

BUDGET ESTIMATES 2016

PREMIER, MINISTER FOR WESTERN SYDNEY

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE – 1 SEPTEMBER 2016

1. QUESTION

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: When did you receive the greyhound report?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: You have already run through that.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Not the precise date. You said you received it and then you processed it, but you never said on what date.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: What date was it? Please feel free to take the question on notice.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We can take it on notice but it came to the Government when it came to the Government, and Cabinet considered it when it considered it.

ANSWER:

The NSW Government received the report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Greyhound Racing Industry on 16 June 2016 and released the report following Cabinet consideration.

2. QUESTION

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Did the New South Wales Government make a submission on the environmental impact statement for the new Western Sydney airport?

Mr COMLEY: Yes, the New South Wales Government did.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Will you make that public?

Mr COMLEY: That is a matter for the Government.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Premier, will you make it public?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Whatever the usual processes are. I will follow through and find out.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: While you are doing that can you tell us at least whether the submission supports or opposes a noise curfew for the airport?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We can find that out for you. But our position in relation to that is that obviously the Federal Government makes the final decisions. We would want any impacts on housing to be minimised, and I know there is a range of proposals around that. You also need to ensure that that airport is viable.

ANSWER:

The submission is available online at www.planning.nsw.gov.au.

3. QUESTION

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That series of recommendations go directly to amending the Premier's memorandum in relation to the disclosure of diaries. Has the Premier's memorandum been amended as recommended by this report and as you say accepted by the Government?

Mr COMLEY: Let me just check.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We can take it on notice.

ANSWER:

The Honourable Member's question was subsequently answered during the course of the hearing.

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4. QUESTION

Mr COMLEY: I can see an issue that we have to check. It depends on the website but we have pulled it up from the website now.

ANSWER:

See previous response.

5. QUESTION

The CHAIR: Going to a different area. I have had a lot to do over many years now with the Coptic churches in Sydney. As you know, they come from Egypt. Their first church was established in Sydenham and that church has been under the control of the Marrickville council but it has fallen into serious disrepair. Minister Speakman put it on the temporary heritage list, which gave it some protection but the Heritage Council has now rejected that classification, so it is in limbo. Is there any way in which the Government could investigate what support it could give to the church building being restored and perhaps becoming a museum, as this is the first Coptic church in Australia and, I understand, the first Coptic church outside Egypt. I spoke in that church many years ago. It is a famous church and prior to the Coptic church taking it over, it was a war memorial church and the front steel gates are a memorial to the ex-servicemen of the Sydenham area. It is a major building.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I am not aware of the details around that. I will take it on notice.

ANSWER:

I am advised that, under the *Heritage Act 1977*, the Minister for Heritage can only list the property on the recommendation of the Heritage Council of NSW. The former Coptic Church in Sydenham has been assessed as being of local significance, but not state significance. There have been two interim heritage orders made over the building, the first in 2007 and the second in December 2015. In both instances, the Heritage Council of NSW's State Heritage Register Committee considered the nomination of the former church following the interim heritage order investigation. Following the latest investigation, the committee acknowledged the social significance of the site but determined it is not likely to be of state significance. The committee instead encouraged the Inner West Council, as the property owner, and the Coptic Church community to work together on future options for the site to ensure the significance of the site to the Coptic community is recognised.

6. QUESTION

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: We will see what the legislation looks like. Premier, last year I asked you some questions about the Liberal Party campaign in 2015 for East Hills and you took the questions on notice. You responded that those matters were being investigated. You will be happy to know that a prosecution has been commenced in relation to that matter. That brings us to this year. My colleague the Hon. Lynda Voltz, on 4 December 2015, lodged a written complaint to Mr Colin Barry at the Electoral Commission concerning alleged serious breaches of the Federal funding legislation. They came to light following the declarations of expenditure — electoral spending in excess of the legislative cap and failure to operate a proper bank account, among other issues, in relation to the Liberal Party campaign in East Hills. She has not received any response from the Electoral Commission. Can you find out where that investigation is up to or

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whether there is an investigation and report back to us?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Obviously the Electoral Commission can respond in relation to that.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: The complaint was made in December last year and the person making the complaint—a member of Parliament—has not even received an acknowledgement from the Electoral

Commission. Can you take that up as the Minister responsible for the Electoral Commission, as you did last year?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Has the member taken it up and asked why there has been a delay? Is it related to the court case? I do not know.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: She has made the complaint, she has received no response from the Electoral Commission, so as the responsible Minister—

Mr MIKE BAIRD: So she has followed it up?

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: She has made a complaint and she has received no answer from the Electoral Commission.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: The answer is no, she has not.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Okay, if you like take it on notice. If you do not take these matters seriously Premier—

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: It is an independent organisation.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: The Premier asked whether the member had followed it up.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Last year the Premier took questions on notice and chased them up, and gave a response.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: The Premier asked for further information, which you did not provide.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I can provide the Premier with a copy of the complaint.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: All I am trying to determine is whether the member sent the letter and followed up with a letter or a phone call. That seems an extraordinarily long period of time given the level of concern. It would be logical to follow up.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I am asking, will you take it on notice?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: There is a level of independence. I can make the Electoral Commission aware that this Committee is concerned in relation to that letter and ask it to respond. I can make it aware of the issue and it is up to them to respond.

ANSWER:

As stated during the hearing, the Electoral Commission has been made aware of the Honourable Member's concern.

7. QUESTION

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Premier, are you aware of the complaint made to the New South Wales Electoral Commission by former Senator Michael Baume about the activities of registered lobbyists Michael Photios and Nick Campbell and their activities in the Liberal Party as being in conflict or inconsistent with their registration?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: There has been a lot of public comment around that issue.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Can you tell us where that complaint is up to in relation to the investigation by the Electoral Commission?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: You can refer it to the Liberal Party.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I am asking you as the Minister responsible for the Electoral Commission.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: The Electoral Commission is an entirely independent body.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I am not asking the Premier to influence its operations, I am asking where that matter is up to. Is it being investigated by the Electoral Commission? Has it been rejected by the Electoral Commission?

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Mr MIKE BAIRD: As you know the Electoral Commission is established so that it is independent. We have given it more powers and resources to do its job.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: It is not here, so I am asking you as the responsible Minister to undertake to find out whether the Electoral Commission is investigating that complaint.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I can make the Electoral Commission aware of the concern of the Committee in relation to this issue.

ANSWER:

See previous response.

8. QUESTION

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Yes. You would be aware, as the perpetrator of this problem, that a number of councils are not going to election in New South Wales until 9 September 2017. A number of other

councils are going on 10 September this year. Can you advise the Committee what, if any, special provisions you made to ensure that there is no confusion involving voters not attending pre-polls about whether elections are actually on in their areas?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: There are a number of specific strategies being employed to deal with that. There is some uncertainty because there are elections in one area and not necessarily another. There is obviously an education component required as part of that. There are a number of strategies. I can take that on notice and provide you the details.

ANSWER:

The Department of Premier and Cabinet engaged directly with administrators of new councils to encourage local awareness campaigns aimed at informing their communities that elections were not being held for their councils in 2016. This engagement supported an extensive state-wide campaign by the NSW Electoral Commission publicising the election date for those residents of councils holding an election, and which included an online tool allowing residents to submit their address and check whether they needed to vote. The Office of Local Government also undertook an advertising campaign to encourage residents to stand as a councillor for those councils holding an election, and issued circulars to all councils with options for local campaigns to publicise the election date.

9. QUESTION

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: In 2014 your budget committed half a million dollars to develop a Western Sydney tourism events and conference strategy, is that strategy being prepared?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: There are a number of strategies that have been rolled out. In terms of the timing of that I can get the details for you.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Will that strategy be released?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Of course it will be. Let me get the details as to exactly where that is up to and I will take it on notice.

ANSWER:

Work is continuing on the Western Sydney Visitor Economy and Events Strategy, including consultation with industry to review the suggested strategies for sport, business events, arts and culture and education.

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The Western Sydney Visitor Economy and Events Strategy will inform the Greater Western Sydney Skills and Economic Development Strategy, which is being developed by the Department of Industry.

The Greater Western Sydney Skills and Economic Development Strategy will be considered by Government before it is released.

10. QUESTION

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: An issue that has been raised is with regard to a long-promised sporting centre of excellence in Campbelltown. Can you give us an idea of when that may be developed?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I know there was some proposal in relation to that. Let me take that on notice.

ANSWER:

The Campbelltown Sporting Centre of Excellence is a Campbelltown City Council initiative, situated at Western Sydney University, which will include two full-size rectangular fields, a full-size oval-shaped field, and meeting, education and sports training facilities.

Through UrbanGrowth NSW, the State Government has contributed \$1.58 million for the Sports Centre of Excellence. The Federal Government has also committed \$7 million.

Campbelltown City Council is managing the project and has advised the NSW Government that it expects the Centre to be operating in 2019.

11. QUESTION

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Premier, would you take this on notice too? Of the 100 public sector jobs promised for those refugees who arrived in Australia from December 2015, how many people have been employed?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I can provide an update to the Committee on that.

ANSWER:

By the end of the year it is anticipated that 14 refugees will be employed by the NSW Government.

The NSW Coordinator-General for Refugee Resettlement has established a network of Refugee Employment champions from each Department to oversee the implementation of this commitment. The amendment to the Public Service rule to make it easier for refugees to be employed in the public service was changed in June 2016. While many refugees are still undertaking English and employment training, the Coordinator General is confident that the Government will be able to provide 100 jobs over the next 12-24 months across the public sector.