



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEES

BUDGET ESTIMATES 2016-2017 Supplementary Questions

General Purpose Standing Committee No. 6

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Hearing: Friday 2 September 2016

Answers due by: Wednesday 28 September 2016

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Questions from the Hon. Mark Pearson MLC

Pounds

1. My office receives many complaints from constituents regarding Local Council Pounds in relation to substandard conditions; extremes in temperature, lack of or poor bedding, crowding, neglect, failure to seek veterinary assistance, kill rates and the lack of No Kill strategies.

A number of RSPCA NSW audits of council pounds have done little to alleviate growing public concerns, and it is the public who pay for these council facilities and services.

- (a) When will the Minister acknowledge that the NSW council pound system needs a drastic overhaul which by necessity should start with a comprehensive state audit and public inquiry?
 - (b) Will the Minister agree to undertake a public Inquiry into the overall condition, performance, management and operation of NSW council pounds & shelters to determine the correct use of public money in line with public sentiments?
2. When members of the public are concerned or dissatisfied with the management of a council pound including matters of housing, practices, duty of care, and heightened attention to kill rates, they will invariably lodge verbal or written complaints with councils, NSW OLG, local MPs, DPI RSPCA/AWL, the state Ombudsman or the Minister's office.
 - (a) Can the Minister provide an accurate break down of the number, nature and recipients of these types of complaints for the 2015 to 2016 Period which would provide some measure of the level of public satisfaction with the management of NSW council pounds?
 - (b) Can the Minister advise what type of analysis has been undertaken on these complaints to identify and enable corrective and remedial action, who has conducted this analysis and confirm examples where this has occurred?

3. The Minister I'm sure will vividly recall the examples of systemic cruelty and abuse inflicted on greyhounds. The images of the mass burial pits, filled with the lifeless bodies of dogs, many of whom were shot or bludgeoned to death, will remain in our memories forever.

These mass pits are also often the final resting place and the common method of disposal for killed impounded companion animals by our NSW council pounds. This is often convenient and economical as the pounds are frequently situated at council tips, especially in rural and regional areas.

Methods of killing can and do still involve the shooting of un-claimed kittens, cats, puppies and dogs. It is all perfectly legal as is blunt force trauma to the animal's head. Alternately, the council can transfer the un-claimed animals to veterinary practices or universities for experimentation or 'bleeding' as has been the fate of countless numbers of greyhounds, including those surrendered to council pounds.

- (a) Can the Minister confirm how many NSW council pounds are;
 - i. Still killing companion animals by firearm or blunt force trauma;
 - ii. Disposing of companion animal bodies at local government tips;
 - iii. Transferring live un-claimed companion animals to universities or vet practices for experimentation or bleeding;
 - iv. Using council (community/public money) to train council staff to undertake the killing 'in-house'.
- (b) When will the Minister outlaw such practices which are strongly opposed by the public and yet it is the public who are required to pay for these council facilities and services?

4. In August 2015 the CEO of the NSW office of local government confirmed that the seizure of cats under the Companion Animals Act 1998 can only be undertaken in certain and very specific circumstances, and that neither the Impounding Act 1993 or Regulations can be relied upon to seize or impound cats. Many NSW councils are however facilitating the trapping, seizure, impounding and killing, including by shooting, of cats either directly or indirectly through the hiring out of traps within their communities.

- (a) Can the Minister confirm under which legislation these NSW councils are acting, and how will the Minister ensure any breaches of mandatory legislation are adequately enforced?
- (b) Can the Minister confirm how many NSW cats have been killed between 2014 and 2016 where some NSW councils have been acting contrary to mandatory legislation?
- (c) Why has there been no government reporting or publishing of intake and outcomes of pound animals since 2011-2012?

5. Transparency and benchmarking improve performance, as evidenced by Victoria's considerably better outcomes for dogs and cats in pounds and shelters than NSW. The euthanasia of dogs was 29% of intake in NSW versus 14 % in Vic in 2012-13 when NSW last reported.

- (a) Why are there no transparency in performance of individual municipalities for intake and outcomes of dogs and cats in NSW, despite taxpayers funding animal control services?

Questions from Mr David Shoebridge MLC

Budget spend

6. Can the Minister outline how the \$590 million allocated to “implement the Fit for the Future reforms” will be spent over two years?
7. Does this \$590 million spend mean that 30% of the purported \$2 billion savings over 20 years will be blown in just two years?

Operation Spicer

8. Is the Minister aware that the Independent Commission Against Corruption’s report into Operation Spicer noted that a prominent property developer’s “fortunes were susceptible to planning decisions made by the council” and that it was in their “interest to foster a favourable relationship with [Hawkesbury] councillors”?
9. Given this finding, when will the Minister legislate to ban property developers from being elected to council?
10. How many of the Liberal Party’s candidates for the 2016 council elections are property developers or real estate agents?

Section 451 of the Local Government

11. Did the Government repeal Section 451 of the Local Government Act because it was evident that it had a corruptive influence on local council?
12. Will the Minister commit to an audit of every time a developer was able to vote in their own self-interest as a result of Section 451?

KPMG

13. In relation to the July 2015 KPMG Document titled “Options Analysis: Local Reform
 - (a) Can the Minister justify why on the 8th January 2016 he stated that KPMG had independently analysed the financial benefits of forced amalgamations when the July 2015 document indicates came up with the savings in the first place?

- (b) When was KPMG first contracted by the Government to conduct a report on local government reform?
- (c) Why did the Minister advise the Budget Estimates hearing on September 4 2015 that he was awaiting IPART's report on amalgamations in October, if KPMG had already produced its Options Analysis?

Amalgamations

- 14. Will the Minister commit to giving residents and ratepayers the right to vote on the future of their local council through a binding plebiscite?
- 15. Can the Minister advise what steps were taken in the recruitment process for Council Administrators?
- 16. Does the Minister accept that there is an inherent conflict of interest in appointing delegates who recommended the amalgamation of local councils as the Administrator of an amalgamated council?
- 17. Have a set of guidelines have been provided to Council Administrators regarding their role?
 - (a) What actions will be taken if they do not adhere to these guidelines?

Local Government elections

- 18. What evidence is there to support holding local council elections, for those councils that have been amalgamated, in September 2017?
- 19. Is the Minister aware of comments made by Inner West Council Administrator Richard Pearson that he would have "no great concern" if elections were held in March 2017?

Constitutional recognition of local government

- 20. What steps is the Minister taking to advocate for constitutional recognition of local government that gives local councils proper legal protections?

GPSC 6 Inquiry into Local Government

- 21. What steps is the Minister taking to implement recommendations from the Parliamentary Inquiry into Local Government including:
 - (a) Recommendation 5: That the Minister for Local Government work cooperatively with the local government sector to petition the Australian Government to seek to redistribute

Financial Assistance Grants in order to direct additional funding to councils with the greatest needs, provided councils with the capacity to raise additional local revenue are able to do so?

- (b) Recommendation 16: That the NSW Government make Joint Organisations available to all councils in New South Wales?
- (c) Recommendation 17: That the NSW Government work with local government on a statutory model for Joint Organisations based on the Hunters Hill, Ryde and Lane Cove Council model as a cooperative and consensus model for local council reform in Metropolitan Sydney?

Woollahra

- 22. Has the Minister found a solution to address the differences in the rating systems between in amalgamated councils after the four year rate freeze?
 - (a) In particular, what is the solution to the inevitability that a majority of Waverley/Randwick will change the rating system to extract disproportionately high rates from Woollahra's wealthier landholders?
 - (b) What will these residents receive in return by way of increased services?

Local Representative Committees

- 23. What was the process for appointing former councillors as Local Representative Committee members?
- 24. What are the job requirements of these committee members, including minimum hours of work?
- 25. What is the pay rate of Local Representative Committee members?
- 26. Can Local Representative Committee members speak to the media or their local residents?
- 27. Are Local Representative Committee meetings open to the public to participate?
- 28. Are Local Representative Committees required to report to the Minister and/or Department?
 - (a) If so, where are these reports published?

Bondi Pavilion

29. What steps are being taken to ensure that redevelopment projects comply with local councils Plan of Management?
30. What steps are being taken to ensure that redevelopment projects comply with local councils Conservation Management Plan?
31. What grants have been provided in the last five years towards work associated with Bondi Park, the Bondi Pavilion and Bondi Beach Plan of Management?

Local Council Pounds

32. What steps is the Minister taking to ensure that Council Pounds are managed to comply with:
 - (a) The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979?
 - (b) The NSW Animal Welfare Code of Practice No 5 - Dogs and Cats in Animal Boarding Establishments?
 - (c) The Companion Animals Act 1998?
 - (d) The Impounding Act 1993?
33. How many complaints regarding incidences of non-compliance in Council Pounds have been lodged in the last financial year?
34. How many Council Pounds have been declared non-compliant in the last financial year?
35. What steps are being taken to ensure that all councils comply with providing the mandatory pound reporting data to the Office of Local Government?
36. Are the RSPCA, Animal Welfare League or the NSW Police compelled to notify the Minister for Local Government where there is any incident or instance involving breaches of Acts or complaints concerning a council pound?
 - (a) If not, why not?
 - (b) If yes, which council pounds have been investigated following complaints?
37. How many grants have been provided under the Responsible Pet Ownership Grants Program for local councils in NSW?
 - (a) Which councils have these grants been provided to?
 - (b) What is the total amount of money that has been provided through these grants?

Taxation and representation

38. What would be the response of the Government to local ratepayers who, deprived of representation in their local municipalities as a result of forced amalgamations, invoke the long-established principle of "No Taxation Without Representation" and refused to pay council rates until that representation was restored?

Oatley Bowling Club site

39. What consultation has the Minister had with the then Hurstville Council and/or newly created Georges River Council about the proposed redevelopment of the former Oatley Bowling club site?
40. What steps does the Minister take to ensure that local councils properly consult with their local residents during the development application process?
41. Does the Minister have concerns about significant development applications being determined by councils in camera?

Clarence Valley asbestos investigation

42. What steps have been taken to address concerns that Clarence Valley Council has failed to respond to community concerns about the burial of asbestos at the South Grafton depot site?
43. Will the Minister conduct an investigation into the site?
44. What steps have been taken to investigate whether Clarence Valley Council dumped and buried asbestos concrete material at the site in question?

Questions from the Hon Shaoquett Moselmane (on behalf of the NSW Labor Opposition)

OLG Advice

45. Minister, after the announcements about the forced council mergers on 20th December last year, many councils, academics and others including myself applied to the Office of Local Government for a copy of the KPMG Report that had used to justify the mergers. However, as reported in the Sydney Morning Herald on 25th January, the Office of Local Government wrote back to everyone advising that they had not seen the report.

- (a) What are the reasons that the Office of Local Government (OLG) was not trusted to see the report?
- (b) When were they advised that they would be denied access to the report? By whom?
- (c) If the OLG had not seen the report, who briefed you? When?
- (d) Has the OLG now seen the full Report? When did they receive a copy?

KPMG and Other Contracts

46. The government paid KPMG \$499,895.00 for 'Local Government Reform – Scenario modelling' in July to August 2015.

- (a) Was this work beyond the skills of the Office of Local Government? Was the Office consulted during the preparation of the report?
- (b) What were the key findings?
- (c) Were you interviewed by these consultants as they prepared their report?
- (d) Have you seen the Report?
- (e) Has the Office of Local Government seen the Report?
- (f) When did you first become aware that KPMG was preparing this second report on local government mergers?
- (g) Were you consulted about the terms of reference?
- (h) Were you consulted about the recommendations?
- (i) Was anyone in the Office of Local Government consulted? Whom? When?
- (j) Who was consulted in the preparation of the report?

- (k) What were the key findings and recommendations in the report?
 - (l) Has the report been made public? Will it? Why not?
47. Have any other tenders been awarded in relation to this matter?
48. The government also awarded KPMG Australia Pty Ltd another contract for 'Preparation and Delivery of Merger Proposals' valued at \$380,500.00. But the contract duration is listed as both starting and ending on 1 December 2015.
- (a) Was this work beyond the skills of the Office of Local Government? Was the Office consulted during the preparation of the report?
 - (b) What were the key findings?
 - (c) Were you interviewed by these consultants as they prepared their report?
 - (d) Have you seen the Report?
 - (e) Has the Office of Local Government seen the Report?
 - (f) When did you first become aware that KPMG was preparing this second report on local government mergers?
 - (g) Were you consulted about the terms of reference?
 - (h) Were you consulted about the recommendations?
 - (i) Was anyone in the Office of Local Government consulted? Whom? When?
 - (j) Who was consulted in the preparation of the report?
 - (k) What were the key findings and recommendations in the report?
 - (l) Has the report been made public? Will it? Why not?
 - (m) Have any other tenders been awarded in relation to this matter?
49. The government awarded yet another contract to another consultant, this time Hudson Global Resources, for 'Assessment of GM in LG'. Again the contract duration was for one day: 1st May 2016. The amount paid by the government was \$200,000.00.
- (a) Was this work beyond the skills of the Office of Local Government? Was the Office consulted during the preparation of the report?
 - (b) What were the key findings?
 - (c) Were you interviewed by these consultants as they prepared their report?

- (d) Have you seen the Report?
- (e) Has the Office of Local Government seen the Report?
- (f) When did you first become aware that KPMG was preparing this second report on local government mergers?
- (g) Were you consulted about the terms of reference?
- (h) Were you consulted about the recommendations?
- (i) Was anyone in the Office of Local Government consulted? Whom? When?
- (j) Who was consulted in the preparation of the report?
- (k) What were the key findings and recommendations in the report?
- (l) Has the report been made public? Will it? Why not?
- (m) Have any other tenders been awarded in relation to this matter?

Hunter Proposals

50. When will the Minister make a formal announcement abandoning the forced merger proposals on the government's so-called "Stronger Councils" website relating to councils in the Hunter?

Central Coast Council

51. What action will you take to ensure the 'residual' portion of the site at Regatta Way, Summerland Point that was stipulated to be transferred to the ownership of the Council and used for public recreation, is not instead sold to a developer?
- (a) Will you meet with local residents concerned about the ongoing inaction of the council in relation to this matter?

Financial Risks and Audits

52. Has a forensic audit found that Liverpool City Council may have been exposed to specific financial risks as a consequence of a contract outsourcing customer and management services with Queensland based Propel Partnerships?
- (a) If so, what measures will you put in place to ensure that such risks to councils and their ratepayers are minimised in future?

53. Will you ensure that the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committees at all councils have at least one member who is not a councillor, a staff member of the council or a member of an entity controlled by the council? If not, why not?

Local Council Elections

54. Are there any proposals to delay the election proposed for September 2017 until March 2018?

Developers

55. Have you had meetings with major developers, lobbyists or developer groups in the last 12 months at which council amalgamations were discussed?
- (a) If so, with whom?
 - (b) On what date?
 - (c) What was the nature of those discussions?

OLG

56. Can you please provide a structure chart or charts showing the position title, level/grading, salary range, status (permanent, temporary, and so on) and occupancy (permanently occupied, temporarily occupied – and for what period, vacant) of all permanent and temporary positions in OLG:
- (a) as at 1 September 2016.
 - (b) as at 1 July 2015.
57. Can you please provide a schedule of all contractors and consultants employed to date by OLG in relation to any aspect of local government reform, listing name, work performed, total cost and what the engagement process was (competitive tender, and others)?
58. You have had an acting Chief Executive in OLG for almost a year.
- (a) Was there any merit selection process for the role?
 - (b) Do you intend to substantially fill the position? When?
 - (c) Will a formal recruitment process be undertaken? When?

59. What is the average time it takes OLG to investigate an allegation of misconduct, from the day the allegation was received by OLG to the day it was concluded (either with a penalty/sanction or a clearance)?
 - (a) What is the range of times it takes for this?
60. How many responses were received to the consultation on the phase 1 changes to the LG Act? What did they say? How many were written responses vs electronic survey forms? Why has the OLG not released an analysis of the responses? Will the analysis be released? When?

Amalgamations

61. Why did you ignore the voluntary amalgamation proposals that were put forward in good faith by councils in accordance with the Government's own process, and choose to forcibly amalgamate those councils with different partners?
62. Why were some councils that were supposedly "fit for the future" forcibly amalgamated when they had participated in good faith and been found to be fit?
63. Why have the majority of the non-structural recommendations of the ILGRP report been ignored?
64. For each of the ILGRP's recommendations that it has accepted, when will the Government take action to implement them, and what will this involve?
65. Why is the Government actively preventing struggling councils from accessing TCorp funds at an attractive rate? This seems punitive rather than helpful.
66. What quantitative evidence or modelling do you have that 'rates are going to go down'? Will you make this public? When?
67. Why haven't you implemented the recommendations of the Parliamentary Inquiry into Local Government Reform?
68. Does the Government intend to force any further amalgamations (other than the "pending" ones)?

Rates – IPART pensioner rebate

69. In your media release dated 21 June this year regarding the NSW Budget, your first dot point of budget highlights is: '\$79 million to ease cost of living pressures for pensioners through the Pensioners Rebate Scheme, subsidising council rates and charges.'

- (a) Would you agree that only a heartless, penny-pinching government would try to abolish this Scheme and cost shift the whole rates burden onto pensioners?

Council Budgets

70. In light of the forcibly merged Northern Beaches Council spending over \$40,000 of the \$10 million allocated to them by the Government on a conference conducted by the General Manager, what guidelines are in place to ensure these funds are expended to benefit the local community as intended rather than act as a piggy bank for insiders? Will you make these guidelines public? If not, why not?

Rate freeze

71. In December 2015 when the Premier and yourself announced proposals to merge councils across NSW, why did you fail to correct media stories that this included a “rate freeze”, when all that was proposed was a “rate path freeze”?

Swimming Pools

72. Were swimming pools with out-of-ground pool walls as part of the pool barrier ever legal in NSW? If not, when did they cease being legal? Why?
73. If their construction had been approved by a local government authority, are they illegal?
- (a) Are they legal now?
 - (b) If not, what action is being taken by you to alert the owners of such pools that their pools are illegal?
 - (c) How are the owners of such non-complying pools being notified?
 - (d) How is the rectification being monitored? By whom?
 - (e) What penalties apply for non-compliance?
74. Do you believe that a 1200mm high pool fence in front of a 1200mm high non-scalable out-of-ground pool wall will make it safer?
75. Do you believe that a 1200mm high pool fence in front of a 4.0 metre high non-scalable out-of-ground pool wall will make it safer?
76. Do you believe that a 1200mm high pool fence surrounding a pool sitting on 5.0 metre high non-scalable reinforced concrete piers will make it safer?

77. What is your estimate of the cost to owners of such swimming pools, that have previously been approved, to meet the government's requirements regarding fencing?

Entertainment expenses

78. How much did your Ministerial Office spend last financial year on entertainment expenses?
- (a) I would also then assume you should have no problem with entertainment expenses by local councils?
79. How much did the Office of Local Government spend last financial year on entertainment expenses?
80. How much did the Office of Local Government spend last financial year on legal advice?
81. How much did the Office of Local Government spend last financial year on advertising?

Air fares and accommodation

82. How often do the administrators and general managers of the newly merged councils meet together?
83. Who pays for their airfares?
84. Who pays for their accommodation?

Interim General Managers

85. How many interim general managers of forcibly merged councils have resigned since the mega councils were established? From which councils?

Co-administrators

86. Minister, what was the rationale for appointing co-administrators of some of the forcibly merged councils?

Plans to reduce dog bites

87. Given that nationally around 14,000 dog bite victims present at hospitals each year, and four people every day are hospitalised, do you agree that existing dog control measures are not sufficient?

88. Do you support the establishment of a national register of dog bites to track incidents and record the value – or otherwise – of actions such as banning specific breeds?

(a) If yes or no, what action will you take?

Boundaries Commission

89. In the 'Gundagai Independent' on 26th May this year, Boundaries Commissioner Rick Firman said that the role of the Commission in relation to the 2016 merger proposals "was to review the delegate's report and provide its comments to the minister. That role has not involved the commission re-examining the advantages and disadvantages of the merger proposal, holding public inquiries or calling for submissions."

(a) Minister, do you agree with Mr Firman that this was the correct and appropriate role for the commission?

RSVP

90. At least one of the newly merged councils is obliging those members of the public who wish to attend the meeting to RSVP. The date for the RSVP is prior to the business papers being published, so members of the community are not aware what business is on the agenda. Do you think this is good practice?

Stronger communities fund

91. A number of councils such as Goulburn Mulwaree who have not been forcibly merged, feel discriminated against as they are not eligible to receive a \$10 million grant under the Stronger Communities Fund. Why are you discriminating against residents in these council areas? Don't they also deserve support with infrastructure funding?

DPC budget and local government reform

92. What is the proportion of the DPC budget has been spent on local government reform, in particular to any work performed relating to Stronger Councils, Fit for the Future and/or the Local Government Reform Taskforce, relating to the following budget line items for the projected 2015/2016 expenditure:

(a) Temporary Employees – short term staff

(b) Contractors

- (c) Consultants
- (d) Travel and accommodation – overseas
- (e) Travel and accommodation - domestic

OLG Budget – merger process

93. In relation to the estimates - detailed report for the OLG:

- (a) Budget item “Temporary employees – short term staff”: in the 2015/16 projections, what proportion of the \$2,860,000 was spent in relation to the Stronger Councils, Fit for the Future, and Local Government Reform Taskforce and related work?
- (b) Budget item “Contractors”, in the 2015/16 projections: what proportion of the \$2,305,000 was spent in relation to the Stronger Councils, Fit for the Future, and Local Government Reform Taskforce and related work?
- (c) Budget item “Consultants”, in the 2015/16 projections: what proportion of the \$600,000 was spent in relation to the Stronger Councils, Fit for the Future, and Local Government Reform Taskforce and related work?
- (d) Budget item “Other legal fees and disbursements (to the private sector”): in the 2015/16 projections, what proportion of the \$300,000 was spent in relation to the Stronger Councils, Fit for the Future, and Local Government Reform Taskforce and related work?
- (e) Budget item “Other operating expenses”: in the 2015/16 projections, what proportion of the \$4,914,000 was spent in relation to the Stronger Councils, Fit for the Future, and Local Government Reform Taskforce and related work?
- (f) What are the reasons for the 2016/17 budgeted reduction in the “Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme – rec study to loca”?
- (g) What are the reasons for the 2016/17 budgeted reduction in the “Local Government – current grants”? Is this expected to continue to decline over the forward estimates?

Merged Council Information:

- 94. What mechanisms do you use to monitor the effects of your forced mergers on local councils?
- 95. In total, how many officers or staff in the recently forcibly merged councils in NSW have been made redundant and/or taken a voluntary separation?

- (a) How many are expected to be made redundant and/or take a voluntary separation in the next two years?
96. In total, how much has been paid to date on redundancy and/or voluntary separation payments?
- (a) How much is expected to be paid on redundancy and/or voluntary separation payments in the next two years?
97. In total, how much has been spent on merging IT, accounting and financial systems in your forcibly merged councils?
- (a) How much is expected to be spent in the next two years?
98. In total, how much has been spent on external consultants to plan and implement the forced mergers?
99. What are the numbers of redundancies and/or voluntary separations of non-senior staff members for each of the following newly merged councils:
- (a) Armidale Regional Council
 - (b) Canterbury-Bankstown Council
 - (c) Central Coast Council
 - (d) City of Parramatta Council
 - (e) Cumberland Council
 - (f) Edward River Council
 - (g) Federation Council
 - (h) Georges River Council
 - (i) Gundagai Council
 - (j) Hilltops Council
 - (k) Inner West Council
 - (l) Mid-Coast Council
 - (m) Murray River Council
 - (n) Murrumbidgee Council
 - (o) Northern Beaches Council
 - (p) Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council

- (q) Snowy Monaro Regional Council
- (r) Snowy Valleys Council
- (s) Western Plains Regional Council

100. How much has been paid out in redundancies and/or voluntary separations of non-senior staff members for each of the following newly merged councils:

- (a) Armidale Regional Council
- (b) Canterbury-Bankstown Council
- (c) Central Coast Council
- (d) City of Parramatta Council
- (e) Cumberland Council
- (f) Edward River Council
- (g) Federation Council
- (h) Georges River Council
- (i) Gundagai Council
- (j) Hilltops Council
- (k) Inner West Council
- (l) Mid-Coast Council
- (m) Murray River Council
- (n) Murrumbidgee Council
- (o) Northern Beaches Council
- (p) Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council
- (q) Snowy Monaro Regional Council
- (r) Snowy Valleys Council
- (s) Western Plains Regional Council

101. How much has been spent on merging IT, accounting and financial systems for each of the following newly merged councils?

- (a) Armidale Regional Council

- (b) Canterbury-Bankstown Council
- (c) Central Coast Council
- (d) City of Parramatta Council
- (e) Cumberland Council
- (f) Edward River Council
- (g) Federation Council
- (h) Georges River Council
- (i) Gundagai Council
- (j) Hilltops Council
- (k) Inner West Council
- (l) Mid-Coast Council
- (m) Murray River Council
- (n) Murrumbidgee Council
- (o) Northern Beaches Council
- (p) Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council
- (q) Snowy Monaro Regional Council
- (r) Snowy Valleys Council
- (s) Western Plains Regional Council

102. How much has been spent on external consultants and/or contractors and/or temporary short-term staff to plan and execute the forced amalgamations for each of the following councils?

- (a) Armidale Regional Council
- (b) Canterbury-Bankstown Council
- (c) Central Coast Council
- (d) City of Parramatta Council
- (e) Cumberland Council
- (f) Edward River Council
- (g) Federation Council

- (h) Georges River Council
- (i) Gundagai Council
- (j) Hilltops Council
- (k) Inner West Council
- (l) Mid-Coast Council
- (m) Murray River Council
- (n) Murrumbidgee Council
- (o) Northern Beaches Council
- (p) Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council
- (q) Snowy Monaro Regional Council
- (r) Snowy Valleys Council
- (s) Western Plains Regional Council

Merged council expenditure

103. Parramatta Council had previously advised residents that there was to be a speed cushion installed on Loftus St. Following the forced council merger, of what is now known as Cumberland Council, council advised residents that the timing of the work “will depend on the availability of funds and competing priorities”. Given that the money for this project had been ear marked for the speed cushion, will the Government ensure the funds are made available to implement a much-needed traffic safety measure?
104. In terms of already ear-marked expenditure for street works and other road safety measures by councils who are now subsumed into a larger local government area, what is the advice OLG and/or the Minister has given to the administrators of the new merged council areas about the implementation of such expenditure?

Representation on local representative committees in forcibly merged council areas

105. What considerations were administrators required to take into account in forming the local representative committee?
106. Was any of the considerations geographic location, gender, age, experience, or anything else?

107. Is the Minister aware of the unbalanced nature of the Cumberland Council local representative committee?

Community Swimming pools

108. Local swimming pools are often at the heart of suburban communities, with there being many campaigns run to preserve and not close down local pools. I make reference in particular to the former Holroyd City Council, where council had once considered closing both Wentworthville and Guildford pools but did not due to the opposition of the community. What advice has the Government provided to administrators in relation to changing the operations and/or shutting down local community pools?

Parramatta Pool

109. How much funding will the Minister and/or the Government provide to City of Parramatta Council for the relocation of Parramatta Pool due to the decision of the NSW Government to upgrade Parramatta Stadium?

Parking Panel to review parking fines

110. The former Parramatta City Council had a parking panel to review parking fines. With the forced amalgamation of councils, people who receive parking fines in Granville, Guildford and Merrylands no longer have access to the parking panel. What will the Minister do to rectify this immediately, so that Granville, Guildford and Merrylands residents are not worse off, and can have their fines review by a body other than SDRO?
111. Where this has affected residents in other council areas, what steps is the Minister taking so that residents are not left worse off in relation to having their parking fines reviewed by a body other than the SDRO?

Minister's diary disclosures and KPMG

112. In estimates, the Minister mentioned that all of his meetings are disclosed in his diary disclosures on the Department of Premier and Cabinet website. In going through the diary disclosures for the periods mentioned in the three KPMG contracts (contract Award Notice ID A425947, 177005, and DPC 2016/023) undertaken into local government, as well as ante and post the time periods, there is no meeting listed between himself and KPMG.

- (a) Can the Minister confirm that he was not part of any of the consultations in relation to the KPMG contracts?
- (b) Can the Minister confirm that he was not briefed about the KPMG contracts and the key findings from those contracts?
- (c) Can the Minister confirm that he found out about the KPMG contracts and key findings from the Premier's media release?

Council mergers and rate rises

113. Can the Minister confirm that the modelling used for the Government to say that “merged councils result in lower rates” is flawed?
- (a) In particular, that the modelling did not show a direct connection (whether causative or correlative) between merged council entities and lower council rates?
 - (b) Can the Minister confirm that the modelling of the 22 merged council entities, the modelling showed that:
 - i. Out of the 22 councils, 11 councils found that in the following year that their rates were lower (exclusive of the rate peg being applied in the following year's rates);
 - ii. Out of the 22 councils, 8 councils found that in the following year that their rates were higher (exclusive of the rate peg being applied in the following year's rates); and
 - iii. Out of the 22 councils, 3 councils had no data.
114. Does the Minister, and by extension the Government, still want to make the claim that merged councils will result in lower rates?

Local Government Forced Amalgamations Impact on Contractors

115. The Government has claimed to not be seeking savings in wages through the reform process in small rural and regional areas, by putting a moratorium on reducing staff numbers in these councils (eg: Dungog). However they have not provided a similar guarantee for small businesses that contract to Council. Given that uncertainty and forced amalgamations have put a \$250,000 cap on contracts that can be automatically entered into by councils who are in limbo awaiting determinations, what impact is this having on small councils in rural and community areas such as Dungog?

116. Can Councils make arrangements to enter into contracts over \$250,000, has the Government tracked how many requests have been made? If so, how many have been made?
117. Is the Minister aware of any such issues being experienced by any small business across the state of NSW?
118. Where bulk tendering has not already occurred (eg, Hunter Region of Councils), there is potential for two small businesses who have been separately contracting to two formerly separate but now newly merged councils to be in competition when the merger occurs. What steps is the Minister for Small Business taking to ensure that such competition is fair and that smaller and micro businesses are not cannibalised by larger businesses?
119. Will these issues provide private sector jobs losses in regional and rural towns with small populations, despite the government's assurances that public sector jobs will not be lost in those areas?
120. Does the Government place more value on public sector jobs or private sector jobs, or is there another reason that the Government has acted to protect public sector jobs but not private sector jobs?
121. Given the government has promised a moratorium on council job losses in regional and rural local government areas with small populations, what guarantees have been made to protect contractors in the same areas?
122. What is the average cost to a small business of an audit of the Government's Payroll Tax rebate?
123. What actions has the Minister undertaken to ensure small businesses who were contracted to undertake work on behalf of merged Councils were compensated for any losses sustained as a result of the mergers?
124. Were affected small businesses notified their contracts would be terminated prior to the announcement of these mergers?
125. If not, why not?
126. Has the Minister met with affected small businesses since the mergers were announced?
127. If so,
 - (a) How many small businesses have been adversely affected by the forced merger process?
 - (b) How many jobs within small businesses have been lost?
 - (c) How many small businesses have gone into liquidation due to the termination of contracts?

128. Has the Minister advocated for the implementation of a financial assistance package to ensure affected small businesses have the opportunity to remain sustainable following the termination of their contracts with merged Councils?
129. Minister, in terms of the \$2 billion purported savings that have been calculated by KPMG – what is the proportion of each of those savings, in terms of staff savings, M&C savings, and councillor fee savings?

Domestic Violence Leave and Awareness

130. For each department, statutory agency and/or other bodies in the Minister's Portfolio please report:
- (a) Date of introduction of domestic violence leave into enterprise agreements/contracts of employment, awards as applicable;
 - (b) Whether or not all employees and/or contractors are eligible for domestic violence leave;
 - (c) Number of days of domestic violence leave that have been taken in each financial year since the introduction of such leave;
 - (d) Number of days available for eligible staff to access domestic violence leave in each financial year;
 - (e) Number of other personal days of leave that have been taken in each financial year since the introduction of domestic violence leave;
 - (f) Number of sick days available for eligible staff to access domestic violence leave in each financial year;
 - (g) Whether or not all staff and/or contractors have access to Employee Assistance Programs?
 - (h) What training has been undertaken with management and administration for those involved in approving and/or processing domestic violence leave on issues such as?
 - i. Privacy and confidentiality of information about domestic violence
 - ii. Access to emotional, psychological, financial and medical support which may be required
 - (i) Who has provided training on domestic violence in the workplace?
 - (j) What percentage of staff in each agency has undertaken domestic violence training?

- (k) What efforts have been made to ensure that perpetrators (or their accomplices) within the staffing profile are not able to access personal information of victims in order to identify their location, or other information which may assist in committing domestic violence against them, including changing or accessing records in such a way as to disadvantage them financially or legally?

Holroyd Council Amalgamation

- 131. How many former Holroyd Council staff have been made redundant following the forced amalgamation into Cumberland Council?
 - (a) How much has been paid in redundancy payouts?
- 132. How much has been spent on merging IT, accounting and financial systems between Holroyd, Auburn and (partially) Parramatta Councils as part of the creation of Cumberland Council?
- 133. How much has been spent on external consultants to plan and execute the forced amalgamations of former Councils which now make up Cumberland Council?

Sexual harassment and Anti-bullying training and awareness programs

- 134. For each department, statutory agency and/or other bodies in the Minister's Portfolio please report:
 - (a) Date of introduction of sexual harassment and anti-bullying training and awareness programs
 - (b) Whether or not all employees and/or contractors have received such training?
 - (c) Is this course mandatory for all employees/ contractors?
 - (d) How long for each session, how many sessions?
 - (e) Who delivers it?
 - (f) Is the program tailored to take into consideration specific needs of LGBTQIA, ATSI and CALD or other at risk groups?
 - (g) How?
 - (h) What percentage of staff in each agency has undertaken sexual harassment and anti-bullying training and awareness programs?

Local Government Amalgamations

135. When will announcement be made on the possible merger of Newcastle/Port Stephens/ Dungog Councils?

- (a) When will elections be held for these councils ?

Flexible Workplaces

136. Minister, the Premier announced on International Women's Day that the public service would all have access to flexible working arrangements by 2019.

- (a) Do you centrally register staff who have flexible work arrangements?
- (b) What numbers of staff within your Department currently have flexible working arrangements?
- (c) Are you aware of any measures that are currently underway to implement this?

Office Administration

137. How many staff are in your ministerial office?

- (a) What was the average salary for staff members in your office during 2015-16?
- (b) What is the estimated average salary for a ministerial staffer in your office in 2016-17 based on current appointments?

138. How many blackberries/iphones/smart phones are assigned to your staff?

- (a) For each phone, how much was each bill in 2015-16?
- (b) How many phones have been lost or replaced due to damage in your office?
 - i. What is the cost of replacing those phones?

139. How many iPads or tablets has DPC assigned to your Ministerial office and to whom have they been issued?

- (a) What was the cost of providing iPads or tablets to your Ministerial Office in 2015-16?
- (b) How many iPads or tablets have been replaced due to lost or damage in 2015-16?
 - i. What was the cost of replacing these devices?

140. Has any artwork been purchased or leased for display in your ministerial office in 2015-16?

- (a) What is the cost of this?

141. Have any floral displays or indoor plants or potplants been hired or leased for display in your ministerial office in 2015-16?
- (a) If so, what was the cost of these items?
142. Have any floral displays or indoor plants or potplants been purchased for display in your ministerial office in 2015-16?
- (a) If so, what was the cost of these items?
143. What was the total cost of all subscriptions by you and your staff to online news services, newspapers, magazines, journals and periodicals in 2015-16?
- (a) What are these services/newspapers/magazines/journals/periodicals?
- i. Who is the subscriber for each of these?
144. What was the total value of all gifts purchased for use by you and your office in 2015-16?
- (a) What were the gifts purchased?
- i. Who were they gifted to?
145. Do you purchase bottled water or provide water coolers for your office?
- (a) What is the monthly cost of this?
146. What non-standard features are fitted to your ministerial vehicle?
- (a) What is the cost of each non-standard feature?
147. What was the total bill for your office in 2015-16 for:
- (a) Taxi hire
- (b) Limousine hire
- (c) Private hire care
- (d) Hire car rental
- (e) Ridesharing services
148. Were any planes or helicopters chartered by you or your office and paid for with public money in 2015-16?
- (a) If yes, will you please detail each trip, the method of transport and the cost?

Hospitality

149. How much did your ministerial office spend on hospitality, including catering and beverages, in 2015-16?
150. How much did your Department/agency spend on hospitality, including catering and beverages, in 2015-16?

Labour Hire Firms

151. Do any Departments/agencies within your portfolio responsibilities utilise the services of Labour Hire Firms? If yes, please advise in table form for 2015-16:
- (a) The names of the firms utilised
 - (b) The total amount paid to each firm engaged
 - (c) The average tenure period for an employee provided by a labour hire company
 - (d) The longest tenure for an employee provided by a labour hire company
 - (e) The duties conducted by employees engaged through a labour hire company
 - (f) The office locations of employees engaged through a labour hire company
 - (g) The highest hourly or daily rate paid to an employee provided by a labour hire company

Media and Public Relations

152. How many media or public relations advisers are employed for each of your portfolio agencies?
153. What is the forecast for the current financial year for the number of media or public relations advisers to be employed and their total cost?
154. What is the total cost of media monitoring services used by Departments/agencies within your portfolio responsibilities?
155. Have you had media training or speech training?
- (a) If yes, who paid for it?
 - (b) If paid by taxpayers, what was the amount paid in 2015-16?

Facebook

156. How much did your ministerial office spend on Facebook advertising or sponsored posts in 2015-16?
157. How much did your Department/agency spend on Facebook advertising or sponsored posts in 2015-16?

Overseas Trips

158. Were any of your overseas trips in the last financial year paid for in part or in full by using public money?
- (a) If so, did any of your relatives or friends accompany you on these trips?
159. Have you undertaken any official overseas travel that was privately funded?
- (a) If so, what was the nature of these trips?
- (b) Who paid for these trips?

Department/Agency Travel

160. What was the total expenditure in 2015-16 by Departments/agencies within your portfolio on:
- (a) Taxi hire
- (b) Limousine/private car hire
- (c) Hire car rental
- (d) Ridesharing services

Consulting

161. How much did the Department/agencies under your portfolio responsibility spend in legal costs in 2015-16?
- (a) For what specific purposes or matters was legal advice sought?
162. Have Department/agencies under your portfolio engaged any consultants to provide the following services or advice in 2015-16:
- (a) Social media
- i. And the cost of these services

- (b) Photography
 - i. And the cost of these services
- (c) Acting training
 - i. And the cost of these services
- (d) Ergonomics
 - i. And the cost of these services

Department/Agency Staffing

163. How many redundancies were processed by Departments/agencies within your portfolio responsibilities during 2015-16?
- (a) Of these redundancies, how many were:
 - i. Voluntary
 - ii. Forced
 - (b) What was the total cost of all redundancies?
164. Have any staff who received a redundancy in the last two years undertaken any paid work or provided any paid services for the agency with which they were formerly employed?
- (a) What was the nature of these works/services?
 - (b) What was the total cost of these works or services?
165. Are any staff formerly employed by your ministerial office now employed by Departments/agencies under your portfolio responsibility?
166. How many staff were dismissed from Departments/agencies under your portfolio responsibilities in 2015-16?
- (a) What were the reason/s for each dismissal?

Smart Phone Accounts

167. Do the Departments/agencies within your portfolio have an iTunes account?
- (a) What was the total expenditure in 2015-16 on iTunes?
 - i. What applications/subscriptions/services were purchased through iTunes?

168. Do the Departments/agencies within your portfolio have an Android account?

(a) What was the total expenditure in 2015-16 on Android?

i. What applications/subscriptions/services were purchased through Android?

Websites Visited

169. What were the top 20 most utilised (by data sent and received) unique domain names accessed by your Ministerial office this year?

170. What were the top 20 most accessed (by number of times accessed) unique domain names accessed by your Ministerial office this year?

Merchant fees

171. Please provide a list of all transactions where customers need to pay a merchant fee on credit and/or debit card payments in your Department/agency.

172. Please provide the percentage and/or amount of the merchant fees applied to all credit and/or debit card payments/transactions in your Department/agency.

173. What was the total amount paid in merchant fees on credit and/or debit card payments in your Department/agency in 2015-16?

Probity Auditor

174. Has your office or department used a Probity Auditor or Probity Advisors, or similar, in the past five years? If so please list the company and/or individual, the project, the engagement dates, and their total remuneration in tabular format?