any councillors to elect at the weekend.

Activists Wollongong Against Corruption organised a mock community ballot allowing residents to vote for corruption or democracy, spokeswoman Jess Moore said.

"The State Government has denied us our basic right to vote, not in order to fight the very real problem of corruption, but to avoid a disaster at the polls," she said.

"This is absolutely inexcusable."

Ms Moore said the activists wanted to increase community participation in local politics to fight corruption.

"We demand the new Premier arrange fresh elections to Wollongong and Shellharbour councils by no later than March 2009," she said.

"Only with increased transparency and accountability can local government regain respect in the Illawarra."



Church: Election fever was replaced by this fete.
Picture: GREG TOTMAN

McCarthy gets big vote of confidence

KIAMA

By MICHELLE HOCTOR

SANDRA McCarthy not only achieved a landslide victory in the Kiama local government election, but will be voted in for a ninth year as mayor when the new council meets next month.

Councillor McCarthy, who topped the weekend poll, is tipped to have three, possibly even four, members of her five-person team elected to the Kiama council.

In addition, the Kiama Greens have said they will support Cr McCarthy as mayor when the council next meets on October 21.

For the first time in decades, the Australian Labor Party is likely to have no representation on the council, with Kiama ALP president Neil Reilly fighting for his survival and Joyce Wheatley - a councillor of 28 years - unofficially eliminated from the race.

With only first preference votes counted, pre-poll and postal votes yet to be tallied and preferences still to be distributed, the final result in Kiama is not expected to

Newsagent robbed at gunpoint

KIAMA council candidate Bruce Johnston started election day on Saturday with a 12-gauge shotgun pointed at his chest.

The Kiama Newsagency proprietor was alone in his Terralong St store, sorting goods behind the counter about 6.30am when he stood up to be confronted by an intruder with a gun.

"I looked up to say, 'Good morning, how are you?' and I looked straight up into the barrel of a 12-gauge shotgun, with it pointed

right at my chest, crooked up under this guy's armpit," Mr Johnston said.

"He said, 'Open up your till, give me all your notes or I'll put a shot straight through you'."

Mr Johnston did as instructed and the man, described as having dark, short hair and wearing a beige, striped jumper and baseball cap, left the shop, headed on foot in an easterly direction.

Mr Johnston, who has an outside chance of winning a council seat, said he stayed calm during the robbery.

be known until early next week.

However, there is a consensus that Cr McCarthy's Teamwork, Leadership, Community (TLC) team will dominate the nine seats on Kiama Municipal Council.

Cr McCarthy (TLC), Lexie Wheeler (TLC), Peter Bowman (TLC), Ben van der Wijngaart (Kiama Greens), Monique Dare-

Ward (Kiama Greens) and independents Brian Petschler and Trevor Fredericks are expected to fill seven seats.

Warren Steel (We Love Kiama), Neil Reilly (Community First) and Jane Littrich (TLC) are expected to battle for the final two seats.

Cr McCarthy's team accounted for 36 per cent of first preferences,

comprising 26 per cent above the line and 10 per cent for Cr McCarthy below the line.

The result represents a 10 per cent increase on the councillor's 2004 vote, when she also topped the poll in Kiama.

The Kiama Greens and Petschler-Fredericks tickets each polled 22 per cent, followed by Mr Steel's ticket with 7 per cent, Mr Reilly's ticket with 5 per cent and ungrouped candidate Brendon Comber with 3 per cent.

Cr McCarthy, who will retain the position of mayor until next month, said she was humbled by the outcome of the election.

"I am really delighted with the result and thank the community for their vote of trust in me. It has been quite humbling," she said.

Mr van der Wijngaart said the Kiama community had given a strong vote of confidence in both Cr McCarthy and the Greens, while endorsing the direction of the outgoing council.

In contrast, Mr Reilly conceded that his ticket "hadn't done well at all", adding that a fair bit of soul-searching was in order.

throughout ALP's blue-collar heartland

The swing against Labor wasn't confined to its former stronghold in Sydney's inner western suburbs, with voters delivering a stinging rebuke to the State Government across NSW.

The attack comes at a time when the ALP's wall-to-wall federal and state dominance is cracking, thanks to a decision by the West Australian National Party to form a coalition with the Liberals that

will oust WA Premier Alan Carpenter from power.

The next State election shouldn't be seen as a two-party contest between Labor and Liberal, said ABC-TV election analyst Antony Green.

Mr Green said recent state polls showed Labor's primary vote falling to the low 30s, and votes for the Greens and "others" at about 25 per cent.

"If those votes were repeated at the next state election, the result would look like Saturday's local government polls, Labor haemorrhaging support in its own safe seats at the same time as it tries to fend off the Coalition in traditional marginal seats," he said.

"Saturday's local government elections may be dismissed as sideshows, but ... the sideshow

may return as the main feature in 2011."

The Greens and the Liberal Party fielded record numbers of candidates at Saturday's election, hoping to cash in on voter discontent with the Government.

Having already made inroads in previously tightly held Labor areas such as the inner west, the Greens' representation on local councils increased 25 per cent.

"We attribute this not simply to a backlash against Labor ... but also to the Greens' consistent policies relating to a ban on developer donations, consistent opposition to the changes to the planning laws ... a commitment to climate change and to working on that at the local level, and an undertaking and ongoing working with local communities," said NSW Greens MLC Sylvia Hale.