

BUDGET ESTIMATES 2022-2023

Questions on Notice

Portfolio Committee No. 7 – Planning and Environment

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Hearing: Thursday 25 August 2022

Answers due by: 21 September 2022

Q#	Question	Answer
INVESTIGATIONS INTO CR SARAH RICHARDS		
1	<p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Okay. Thank you. Was Mr Bennett formally interviewed by the OLG?</p> <p>Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: I would have to ask the OLG. I don't have any input into the investigation.</p> <p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Ms Dench, are you able to answer that?</p> <p>ALLY DENCH: I'd need to take that one on notice.</p> <p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: What about Sarah Richards? Was she formally interviewed by the OLG?</p> <p>ALLY DENCH: I'll take that on notice, and I'll get that information for you before the end of the day.</p> <p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: It would be useful if we could have that for this afternoon.</p> <p>ALLY DENCH: Yes, before the end of the day.</p> <p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Was anyone interviewed by the OLG?</p> <p>ALLY DENCH: I'll get that information for you by the end of the day.</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>Under the powers of investigation set down under section 440 of the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i>, the Office of Local Government (OLG) cannot compel a witness to be interviewed.</p> <p>However, the OLG initiated preliminary enquiries, which involved informal discussions with Mr Matthew Bennett and Ms Sarah McMahon (nee Richards).</p>
NSW PET REGISTRY UPGRADES		
2	<p>The Hon. MARK PEARSON: Will that include the possibility to access it nationally from other States and Territories? That has been an issue in the past.</p> <p>Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: That's a really good question. I'm happy to flick to someone to be able to answer that question, please. Ally?</p> <p>ALLY DENCH: At this point in time it's something that can be looked at in the scoping of the work. I'll ask Ms Bishop because she's been running this particular project in regard to the extent that it's able to be—</p> <p>KARIN BISHOP: Yes, thanks for the question. That's a really good point. It's not something that is currently in scope, but we're very happy to take it on board and consider it as we develop it. The project is being developed in stages, so that's something that we will definitely be looking at.</p> <p>The Hon. MARK PEARSON: It has been an issue where animals are purchased online and they come from interstate and then there have been health issues with the animals,</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>States and territories can already access the NSW Companion Animal Register (CAR) to look up microchips under an approved person application.</p> <p>An approved person includes councils, vet practices (located on or near the state border or have proven that they receive excessive lost or found pets at their practice), AWL (head office), Central Animal Records (commercial database for lost and found), RSPCA ACT,</p>

	<p>particularly from puppy farms, and that sort of inbreeding issue. It would be good if you could give me an update on the progress of that because it's quite important.</p> <p>KARIN BISHOP: I'm happy to look into that. One thing I can say is that all the breeders that will be on the registry will have to have their own breeder identification number. So, if that is extended to interstate, they will need to be registered breeders as well.</p>	<p>Domestic Service (Access Canberra) and RSPCA QLD.</p> <p>Further details about access and arrangements to the CAR can be found under sections 81 to 83k of the <i>Companion Animals Act 1998</i>.</p>
STAFFING LEVELS OF CENTRAL COAST COUNCIL		
3	<p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: As part of the plan to resolve the issues at the Central Coast Council, staffing costs were reduced by \$30 million. Are you aware of how many staff were let go in order to achieve that cost saving?</p> <p>Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: No, not specifically. I'd have to take that on notice.</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>Councils report staffing levels in their annual reports and these reports are available on Council's website.</p>
COUNCILLOR MANDATORY TRAINING		
4	<p>MELANIE HAWYES: There is a requirement that councillors undertake mandatory training. It is in its first year of implementation. They will be required to report it in their annual reports, which are pending in September. In the meantime, through our engagement, we have ascertained they almost all have completed that induction training. That is what they have said to us.</p> <p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: What is that figure, Ms Hawyes?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: I will have to get you the figure, which we can do in the break. I don't have it just to hand.</p>	<p>Answered in session</p> <p>I am advised:</p> <p>As at 25 August 2022, 117 of 128 councils reported to the OLG that they had undertaken the induction and professional development or delivered induction and professional development to their councillors within the first six months following their election. The OLG awaits a response from the remaining 11 local councils.</p>
GAMING MACHINES DEVELOPMENT CONTROLS		
5	<p>The Hon. MARK PEARSON: Minister and officers, I'm just going to ask you to go with me in this in a bit of a discussion to try and grapple with this question which the Wesley Mission has actually asked me to raise with you, because it's an issue which cuts across the</p>	<p>I am advised:</p>

Planning portfolio but also the Local Government portfolio. What it's in relation to is poker machines, and there is a restraint that is section 209 which explicitly prevents councils or consent authorities to consider poker machine installations when determining planning applications. It has been placed in the Gaming Machines Act, and what it does is there can be an application for fewer than 21 poker machines to be placed in a facility but there is no requirement for consent for that if the number of poker machines is under 21. So there's no requirement for an application to be made to the local government, to the council. Are you aware of this particular exemption?

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: No, I'm not Mr Pearson, and certainly it's not something that has come across my—

The Hon. MARK PEARSON: Are any of your officers aware of that?

MICHAEL CASSEL: We'll need to take that on notice. It's very specific.

The Hon. MARK PEARSON: Would you take it on notice to investigate it?

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: Absolutely.

The Hon. MARK PEARSON: The concern from the Wesley Mission of course is that it's an avenue for poker machines to be installed without any consideration of the possible impact on the community. An explanation: ILGA and Liquor & Gaming define SA2 units across the State as either band 1, 2 or 3, depending on the socio-economic disadvantage index and gambling machine density. Then they're all ranked. That is, the top 50 per cent of SA2s are called band 1, and if a venue applies for less than 21 poker machines, no community consultation is required and no application needs to be made to the council. So obviously you can obviously see what the concern is from the mission and the community about the possible impact that can have on vulnerable people in the community, so I would really appreciate if you could turn your mind to that and come back to me.

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: I know the secretary would like to provide some—

MICHAEL CASSEL: Mr Pearson, if I could have a copy of that correspondence, I'd be happy to come back to you with an answer around that. It sounds a very technical question.

The Hon. MARK PEARSON: Yes, and that's why I'm sort of seeking your assistance because it's not an area that I turn my mind to but I appreciate the Wesley Mission's concern.

MICHAEL CASSEL: I'm happy to get Planning to answer that.

The Hon. MARK PEARSON: I will get all the details to you.

This question should be directed to the Minister for Hospitality and Racing and the Minister for Planning and Homes.

RATEABLE LAND		
6	<p>The CHAIR: Minister, will you consider at some point allowing councils to rate currently non-rateable properties, such as infrastructure like universities or government schools, churches et cetera, particularly for councils where they really are struggling with their rate bases and they feel a significant struggle through the sort of exercise of—for want of a better term—the cost shifting that has taken place intentionally or unintentionally on some of those struggling regional local government areas?</p> <p>Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: That's a matter for the Valuer General to consider and—</p> <p>The CHAIR: Is it something, Minister, that if submissions were made to you by a particular local government, that's something you would consider taking up?</p> <p>KEITH BAXTER: Sorry, Ms Higginson, that was considered in the IPART review of rating and the Government responded to that. IPART made a series of recommendations in that and the Government at the time provided a response to that, which was available, and we can probably get a copy of that for you.</p> <p>The CHAIR: I suppose the question really goes to: Is that static? I mean, a recommendation made—the experience of local governments that are struggling is that—</p> <p>KEITH BAXTER: At the moment, the Government policy is established in the Government response, but I'm happy—we can take it further on notice for you.</p> <p>The CHAIR: With your expertise and having a view of LGAs across the State, when a case is made, do you see some value in continuing that consideration?</p> <p>KEITH BAXTER: Yes.</p> <p>ALLY DENCH: Yes.</p> <p>Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: Can I also say, Ms Higginson, something that's really important to me and that I'm focused on is sustainability of councils. I don't know whether you're aware, but there will be a review into IPART and the methodology they use. I think that's a really important piece of work because clearly, as we've seen in regard to the announcement of the 0.7 per cent rate peg, we need some consistency. Sustainability is really important, so that piece of work is really important, and it's really important to the future of the sector. I'm very focused on the sustainability of councils, and I look forward to the recommendations that are going to be put forward by IPART.</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>The NSW Government does not support wholesale changes to the existing exemptions framework, noting our continued commitment to not disadvantage vulnerable communities. This position is clear in the Government's 2020 response to IPART's Local Government Rating System review, which can be accessed here.</p>

COUNCILLOR PRIVILEGE FROM DEFAMATION		
7	<p>The CHAIR: Thank you. Are there any plans or consideration for looking at the protection of councillors from defamation proceedings in terms of a privilege? Is that on your radar in terms of councillors?</p> <p>Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: We can certainly look into that.</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>There is a defence of qualified privilege on public interest grounds under the <i>Defamation Act 2005</i>, which falls more appropriately under the portfolio responsibilities of the Attorney General.</p>
CENTRAL COAST COUNCIL WATER BUSINESS		
8	<p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That's good, thank you. I have a couple of questions on the Central Coast Council. One of the issues that has been raised in relation to the Central Coast Council is the water business. Are you aware of any future plans in relation to that water business—for example, plans to sell it or corporatise it? Are you across any of those options?</p> <p>Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: I'm not across where it's up to at the moment, but I'm certainly happy to throw to the CE to give you a brief.</p> <p>ALLY DENCH: Yes, thank you for the question. We are in conversations with our water agency as well as Central Coast in regard to that.</p> <p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: What is the direction of those conversations?</p> <p>ALLY DENCH: We've just had some preliminary conversations at this stage.</p> <p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: As a participant in those conversations, has the administrator indicated his view or the council's view of what outcome they would like to see?</p> <p>ALLY DENCH: Yes.</p> <p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: What is that outcome that they are pursuing?</p> <p>ALLY DENCH: I would like to take that on notice.</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>Discussions between the OLG and the Administrator of Central Coast Council to identify appropriate options are in the preliminary stages and ongoing.</p>

WINGECARRIBEE COUNCIL CONFLICT OF INTEREST

9

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I might just ask a couple of questions in relation to the Wingecarribee council. I just wondered how long you have been aware of the issues at Wingecarribee council.

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: Obviously, becoming local member in 2019, I had a lot of dealings with Wingecarribee council as part of my role as a local member. I field lots of emails and have conversations with constituents within their local government area. I was aware of some concerns since 2019.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Have you had any meetings with the council or councillors in relation to those issues?

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: Absolutely. I had regular meetings with the council—the council mayor and council general manager. I meet with all of my councils on a regular basis.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: In 2020, before you were the Minister and the issues at Wingecarribee Shire Council were becoming more well known, the former Minister noted the strong representations from yourself and the member for Wollondilly in relation to the dysfunction at the council. You're aware of that, obviously. You're aware of those representations that you made.

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: Indeed.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The question is: How did you manage the potential conflict of interest between yourself as a local member who had previously made strong representations in relation to the council and your role as the Minister in your decision to dismiss the council?

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: As you're aware, the former Minister appointed the person to do the inquiry. I don't see any conflict of interest in regard to that.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Not in relation to that.

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: The inquiry was conducted and there were recommendations made. I followed those recommendations and accepted all of them.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That is fine. But, as I said, there is still potentially a conflict of interest. I understand a report was prepared and it made recommendations, but you were still the decision-maker. You still had the capacity to accept or reject those recommendations. You obviously had a deep personal interest in the matter, as a local member who'd had regular meetings on the matter over a number of years and who'd made

The Department of Planning and Environment provided verbal advice that I had no conflict of interest in accepting all of the Commissioner's recommendations from the independent Public Inquiry into Wingecarribee Shire Council.

	<p>strong representations on it. It is arguable that you had a preformed view about what needed to occur prior to the report being prepared and recommendations given to you. How do you respond to that?</p> <p>Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: I didn't have a preformed view. I knew there were issues. As a local member, my role is very different to being in the role as the Minister for Local Government. There was a public inquiry, there was an independent person that conducted that inquiry and made recommendations, and I followed those recommendations. I don't see that I had a conflict of interest or any personal view in regards to that. It could be speculated as much as you like, but that's just not true.</p> <p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: It's just that conflicts of interest often aren't necessarily actual, as you would well know. The perception of a conflict is also—</p> <p>Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: Ms Jackson, there was plenty of evidence during that inquiry as to how the council was performing. I didn't influence those inquiries. There were recommendations done under that evidence, and I was quite happy to accept that.</p> <p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Did you take any steps, or did the department or the Office of Local Government take any steps, to acknowledge or—</p> <p>Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: Absolutely. I asked for legal advice as to whether I had a perceived conflict of interest—</p> <p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That's excellent.</p> <p>Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: —and that legal advice came back to say no.</p> <p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Are you able to table that legal advice?</p> <p>Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: I would to have ask the—I can't table it right now. Certainly, we'll take it on notice.</p>	
MISCONDUCT REVIEW		
10	<p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Minister, you raised the misconduct review on a number of occasions during an earlier question. Can you provide an update on where the review into councillor misconduct is?</p> <p>Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: Yes. The current review is being undertaken by Gary Kellar. I am looking at getting the report by October.</p> <p>---</p> <p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Can I ask how many submissions were received in response to the</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>A total of 48 formal submissions were received.</p>

	<p>consultation paper?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: We can get you that figure. I note that there's the submission process, but engagement with the sector continues, whether it is with LGNSW or councils and others. It is not restricted to the number of submissions received. A number of them were aggregate submissions. We have Mr Kellar continuing his work, which includes consultation with other jurisdictions that are also looking at how to improve their conduct frameworks. It seems that we're not the only jurisdiction dealing with the need to update and refresh that framework, so there is consultation beyond the submission process itself.</p> <p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: But you will be able to get me the number of submissions.</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: We can get it for you and provide it in the later session, if that's okay.</p>			
11	<p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I appreciate that. In terms of the advertising of the opening of submissions, how is that done throughout the State?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: I will need to take that on notice. Melissa, do you have that?</p> <p>MELISSA GIBBS: I know that there was definitely a circular that was issued. The website, obviously—</p> <p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Sorry Ms Gibbs, a circular to councils?</p> <p>MELISSA GIBBS: A circular to councils, yes, and definitely notices on the website. It was pretty fairly widely known that the review was being undertaken. One of the other reasons, and you raised the length of time taken—</p> <p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I'm sorry, on that point, "it was pretty widely known". How did you come to that conclusion?</p> <p>MELISSA GIBBS: Mainly because the Minister had been speaking about it at a number of sector events, such as the local government conference, Local Government Professionals conference, in discussions with the parties to the local government award.</p> <p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: So unless you were at a local government conference or some sort of insider event, you may have missed this even if you're a councillor. What about ratepayers?</p> <p>MELISSA GIBBS: Can I take on notice whether there was any particular targeting of ratepayers?</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>The consultation paper was published on the OLG's website, publicised on the NSW Government's "Have Your Say" webpage and in the media by way of a media release.</p> <p>A circular was also issued to councils to inform them of the release of the consultation paper and to invite them to make submissions. Following the December 2021 local government elections, councillors were informed of the misconduct review and the consultation paper at the "Hit the Ground Running" webinars conducted by the OLG and were encouraged to make submissions.</p> <p>48 submissions were received as follows:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1451 1353 2029 1390"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="1451 1353 1832 1390">Category</th> <th data-bbox="1832 1353 2029 1390">Number</th> </tr> </thead> </table>	Category	Number
Category	Number			

	<p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Sure. Minister, does that concern you that we may not have advertised this to ratepayers in terms of their elected representatives, a code of conduct being reviewed?</p> <p>Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: We'll take on notice to see whether we have or haven't.</p> <p>MELISSA GIBBS: It may have been on the Have Your Say website. I'd need to check that though.</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: We'll just check for you in the break.</p> <p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: As we stand now, we don't have any line of sight onto the penetration into that sort of ratepayer space in terms of knowledge of this review?</p> <p>MELISSA GIBBS: I can get you a breakdown, if you like, of the submissions that were made and by the category of people who made the submission—whether it is the council, a councillor, elected body staff member or member of the community.</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Council</td> <td>22</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Council officer</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Joint organisation</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Councillor – former and current</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Local government membership body</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Public</td> <td>7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>State Government agency</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>MP</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Conduct reviewer</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>48</td> </tr> </table>	Council	22	Council officer	1	Joint organisation	1	Councillor – former and current	5	Local government membership body	3	Public	7	State Government agency	6	MP	1	Conduct reviewer	2	Total	48
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12	<p>The CHAIR: How many overall submissions? Did you answer that?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: We're just getting the number for you in the break.</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>See answer to (10).</p>																				
NATIVE FORESTRY																						
13	<p>The CHAIR: I raise this because, naturally, there's a number of contentious aspects in terms of the recovery and pre-existing contentious issues before the disaster events happened in some of those council areas. There is a fear that councillors will be overridden and their powers usurped in the recovery. There clearly is a much better way of finding that balance, so thank you for that assurance. Can I go to a completely different issue around the State Government's new policy on private native forestry. Obviously, this impacts some of our regional and local governments.</p> <p>One of the issues that has been longstanding is the notion of councils having some power over private native forestry and the impacts that that has on their functions as a local government—whether it is roads, consent, managing the environment, et cetera. Can you tell us about the dual consent provisions for private native forestry—again, this goes to the notion of councils being overridden—and whether there are still councils that are able to make decisions about this?</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>This question should be directed to the Minister for Planning and Homes.</p>																				

	<p>Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: I would have to refer to the agency. Do you have any idea?</p> <p>MICHAEL CASSEL: Could you just repeat the question? I think it is more of a forestry/native forestry question, which is not the Minister for Local Government.</p> <p>The CHAIR: No, I understand that. This is actually about councils being able to exercise their consent functions. Do councils still have the power to make their decisions, under their LEPs, now the State Government has introduced a new regime? For context, the State Government said that dual consent of councils was a problem; however, it still appears there are dual consents. Have you been informed, or do you know, whether councils will be able to continue to exercise their powers?</p> <p>MICHAEL CASSEL: I'd need to take that on notice. I think it is more of a planning or native forestry question, so I want to take that one on notice.</p> <p>The CHAIR: Thank you. I suppose the question, if you could get the answer to it, is how many councils are still able to exercise their functions, under their LEPs, as it applies to private native forestry? Also did the State Government consult with Office of Local Government, or councils, if those dual consent capacities have been removed? They are the two questions.</p> <p>MICHAEL CASSEL: Okay.</p>	
RATE PEGGING		
14	<p>The CHAIR: Is there something that the New South Wales Government will do—and you, Minister—to improve the rate-pegging methodology to prevent future financial shocks to the sector and ultimately move to removing rate pegging?</p> <p>Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: I'm not sure whether that's the answer, but certainly the review by IPART is an important piece of work, as I reiterated to you earlier. Having that consistent rate peg and making sure the methodology is actually looking forward instead of looking backwards, to me, is an important concept. So I'm looking forward to that review taking place because I think it's really important that we do have that consistency on what rate peg is being applied. Certainly that enables councils to better plan financially. We need to move the peaks and troughs in regard to rate pegging. As I said, I think it's a very important piece of work.</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>The indicative date for the issue of the Final Report is 18 May 2023.</p> <p>Further information can be found on the IPART website here.</p>

	<p>The CHAIR: Do we have timing around that?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: Yes, the review has kicked off. IPART confirmed with me, actually just the other day, that they have commenced. Obviously they need some time to complete that review, given it's quite a complex topic. I think we've set an end date of March. I might need to take it on notice; I don't quite remember the end date. But it's got a time line with IPART, and I can tell the Committee they've kicked it off. We'll confirm the scheduled end date in the break.</p>	
DEMERGER OF COOTAMUNDRA-GUNDAGAI REGIONAL COUNCIL		
15	<p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Were any discussions had between the Minister and OLG people in general about the demerger process of Coota prior to the decision being made?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: Yes. Clearly, when the report came in from the boundaries commission we were a part of providing a factual analysis of that report, but that's essentially a normal part of the process. Beyond that, no—just general business in terms of, "The report's in, here's the boundaries commission's findings. Minister, here's the time frame in which you need to make a decision."</p> <p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Sorry, what was the analysis? A factor analysis?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: Simply summarising what the reports themselves say.</p> <p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: So you didn't make a recommendation or anything?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: No.</p> <p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: What about plans or advice to previous local government Ministers regarding a process of demerging? Was any advice ever given to previous Ministers?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: I personally haven't provided any advice on previous processes. We simply dealt with the current framework, the boundary process and the factual analysis of the findings of those reports with the Minister to assist her in making a decision—no recommendations and no analysis of the past processes.</p> <p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: So a previous Minister never requested that analysis be done in the event that "We've got to demerge. What's the process? What's the plan?"</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: I can't answer that. I've been the deputy secretary since February, so Minister Tuckerman is the only Minister I've worked with in this portfolio.</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>Decisions as to whether I accept a proposal is a matter for me alone under the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i>.</p> <p>The OLG provides support on options for implementing my decisions relating to a proposal.</p>

	<p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Perhaps you could take on notice whether Ministers have been provided information in relation to what the process of a demerger would look like.</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: Yes, we can do that.</p>	
POLICY OF MERGING COUNCILS		
16	<p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: In terms of the KPMG report that provided the architecture for the original merging policy back in 2016, has anyone inside OLG been privy to the full report?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: I personally haven't, and it is some time in the past, so I haven't read that report or been provided with that report. It is part of a past set of decisions.</p> <p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: It would seem somewhat strange, wouldn't it—surely, someone in OLG has read that KPMG report.</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: I can't speak to that. I can take that on notice, but I personally haven't. It is a set of past decisions from some time ago. We work with the current framework, including the boundaries commission process that is set out for us.</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>As part of the NSW Government's investigation into local government reform options, KPMG was commissioned to provide a range of advice.</p> <p>The advice was one input into the decision-making process of Government at the time.</p> <p>Information about KPMG's analysis was made publicly available in the following documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An overarching report outlining merger benefits entitled Local Government Reform Merger Impacts and Analysis released on 18 December 2015 • A technical report entitled Outline of Financial Modelling Assumptions for Local Government published on 20 January 2016 • The 35 original Government merger proposal documents published on 6 January 2016.

		<p>There were certain documents prepared by KPMG that, because they were considered by Cabinet, are Cabinet-In-Confidence and were not provided to either the delegates or to the public.</p> <p>The NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) has determined on two occasions that there were reasonable grounds for the Department's claim that the documents were precluded from production on the grounds of being Cabinet information, as provided for by cl 2(1)(c) of Sch 1 of the <i>Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009</i>.</p>
LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARIES COMMISSION		
17	<p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Are the members of the Local Government Boundaries Commission paid for their work?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: I actually—</p> <p>ALLY DENCH: There are sitting fees.</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: There are sitting fees, yes. I don't know the amount. I can take that on notice, but there are sitting fees.</p> <p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That would be useful. So it's a certain amount per day of work for that. If you could take that on notice—</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: Yes.</p>	<p>Answered in session</p> <p>I am advised:</p> <p>The Chair of the Local Government Boundaries Commission is paid \$50,000 per annum. The two sitting members receive \$25,000 per annum each. The Department member is unpaid.</p>
DEMERGER OF COOTAMUNDRA-GUNDAGAI REGIONAL COUNCIL		
18	<p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: —that would be useful. I obviously asked the Minister this morning about some time frames. Rightfully, I suppose, in terms of how long these processes take, there is no set time. Specifically then, in terms of the boundaries commission's work on Coota-Gundagai, how long did that process take from the start of that consideration to the recommendation? How long was that time frame?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: Do you have that to hand? We might need to take it on notice.</p>	<p>Answered in session</p> <p>I am advised:</p> <p>11 months.</p>

	ALLY DENCH: We might need to take that on notice. I wouldn't want to mislead. We can get that.	
DEMERGER OF COOTAMUNDRA-GUNDAGAI REGIONAL COUNCIL		
19	<p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I know you answered this previously, but I probably wasn't listening close enough: How long did the process take for the boundaries commission to determine the Cootamundra—</p> <p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: They took it on notice.</p> <p>ALLY DENCH: I can give you that answer—11 months.</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>See answer to (18).</p>
PENSIONER CONCESSIONS		
20	<p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: There was also in the budget \$78 million as a sort of cost-of-living measure for pensioners. Is that capped per council or is it also just first come, first served?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: It's not part of flood relief.</p> <p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No, sorry, I had moved on. Apologies. Also in the budget there was another—</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: Pensioner concession.</p> <p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Apologies, Ms Hawyes.</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: I was just making sure I wasn't confusing—</p> <p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I had asked my questions in relation to the loan facility and this was another project, \$78 million for cost of living for pensioners, for rates and charges.</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: This one is more to individuals rather than to councils.</p> <p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That's right, yes. But again my question was, is that capped per council? If many individuals in a certain local government area—is there any—</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: No, it's an individual rebate per property. We can provide you that breakdown. Keith, you might want to provide the breakdown, but is it not capped in the sense that you are inquiring about.</p> <p>ALLY DENCH: Did you want the breakdown?</p> <p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes, that would be useful.</p> <p>ALLY DENCH: The pensioner concessions provide a maximum rebate of \$425 per property, which comprises of \$250 for ordinary rates and annual domestic waste changes; \$87.50 for annual water rates; and \$87.50 for annual sewerage rates.</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>The funding allocation for pensioner concessions in the NSW Budget is based on the amount paid by the Government in previous years.</p> <p>The number of pensioner concessions accepted by NSW councils in 2021-22 were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 476,421 for ordinary rates • 192,616 for water charges • 172,939 for sewerage charges <p>The OLG does not collect information on the number of concession applications made to councils which were unsuccessful.</p> <p>A list of the number of pensioner concessions given in the 2021-22 year by LGA is annexed and marked 'A'.</p>

	<p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: And eligibility is essentially you are a pensioner?</p> <p>ALLY DENCH: Pensioner.</p> <p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Is there anything additional to that in terms of other eligibility in relation to hardship or it's just proof of pensioner status?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: It's your eligibility under the Commonwealth legislation around pensions and veteran entitlements.</p> <p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Again, any information on where that \$78 million figure came from? What was that based on? How was that figure determined?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: We might take that on notice because it's been in place for some time, so I don't have it to hand. If it's okay, we'd like to take that on notice.</p> <p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Let's go with the last financial year, the last budget year as this is what budget estimates is on. How many applications were made during that year?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: I don't have that to hand but can happily take that on notice and possibly find out while the we continue the discussion.</p> <p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: It would be useful to know how many applications were made. If they were not all successful, how many were successful. So applications that were successful and possibly a breakdown per LGA as well, if you have that.</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: The second part, the breakdown by LGA we'll have to take on notice because it will take a bit more analysis.</p>	
RFS ASSETS		
21	<p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: There was an Auditor-General report on 22 June on the local government sector. Essentially, the report focused on financial statements. The report recommended that councils should be responsible for Rural Fire Service assets and equipment and, in layman's terms, I guess, putting it on their books and then depreciating the items. Are you able to explain to us the logic behind that decision?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: Thanks, Mr Buttigieg. It's been a source of debate, I guess, a live issue with the local government sector for some time. We understand feedback from your office as to the need to have those assets consistently reported. Our role has been to liaise in-between Treasury and the sector and the Audit Office, to work with councils so that we communicate the position around the assets and, in turn, provide feedback through to Treasury and the Audit Office from the sector. We have recently shared Treasury's position</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>This question should be directed to the Treasurer.</p>

with Local Government NSW for the very reason you're asking: to understand the underpinning logic of the State's position.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Has Treasury come back to you with any analysis as to why that Auditor-General's report came out with that recommendation?

MELANIE HAWYES: Yes, we have that advice. It's been shared with the sector.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: It's been shared with—

MELANIE HAWYES: Local Government NSW and the sector.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Can you elaborate on what that advice was?

MELANIE HAWYES: The Government position is that the assets are under the financial control of councils, they're vested in councils, and that they should be reported in councils' financial reports where the council forms the view that they are material assets.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: What I'm trying to understand is the economic justification behind it. Let's go back a bit. As I understand it, the councils don't purchase these assets, do they?

MELANIE HAWYES: It's really a question for the Treasury about the economic underpinnings of that position. Our role is to communicate that to the sector.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: But you just said you are in possession of the analysis

MELANIE HAWYES: And that it has been shared with the sector, yes.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: But you can't elaborate on what that analysis was?

MELANIE HAWYES: I don't think it's my place to, and I would want the benefit of having it in front of me to do that.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Okay, but the OLG must have formed an opinion, given your advocacy role and your stewardship role on behalf of councils, on the veracity of that analysis.

MELANIE HAWYES: No, we have insight into the sector's perspective and we feed that back.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Which is?

MELANIE HAWYES: The sector has expressed with us—LGNSW has expressed with us—that they don't agree. So we are currently brokering those discussions.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I would have thought if Treasury's come back or the Auditor-General's come back with an analysis saying, "This is why we think councils should put these assets back on their books," and you've read that, you're not in a position

	<p>to tell me what view the OLG has come to? You're just kind of brokering competing interests between Local Government and Treasury, are you?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: We have shared Treasury's analysis and we have fed back the sector's perspectives, and we are assisting in brokering a way through.</p> <p>The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: Is it the same with the SES?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: The SES has different operating legislation. Again, I'm not really qualified to speak to the detailed operations of other portfolios in my role here.</p> <p>The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: But it's not on the books of the council. Councils are very involved in the SES; that's all. Sorry, Mark.</p> <p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: That's okay. Is that economic analysis something that you could produce to the Committee?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: It's been shared with LGNSW, so on notice we could provide that.</p>	
INFRASTRUCTURE SPENDING		
22	<p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I might just ask some questions in relation to infrastructure. In 2013 the Office of Local Government carried out an infrastructure backlog review. That found that councils faced a combined estimated backlog of \$7.4 billion. I understand that number then came down to \$3.8 billion in 2019-20 but that we have not had an update since then. Do you have a more recent figure in terms of the infrastructure backlog faced by councils?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: It would be helpful to understand where you're drawing that figure from.</p> <p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The Local Government Infrastructure Audit. There was an audit report in 2013. That was updated on your council—in, as I said, 2019-20, so your figures from you.</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: I might take that on notice.</p> <p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I'm just after the most recent figure that you have available. That would be useful.</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: Can we take that on notice? Thanks.</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>The most recent figures available for the local government infrastructure backlog comes from the 2021 financial reports.</p> <p>These show the total backlog for councils and county councils was \$3.86 billion in the 2021 financial year with an overall infrastructure backlog ratio of 3.2 per cent compared with 3.3 per cent for the 2020 financial year.</p> <p>Since the 2013 Local Government Infrastructure Audit, the backlog has fallen by around 47 per cent while at the same time the total carrying value of infrastructure assets has increased.</p>

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Assuming there is still a backlog, which I think is a fair assumption, what are the biggest drivers of that from your work with councils? What are the biggest barriers to reducing that backlog?

MELANIE HAWYES: Are you talking about housing infrastructure? What are you—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: My understanding is the infrastructure backlog was broader than that. I mean, it included a range of infrastructure that council was responsible for. Maybe it is housing. I guess that's what I'm getting at. Councils face this infrastructure backlog. We don't have the most recent—the most recent figure that we have is that it is still over \$3 billion. What are the main drivers for that and the main barriers to reducing it?

MICHAEL CASSEL: Can I just suggest maybe we take this on notice. You've told us where you got the information from. We want to check what the latest figures we have are and that'll obviously give us an insight into what's contained in those figures or what works are there. Because I think we're drifting into a territory where we're not giving factual answers, we're trying to hypothesise, because we don't have the information you have.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Okay. Apologies—

MICHAEL CASSEL: Sorry, I'm not trying to be—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: As I said, I have these figures from government—from you. So these aren't external figures that I think I'm working on, but I understand your point. You're not across that. Again, you probably have to take this on notice, but this is the last question I'll ask on this considering that answer. My understanding is that the audit that was done in 2013 showed that northern coastal areas accounted for 30 per cent of the backlog at that point. That's obviously quite a large percentage of the overall statewide council infrastructure backlog just within the northern coastal councils. You might imagine that, as a result of the recent floods, that's gotten even worse. So I'm obviously interested to know what particular programs might be in place to try to assist with the specific resolution of the infrastructure backlog there that was already quite large.

MICHAEL CASSEL: I take the point. I'm sure over the last couple of years the backlog would possibly have got worse but I don't know whether that's because there's a lack of funds or whether it's because of a lack of ability to engage somebody to do the works, which both are obviously relevant in this situation. But we'll be happy to provide that on notice.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Again, just potentially take it on notice—in 2019-20 the average backlog faced by regional councils was \$52 million, and the average backlog faced

In relation to support for councils to assist in resolving their infrastructure backlogs, this includes:

- The Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme, which assists councils to pay for loans associated with infrastructure upgrades and maintenance by subsidising interest costs to make loans more affordable. Under the scheme, 167 projects from 97 councils have been approved with the value of projects worth around \$821 million
- The Low-Cost Loans Initiative, which assists councils to fund infrastructure projects to accelerate housing supply, including roads and utilities
- Other funding options, such as Restart NSW, which assists local governments to deliver infrastructure projects, and grant funding options at the Federal level.

In relation to regional councils, reasons for backlogs will vary. Certain factors which may contribute includes the nature and size of the assets a council is responsible for.

	<p>by metropolitan councils was \$28 million. So regional councils are just overall experiencing a much more substantial issue resolving their infrastructure backlog—again, any particular interventions that have been put in place to assist regional councils?</p> <p>MICHAEL CASSEL: Given the broad nature of the regional councils, a lot of them do their own water infrastructure et cetera. It's obviously a different set of criteria. I'd rather get you back a considered answer rather than try and hypothesise here.</p>	
VETERANS EMPLOYMENT WITH COUNCILS		
23	<p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes, Minister Farraway. That's fine. I wanted to ask about the April 2022 announcement jointly between Minister Tuckerman and Minister Elliott: "Preparing our veterans for council careers". That announcement was that five councils had pledged their support to veteran employment. I just wondered if we could get some information about what that pledge involved.</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: I might ask Melissa Gibbs to respond to that, because she was working on that piece.</p> <p>MELISSA GIBBS: Yes, so the Office of Local Government has been working with the Office for Veterans Affairs in New South Wales to encourage councils who are facing skills shortages themselves to look to veterans as a potential source of potential employees. This was actually brought to us by the United Services Union, who could see the excellent work being undertaken by the New South Wales Office for Veterans Affairs in the State Government public sector, which had a program to target something like 700 veterans. They managed to attract something like 2,000. So it was a huge success.</p> <p>We worked closely with the Local Government NSW and the parties to the local government award to try to encourage councils to be more veteran friendly, if you like, in their recruitment—even things like, "We encourage veterans to apply to work at our council", "We value the service of veterans" and "We'd like to welcome veterans as a potential source of employees". We worked with Local Government NSW to do a similar thing that the public service did in New South Wales with Veterans Affairs, which is to look at the current—they call it a rank to grade guide. So it was if you're leaving the service and you're at this rank, you would be suitable to apply for positions that look like this in the public service capability framework.</p> <p>We tried to apply that to the local government context, so that veterans leaving the service could say, "Well, look, I've reached this particular level. It'd be appropriate for me to apply</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>Councils are not required to commit to a veterans' employment target when making this pledge, which is a voluntary pledge to welcome and encourage veterans to apply for council jobs.</p>

for a position that looks like this in local government". There are five councils that have pledged their support to become more veteran friendly. You're going to ask me who they are and I can't remember, but I do remember that Lake Macquarie was one of them. Tweed Shire Council has also employed a number of veterans in a number of areas and we've showcased some of their activities. And I also—I'll stop there, because otherwise I might name councils that I'm not completely sure of, but I can certainly get you some further detail about that program and what it looks like and the success stories that it's had.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes. So the pledge, when they pledge their support, that's perhaps including a line on a job description that says, "We welcome veterans to apply" or "We're a veteran-friendly employer", something like that?

MELISSA GIBBS: Yes, and they showcase veterans who have transitioned from the service into council, and there's case studies of how veterans have made that transition, some of the challenges that they've faced, some of the good news stories that they've had, and—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: And that's just on a website, presumably?

MELISSA GIBBS: Yes.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Are there quotas associated with the recruitment?

MELISSA GIBBS: No, it's really one of those areas where the unions, Local Government NSW, OLG, has been encouraging councils to go down this path. Obviously, we can't direct them or impose quotas. It's been more of a case of working collaboratively with councils to encourage them to do so.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I mean, obviously you can't but perhaps—I guess the question was when they make the pledge perhaps part of making that pledge might be to commit to a target or a figure? But you're saying at the moment it doesn't involve that?

MELISSA GIBBS: Not that I'm aware of, but I would like to get further information on it, just to be 100 per cent sure that I'm not misleading you there.

ALLY DENCH: I'd like to acknowledge Campbelltown council, too.

MELISSA GIBBS: Was it Campbelltown?

ALLY DENCH: Yes, they're actually leading the way in this.

MELISSA GIBBS: I was almost going to mention them, but I—

ALLY DENCH: Yes, it was Campbelltown.

	<p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: So there's the five that we're just getting the detail of. There were five mentioned in the original April announcement, I guess also any additional councils that have pledged to be—</p> <p>MELISSA GIBBS: I've just been advised that we're now at nine, so we're making good progress since April.</p>	
COUNCILS FINANCIAL REPORTING		
24	<p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Just to be clear, say, for the purposes of last year, every council has now submitted that data. That's why you're able to have the time series data on the website. So you are at 100 per cent for 2020-21?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: I'd like to take that on notice, but I do note the Audit Office report has just finished doing their sweep of the councils and the current reporting period is coming up. I will take on notice if there's any councils that didn't make—</p> <p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: As I said, I'm not talking about 2021-22, because I accept that the end of the standard reporting period is not over. I'm talking about last year, but, yes, that would be useful if you could take that on notice.</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: Yes</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>127 of the 128 local councils have delivered their 2020-2021 audited financial statements to the OLG. Kiama Municipal Council has not reported its 2020-2021 audited financial statements. A copy of the draft 2020-21 financials was presented to councillors at a meeting on 19 July 2022 and has been provided to the NSW Audit Office for review.</p>
VACANT HOUSING STOCK		
25	<p>The Hon. MARK PEARSON: I'd just like to ask a question about a matter that was raised earlier. I'm just wondering, is there any data on houses or homes or places or dwellings that have not been occupied for a period of time? I'm just going back to this question as to whether it might be an avenue to go down for councils or any other authority to contact the owners of dwellings which haven't been occupied for periods of time to see whether that could be part of solving the housing problem. It's happened in other parts of the world, and I'm just wondering, has that data ever been gathered from councils about dwellings that haven't been occupied for X period of time?</p> <p>MICHAEL CASSEL: The only data I know of—so I'll take the question on notice—occurs on census night, so that's why it's a topic of conversation at the moment because of so many homes being recorded as being unoccupied on the census night. I'm not sure council have a way, and they'd have to pick a date or a series of dates and say, "Was somebody living there or was somebody not living there?" A lot of the evidence, I understand, is anecdotal around that. Obviously our own assets, such as the Land and</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>This question should be directed to the Minister for Planning and Homes.</p>

	<p>Housing Corporation—they can tell you how many homes are vacant through restoration or redevelopment or something of that nature but not private ownership as far as I know.</p> <p>The Hon. MARK PEARSON: If you're willing to take it on notice—</p> <p>MICHAEL CASSEL: But I will take it on notice—</p>	
<p>COUNTY COUNCIL'S PERFORMANCE</p>		
<p>26</p>	<p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Those OPR statistics, the information I have is that the latest ones are for, again, 2019-20, and for that financial year, four of the 10 county councils returned negative operational performance ratios. So there was Castlereagh Macquarie, which was negative 19.4 per cent. Do we know what the reason for that was?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: We'll take that on notice, if that's okay.</p> <p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Do we know what their OPR was for 2020-21?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: I don't have that to hand; we'll take it on notice.</p> <p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: For the Committee's benefit, that particular county council, Castlereagh Macquarie, the OPR in FY18-19 was actually 13.9 per cent. So the swing from 13.9 per cent to negative 19.4 per cent—a 33.3 per cent difference in one financial year—I would've thought that that would've raised a red flag. Shouldn't it have?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: We'll take on notice if you're describing there's been a deterioration, but the county councils are not a council in the sense of providing the suite of services that a council that—you're thinking a major council in that sense. They're a unique subset under our legislation. But we'll take on notice questions as to what is deteriorating.</p> <p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: But, nevertheless, the OPR would still be indicative of—</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: Yes, absolutely.</p> <p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Are you aware that at the same council with that decline in the OPR, the GM's salary went from \$27,375 to \$69,927—so a 155 per cent increase in the same year that the OPR declined?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: No, I'm not aware of this one, but we'll take on notice questions around this particular county council.</p> <p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Okay, so no information on the GM's salary for financial year 2021-22?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: I don't have that to hand; I'll take it on notice.</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>In relation to Castlereagh Macquarie County Council's operating performance ratio (OPR) in 2019-20, this information is publicly available in its Annual Financial Statement, which can be accessed here.</p> <p>CMCC's OPR for FY 2020-21 was 25.5 per cent. CMCC's 2019-20 financial report sets out reasons for this variance and as of 2020-21 financial reporting, CMCC recovered strongly with a move back into positive OPR.</p> <p>In relation to the CMCC General Manager salary, the salary increase coincided with the appointment of a new General Manager. CMCC confirmed that the General Manager is appointed under a standard contract of employment and the terms of the contract were approved by the councillors. Ultimately it is a matter for the council to determine an appropriate remuneration package for the General Manager. A package of under \$70K does not appear to be excessive for a General Manager.</p>

	<p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: That particular council relied on grants and contributions for almost 90 per cent of its revenue, which probably makes sense given what you've told us about their compositions. But is it a concern that such a large pay rise would have been afforded to the GM, given they're getting all their money from grants?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: I'm not in a position to make a comment as to whether it would be a concern or not. I'll take on notice your comments, observations, facts and statistics that you might want to provide to me about the position of that county council.</p> <p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: That same council spent 22 per cent of total expenditure on governance and administration. The next closest were New England Tablelands and Rous Water, which spent 4 per cent of total expenditure on government administration. I'm just a bit concerned that the oversight body, the OLG, has no idea about these sorts of stats coming out of a county council and then a concomitant increase in the GM's pay. I would have thought that that was the sort of thing that the OLG were privy to and aware of, and perhaps would have acted on.</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: It is a weeds authority, and I'll take on notice comments and questions about its financial performance. We don't have that data to hand to answer today.</p> <p>The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: What about the Upper Hunter county, which was another one that experienced a significant shift? The OPR, or operational performance ratio—which as we've said is a key indicator of financial performance—went from 21 per cent to negative 2 per cent from 2018-19 to 2019-20. Is there no oversight or intel on that?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: We'll need to take it on notice, because these are weed authorities primarily. We'll take that on notice, thank you.</p>	<p>In relation to the GM salary for FY2021-22, this data will not be available until the FY2021-22 Financial Data Returns are lodged with the OLG.</p> <p>In relation to Upper Hunter County Council's OPR decline from 2018-19 to 2019-20, this information is publicly available in Council's Annual Financial Statement, which can be accessed here.</p> <p>Council reported an improved OPR of 14.5 per cent in 2020-21.</p>
FIRST TIME COUNCILLORS		
27	<p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I have a couple of follow-up questions about the support for newly elected councillors. Some of this information was discussed this morning. Do you have a figure for how many first-time councillors were elected at the recent local government elections?</p> <p>MELANIE HAWYES: We have a rough percentage that there was approximately a 50 per cent turnover. I'd need to take on notice how many were first-time elected officials.</p> <p>The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes, potentially some of them had been on councils before and come back.</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>The OLG is in the process of collecting this data.</p>

	MELANIE HAWYES: Potentially, yes. I don't think we have that figure with us today.	
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Row Labels	Sum of Total No. of		Sum of No. of Pensioner	Sum of No. of Pensioner	Sum of No. of Pensioner
	Sum of 55% Provided	Pensioner Concessions	Concessions Granted - Ordinary Rates	Concessions Granted - Water Rates	Concessions Granted - Sewerage Rates
2021-22	74,537,098	841,976	476,421	192,616	172,939
Albury	825,119	11,398	3,748	3,859	3,791
Armidale Regional	351,043	4,982	1,826	1,630	1,526
Ballina	782,709	10,586	3,666	3,485	3,435
Balranald	31,779	444	156	147	141
Bathurst Regional	607,806	8,337	3,098	2,652	2,587
Bayside	1,198,492	9,257	9,257	0	0
Bega Valley	763,860	9,647	3,935	3,065	2,647
Bellingen	270,647	3,503	1,448	1,146	909
Berrigan	233,744	3,252	1,132	1,044	1,076
Blacktown	1,996,811	15,817	15,817	0	0
Bland	79,719	985	545	0	440
Blayney	83,360	858	541	0	317
Blue Mountains	853,543	6,693	6,693	0	0
Bogan	44,254	576	202	198	176
Bourke	25,350	382	141	135	106
Brewarrina	9,930	136	50	46	40
Broken Hill	302,610	2,290	2,290	0	0
Burwood	215,960	1,655	1,655	0	0
Byron	419,185	5,530	2,189	1,706	1,635
Cabonne	174,148	1,943	1,057	256	630
Camden	484,123	3,755	3,755	0	0
Campbelltown	1,067,818	8,765	8,765	0	0
Canada Bay	490,356	3,567	3,567	0	0
Canterbury Bankstown	2,749,824	21,351	21,351	0	0
Carrathool	31,501	426	159	157	110
Castlereagh-Macquarie County	0	0	0	0	0
Central Coast	5,714,870	83,752	27,503	28,304	27,945
Central Darling	19,324	212	141	57	14
Central Tablelands County	52,140	2,195	0	2,195	0
Cessnock	655,170	5,156	5,156	0	0
Clarence Valley	1,197,403	14,700	5,839	5,151	3,710
Cobar	54,122	687	243	242	202
Coffs Harbour	1,403,160	22,910	6,531	10,937	5,442
Coolamon	71,344	778	430	0	348
Coonamble	59,916	788	290	270	228
Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional	280,758	3,599	1,379	1,127	1,093
Cowra	299,631	3,726	1,434	1,389	903
Cumberland	1,382,555	10,704	10,704	0	0
Dubbo Regional	624,494	8,688	3,208	2,800	2,680
Dungog	95,638	764	764	0	0
Edward River	169,774	2,203	783	727	693
Eurobodalla	1,011,319	14,567	5,358	4,719	4,490
Fairfield	1,723,305	12,780	12,780	0	0
Federation	352,699	9,804	1,723	4,133	3,948
Forbes	165,884	2,152	783	716	653
Georges River	963,479	7,954	7,954	0	0
Gilgandra	69,888	917	363	290	264
Glen Innes Severn	219,657	3,082	1,233	944	905
Goldenfields Water County	84,283	1,856	0	1,856	0
Goulburn Mulwaree	501,171	10,118	2,319	3,964	3,835
Greater Hume	172,872	2,354	1,310	377	667
Griffith	280,566	3,786	1,326	1,290	1,170
Gunnedah	181,970	2,403	915	791	697
Gwydir	128,506	1,538	617	494	427
Hawkesbury	480,268	4,420	3,516	0	904
Hawkesbury River County	0	0	0	0	0
Hay	56,519	684	248	224	212
Hills	735,789	5,733	5,733	0	0
Hilltops	385,623	4,894	2,004	1,560	1,330
Hornsby	739,942	5,812	5,812	0	0
Hunters Hill	40,240	338	338	0	0
Inner West	941,920	7,633	7,633	0	0
Inverell	363,045	4,313	1,726	1,421	1,166
Junee	80,038	828	471	0	357
Kempsey	758,635	10,017	4,086	3,417	2,514
Kiama	236,567	1,770	1,770	0	0
Ku-ring-gai	392,426	3,215	3,215	0	0
Kyogle	198,815	3,366	1,151	1,125	1,090
Lachlan	93,714	1,228	436	423	369
Lake Macquarie	2,295,907	18,179	18,179	0	0
Lane Cove	110,791	832	832	0	0
Leeton	182,836	2,294	877	783	634
Lismore	734,531	12,938	6,389	2,735	3,814
Lithgow	481,352	6,228	2,324	2,010	1,894
Liverpool	1,236,943	9,562	9,562	0	0
Liverpool Plains	191,098	2,677	1,050	920	707
Lockhart	44,495	490	274	0	216
Maitland	692,911	5,756	5,756	0	0
Mid-Coast	2,626,677	40,746	12,776	14,491	13,479
Mid-Western Regional	395,380	4,770	2,020	1,441	1,309
Moree Plains	117,994	1,531	581	507	443
Mosman	84,239	681	681	0	0
Murray River	254,305	3,189	1,141	1,055	993
Murrumbidgee	55,350	796	279	263	254
Muswellbrook	212,314	2,792	1,001	893	898
Nambucca Valley	489,276	6,026	2,549	1,859	1,618
Narrabri	167,710	2,080	818	671	591
Narrandera	115,663	1,506	579	490	437
Narromine	100,677	1,418	515	462	441
New England Tablelands County	0	0	0	0	0
Newcastle	1,356,050	10,391	10,391	0	0
North Sydney	187,391	1,548	1,548	0	0
Northern Beaches	1,351,485	10,240	10,240	0	0
Oberon	78,049	924	447	246	231
Orange	633,751	11,110	2,929	5,392	2,789
Parkes	250,484	3,464	1,226	1,198	1,040
Parramatta	1,045,572	7,940	7,940	0	0
Penrith	1,399,557	10,523	10,523	0	0
Port Macquarie-Hastings	1,851,982	26,659	9,441	8,574	8,644
Port Stephens	849,207	6,712	6,712	0	0
Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional	507,315	6,377	2,423	1,985	1,969
Randwick	572,502	4,551	4,551	0	0
Richmond Valley	461,774	5,964	2,472	1,770	1,722
Riverina Water County	206,837	4,488	0	4,488	0
Rous Water	10,566	248	0	248	0
Ryde	599,337	4,921	4,921	0	0
Shellharbour	795,215	6,227	6,227	0	0
Shoalhaven	2,502,131	34,234	12,032	11,399	10,803
Singleton	247,840	2,962	1,208	931	823
Snowy Monaro Regional	315,782	4,265	1,654	1,402	1,209
Snowy Valleys	292,085	3,680	1,395	1,182	1,103
Strathfield	157,738	1,241	1,241	0	0
Sutherland	1,651,639	13,353	13,353	0	0
Sydney	373,543	2,811	2,811	0	0
Tamworth Regional	1,007,314	13,825	5,507	4,367	3,951
Temora	99,060	1,115	633	0	482
Tenterfield	194,114	2,213	1,005	641	567
Tweed	1,886,461	23,925	8,551	7,824	7,550
Upper Hunter	237,475	3,022	1,190	965	867
Upper Hunter County	0	0	0	0	0
Upper Lachlan	120,160	1,494	667	432	395
Upper Macquarie County	0	0	0	0	0
Uralla	106,213	1,201	544	340	317
Wagga Wagga	624,857	11,028	7,418	0	3,610
Walcha	30,885	695	268	216	211
Walgett	96,145	1,094	645	236	213
Warren	46,172	593	211	200	182
Warrumbungle	211,057	2,597	1,127	856	614
Waverley	230,542	1,692	1,692	0	0
Weddin	75,851	785	473	0	312
Wentworth	98,769	1,329	517	428	384
Willoughby	249,906	1,982	1,982	0	0
Wingecarribee	876,894	18,891	4,246	7,695	6,950
Wollondilly	336,605	2,551	2,551	0	0
Wollongong	1,929,267	15,449	15,449	0	0
Woolahra	113,389	864	864	0	0
Yass Valley	144,550	1,748	745	552	451
Grand Total	74,537,098	841,976	476,421	192,616	172,939