

Sweet and sour rort

Parramatta make a meal of election

Josh Massoud

IT'S the election stunt that will leave a bad taste in the mouths of every Eels fan who can use chopsticks but can't read Chinese.

Parramatta Leagues Club directors last night were accused of bribing selected members who have been posted \$30 meal vouchers for the venue's Chinese restaurant along with how-to-vote cards supporting the current board.

Eels diehard Liang Ge was among Chinese-born members who received the mail-out. Her Australian-born husband Dean Brown did not.

Both are eligible to vote at the April 24-26 elections, to be held in the same period during which the vouchers are redeemable at Tingha Palace restaurant.

"It's pretty sneaky because they are taking advantage of Chinese people who don't really know what's going on," Liang said.

The double-sided letter and voucher are written entirely in Chinese and the only known recipients all have Asian surnames.

The fresh drama comes just a day after *The Daily Telegraph* revealed Parramatta Leagues was trading on the brink of insolvency, with a \$28 million black hole between its current assets and liabilities.

But the letter — one side of which is penned by the current board and the other by Tingha Palace co-owner Vincent Wong — neglects to mention the club's parlous financial state.

Instead there is only encouragement to re-elect the sitting board. The letter's bold-font title reads: "Your vote is very important to our future success."

It continues: "Under these challenging economic times Parramatta Leagues Club needs experienced leaders that will continue to provide service for the club and community."

It then refers to a mobile phone number belonging to current director Chris Jurd, which recipients are told to ring should they "have any questions". The board's campaign website is printed next to Jurd's number.

In reference to the \$30 voucher, Wong writes: "We want you to come and vote for the existing seven board members. To thank you for supporting us we will give you a \$30 voucher for the restaurant."

Rebel ticket 3P, which is gunning to overthrow the board, last night slammed the move. It is understood more than a third of the club's 43,000-strong membership is Chinese-Australian. To redeem the voucher, holders must show their membership card.

"This is nothing more than bald-faced bribe for Chinese votes," 3P nominee and successful restaurateur Mario Libertini said.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF LETTER

"On behalf of current board:
Your vote is very important for our future success. Under these challenging economic times Parramatta Leagues Club needs experienced leaders that will continue to provide service for the club and the community. Together with the State Government we will keep the same tax rate for poker machines and the same trading hours. We will promise to keep up to date with the needs and wants of club members. We wish to hear from you if you have any questions. This is the phone number (belonging to current director Chris Jurd) and web address. The Parramatta Leagues Club elections will be held from 24-26 April."

THE TINGHA PALACE DINNER VOUCHER

"We want you to come and vote for the existing seven board members. To thank you for supporting us we are giving you a \$30 voucher to use at the restaurant. The Parramatta Leagues Club elections will be held from 24-26 April."



"The Chinese make up a huge proportion of the club's membership but they're not known to vote. Someone wants to change that."

Eels chairman Alan Overton did not return calls. Jurd declined to comment.

Wong insisted the voucher mail-out was his idea to boost trade. He said only 300 letters had been sent to "random" members.

Asked why the current board's how-to-vote card was included, Wong said: "They asked me to include pamphlet in there and what could I say? I can't tell them no."

Asked why it was written in Chinese, he replied: "That's the only language I know how to write."

Wong confirmed that members don't need to actually vote to redeem the vouchers.

"If that's the case, I'll go and have a free meal and then vote for 3P," Liang said.

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Only thing I get is grilled Eels

Brad Clifton
Comment

I'M A lifetime member of the Parramatta Leagues Club. I'm also a life-long lover of Chinese food. So the revelation that I have missed out on a \$30 feed at the Tingha Palace is a little hard to digest.

In fact, there is nothing sweet, but something very sour, about the club seemingly singling out certain patrons for special attention.

Surely the fact I cannot discern one Chinese character from another was not the reason I was overlooked, was it? I might not be able to speak Mandarin but I'm fluent in chow mein.

Perhaps it was a mere oversight. Maybe my address has dropped out of the computer

system. In a bid to get to the bottom of my omission from the freebie list, I telephoned club reception yesterday.

Is my address correctly recorded in the database? Yes.

Have I missed out on receiving any election-related material in recent weeks? No.

"You just have to come to the club during the three election days to vote," one helpful staff member informed me.

Alas, it seems I'll have to lodge my ballot paper without my fill of free fried rice and salt-and-pepper squid. Oh well, I guess that's the way the fortune cookie crumbles.

Brad Clifton is *The Daily Telegraph's* deputy sports editor and a long-suffering Eels fan.

Weekend teams

Broncos
v
Eels

Friday, Suncorp Stadium, 7.35pm

1 Karmichael Hunt	1 Luke Burt
2 Antonio Winterstein	2 Etu Uaisele
3 Steve Michaels	3 Jarryd Hayne
4 Justin Hodges	4 Taulima Tautai
5 Israel Folau	5 Joel Reddy
6 Darren Lockyer (c)	6 Feleti Mateo
7 Peter Wallace	7 Kris Keating
13 Corey Parker	13 Todd Lowrie
12 Ashton Sims	12 Ben Smith
11 Sam Thaiday	11 Nathan Hindmarsh
10 Joel Clinton	10 Fuifui Moimoi
9 Andrew McCullough	9 Matthew Keating
8 Nick Kenny	8 Nathan Cayless (c)

Interchange:
14 A Gorrell 15 P Wapau
16 J McGuire 17 A Glenn

Interchange:
14 J Robson 15 W Hauraki
16 T Mannah 17 B Oake 19 J Galuvao

Referees: Jared Maxwell and Brett Suttor

Rabbitohs
v
Sharks

Friday, ANZ Stadium, 7.35pm

1 Luke Capewell	1 Mitch Brown
2 Nathan Merritt	2 David Simmons
3 Colin Best	3 Ben Pomeroy
4 Beau Champion	4 Matthew White
5 Fetuli Talanoa	5 Luke Covell
6 John Sutton	6 Trent Barrett (c)
7 Chris Sandow	7 Brett Seymour
13 Craig Wing	13 Paul Gallen
12 David Fa'alogo	12 Anthony Tupou
11 David Kidwell	11 Reece Williams
10 Roy Asotasi (c)	10 Luke Douglas
9 Issac Luke	9 Corey Hughes
8 Luke Stuart	8 Kade Snowden

Interchange:
14 J Simpson 15 E Pettybourne 16 J Lowe 17 S Geddes 19 S McPherson 20 B Lowe

Interchange:
14 R Maitua 15 B Norrie 16 B Ferguson 17 T Seu Seu 18 I Donnelly

Referees: Ben Cummins and Alan Shortall

Roosters
v
Dragons

Saturday, SFS, 3pm

1 Sam Perrett	1 Darius Boyd
2 Sisa Waqa	2 Brett Morris
3 Sia Soliola	3 Beau Scott
4 Setaimata Sa	4 Matt Cooper
5 Shaun Kenny-Dowall	5 Wendell Sailor
6 Braith Anasta (c)	6 Jamie Soward
7 Mitchell Pearce	7 Ben Hornby (c)
13 Craig Fitzgibbon	13 Jeremy Smith
12 Nate Myles	12 Ben Creagh
11 Willie Mason	11 Matt Prior
10 F P Nuuausala	10 Michael Weyman
9 James Aubusson	9 Dean Young
8 Mark O'Meley	8 Justin Poore

Interchange:
14 L Paea 15 S Shackleton 16 M Aubusson 17 J Friend

Interchange:
14 D Hunt 15 N Costigan 16 J Nightingale 17 J Saffy 18 M Head

Referees: Shayne Hayne and Tony De Las Heras

Storm
v
Warriors

Saturday, Olympic Park, 5.30pm

1 Billy Slater	1 Lance Hohaia
2 Steve Turner	2 Denan Kemp
3 Will Chambers	3 Simon Manning
4 Greg Inglis	4 Jerome Ropati
5 Anthony Quinn	5 Manu Vatuvei
6 James Maloney	6 Joel Moon
7 Cooper Cronk	7 Stacey Jones
13 Dallas Johnson	13 Mitchell Luck
12 Ryan Hoffman	12 Jacob Lillyman
11 Kevin Proctor	11 Ben Matulino
10 Adam Blair	10 Steve Price (c)
9 Cameron Smith (c)	9 Ian Henderson
8 Jeff Lima	8 Sam Rapira

Interchange:
14 R Hinchcliffe 15 W Koopu 16 A Tolman 17 S Anderson 18 M Cross

Interchange:
14 N Fien 15 R Packer 16 J Royal 17 P Ah Van

Referees: Tony Archer and Matt Cecchin