

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO.6
2016-17 Budget Estimates

Answers to Questions on Notice – 2 September 2016
Local Government Portfolio

Question 1

The Hon. PAUL TOOLE: Our Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme [LIRS]—a \$120 million investment by the Government — has shown just under a billion dollars being allocated towards addressing infrastructure across this State. I point out that when I became the Minister there was about \$7.4 billion in infrastructure backlog for councils across the State. Today it is \$3.3 billion. I am proud that this Government is investing heavily in councils and communities across the State to ensure that they get the appropriate infrastructure and services they need.

The CHAIR: Minister, can you table where you got that figure from and the reduction?

Answer

Councils' annual Financial Statements - Special Schedule 7 (Report on Infrastructure Assets).

Question 2

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: To date this calendar year, how much has the Government paid for advertising in relation to its local government merger campaigns? ... How much has the Government paid for advertising to date this calendar year? It is not an unreasonable question.

Answer

This information will be available in the annual report.

Question 3

The Hon. PAUL TOOLE: I said that we have just finished another round of public meetings in areas where proposals for mergers have been put forward. Some of them have been instigated by councils. The Government advertised in those areas to inform the community so that they could attend public meetings and be part of the process.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: You must have issued contracts for that. How much were the contracts for?

The Hon. PAUL TOOLE: That information will be in the annual report. I am happy to take that on notice as well, to provide information the available information.

The Hon. PAUL TOOLE: I said it will be available in the annual report and I will take it on notice to provide what information we can.

Answer

Please refer to the answer for Question 2.

Question 4

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: For the two KPMG contracts, as well as the contracts that I mentioned earlier, under the heading "Method of Tendering", the comments are "Limited" and "Non Tender". Would you tell me what the terminology means?

The Hon. PAUL TOOLE: The report is one of many. I can take that on notice and provide you with a proper and long explanation in answer to the question.

Answer

Terms are covered by a Prequalification Scheme established by the Department of Finance, Services and Innovation.

Question 5

The Hon. PAUL TOOLE: The advice that I have been given by the Electoral Commissioner is that the most appropriate time to run the election smoothly would be September 2017.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Will you table that information?

The Hon. PAUL TOOLE: I would be happy to table the information that I have been given.

Answer

Advice provided by the NSW Electoral Commission will be tabled as an attachment.

Question 6

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Minister, would you tell the Committee where the Office of Local Government has identified Alucobest and other flammable building materials in New South Wales?

The Hon. PAUL TOOLE: I will have to take that on notice.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Would Mr Hurst be able to provide an answer?

The Hon. PAUL TOOLE: I will ask Mr Hurst if he has any information on that.

Mr HURST: Thank you, Minister. I am not aware of any information that has been provided to us on that issue. I am happy to conduct research and provide further information on that through the Minister.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: I appreciate that, thank you. Are you aware of any involvement in this matter by the Office of Local Government or do you not know at this stage?

Mr HURST: I am aware of the matter because I have seen the media reports. We will conduct the appropriate searches to determine the involvement of the Office of Local Government and provide an answer.

Answer

The Office of Local Government does not have a role in the identification of such materials, and no record was identified of any involvement by OLG in these matters.

Question 7

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: My specific question related to those pools with out-of-ground pool walls as part of the pool barrier. How many are there? Were such pools ever legal in New South Wales?

The Hon. PAUL TOOLE: I will take that question on notice to see if we have those numbers. We only have information that is provided by swimming pool owners to councils in this State. Already pool registrations have been increasing and they are continuing to increase. In the past year it is a 1.5 per cent continuing improvement.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Will you also take on notice not only the number — and my guess from the advice I have received is it is about 20,000 — but also were such pools ever legal in New South Wales, even if their construction had been approved by a local government authority? Are they legal now? If not what action has been taken by you to alert the owners of such pools that their pools are illegal? How are the owners of such non-complying pools being notified? How is the rectification being monitored and by whom? What penalties apply for non-compliance? I appreciate that you have agreed to take those questions on notice.

Answer

External walls of out of ground pool walls would not ordinarily satisfy the requirements of section 7 of the *Swimming Pools Act 1992*. This has been the law of NSW since the inception of the Act. Provisions introduced into the Building Code of Australia by AS1926.1-2012 preserve the law of NSW.

Under section 22 of the *Swimming Pools Act 1992*, a local authority may grant exemptions from barrier requirements that are impractical or unreasonable in particular cases. Recording such exemptions is a matter for the relevant local authority.

Pool owners are responsible for maintaining a compliant barrier. Local authorities have inspection and enforcement responsibilities to ensure compliance with the Act and Regulations.

Question 8

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: ... Will you give the total remuneration package for each administrator you have appointed? I do not pretend you have got that in your head now but will you provide that on notice?

The Hon. PAUL TOOLE: Are you asking for a breakdown of each one?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: The total remuneration package. If you want to break it down, I would appreciate that too.

The Hon. PAUL TOOLE: I have given you the bands for each of those councils but if there are other expenses they are in line with what councils provide. I cannot give you that because that is a matter for each council and each administrator and the policies and expenses that are delivered by each of those council areas.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I want to know their remuneration package, how much they are getting for salary, how much they are getting for superannuation and how much they are getting for non-salary entitlements. I do not want to know what they are getting in a monthly expenses package.

The Hon. PAUL TOOLE: I cannot give you that information anyway. I can give you the remuneration bands as I have given you.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Please provide that for all of the administrators.

Answer

New Council	Administrator	Remuneration band (per annum)
Inner West	Richard Pearson	\$280,000 - \$320,000
Cumberland	Viv May	\$280,000 - \$320,000
City of Parramatta	Amanda Chadwick	\$280,000 - \$320,000
Canterbury –Bankstown	Richard Colley	\$280,000 - \$320,000
Central Coast	Ian Reynolds	\$280,000 - \$320,000
Georges River	John Rayner	\$280,000 - \$320,000
Armidale Regional	Ian Tiley	\$180,000 - \$220,000
Snowy Monaro Regional	Dean Lynch	\$180,000 - \$220,000
Hilltops	Wendy Tuckerman	\$180,000 - \$220,000
Edward River	Ashley Hall	\$100,000 - \$150,000
Gundagai	Christine Ferguson	\$100,000 - \$150,000
Western Plains Regional	Michael Kniepp	\$180,000 - \$220,000
Snowy Valleys	Paul Sullivan	\$100,000 - \$150,000
Northern Beaches	Dick Persson	\$280,000 - \$320,000
Federation	Mike Eden	\$100,000 - \$150,000
Murrumbidgee	Austin Evans	\$100,000 - \$150,000
Mid-Coast	John Turner	\$180,000 - \$220,000
Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional	Tim Overall	\$180,000 - \$220,000
Murray River	David Shaw	\$100,000 - \$150,000
Bayside Council	Greg Wright	\$280,000 - \$320,000

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 20 April 2016 1:49 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: CONFIDENTIAL: 2nd Tranche LG Elections

Dear [REDACTED]

As promised, I am following up from our meeting last Friday, with respect to the request from DPC for the NSWEC to consider a 2nd tranche of LG elections for amalgamated councils in September or June/July 2017. I have now had the opportunity to review these timings within the context of:-

- the State Election in March 2019,
- the potential for amended electoral legislation which will impact on system enhancements and business process changes,
- the restructure of our organisation in line with the GSE Act and PSC Policy,
- the potential of 2 State By-Elections in November 2016, and
- other major logistic projects we have to implement around facilities management and roll management system implementation.

Given all of the above, and an analysis of risk, I have come to the conclusion that the preferred timing from the NSWEC perspective is September 2017 for the 2nd tranche of LG elections. My recommendation would be to hold these elections on Saturday 9 September 2016 which follows the current legislation of the ordinary LG election being held on the 2nd Saturday of September.

However, it must be noted that the longer the timeframe to lock in this decision by government, the less opportunity there will be for the NSWEC to revert back to a March 2017 or June/July 2017 timeframe. The September 2017 timing has been worked through on the basis that we can undertake additional planning and projects in between the two LG election events. This will enable us to be fully prepared in advance with projects plans, schedules and workforce planning ready to implement for the State Election in 2019 and any changes to systems and processes required as an outcome of post implementation review of the September 2016 LG elections. Any delayed movement away from a September 2017 LG election will have a high negative impact on this complex planning process, and potentially put preparations for the 2019 State Election at risk.

I also need to flag with you that this movement of date further out will likely have a further impact on additional cost to run these elections. I will ask the Finance Director to undertake an initial evaluation and analysis of this, and let you know the outcome.

Please feel free to give me a call at any time should you wish to discuss.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
NSW Electoral Commission

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