

It's smiles all round as malls put business before politicians' pleasure

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Tough love ... Brooke Barnes and her son Austin, 3, revisit Erina Fair shopping centre. *Photo: Wolter Peeters*

Brooke Barnes could be forgiven had she been apprehensive about her son's trip to the doctor at Erina Fair shopping centre on the central coast yesterday.

It was, after all, during a visit to the doctor during the 2007 election campaign that 14-month-old Austin was embraced by not one, but both major party leaders who had coincidentally both chosen Erina Fair for their campaign stops in the seat of Robertson.

Ms Barnes said her now three-year-old son had survived a John Howard hug and a Kevin Rudd cuddle just two hours apart without any trauma.

Last election Ms Barnes told the media accompanying the leaders her vote would go to Mr Rudd and Labor.

This year she said no party was standing out.

"I don't know this time; it's a really hard one," she said. "I don't even know who my candidate is. We haven't got anything in the mail yet."

While Austin and his mother are still happy to visit Erina Fair, shopping centre owners are increasingly reluctant to mix business with politics. Candidates expecting to waltz into their nearest shopping centre to press the flesh with voters and cuddle babies should think again - centre managers have the right to refuse entry, and some are willing to use it.

SUBMISSION 67 - ATTACHMENT A

When the *Herald* called several Centro centres around the country it was told a ban on candidates was in place, but a company spokesman, Andrew Scannell, denied it was official policy.

"We ask that they contact us beforehand if they're planning to visit, and then we assess each request on a case-by-case basis," he said.

GPT, which has 17 centres on the east coast, said the company welcomed candidates as long as they did not try to set up stalls inside a centre.

"We just ask that they recognise it is a working space," the head of corporate affairs, Donna Byrne, said.

A Westfield spokeswoman, Julia Clarke, said her centres were also open for candidates "as long as they don't hamper shoppers and retailers doing business".

Shopping centre owners have successfully fought off a push to guarantee candidates access in the past two years, allowing them to exercise discretion on who they let in and who they block.

Milton Cockburn, the head of the Shopping Centre Council of Australia, said some managers find pestering by candidates can upset shoppers and store-owners.



Government relations policy

Effective 20 October 2009

Government Relations Policy

Our engagement with government

Stockland prides itself on a high level of engagement with all levels of government.

We actively engage with politicians, public servants, regulators and our industry bodies with respect to policy decisions in general and those that affect our properties in particular.

No political donations

Our policy is to make no donations to politicians or political parties at any level of government. This policy has been in place since 1 July 2008.

We expect that all of our projects are judged on their merits. It is important to us that our community stakeholders share this view.

Access to our properties

Stockland does not consent to political canvassing or campaigning in free or casual leased space in Stockland shopping centres.

Subject to the discretion of the Centre Manager, sitting Federal and State MPs and Mayors may conduct community oriented events in our shopping centres up to 3 times a year in the course of carrying out their representative duties. These visits must not have a campaigning tone and must not occur within 6 months of an election at the relevant level of government. Federal or State party leaders can visit our centres during elections.

External consultants

In some instances we will employ consultants and external experts on a fee for service basis.

Gifts to politicians

Where appropriate our employees offer guests of honour at Stockland functions a nominal gift of appreciation such as flowers or a book.

Personal political activity

Our people are free to engage in any lawful political activity outside of their work at Stockland, mindful of the reputational implications of such activity.

Further Information

For further information, please contact Karyn Munsie, Executive General Manager Corporate Affairs or Mike Zorbas, General Manager Government Relations. This policy is reviewed annually.

NOTE

Other proposed attachments referred to in Shopping Centre Council of Australia's submission are ready available online and have not been included in this attachment.

1. Shopping Centre Council of Australia submission 185 to the 2007 federal election inquiry: <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/em/elect07/subs/sub185.pdf>
2. Australian Parliament House conditions of entry: <http://www.aph.gov.au/visitors/>