

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 1 – PREMIER AND FINANCE

Thursday, 6 September 2018

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio area

PREMIER

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The Committee met at 2.00 p.m.

MEMBERS

Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile (Chair)

The Hon. Scott Farlow

Mr Justin Field

The Hon. John Graham

The Hon. Taylor Martin

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey

The Hon. Peter Primrose

The Hon. Adam Searle

The Hon. Natalie Ward

PRESENT

The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian, *Premier*

CORRECTIONS TO TRANSCRIPT OF COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

Corrections should be marked on a photocopy of the proof and forwarded to:

**Budget Estimates secretariat
Room 812
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000**

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The CHAIR: Welcome to this public hearing for the inquiry into Budget Estimates 2018-19. I acknowledge the Gadigal people, who are the traditional custodians of this land. I also pay respect to the elders past and present of the Eora nation and extend that respect to other Aborigines who may be present. I welcome Premier Berejiklian and accompanying officials to this hearing. Today the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of Premier. Before we commence I will make some brief comments about the procedures for today's hearing.

Today's hearing is open to the public and is being broadcast live via the Parliament's website. In accordance with the broadcasting guidelines, while members of the media may film or record Committee members and witnesses, people in the public gallery should not be the primary focus of any filming or photography. I remind media representatives that they must take responsibility for what they publish about the Committee's proceedings. It is important to remember that parliamentary privilege does not apply to what witnesses may say outside of their evidence at the hearing. I urge witnesses to be careful about any comments they may make to the media or to others after they complete their evidence as such comments would not be protected by parliamentary privilege if another person decided to take an action for defamation. The guidelines for the broadcast of proceedings are available from the secretariat.

There may be some questions that witnesses could only answer if they had more time or with certain documents to hand. In those circumstances witnesses are advised that they can take a question on notice and provide an answer within 21 days. Any messages from advisers or members' staff seated in the public gallery should be delivered through the Committee secretariat. Madam Premier, I remind you and the officers accompanying you that you are free to pass notes and refer directly to your advisers seated at the table behind you. A transcript of this hearing will be made available on the website tomorrow.

To aid the audibility of this hearing, I remind both Committee members and witnesses to speak into the microphones. In addition, several seats have been reserved near the loudspeakers for persons in the public gallery who have hearing difficulties. Finally, could everyone turn their mobile phones to silent for the duration of the hearing. All witnesses from departments, statutory bodies or corporations will be sworn prior to giving evidence. Madam Premier, I remind you that you do not need to be sworn as you have already sworn an oath to your office as a member of Parliament.

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BARRY MANN, Chief Executive Officer, UrbanGrowth NSW Development Corporation, sworn and examined

TIM REARDON, Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet, sworn and examined

JOHN SCHMIDT, Electoral Commissioner, New South Wales Electoral Commission, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: We will commence with questions from the Opposition.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Premier, Daryl Maguire's conduct was totally unacceptable, was it not?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am happy to take a question about that but of course I am in agreement with that.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: It was so unacceptable that he had to resign as a Parliamentary Secretary and from the Parliamentary Liberal Party and commit to not running again at the next election. Given that his conduct was so unacceptable, why did you resist calls for him to resign from Parliament at least for a period?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will answer your question but I just remind you that this is a Committee to undertake an examination of the budget. Those questions have been canvassed in Parliament, they have been canvassed in the public domain—

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Yes, and we can canvass them here. You are the Minister for electoral legislation, the Electoral Commission conducts the election and we are having a by-election in Wagga Wagga as a result of Mr Maguire's conduct. These questions relate directly to those aspects of the budget that fall within your portfolio, so please answer.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I would strenuously argue that the questions you are asking are not within the remit of a budget estimates committee; however, I will make this one answer in response to that question. Of course that behaviour was unacceptable. On the day the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] hearing happened the former member resigned from his position as Parliamentary Secretary and resigned from his position as a member of the Liberal Party. Subsequently he has resigned his position as a member of Parliament. That was in line with community expectations and in line with my expectations.

I was extremely disappointed and shocked at what was revealed, which is why we are having that by-election. I also say to you, Mr Searle, that we are a government that upholds at all times the integrity of the Parliament and its members. We are a government that respects what community expectations are of everybody's behaviour. Similarly, all of us, including me first and foremost, have serious expectations about how every member of Parliament should conduct themselves.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Again, why did you resist calls for him to resign from Parliament? Was it so you could avoid—

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: The Premier has already answered that question.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: With respect, she has not.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: It is not a budget question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I did not resist at all. Again I say this is the last point I want to make on this issue because it does not relate to the budget estimates even though you are alleging in great—

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: It is a very long bow.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: However, I will say the following: Even though I was on leave I made my position via public statement very clear that I asked him to consider his future. The day that I came back from leave he was gone from the Parliament.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: But only after the Opposition called for him to resign.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I made my position very clear via public statement whilst I was on leave which was on the weekend of the occurrence. I said that I wanted him to consider his position, which he did. I am relieved he did and that is how the events transpired. I am pleased that he did because now we are in a position whereby we can ensure that every member of Parliament upholds the values that we expect of all our colleagues.

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The CHAIR: The Premier has answered your question, so can we move on to another issue?

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Chair, with respect, I get to ask the questions. If there is a point of order somebody will take it and you can rule.

The CHAIR: I am advising you to move on.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Mr Maguire would have to be the unluckiest bloke in the city of Sydney, would he not, to in his first foray into this new line of work, as recorded in the ICAC tapes, be pinged by the ICAC? It is unlikely that this was in fact his first time into that line of business. Would you not agree?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Mr Chair, I will answer this question but as the final question in this line of questioning because this is a budget estimates hearing. I would remind Mr Searle in the most polite and courteous way that I can that there is an ICAC investigation and that I have full confidence in the ICAC. In fact, we have broadened the ICAC's powers. We have provided more resourcing for ICAC. ICAC is best placed to deal with all the matters that are raised in relation to this or any other matter of conduct for that matter. In fact, in the presence of the Electoral Commissioner here, it was our Government also that broadened the remit of ICAC to look at other issues.

I do not want to say anything further than that on this issue. It is a matter for ICAC and I have full confidence that ICAC will deal with all these matters. It has all the information that it can pursue in relation to any matter. I urge you, Mr Searle. As the Leader of the Government in the upper House, you have the opportunity to interrogate me as the Premier of this State on the more than \$75 billion we expend every year. That is the purpose of this Committee. Given that there is an ICAC investigation, I will not answer any further questions on that issue.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I did not ask you about the ICAC investigation.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: You did. You just asked me a question which related to the investigation. It is not appropriate for any of us to ask about or to cast judgement on or opine about those matters. There is an investigation and I have full confidence that ICAC will deal with those matters.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Have you asked your Ministers or your Liberal members of Parliament whether Mr Maguire ever approached them in relation to other business proposals?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Point of order: What is the relevance of Mr Maguire or other members' futures to the budget?

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: To the point of order: The member's question goes directly to the Premier's power as the head of the Government and her making inquiries into Ministers is precisely why it falls within the ambit of the Premier's responsibilities. It may well be an awkward question for the Premier to have to answer two days before a by-election but it is a question that is being asked.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: To the point of order—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Mr Chair, I am happy to answer the question in the context of Ministers to say the following: I am incredibly proud that our Government, back in 2014, I believe, required every single Minister to disclose all of their meetings and interactions; something, unfortunately, the Labor Party never did. In fact, your shadow Ministers refuse to do it today. So given that all of those interactions are on the public record, given the ICAC is well resourced to deal with all these matters, again I implore you to focus on the purpose of this Committee. ICAC has the power to look at any issues regarding that. I urge you, Mr Searle, as I said in Parliament and as I said publicly, whether in relation to this or any other matter, if anybody has an issue of concern they should provide it to the relevant authorities—whether that includes an independent government agency, whether it includes the ICAC or any other inquiry. If there is any issue of concern, that can be raised with the appropriate body. I would urge you, Mr Searle, to undertake your responsibility on behalf of the people of this State in interrogating me on the budget.

The CHAIR: And not to abuse the estimates procedures. because the Premier is here voluntarily. If this line of questioning is to persist, you might be discouraging the Premier from attending estimates hearings in future.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Mr Chair, the established procedure is we get to ask questions. If there is a point of order you rule. You can rule them in or out of order and then we can move on. I do not think it calls for a lecture.

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The CHAIR: It needs a lecture.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Premier, Budget Paper No. 3, pages 8-1 and following deal with accountable and responsible government, and the different things that are done there. This falls squarely within that ambit. You are not trying to dodge these questions, are you?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am happy to answer any questions that relate to my responsibility on behalf of the people of this State in relation to budget estimates. For the record, Mr Searle, I have been asked a number of these questions in Parliament, which I have happily answered. I have been asked a number of questions in the public domain, which I have happily answered. Unfortunately, this is your attempt to try to use this process not to question me on things for the purpose for which I am here. I would urge you to undertake your responsibility on behalf the people of this great State.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I am, Premier.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Ask about the budget. There are four of you.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Premier, you are asking the people of New South Wales, and particularly the people in Wagga Wagga, to trust you. How can they do that when you have allowed Mr Maguire, his family and his staff to participate in choosing your candidate in that by-election?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Point of order: That is outside the terms of reference.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Point of order—

The CHAIR: Point of order, Mr Farlow?

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Mr Chair, questions about Liberal Party preselection processes are by no means relevant to the budget and expenditure in New South Wales. I ask that you draw Mr Searle back to—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: The terms of reference.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: —a line of questioning that falls within the remit of the budget.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: To the point of order: The budget deals with the electoral legislation and the new funding for electoral matters, I think some of which have been brought into effect for the Wagga Wagga by-election. This is relating to that by-election. It is within the ambit of the standing orders for this budget estimates Committee.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: The Liberal Party preselection processes do not fall within this Committee's purview.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Not by any stretch, and you know it.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: It is about the by-election and it is about the administration of the electoral legislation.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: It is a very long bow.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Well, the Chair can rule.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: But I can answer that in one sentence: They are matters for the party organisation, which I have no jurisdiction over.

The CHAIR: I uphold the point of order.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Well, Premier, allowing that does not look like you and the Government understand that what Mr Maguire did was wrong, does it?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Mr Searle, actions speak louder than words.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Yes, and you have allowed people associated with Mr Maguire to choose your candidate for the by-election.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Point of order: Mr Chair, you have ruled that my former point of order was—

The CHAIR: I upheld it.

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Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Mr Searle, actions speak louder than words. There was one week between the time the revelations became available and when Mr Maguire announced he was resigning from Parliament. It coincided with my return from leave, and as Premier I acted swiftly. Because, can I tell you, out there in the community I appreciate the disappointment and the anger about the conduct of all politicians, and our obsession with ourselves rather than governing for the community? Unfortunately, your line of questioning reinforces that because rather than asking me about the infrastructure and services I am providing to the community, you are trying to engage in a political process that I do not believe serves the people of this State well.

I say this on the record: Of course we would have preferred not to have a by-election, but it is the right thing to do, which is why we forced those actions by the member, to force his resignation, and I am glad of that because we always need to maintain the highest levels of integrity. And again I implore you, Mr Searle, you have asked me quite a number of questions on this matter. I believe now you are encroaching on the ability of your Committee to ask me questions that relate to the good people of this State. I will always be here to serve the community, to identify priorities in infrastructure and services, and I hope that you respect this process by holding me to account on all those things the members of the public expect me to be accountable for.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Premier, your Deputy Premier is quoted as saying, "If the voters of Wagga dismiss a Liberal candidate this weekend ... well that strengthens my position that the Nats would run [a candidate] in 2019 ..."

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Read the budget. Get to the budget; anything, anywhere in the budget.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: That confirms what the papers have been saying. You have only got away with running a Liberal in this by-election because the National Party has an agreement from you to let them run next year if you lose it on Saturday.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Mr Searle, I am—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Point of order: Once again Mr Searle is flouting the terms of reference of this Committee. This Committee has a wide remit to look into any aspect of the budget, should he care to read it or be interested in it.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: To the point of order: Points of order cannot be taken once the witness starts to answer, which the Premier had, and it is within the remit.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: So, Mr Searle, you have never interjected when someone else has spoken?

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: It is about the statement made by the Deputy Premier.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: The Premier is capable of answering this question.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I have no doubt.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: The Premier's budget relates to supporting the Premier and the Deputy Premier. I think this is a relevant question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Mr Searle—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I have no doubt about the Premier's ability to answer the question.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: We would just like to hear about the budget.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I would just like for the people of New South Wales for you to ask a question that is relevant to the budget.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I think the people of New South Wales might think that the Deputy Premier's views are very relevant.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: It is such a good budget you may not have any questions to ask. It is such a good budget.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Mr Searle, the nexus or line you are drawing is a stretch even for you, but I am happy to say the following: My experience in my position, and I feel privileged to hold the job that I do, it is a privilege being the Premier of the best State in Australia, I can tell you that community sentiment at the

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moment is about wanting the government of the day to focus on the community, not each other. So when you ask me a question like that it only inspires me to work harder on behalf of the people of this State and to focus on the issues that matter to them—whether it is infrastructure or services or the priorities that we identify. That is my focus and I would hope it is the focus of every member of this Committee because we are here, I would hope, to be accountable for the decisions my Government has made in relation to the community, not opinions about colleagues or other things.

The CHAIR: You have obviously prepared a series of questions on this issue.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: On a series of issues.

The CHAIR: Could we move to another member of the Opposition?

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: My question to the Premier is: Your Deputy Premier has effectively said to the people of Wagga Wagga, "If you want a National candidate, vote the Liberals out on Saturday." Doesn't that undermine your authority as Premier and head of the Government?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: How is this relevant to the budget?

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: It goes directly to her position as Premier.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: How is this relevant? Tell us one aspect of the budget.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Well, I am happy to make it relevant to the budget and I thank the Hon. Natalie Ward for raising the issue. The Deputy Premier and I have overseen record investment in regional New South Wales, which I am incredibly proud of. We have the strongest Coalition in the nation, backed up by the strongest economy and the strongest budget. We inherited a budget position from the previous Labor Government that delivered us deficits and billions of dollars of debt, and a complete disregard for rural and regional New South Wales. He and I together, including our colleagues, have turned that on its head. Now one in three dollars of infrastructure expenditure is in our regions, including \$25 billion to \$26 billion over the next four years.

In addition to the great work by the Deputy Premier and myself, we also now have record programs in relation to service delivery. Rural and regional New South Wales is on the precipice of unprecedented investment, but also the opportunities that that brings. These are the issues that I am focused on, that my Deputy Premier is focused on, and I would hope that you would be focused on. Because, for example, it is not by accident that since we have been in government we have upgraded or built 48 new hospitals across rural and regional New South Wales. Since we have been in government our Fixing Country Roads program has ensured that the freight task has drastically improved, as well as the safety on our regional and rural roads, so I am incredibly proud of the record of our government when it comes to rural and regional New South Wales.

I am incredibly proud because as a strong Coalition in New South Wales we are able to deliver all these achievements for the community and I look forward to future opportunities. It is also opportune for me to mention the \$4.2 billion Snowy Hydro fund. The Snowy Hydro project, as we know, was a nation-building project. We are now ensuring that every single cent of that fund will contribute to nation-building projects in rural and regional New South Wales. That is what good government is about; these are the issues that matter to the people of New South Wales. Believe me, when I visit communities they are not asking me about the matters you are asking me about. They are asking me about their local services, their local facilities. They are asking why my Government is not doing this or that in their local area and could I make that a priority. It is my job to listen and deliver. Certainly what they do not want us to focus on is ourselves. They want us to focus on the community and that is exactly when I intend to continue to do.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: You know Mr Michael Photios, do you not?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Can you please ask me a question?

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: That was a question. You know Mr Michael Photios, do you not?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I do not think it was a question.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: What has that got to do with the budget?

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: He is a close friend of yours, is he not?

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Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It did not sound like a question to me. Can you please ask me a question?

The CHAIR: You are making a statement.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: He is a close friend of yours, is he not?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Can you please ask me a question?

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Point of order—

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: He has been a long-time supporter of you and your career, has he not?

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Point of order: Wide latitude is allowed in budget estimates, but the Premier's acquaintances, friends, what she does on a Saturday night, is not relevant to budget estimates. I ask the Chair to draw Mr Searle back to the budget estimates.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: To the point of order: I was not asking the Premier what she did on Saturday night; I was asking about her association with a particular person.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: That was possibly the next question.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I am happy for you to run a protection racket for the Premier if you all want to, but I will ask the questions.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: We are just interested in actually hearing about the budget.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Mr Chair, can I ask a question to you? I would be happy to answer a question if I am given a specific question, but the way Mr Searle is pursuing the issues does not make it clear to me what he is actually asking. I am happy to answer any question, but I would prefer it to be a question as opposed to some type of rhetoric or assertion.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Premier, can you confirm that Mr Photios contacted your chief of staff, Sue Cruickshank, advancing the interests of Acciona, the company now suing your government in connection with your failed light rail project?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I would have to take that on notice, I have no knowledge of that. But you also need to get the correct name of my chief of staff as well.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I am happy to be corrected.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Can I say one thing to address perhaps the interesting nature of your question?

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: You are not aware of any contact between Mr Photios and your office?

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Point of order—

The CHAIR: The Premier is answering the question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will have to take that on notice, but I will say this: Those legal matters are matters between the parties and the courts and are being dealt with in that process.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I was asking about the contact between Mr Photios and your ministerial office or your Premier's office. You are unaware of any contact.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: She has taken it on notice.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will have to take that on notice, yes.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Could you also please take on notice when the contact between Mr Photios and your chief of staff occurred?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: You are making that assumption that that did occur.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: If it occurred.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Yes. I am happy to take that series of questions on notice.

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The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Who do you understand that Mr Photios was representing when he made that contact. Was it Acciona?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: As I told you, I do not have any knowledge of that. I will have to take that on notice.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Could you please tell the Committee on notice what passed between your chief of staff and Mr Photios?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am happy to take any of those questions on notice because we are a government that is open and transparent and supports the people of this great State in advancing our infrastructure and quality of life. I would be more than happy to take all of those questions on notice.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: You are the Minister responsible for the lobbyist register?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Yes.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: When did Mr Photios declare Acciona to be a client of his?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will take that on notice unless my secretary has any information on those matters, but I would not know.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: To assist the Committee, it was 23 March this year, but my question—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Mr Nile, that goes to the heart of my issue beforehand. Mr Searle clearly knows the answers. He should ask me questions to which he does not know the answers.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I think he was asking for confirmation.

The CHAIR: That is the reason we are here.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I am endeavouring to understand the level of contact between Mr Photios and your office.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: But I am trying to suggest to you that you are not using this process for its intent.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: We will come back to that in 20 minutes, Premier.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Thank you, I look forward to it.

The CHAIR: I think the member is abusing the estimates process. Mr Field?

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Thank you, Chair. Thank you Premier, for being here. Last week in Primary Industries budget estimates, your Minister, the Hon. Niall Blair, acknowledged the link between climate change and the current drought facing New South Wales. You have a \$1.1 billion drought assistance package at the moment. In the budget there is more than \$100 million allocated to climate disaster relief. My question to you is: Has the Government done any analysis on the impact of future State budgets as a result of climate change?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Certainly we take into account all those environmental factors which could adversely impact on our primary industries. I am pleased that the relevant Minister accepted that during his appearance before this Committee. But I also feel very strongly that we should give farming communities credit for being perhaps some of the best environmentalists. The way they take care of their land and the way in which they manage their properties demonstrates a respect for the environmental factors. Certainly, as a government, across government, we take those issues regarding climate change seriously.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: But have you done any analysis to assess if it is going to cost the State budget more in the future, as the impacts of climate change worsen?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will ask the secretary to comment on that further but certainly, for various issues which pertain to specific areas, we take those issues into account. Whether there is a formal formula or some process across whole of government, I will ask the secretary to address.

Mr REARDON: To assist, we have a series of long-term plans. I will start in sequence. We have an intergenerational report we put out a couple of years ago that forecasts out to the middle of the century. That set a frame and a whole range of planning assumptions that all clusters across government now use as their long-term planning forecasting. They are updated from time to time, as you could imagine. We then had the Greater Sydney

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Commission's Sydney Region Plan to tell us what we were doing for the long-term in Sydney. Beneath that we had the Future Transport 2056 strategy—again, with a common set of planning assumptions. Beneath that we had the NSW State Infrastructure Strategy produced by Infrastructure NSW—again, a long-term plan.

From time to time we update those. We have actually put a time frame of about five years for those. As new planning assumptions come on board, we update those accordingly to set what we are doing for the long-term. If you go into those plans, and add to them our regional New South Wales vision that we put out more recently about what we are doing in regional New South Wales for the medium to long-term, you will see in there that we do talk about the changing environment—I mean "environment" in the broadest context of global trends and global megatrends—and we will continue to do that. We will keep a lot of the work, such as the Future Transport 2056 strategy, as broad and as flexible as possible. Government will make short-term commitments. Then it will talk about what it is doing for 10 to 20 years, then the 20- to 40-year time of horizons, and we have to be adaptable to change as we go.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I appreciate that, but I do not get the sense that there is any specific consideration of how climate change impacts will specifically impact on the State's budget, their ability to raise revenue and the likely cost increases. We are talking about changes to royalty regimes for the coal industry, changes to entire districts as a result of changing industry from fossil fuel mining to renewable energy, agricultural production capability within the State, how we change the public transport infrastructure to move to electrical, health costs and energy costs. All of those things are going to have a significant change on the budget forecast's revenue opportunities as a result of worsening climate change. How is that being factored into long-term planning?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Mr Field, to give you a great sense of comfort, please know that obviously all of our agencies, coordinated by Treasury, do ongoing risk assessments of anything which could impact the adverse economic opportunities, but also future economic opportunities, of New South Wales. Rest assured that that exists. We consider all risks when we are looking at the budget position—because that was your question and whether there are other factors we need to address in terms of mitigating any of that risk. That is always part of our ongoing budget process. Certainly, if there is anything specific regarding an environmental concern that is a risk factor, if there is any specific formula or consideration, of course our officials take those on board. Please note that you do not have a successful budget and you do not have a strong economy unless you are very acutely aware of the potential risks now and into the future. That, of course, includes any risks which might be caused by environmental or climate change.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Has there been a specific climate change risk assessment done to analyse the future impacts on the budget?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Do you know what? I am happy to take that on notice because, as the secretary has already outlined, we do various assessments within agencies, including the impact of those issues in specific agencies. But I am happy to provide you with greater detail across whole of government and what we are doing on those issues.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I understand the Government has an aspirational goal of net zero emissions by 2050. How are you tracking towards this?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: There are quite a number of initiatives we recently announced to encourage people to reduce their emissions. In fact, proceeds from the Climate Change Fund have allowed us to provide incentives for people when they are purchasing whitegoods. We have provided incentives and funding to councils to convert their lighting to LED lighting. We, of course, also provide support to small businesses to be more energy efficient. The Climate Change Fund is a direct way in which we can encourage the reduction of emissions across the community. What I love to say to communities when we talk about these issues is that you can reduce emissions and reduce pressure on household budgets at the same time. By being energy smart you can actually reduce the cost of bills, you can actually reduce the cost of doing business, you can actually reduce the costs incurred on business.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: It sounds like something The Greens have been saying for a long time, Premier.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am glad that I have satisfied your question, but it worries me a bit that we are in agreement—it worries me immensely that we are in agreement on that point! I say the following—

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Your Treasurer called for a coalition on Monday.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Did he?

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The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: He did.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Gosh, that is a big call from him!

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Premier, there is potentially another thing you can satisfy me on. Are there any plans to change the way electricity and water distributors are levied for Climate Change Fund contributions?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We have certainly changed our focus on how we spend the Climate Change Fund.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I am trying to guarantee future revenues.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: There is nothing that I am aware of that changes the inputs into that fund, but certainly I do not apologise for the Treasurer, and me and relevant Ministers taking a fine-tooth comb across that fund because we want to make sure that every dollar spent from that fund not only reduces emissions but reduces cost-of-living pressures on families, and we believe, as you do, that they are mutually inclusive.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I appreciate that and I appreciate the \$75 million recently announced, although I do not think it is new money.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Which \$75 million are you talking about?

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: That package of energy efficiency measures I think was part of a broader package.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: There have been three or four of them.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: There may be, but you are about \$400 million underspent on the fund over the past four years. Your climate action plans are now 1½ years late, the strategic plan that was supposed to include a road map to get to zero emissions by 2050 I do not believe has been finalised yet, it has been out in some form of draft since then, so whilst I appreciate your announcements I am not sure that the sense of urgency within government about how to mitigate climate change is reflected in your actions because you are not spending the money that is being put aside for climate action.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I have to correct you on that. Last year alone, in 2017-18, we have expended \$180 million worth. But, as you know, we have recently made a number of announcements that add to that figure and I am pleased to go through some of those. Our energy efficient measures—recently when I was in Ballina we announced a new program whereby we are encouraging local communities to generate their own power into their grid, which was warmly welcomed by a number of the local communities there. What we have done, and I am very pleased about this, is to make sure the Climate Change Fund is better targeted and more strategic to not just reducing emissions but reducing cost-of-living pressures.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: When will we see those plans that are supposed to spell out how the \$1.5 billion or \$1.4 billion over five years will be spent? Because, from my analysis, you are about \$400 million underspent over the past few years.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: That figure you give is over four years.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: We are now two into it and we are a long way from there.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Last year we spent \$180 million. I do not have updated figures on what we have expended to date this year, but I can say that I am extremely pleased with the progress we are making on this issue. I am extremely pleased because not only is there greater community engagement but there is also greater business and industry engagement. We were seeing the beneficiaries of the Climate Change Fund convert their ability to reduce emissions but also create employment opportunities because they are able to save money and not pass on expenses to consumers. So the benefits of us being more strategic and targeting the fund to better uses is deriving benefit for the community.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Thank you, Premier, we will come back to this.

The CHAIR: Moving on to matters relating to councils, has the Government's position in relation to forced council amalgamations changed?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It has not. The position that we arrived at has not changed. We do not intend to progress any further amalgamations, if that is your question, and certainly there are no changes to the policies we articulated back in 2016 and after that point.

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The CHAIR: What has been the impact of council amalgamations on State revenue to date?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It has been pleasing that across the communities those councils that have merged have demonstrated favourable outcomes in terms of what they can offer their ratepayers. But I want to stress—and this is why we changed our original position—that I appreciate the angst that many people in the community, especially those in our regions, feel about the way we went about that policy, and I accept that, which is why we stopped the policy when we did. I do not want to take away from those sentiments that still exist in some parts—not everywhere—but the vast majority of feedback that I receive is that even though the process was not what they hoped and it was painful for many of them, they believe they are in a better position now. That is the vast majority of people's views. Certainly, this can be explained in the type of benefits that we are able to provide ratepayers.

Of course, the State Government, as part of that process, also provided additional funding to councils that merged. We are seeing a lot of local infrastructure happening in communities across the State, and this is in addition to the infrastructure investments we make as a Government. Across the State we are seeing a lot of investment in infrastructure as a result of that process. I hope to allay your concerns by saying that we are completely mindful of community sentiment on this issue. Those councils that have merged have demonstrated enormous benefits to their communities, but obviously we also appreciate the pain and angst that many communities experienced during the process.

The CHAIR: Just following up that question, how much has New South Wales spent on legal fees associated with challenges to council amalgamations?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I understand that issue is managed by the Crown Solicitor's Office, so I will ask my secretary to make any comment on that. I do not have that figure on me. I am happy to take it on notice, but if there is any further information the secretary can provide information on then I am happy for him to do so.

Mr REARDON: As the Premier said, it is managed by the New South Wales Crown Solicitor's Office, so we will take it on notice in terms of the actual cost.

The CHAIR: Can you give an approximate estimate?

Mr REARDON: Not at this point in time. I will come back to the Committee as quickly as I can; I do not have it in front of me.

The CHAIR: Premier, you know that I have had a constituent, Philip Armstrong, come to see me concerning ex gratia payments and how this could occur. I understand this man received an unconditional pardon from the Governor and has planned to apply to the Court of Criminal Appeal to have his conviction quashed and will be making an application to you for an ex gratia payment. Could you inform the Committee how ex gratia payments are considered and what part of the budget is relied upon when they are made, and when you have all the facts would you support the Treasurer considering this request?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Firstly, can I thank you for raising this matter on behalf of that constituent, because you always feel for people who feel that they have not had justice served properly? I am obviously not across the details as much as you might be in relation to the specific matter. But I understand you wrote to me and we have referred the matter to the Attorney General, who is the appropriate Minister to deal with that. But I will ask the secretary to address the issue raised about ex gratia payments in general; he would probably have better information to provide than I would on this occasion.

Mr REARDON: Just on guidelines and criteria, ex gratia payments, also known as act of grace payments, can be authorised by Ministers subject to the guidelines set out in Treasury Circular NSW TC 11/2. Those payments may be made to persons who Ministers considered have suffered financial and/or other detriment as a result of the workings of government. This detriment must be of a nature that cannot be remedied through recourse to legal proceedings. Ex gratia payments cannot be made to meet legal liabilities or where legal advice is that the Government may be found liable to pay compensation. The cost of ex gratia payments are met from the approving portfolio Minister's existing budget or within the Treasurer's written approval. Finally, where an ex gratia payment is sought in connection with an alleged miscarriage of justice it is appropriate for that request to be considered by the Attorney General. They are the criteria in the guidelines.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Moving on to another issue that is close to my heart, as you know—the issue of religious freedom—following the passage of the same-sex marriage legislation the churches have great concern

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as to how this may affect their church if they do not support same-sex marriage and what pressure would be put on them. I am concerned that one way to relieve their concern would be the passage of the religious freedom bill I have introduced into the Legislative Council. Are you giving some serious consideration to that bill? I know there is an issue of the Federal Government also investigating this issue and there may be a Federal bill, but we have precedent for the State if they believe something is important to go ahead with State legislation, as happened with my bills dealing with banning cigarette advertising; all the other States eventually introduced their own bills, so then it became a national bill. That could be the procedure that could occur with the religious freedoms bill—that New South Wales could take the leadership on that issue, and perhaps then the Federal Government or the other States may introduce their own legislation. What is the situation from your point of view as Premier?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Mr Nile, first, I commend you: Irrespective of whether people agree with you or do not agree with you, you always represent your constituency admirably and this is one of those occasions. I appreciate that you have a bill in the upper House on this issue. Of course we respect freedom of religion. It is a valuable tenet, an absolute tenet, that we respect and applaud, and those freedoms come with ensuring that no hurt is caused to anybody. But, in relation to your specific question and your bill, we will consider our position once the expert panel that is reporting on this issue from a Federal level hands down its findings, and presumably the Federal Government will respond in due course. Then we will consider options after that. As you know, the Hon. Philip Ruddock has undertaken that work on behalf of the Federal Government. When his report is made public and the Government responds to it, we will then consider our position. Obviously the biggest challenge for us is to maintain religious freedom without unintentionally hurting anyone else. That is the balance we need to find. I respect people to exercise their faith freely; I also respect the fact that we want to not cause any unintentional harm to anybody.

The CHAIR: Have you had any timetable given to you by the Federal Government or Mr Ruddock on his panel? I think it is overdue.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We are watching this space closely. As you appreciate, when it comes to upholding the rights of our citizens in New South Wales, if there is anything within our jurisdiction we are happy to act on that. Recently the improvements in relation to the anti-discrimination Act, which created an offence for people threatening or inciting violence against others, was an important piece of legislation that we had jurisdiction over. If there is further opportunity to work on that, we will. In relation to the matter you have raised, I feel that we need to wait to see what the Federal Government's response is to Mr Ruddock's recommendations. I have not seen them yet or read them or have any knowledge of them, but I feel strongly that we need to wait until we see what the recommendations are, if any, what the Government's response is and, if we feel we need to act in any way, we will consider our options at that stage.

The CHAIR: Is it possible that the change of Prime Minister might delay that panel reporting? I know Mr Turnbull was personally promoting it.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I do not think that will cause any delay whatsoever. I am happy to pursue the timing for you, and I am happy to take on notice when we expect the timing to be and ask the relevant authorities when that is likely to occur.

The CHAIR: Following up infrastructure matters, can you update the Committee on the progress of the WestConnex project and the costs incurred to date against what was originally projected in the budget?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Do I still answer the question with the bell ringing?

The CHAIR: If it is a lengthy answer, you can take it on notice.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am happy to answer it. I am happy to provide you with a detailed response, but I do want to say on the record I was concerned to hear about incorrect reporting this week about the project not being delivered in 2023. I want to assure the Committee that the State Government is overseeing the construction of that project and it will be completed in 2023. Outside of that I am more than happy to provide detailed information on where we are up to, on the various progress we have made and I am personally pleased with the progress to date. Of course, as with all major infrastructure projects, there are challenges and we will take those challenges on board during the construction process. I am more than happy to provide you with that extra information.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Premier, I have an article to provide to you to jog your memory. The article suggests that Mr Photios, a lobbyist, was on the phone to your office in 2017 advancing the commercial interests of Acciona, a company now in significant legal conflict with your Government in connection with the

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light rail project. If that is correct, that contact with your office on behalf of Acciona occurred before he registered them as a client in March of this year. As the Minister responsible for the lobbyists code and register, what view do you take of that kind of conduct?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am happy to take that matter on notice because I do not know the details of what you are asking. I am more than happy to take that on notice and, in fact, it is our Government that has strengthened the lobbyists register and it is our Government that has made sure that there is clear openness and transparency in relation to those matters. I cannot provide any further information on that because I do not know what that is.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: So you have not seen the article before?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I do not know if I have. You have just put it in front of me, so I do not know if I have read it.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Do you want to have a look at it?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No, it is okay. I prefer to take it on notice, thank you.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Did you discuss the article or its contents with your chief of staff?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Not to my recollection.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: But you know that lobbyists are required not only to register but also to declare all of their clients—do you accept that?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: That stands to reason. I would expect everybody registered on the lobbyists register to comply with that and, in fact, there are penalties if people do not. I expect everybody to comply with that as I expect everybody to disclose any meetings that are held as well.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Are you aware, Premier, that on 10 May I wrote to the Electoral Commission referring this matter to it and asking it to consider if any breaches of the lobbying legislation and code have occurred?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am not sure how I would know that you have written to the Electoral Commission, but I am happy for the electoral commissioner to answer that.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I am glad the electoral commissioner came along. You are not aware?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am sure you are very conscientious and expeditious in the number of letters you write, and I cannot presume to know any of the detail of any of those, but I am more than happy for you to ask the electoral commissioner any questions regarding that issue.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: The protocol is that I have to ask you and then you can refer the questions on.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Certainly. I am happy to adhere to that protocol.

Mr SCHMIDT: Mr Searle, if I could—

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Please. You wrote back to me on 23 May?

Mr SCHMIDT: Yes. I would like to assure all members from all political persuasions at the table that we do not discuss individual allegations with the Government or other people, as would be appropriate. Of course, the standard practice of the commission is not to discuss the status of matters which may or may not be under investigation, and matters which are referred to us are given appropriate consideration according to our guidelines.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Sure. But I wrote on 10 May, and later in May you said those matters were being "considered in accordance with your compliance and enforcement policy". Is that correct?

Mr SCHMIDT: That is correct.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: On 16 August I was informed by the commission that "the investigation into the matter is ongoing". Is that correct?

Mr SCHMIDT: That is correct.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Can you tell us where the investigation is up to in a procedural sense?

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Mr SCHMIDT: No, I cannot. I mean, can say that the matter is still being examined by the commission; I cannot say anything else.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Can you tell us what steps have been taken in the investigation?

Mr SCHMIDT: No, I cannot.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Can you tell us who has been spoken to—for example, Mr Photios?

Mr SCHMIDT: Most certainly not.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: What are the time frames according to which you will make these decisions?

Mr SCHMIDT: As I am sure you will appreciate, Mr Searle, each individual matter which is referred to us has its own characteristics. We do an analysis to ensure we make an appropriate decision at the end of that investigation. Sometimes that analysis and work is a shorter or longer period—it depends on the facts of the individual case.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I have your compliance and enforcement procedures and your policy, and they refer to time frames. I think in once case for a review there is a 20-day time frame. What are the time frames that, in a matter of this kind, we should expect to be applied?

Mr SCHMIDT: The guidelines set out a generic target we endeavour to meet, but of course the individual circumstances of a case mean that that will vary.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: You do not have any sense of how long it will take you to weigh this particular matter.

Mr SCHMIDT: It would be inappropriate for me to say.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I understand it might be inappropriate to ask for further details, but you cannot give us a ballpark?

Mr SCHMIDT: No.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Premier, it is clear that Mr Photios was working for Acciona. The commissioner has confirmed there is an investigation in relation to whether or not there was a breach of the code. Your transport Minister said he was not going to pay Acciona any more money, but this week it has been revealed that your Government has provided a \$500 million interim liquidity funding facility to the project. What changed your Government's mind? Was it because of Mr Photios' influence?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Absolutely not. That was advice provided to the Government by the experts that are overseeing the project for the Government. Just to make clear: That is a guarantee of a loan facility which is supported by private equity. But I say this, Mr Searle, that project is going much better than it was. Our interest is to make sure that we complete that project as quickly as possible, and our motivation in relation to that project is to provide another vital piece of infrastructure for the people of this great State. I appreciate that perhaps you do not have as much experience in infrastructure projects as perhaps our Government does, but let me assure you that every decision taken on that project or any other project relates to our ability to deliver projects in a timely way and in a most efficient way.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Thank you, Premier, and thank you for that information. Of course, we did learn through estimates that the transport Minister and Treasurer agreed to pay back \$500 million to unknown banks—all banks—if ALTRAC, the consortium you chose to build the light rail, falls into insolvency. Sadly, they were not prepared to tell us which banks will be paying the \$500 million or whether or not ALTRAC is paying the New South Wales taxpayers anything for this secret guarantee or how long the guarantee lasts. You said this morning that you are very eager to take questions in respect to your record on infrastructure. My question is: In the absence of your transport Minister and Treasurer offering us an explanation, can you tell us which banks will pay \$500 million if ALTRAC falls into insolvency? Is ALTRAC paying New South Wales taxpayers anything for this guarantee? How long does the guarantee last for?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Given the detail of that question, I might refer it to the secretary to see whether he has any further detail. I refer you to the responses given by both the Treasurer and the Minister for Transport.

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The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: The non-responses.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will refer to the secretary because I certainly do not have any additional information on that issue other than what is already on the public record. I ask the secretary if he has, to advise the Committee.

Mr REARDON: In relation to the issue of loan guarantee, I think that matter has been furnished in two previous estimates hearings, as the Premier just pointed out. In terms of the nature of it, it is a public-private partnership, as you would be aware. In relation to how the arrangements work within a consortium, we deal with an ALTRAC consortium. The arrangements that it puts in place within that consortium is a matter for them, and any matters you might raise in relation to consortium members and the relationship between them I would happily take on notice for you.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Thank you. Premier, when were you actually informed that your Treasurer and your transport Minister had agreed to a secret \$500 million liquidity funding facility?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Obviously I do not agree with the words you are using in your question. But in relation to that, I will have to take that on notice because I cannot exactly remember when.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: In order to extend \$500 million of taxpayer credit to a private consortium, is that a Cabinet decision, or is that a decision that the transport Minister and the Treasurer can make on their own without telling you?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Can I just stress, Mr Mookhey, that the facts that you put in your question are actually not correct. It is not, you said, a credit facility. It is actually—

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: It is an interim liquidity funding facility.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Correct, yes.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: In order to approve and establish an interim liquidity funding agreement under the public finances and management Act—section 20, to be specific, about the Treasurer's power—is that required to go to Cabinet? And as you are Premier, are you meant to be told?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will ask the secretary to respond to that and provide his advice.

Mr REARDON: Under the Government, we have an \$87 billion infrastructure capital program, as you know, in the next four years, and you would be aware that there are, quite literally, hundreds of projects at various levels that we go through. The Infrastructure NSW Infrastructure Investor Assurance Framework is the—exactly that, independent assurance for all of the projects. They go through a series of gates. There are six gates for those projects.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I am aware of this. We have gone through this in multiple estimates before. My question is specific.

Mr REARDON: Can I finish the answer?

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Does the Premier need to be told that a \$500 million interim liquidity funding facility has been agreed? Now having heard your answer, are there other interim funding agreements in respect to any of the other infrastructure projects that are in place?

Mr REARDON: Can I finish my answer to you?

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I am directing you to the question.

Mr REARDON: I am answering your question.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Thank you, Mr Reardon.

Mr REARDON: We have established processes in place with the Infrastructure Investor Assurance Framework and that requires us at certain levels—and we actually publish those guidelines so that will tell you at certain levels where we have very large-scale projects, what Cabinet processes they need to go through. I was mentioning to you when you stopped me that we have six gates and those gates require us to go through a project justification.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Indeed.

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Mr REARDON: And through a strategic business case and final business case. I am going to your question. And then through to construction, procurement commencement and delivery, and then operations. Each one of those require us at certain levels, depending on the scale and the estimate to complete [ETC] the project, the estimated total cost to go through certain Cabinet processes. Where we hit those milestones, we need to either go to government on scope or we have to go to government for funding and investment.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: You would know, as well as I do, that under the Infrastructure Investor Assurance Framework the threshold for the application of the gates that you just described is generally \$100 million. A \$500 million facility is massive in the infrastructure spend. It defies common sense, Premier, that your transport Minister and Treasurer would agree to this without telling you. I just go back to the very first question. Notwithstanding what we just went through, did it go to Cabinet? Were you told? When?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will make this generic statement and then take the question on notice, and that is: During government decision-making processes, from time to time, there are delegations provided to relevant Ministers on certain matters. I will take that question on notice and provide you with my best response.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Thank you, Premier. When you personally first announced the CBD light rail, it was meant to be finished this year; it was meant to cost \$1.6 billion. It is now scheduled to finish 20 months late. The cost has risen by \$500 million to \$2.1 billion because the Auditor-General says that Transport for NSW, under your leadership, got the business case wrong. The contractor is now suing New South Wales for \$1.2 billion, and we have now agreed to pay \$500 million of their debt if they become insolvent. Do you take personal responsibility for this? Will you apologise to the New South Wales taxpayers for the errors that have been made in the CBD light rail project?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Mr Mookhey, again, I am happy to answer questions in relation to that project, because I think it is a fantastic project. But there are a number of factual errors in your question, and I will address those one by one according to my memory. If I overlook any of them, I will come back to them. Firstly, can I say this project is going to bring unbelievable benefit to the people of New South Wales. When we first embarked on the project we had an estimated total cost of the project. The final budget of the project has always been \$2.1 billion—always. That is the final—

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Premier, in a press release that you issued as transport Minister, it was \$1.6 billion.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: That was the estimated total cost of the project. But as you would know, given you claim to be an expert in—

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Two months later, it went to \$2.1 billion.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Correct. If you are as experienced in infrastructure projects as you profess, you would know that government does its homework on a project, then we take that project to market. We get views from the experts. We get views from people who have actually built this around the world, and then we assess—and then obviously you start issuing contracts and the final budget of the project is \$1.2 billion. Mr Mookhey, I refer you to the Auditor-General's report—

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Yes, in which they said you got it wrong.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Auditor-General's report on page 2 states:

Our audit found that TfNSW's due diligence and probity in the procurement process was detailed and met NSW Government requirements.

...

Overall, the pre-tender assurance review was thorough and provided a greater level of scrutiny than would normally be expected from a mainstream gateway review. This reflects the transport-specific assurance framework that TfNSW uses and NSW Treasury endorsed.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Premier, are we to infer from your answer, therefore, that you do not think anything has gone wrong with the CBD light rail project?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Look, there is no doubt there are challenges with this project. Can I say the following: You implied in your question—well, you stated in your question—the project is 20 months late. That is not true.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Premier, you said—

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The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Point of order—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Let her answer.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Can you please let me answer?

The CHAIR: The Premier is correcting your question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: In my experience, Opposition members like to put out a number which is wrong and then treat it as the truth. When we first announced the project, we said the project would be completed in early 2019—early to mid-2019. We now have advice from the consortia that it is March 2020, and we have also said on the record, which is 12 months. It is 12 months or less than, not 20 months, as you profess.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Okay.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: But we have also said on the record that if there are opportunities for us to bring that time frame forward into 2019, we are looking at those. So I say to the people of New South Wales: Under the Labor Government, you got no projects. In fact, you had projects that were started that wasted money—the \$500 million CBD to Roseville metro, the Tcard—how many times did you try that one? You promised the Parramatta rail line and it stopped at Epping, so you had to change it to the Chatswood-Epping rail line because you could not build it to Parramatta.

So I say this to you, Mr Mookhey: Yes, the project has had its challenges, as have so many other projects, but I am confident that not only will this project change Sydney for the better, it will also provide great experience and value for our customers, for taxpayers and for the economy. In fact, the project has generated so much investment from the private sector as well. You may have noticed that a number of businesses are taking the opportunity to upgrade their premises and to provide input into the economy. Every major project has its challenges. I remember with the North West Rail Line people saying that project will be more than \$1 billion over budget and years late. Guess what? That project will be delivered on time and half a billion dollars, at least, under budget.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Even accepting your position that the project is not 20 months late, but only 12 or 13 months late, do you not understand from the perspective of the businesses on George Street, as well as everybody else who uses the central business district, that that is incredibly frustrating? Will you not take any element of responsibility for the fact that this project is now well and truly over budget, well and truly late, and we are facing a \$1.2 billion suit?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: As far as I know, the project budget has not changed. But in relation to the businesses, as Premier of this State we have hundreds of infrastructure projects on the go. As Premier of this State I take responsibility for everything because the buck stops with me. I stress again my absolute apology, as I have done before, to all those businesses who feel they have been adversely impacted. If we have overstayed our welcome outside your premises, we need to deal with it. The latest information I have is that we have made 89 offers of assistance to small businesses, in excess of \$10 million worth of support to them. Of course, I am sorry and I empathise with those businesses that feel affected.

The Government has made every effort. Mr Reardon might have further information. In fact, I believe there is a committee looking at this issue. If a business believes that we deserve to support them I understand that the Minister for Transport and his agencies have been working overtime to make sure we deal with that. I appreciate that whether it is that project or other projects, during construction it is very difficult. Our aim is to mitigate disruption, stress, discomfort and all those things that unfortunately are by-products of building a major project.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I do indeed welcome the apology because your transport Minister was not prepared to give one. I think you have taken a sensible step forward.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: But it is not the first time, Mr Mookhey. You obviously do not listen very well.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Premier, it is good that you are prepared to say sorry to them but 60 of these businesses launched a class action against your Government last week saying that the delays of the CBD Light Rail are the reasons why they are out of business. I asked this question of your transport Minister who was not prepared to answer it so I will ask you. Should your Government win this litigation against those 60 businesses to which you just apologised, will you commit to not seeking cost orders against them?

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The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Point of order: That is cause for conjecture. We do not know the outcome of those proceedings.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: As you would know, it would be completely inappropriate for me to respond to any proceedings that are before the courts. But our Government has a open policy in relation to supporting businesses that feel aggrieved. We have already provided support to around 89 or 90 businesses. I refer the rest of your questioning to the response provided by the Minister. I also say, as you would know, it is completely inappropriate to respond to any issues that might be before the courts.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I am not asking you to respond to an issue before the courts; I am asking you as a matter of policy whether you will waive seeking a cost order against them?

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: You are asking a hypothetical.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Obviously, as you would understand, it is difficult and expensive for businesses to be in litigation. I am sure they would welcome the apology you have given but far more important than the apology is a commitment from you, as the Premier, to the businesses that have been devastated by the light rail not to seek a cost order against them.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Is this a question or a lecture?

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Would you contemplate that?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I refer you to the responses given by the very capable Minister for Transport on this issue. I leave it at that.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Will you guarantee that the CBD Light Rail project will, in fact, open in March 2023?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No, because I am hoping it will happen before that.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Will you guarantee that the latest date it will open is March 2023?

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: You are an optimist, Premier.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We are working to bring that date forward. If there are opportunities for us to bring that date forward we will. Given the complexity of that project, and all the other projects, I am incredibly pleased with the progress we are making overall on our infrastructure agenda.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I restate what you said earlier, and please correct me if I am wrong. You said to the Committee that you had a bit of a refocus on spending from the Climate Change Fund—to focus more on emission saving initiatives that also bring down energy prices. Would that be fair?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: A bit broader than that; not just bringing down energy prices but also cost-of-living pressures because some measures we brought in provide savings for consumers on white goods and other products. So they are saving there. That is not a reduction in their bill; it is a reduction in their cost-of-living expenses. The fund goes broader than that. It is not just about prices on bills; it is also about direct savings from purchasing products or other services which might help with cost-of-living pressures.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: If that is the case, I think it would be fair to assume—and correct me if I am wrong—that you would not be spending money from the Climate Change Fund on any further development of the Warragamba Dam wall increase? That would not be coming from the Climate Change Fund?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I would have to take that question on notice unless I can ask the secretary to respond to that.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Because it is hard to see the climate change justifications, given how you have just described the use of the fund.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Yes. I will ask the secretary to comment on that.

Mr REARDON: Just on your previous questions about resilience and infrastructure, and what we might be doing there, I will make a couple of comments. I pointed to a few documents that are on the public record. I encourage you to look at the State infrastructure strategy that we released earlier this year, and specifically chapter 5 of that strategy. Within that we do go into natural hazards, both now and in the future—so flood, drought and a whole range of other areas—where climatic conditions will emerge and will change. It does go to the heart

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of the matters that you have raised about our long-term planning and resilience, and modelling we might need to do now—that we have done already and that we will need to continue to do over the longer term. It is actually in there and I refer you to that.

Referring to your specifics on Warragamba Dam, just for context, Infrastructure NSW sits within the Premier and Cabinet cluster. So it is my accountability on its work both on the insurance side when it insures all the projects across government and it also has accountability to deliver some itself. Warragamba, and the initiative we are undertaking there, is one of them. It works with Water NSW on that project. Referring to the specifics about the project, we will develop the project as we would normally do. Referring to the funding sources to deliver that, it will be a matter for government. But normally those projects are funded out of Rebuilding NSW and Restart NSW. But the Government can instruct us how it wishes concerning where it might fund them from.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I am not sure that was a clear answer to the question. Are you leaving it open to using funds from the Climate Change Fund to fund the construction of the Warragamba Dam wall rise?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I do not know the answer to that question or whether we are considering that, but the Climate Change Fund has a specific purpose. We have been careful, as a government, to make sure that every dollar we spend from that fund brings the benefits we hope it will. We will continue to do that by matter of policy.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I will move on to plastics. While your Government has been deliberating on whether to ban the bag—I think it goes back to about 2014—it is a pretty open secret that this was under active consideration back then by your Government before the famous ban on bans was introduced by former Premier Baird.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Really?

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Since that time about eight billion plastic bags that have been used in New South Wales would have entered the environment or gone into landfill. Premier, my question is: When will you ban the bag?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: My response to that issue is as follows: I do not need to tell you, Mr Field, as you are well aware of public affairs relating to the larger supermarket chains already banning single-use plastic bags. Many other government entities and agencies also choose to ban single-use plastic bags and to replace them with multiple-use plastic bags. If the community response is such that the major players who distribute single-use plastic bags take it upon themselves to ban the use of those single-use plastic bags, it means the heavy hand of government does not need to intervene. You would also know, being someone who cares about the environment, that the biggest detriment to litter and the environment is containers from drink bottles and other containers, which is why we introduced the container deposit scheme. From recollection, we are collecting two million to three million cans and bottles a day, which is having a huge positive impact on litter. As you would know, one of the Premier's priorities is to reduce litter by a certain amount in the next few years. Please know that our approach to banning detrimental objects such as cans and container deposits is based on the science.

Science and research tell us that the biggest cause in detriment to the environment is those containers, which is why we introduced the scheme. In relation to plastic bags, I am very pleased that the community response has caused these retailers to take that step—that was their decision. I do not believe, in principle—and you can read all the speeches that I have given on this topic—in the heavy hand of government coming in and passing legislation when the community is responding anyway to an important issue. I believe people feel strongly about it, especially young people. I get letters all the time and I choose to read them all and respond accordingly. I am pleased that those who distribute those single-use bags are making those decisions themselves. It means the Government does not have to exhibit its heavy hand in doing that. I also want you to rest assured and to allay your concerns. The biggest threat to our waterways and our environment, which are container deposits, are being addressed through our Container Deposit Scheme.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Premier, the biggest risk to our marine environment is from climate change, and that is according to your own Government's threat and risk analysis.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: But I cannot control that. I can control bottles but I cannot control climate change.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I was going to move on from climate change but we might go back there very quickly. In June the Land and Environment Court in the *Wollar Progress Association Incorporated v Wilpinjong*

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Coal Pty Limited found that the New South Wales Climate Change Policy Framework was not a relevant policy under the mining State environmental planning policy and consequently the NSW Planning Assessment Commission was not required to consider this when deciding to approve the Wilpinjong coalmine extension. Basically, a court judgement says that your aspirational target—that is, the basis for the New South Wales Climate Change Policy Framework—is not enforceable. It does not stop your planning department approving coalmines and it does not enable the courts to make decisions that would empower communities to stop mining coal. The single greatest threat or increase in the risk of climate change and the single greatest threat to the marine environment is being driven by climate change as well. How can the community have any assurance that your aspirational target will be met when your own policy framework does not allow decisions to be made by government to have them met?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Unfortunately, I do not know the details of the specific case you raised. We have targets in place and we work towards those targets. We work hard towards those targets, not just relating to the environmental issues you raised but also across government. Sometimes we exceed our targets and sometimes we work towards them and we re-evaluate them at the appropriate times. I am convinced that as a government we are doing everything we can to be responsible in achieving all our targets. Obviously, you feel passionately about these issues and pay close attention to specific progress on them. Let me assure you that for all the targets we have there is a whole-of-government commitment to achieve them. Perhaps where we might differ, Mr Field, is in the method and how we deal with those targets. But we feel strongly about achieving all of them and working hard to do that. I might ask the secretary to respond as well.

Mr REARDON: We have a Premier's Implementation Unit that tracks 12 Premier's priorities across all areas of government—building, infrastructure, health, education and keeping our environment clean. Just to give you a feel for that, the Premier outlined the numbers of containers that have been collected since late last year. It kicked off on 1 December 2017. The Premier's priority is to reduce the volume of litter by 40 per cent by 2020. As of now we have seen a 37 per cent reduction in litter volume across the State since 2015 to now, so we are very close to that target already. We track and measure those targets across a whole range of areas with quite a level of specificity. On this one, I will not comment on what targets we have but I know that we track them very tightly. It means that we have had more than half a billion—more than 500 million—containers through the Return and Earn Scheme in a period from 1 December last year to date.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I encourage you both to go for a walk along Bondi Beach before the council clean-up starts any day of the week.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: If only I had time, I would.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: You might rethink your targets.

The CHAIR: I will follow up on an earlier question about light rail. There has been a lot of concern about the businesses that have been affected by it and a number have closed. The longer the construction takes the more economic impact on those businesses. There seemed to be some confusion about what compensation those businesses would be getting. Has that been finalised by you and the Government?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am assuming that the Minister for Transport answered these questions. I know that an upper House inquiry is looking into these matters as well. The Government—and I will speak in broad terms—has said to all businesses that if they take issue with how long we said we would be outside their businesses and they feel it has impacted their businesses, we will provide them with support for all that extra time that we have been outside their businesses. To date, 89 businesses have been made offers of assistance. To 89 businesses, we have said, "Fair enough, we need to provide you support." The quantum of that support is just in excess of \$10 million to date. I understand that the vast majority of businesses that have approached us that we felt had a reasonable case for support have received support. That is my understanding. I cannot be more specific other than to say that I know all our agencies involved in that project are highly cognisant of reducing any distress or mitigation to small businesses in particular.

Interestingly, some parts of that thoroughfare—obviously not the businesses that feel aggrieved—have seen increased foot traffic by three times the number. Those parts of the project where the hoardings are down have seen increased foot traffic. Clearly, those businesses that feel they have been adversely impacted are able to bring their case to the Government and the Government is able to provide support. I will ask my secretary whether there is anything further that he knows that I might not know in relation to that. Please know that I feel deeply for businesses that believe we have overstayed their welcome. If that is demonstrated in them suffering we are providing that support. As I said, to date it is in excess of \$10 million.

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Mr REARDON: I will make two points. The first is that since 2015 when the project got into the construction phase proper, Transport established a Coordinator General of Transport to work within the central business district to ensure that the CBD continued to work effectively during the construction phase. When light rail commenced and put a lot of work into that we realigned the road network around the CBD. We did a lot of work on pedestrian flows within the CBD to try to maximise the time that pedestrians had to move around the CBD. We went into the first Christmas making sure that business patronage and customer numbers remained strong. They did at that time without a doubt. With the length of time that the work has been going on, we moved towards business assistance and set up a team pretty quickly about doing business assistance. Transport has had it in place for some considerable time. As the Premier pointed out, there have been 89 offers of assistance to small business. I refer any others on it to the previous comments that the Minister for Transport made in his estimates.

The CHAIR: Following up on another question relating to infrastructure, there have been a lot of announcements about replacing the Spit Bridge with a tunnel.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Hear, hear!

The CHAIR: But the Government has gone quiet on any timetable. I was wondering whether you had any information.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: There is nothing in the budget.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am pleased to say that we made an announcement about that project recently and when I say "we", I mean the Minister for Roads and me. I am happy to provide you with that information. We have entered the next stage—the Western Harbour Tunnel Project and the Northern Beaches project. But I am sure you would be concerned to learn that it is one of the many projects that Opposition members want to cancel. They do not support that project but I am very pleased that you are interested in that project.

The CHAIR: I have to admit an interest: I live at Dee Why and have to drive over it every day.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: That is okay. We appreciate your declaration of that interest. Given that you are a member of a large class of people there should not be a problem with you asking me that question. We are pleased to be getting on with all of our projects and I am happy to provide extra information. The roads Minister and I made a further announcement about that. What we are keen to do with that project as with others—and every project gives us learnings as we move into the next phase—is to make sure that we reduce the impact on communities. Obviously, when you are undertaking a major construction like that there are a number of what we call dive sites for the tunnelling and construction sites. We presented the most recent round of proposals to the community. We expect that consultation to finish by the end of October to November, in which case we will then move forward. But we have already commenced early works on that project. I would be more than happy to provide you with extra detail to give you confidence that we are making positive progress.

The CHAIR: I will follow up on the earlier discussion about increasing the height of Warragamba Dam, which I fully support. I obviously support increasing water storage to make New South Wales drought proof. Aboriginal communities have reported that there are some Aboriginal paintings or artefacts in caves that may be flooded when that wall is increased by 24 feet. Is there any way that the Government can protect those Aboriginal sites with a diverting wall around that section?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am certainly happy to take that on board. I am sure the Committee is clear that the main reason for our proposal to increase the height of the wall is around flood mitigation. We want to protect Western Sydney in particular from that. The relevant Ministers are far more across the detail than I am but I am happy to take on notice your specific concerns about potential Indigenous artefacts or artwork which could be jeopardised. I am happy to take that on board.

The CHAIR: There has been a lot of community concern about the way in which some companies have become very active in promoting social issues. Organisations promote their views on social issues and we accept that, but we do not normally see companies doing that. The latest one is Wear It Purple Day, which is putting pressure on staff to wear purple. To me, that seems to be moving from harassment to bullying of staff. Does the Government have any concern about this development by companies?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I think we are all aware that organisations are trying more than ever to be responsible in a social way for issues that affect the community. What those organisations do is a matter for them, but I take the point which I think you are making in your question that any individual should not feel pressured to participate in something they are not comfortable with. That is a matter for them. I also appreciate

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that many organisations believe it is very important for staff to be made aware of issues that affect parts of the population and I appreciate that. But to your point, if people are not comfortable participating in something due to personal views it should be their prerogative and they should not feel that they have to. My understanding is that most of these days seem to be voluntary and most of these occasions seem to have very good motivations at heart. I am not as concerned as you are on this matter because I would assume that anyone who felt uncomfortable would not participate and would not be forced to either. But I appreciate the concern you have raised.

The CHAIR: I am concerned that the employees should not be put in that position of being bullied by the employer.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I appreciate that. I would hope that individuals who did not feel comfortable participating would not be forced to participate. That is a matter for them. I was just talking to some colleagues beforehand that sometimes we take for granted the freedoms and liberties we have in our country and our State. I do not for a second, because I know what exists elsewhere—even from my own family experience. I do not take a single freedom or liberty for granted. Certainly, people's ability to exercise their beliefs so long as that does not hurt anybody else is a basic tenet of our free society. On that point I concur with you and your concerns that we do not want anyone to be made uncomfortable if they do not feel comfortable with participating in something they feel strongly about.

The CHAIR: I know it is not easy to control companies but it may be something that is beyond the company's articles of formation, et cetera, to do.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: My observation and understanding is that generally all these days and celebrations are voluntary. I have not had anyone raise any concerns with me directly, but if you do have direct concerns, if people have raised the issues with you, I would be more than happy to look at those concerns. I have not had anybody raise them with me.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I am happy for you to take this question on notice. Can you tell the Committee about what contact Mr Photios has had with your chief of staff or ministerial office over the last couple of years?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am happy to take that on notice.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Premier, you are aware that your plan to spend more than \$2 billion on your stadiums policy is hotly contested? You understand it is a political—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Is that a question or a statement?

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: It is a question. You are aware that it is a matter of controversy.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: For my clarification, can you add up for me how you got to the \$2 billion figure?

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: You can tell us.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No, you have asked the question and to be able to respond to your question I need to know what you are including in that figure.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: There are only a few months until the election. You know that the policy that your Government has is controversial. Your Government did not take that policy to the last election, did it? You have got no mandate specifically for that policy.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Have you finished asking the question?

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Yes.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: As you know, we have four-year terms in New South Wales. If we asked for a mandate on every issue we would get nothing done in New South Wales. If an issue is so great in controversy that we need to take it to the election of course we would. Circa 2015 our Government was very up-front with the community about poles and wires, unlike your Government that sold the generators without telling the community at the eleventh hour.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: We did not sell the generators, but we can come back to that.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: That is a contrast between the way you operate and the way we operate. I will put that on the record. Secondly, the community has been made well aware of our decision regarding stadia

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policy. What concerns me is that at every step of the way the Labor Opposition has said that it supports Parramatta Stadium. If you do, you need to take that off the figure you have given me. At every step of the way you have said that you support a rectangular stadium at ANZ. Your leader said that on radio. Therefore, you should take the \$800 million cost out of that as well. So far you support two out of the three upgrades we are doing. The only one you seem to have a mixed position on is Allianz Stadium.

We have made our position very clear on the record. When we make a decision and we publicly announce it of course we proceed to implement that. The people of New South Wales will always have a series of things to consider when they are making decisions or casting their views on the government of the day. We are judged by a whole range of things we do. We make sure that every time we articulate our position we also articulate time frames within which we intend to implement those decisions.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: In response to questions about the caretaker conventions Minister Ayres said, "The decision to redevelop the Sydney Football Stadium has already been taken." If that is correct it may raise legal questions regarding the process being accorded planning determination. Can you confirm—as your planning Minister has already done—that the planning determination has not yet been made and the contract for the demolition of the Sydney Football Stadium is yet to be issued?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Surely that is a planning question, not a sports question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: You have asked me a question in relation to caretaker provisions. I will ask my secretary, who I believe is responsible for caretaker provisions across the whole of government, to comment on those issues.

Mr REARDON: Caretaker conventions are issued every four years as you would expect. The most recent were updated for 2019 and were published pretty recently. They go through in reverse order a series of dates where the official caretaker period for the 2019 State general election will commence on 1 March 2019. As a general rule, during that caretaker period no significant new decisions, initiatives, appointments or contractual undertakings should be made but routine government business may proceed as usual. Coming back from that, advertising close-downs occur in late January and before that when the Legislative Assembly ceases to sit is the pre-election period.

Where the Government has made announcements and decisions to proceed with a project there is nothing to prevent the Government from getting on with those projects. Indeed, across the New South Wales public service, even in the past month or so, we have spent a fair bit of time with each of the 10 clusters ensuring that they are aware of what they can get on with and should be getting on with all the way through to the dates I have outlined. So the expectation is where we are in delivery we continue with those deliverables and where we need to let contracts, bearing in mind those dates, we will get on with doing things once we have received approval off the Government. It is our expectation that people will continue with their work across all 10 clusters. My Deputy Secretary of Cabinet and Legal has provided advice to each one of the clusters as is needed, and will continue to do so over the next few months, for the express reason to ensure that people can continue getting on with projects and services as you would expect over a four-year term.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Premier, can you confirm that the planning determination for the demolition of the Sydney Football Stadium has not yet been made?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I do not know the answer to that question so I will have to take that on notice.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Can you confirm that the contract for the demolition of the Sydney Football Stadium has not been issued?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Not to my knowledge, no.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Shortly after questions were raised by the Opposition about the caretaker provisions, the Department of Premier and Cabinet reissued the guidelines with one change. In previous years the pre-election period has been specifically nominated by date. In the version that was issued quite recently it simply talks about the pre-election period starting when the Legislative Assembly ceases to sit but no date is nominated. What is the reason for that change?

Mr REARDON: When it ceases to sit the pre-election period will commence. If there are sitting dates that are in calendars it will be that date, if there is anything beyond that—

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Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: From my understanding, and I will ask the secretary to confirm, that is exactly what has happened at every previous election. There is no difference.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: In every previous election the date nominated is the last scheduled sitting date for the Legislative Assembly; it does not usually nominate at the end of the reserve week. The guidance that has been issued by you just talks about when the Legislative Assembly ceases to sit. What is the purpose of that change or failure to nominate a specific date?

Mr REARDON: I would not characterise it as a failure to nominate. I will simply take your point on notice but it is basically about—

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Are you the author of the guidance?

Mr REARDON: No. My Deputy Secretary of Cabinet and Legal is the author and I will take it on notice.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I would like to know what was the reason for the change in the form of the guidance. Premier, was your office consulted about the change to the guidance?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I do not know. I know that the only conversation I have ever had with anybody in relation to those things is to make sure it is consistent with previous elections.

Mr REARDON: Could I just add? As you would be aware, these are longstanding conventions. It has been our desire, aim and objective to get this out so that we can make it clear to the public service that it can continue getting on with its work.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: That is another thing; it has been reissued a lot earlier than it has been in the past.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: So that people like you have certainty.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I think about three months earlier and there is that change. Usually you do not change things unless there is a purpose behind it. So along with your answer on notice I would like for there to be an explanation as to the reason for the change.

Mr REARDON: On notice about the wording change, absolutely. In giving clarity, I have just made it clear, and I will reinforce it, that the objective was to give clarity to all 10 clusters and to all the public servants across New South Wales so they had clarity as early as possible about getting on with their work.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Unlike Kristina who just prorogued when she felt like it.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: The change leaves open the prospect of sitting through the reserve week or recalling Parliament potentially to force the demolition issue through the Parliament, if necessary.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Oh, my goodness.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Bring back Kristina.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Will you rule out taking those steps?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: That is a very interesting conspiracy theory. I have not heard that one before.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I am just asking the question. You can rule it out, or not?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: As I have indicated by my response and by my secretary's response, there is no grand conspiracy. In fact, I think we have been very open and transparent in bringing those guidelines forward. The secretary has said that he will take on notice why a specific date was not nominated and that is it. Unless the secretary wants to add anything?

Mr REARDON: I do not think there is anything further to add.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Premier, will you rule out taking any of the steps I have just outlined?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am sorry, can you repeat what you said because I cannot remember?

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: The prospect of recalling Parliament or using the Parliament in the reserve week to drive through the demolition.

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The Hon. NATALIE WARD: She is not Kristina. Don't worry, she won't prorogue.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I cannot comment on why that wording is the way it is but—

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I am asking a different question now. I am asking you to rule out a course of action.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: What I am suggesting to you is—

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: It is a yes or no proposition. It is very simple.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No, it was not actually.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Will you rule out the course of action?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: What I am saying to you—

The CHAIR: The Premier will decide how she answers the question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: —is that I have no intention of digressing from what has occurred in the last two State elections in relation to those matters. In fact, if the Department of Premier and Cabinet has chosen to bring forward a reminder of those guidelines I think that is a good move so that everybody across the public service is aware of their obligations. I want everybody to be clear on what they can and cannot do. Obviously the secretary has said that he will take on notice those issues you have raised.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Premier, will you commit to not taking any binding or irreversible decisions to implement your stadiums policy and let the people decide the fate of that policy at the March election?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: What I will say is that our Government will fully respect all the provisions in the caretaker time frame and also confirm to you that decisions that have already been made are now subject to implementation. That means if we have made a decision and we have provided a time frame to the community, we intend to stick to that time frame.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Even though there is significant indication that the community does not support this policy? It is a controversial matter. Why do you not let the people decide in March?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am sure there are many things that government does that some people do not appreciate or support. When we are making decisions we have one single motivation: What is in the best interests of our State? What is in the best interests of our community? We appreciate that we are not going to get 100 per cent agreement on everything but our job when we articulate our position is to implement whatever we have said we are going to do. Of course at all times we need to respect and adhere to the caretaker provisions and guidelines that exist, which is why I am pleased to learn that they have already been issued.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: So you are not going to let the people decide; you are going to push on as far as you can?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: How can the people decide? You do not have a policy. What can they choose between?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Hon. Natalie Ward makes a valuable point, which I made at the beginning of your questioning—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: What is your position?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Labor Party has said that it supports the Parramatta stadium.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Hear, hear!

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: You have said you support a rectangular stadium at ANZ, which is what we are providing.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Hear, hear! Tick!

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: To be honest, I do not know your position in relation to Allianz because it has changed a few times.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: The response to submissions from Infrastructure NSW required by the planning process was due to be submitted at the end of August. Last Friday at estimates the planning department

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indicated it was weeks late. Cranes are scheduled to demolish the roof of the Sydney Football Stadium weeks before the State election.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Hear, hear!

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: On this new time line it might be days before. Why not let the people decide?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I know Mr Searle was concerned about the exact date in November when Parliament finishes but on the time line that you have just described to me August-September is well in advance of November.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: The advice that we have had is that the cranes will hit the roof in the middle of the election campaign.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: And?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Why not let the people decide?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Because our Government has a policy—

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: We are getting on with the job.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Decide between what?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am not sure what the question is but we announce a project, we announce a time line and we adhere to that.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Your Government's investment of \$20 million in two businesses through the GO NSW Equity Fund in a South Coast oyster business, Australia's Oyster Coast, and a Wagyu beef enterprise at Ebor, Stone Axe Pastoral, is just crony capitalism at work, is it not?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: You asked this question of the Deputy Premier.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I understand you asked those questions of the Deputy Premier—

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I have not asked any questions about this matter.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Those exact questions have been asked.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: That is not a point of order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will ask my secretary to elaborate on my response but my response is this: We have set up various processes to encourage jobs and investment, especially in rural and regional New South Wales. There are independent assessment processes for all those things. There are strict probity requirements around all those issues. I will ask my secretary to elaborate if he has any further details.

Mr REARDON: The questions were asked of the Deputy Premier at estimates just a couple of days ago. We indicated that Jobs for NSW is a \$190 million fund which looks at providing grant and loan products to various organisations. It puts all that information on its website to invite businesses to come forward for those funds. As a member of the Jobs for NSW board, I made the comment that probity and other guidance is given to the board to make decisions on where to invest. Beyond that, any specifics around individual organisations that have been engaged in that process we said we would take on notice.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: In his estimates hearing, Minister Blair said that the process by which the application of taxpayer moneys in these investments, which also saw the investment of public servants superannuation money, was not one that was generally open to businesses who were interested in gaining access to capital investment. Minister Blair said, "It was not an open tender process." According to the Deputy Premier, the investment adviser, ROC Partners, apparently scoured the whole of New South Wales looking for opportunities to park government money and just magically found and recommended two businesses—one in which the adviser had a majority financial interest and the other which is chaired by Mr David Trebeck, a former policy director of the Federal Liberal Party, an alumnus of the H.R. Nicholls Society and a person involved in the 1998 waterfront dispute who has previously attacked regional and rural Australia for seeking and gaining business investment. These two investments by the Jobs for NSW board, through the Go NSW Equity Fund, just does not pass the believability test, does it, Premier?

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Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am not across the detail of the matters that you raise, I am afraid. I will ask my secretary whether he has anything further to add about the process and the independent assessments that occur in relation to those matters.

Mr REARDON: I think I have gone through the process that does occur. You have either asked a question or made a statement about one or two specific items. As we said the other day, we will take it on notice.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Premier, was the establishment and structure of this fund approved by Cabinet?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am not sure when the fund was established. I am happy to take that on notice. It has been around, I think, for a while.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: My colleagues outlined the particular conflict of interest where a company owned by the Government's fund adviser receives the public investment. When did you first become aware of that conflict of interest?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I cannot validate the issues you are raising because I do not know about these matters. You are making an assumption in your question which I am not willing to accept because I do not know the facts.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: It is not an assumption. We have been informed—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: By whom?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: —that the conflict of interest was declared by your agencies; that the conflict of interest was declared at least to the investment committee but not to the public.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Right, okay.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: When did you first become aware of that conflict of interest?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The first I had heard about these matters was during this week—during the estimates process. I will ask to see whether my secretary has anything further to add.

Mr REARDON: I do not have anything further to add than what we discussed the other day.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Premier, you have talked about the importance of open and transparent government. Would you have expected to know about something like that earlier?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am glad we are finally getting to the budget end of questions now that we are getting to the end of the budget estimates. As you appreciate, across government there are hundreds of millions of dollars—in fact, billions of dollars—which we issue in grants and support services. I expect every person in the public service or on our independent panels who are making these assessments to make sure that they adhere to all the guidelines, that they adhere to all the probity requirements that are there, so that government can make decisions with confidence. It is certainly my expectation and my understanding that no matter if it is this fund that you refer to or any other fund, that the independent assessors provide robust advice and information to government.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: If a conflict of interest is declared there would be no reason to hide it from the public. You would agree with that?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I do not know the processes involved in that independent process. I will have to take that on board. I do not want to make assumptions on the questions you are asking because I do not know whether the questions you are asking are factual.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: But you would agree on the face of it that a fund manager scouring the State, looking at the State's 680,000 small businesses and choosing one in which it had acquired a majority shareholding 10 months earlier, does not look good, does it? Is that of concern to you on the face of it?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: As the secretary said, he has taken those matters on notice. If I could also refer you to what information I understand has already been provided. There are independent panels, robust processes which provide advice to government. As the secretary said, we are happy to take that on notice.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Can you rule out ROC Partners or its principals will not receive some material financial benefit as a result of this investment in Stone Axe Pastoral Company?

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Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am sorry; I do not know any of the parties to which you are referring.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Will you investigate the extent of any financial gain they may have made?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am happy to take that question on notice.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I want to ask you a question about competitive neutrality as a Premier and as a former Treasurer [*Time expired.*].

The CHAIR: The member can put that question on notice if he wants to.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am sure I will get many of those.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Premier, I want to move on to gambling policy. In the past 12 months there have been serious allegations and even admissions from some companies in the clubs, the pubs and the casino sector of quite unconscionable conduct relating to poker machines. Do you think it is appropriate that your Government, the Liberal-Nationals Coalition, has a formal memorandum of understanding with the clubs industry that in its essence is about protecting the profits of that industry?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No. I will ask the secretary to make comment about this as well. There are many programs in place to deal with the issue of problem gambling. We know that it is a big problem in the community. In fact, from memory—and I stand corrected—some months ago now Minister Toole, the responsible Minister, announced a policy which provided disincentive from access to that equipment in areas where there were high socio-economic challenges. Through the Minister, we have identified those areas which are most vulnerable to people having addictions to problem gambling and we have adjusted policies accordingly. If there is more we need to do to address problem gambling of course we will. I am comfortable that we have the right balance in New South Wales but if there is more that we need to do we are always open to looking at those matters.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Will your Government sign a new memorandum of understanding with ClubsNSW?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: As I understand it, it is protocol for that to occur in a regular fashion. That happens anyway. There is always an ongoing process.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I am sorry; I think the public would be surprised to hear that it is protocol to sign agreements with industries that you regulate. I am not sure whether any other example of this exists. There is an agreement of sorts with the NSW Farmers Association. I have never heard of another agreement like that between—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No, there has always—

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Historically between the Liberal Party potentially, but I do not think that has happened anywhere else.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No. For the record, there are always memorandums of understanding between government and various stakeholders. That is not an irregular activity.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: This was a formal pre-election pledge basically to protect the interests of this industry. I am asking you whether you will sign another one before the next election. You have done almost everything that you said you would and it has benefited this industry to the tune of many millions of dollars of extra profit.

The CHAIR: Can you frame it in a question?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: That is okay; I get the gist of what he is saying. I will take advice from the relevant Minister on that point because I do not know the answer to that question.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Based on what you said about the Minister bringing new policies forward about high-risk areas, would it surprise you to know that your own budget estimates forecast significant increases in poker machine profits in New South Wales over the next four years and that translates into significant extra losses to the New South Wales public?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I appreciate your strength of feeling on this issue. I do not for a second want to take away from the fact that we have problem gambling in New South Wales. We also have programs to mitigate that problem gambling. If there are any additional questions you would like to put on notice, I am more than happy to provide additional information to any of those issues.

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Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Based on the concern that you mention about persons suffering harm from gambling addiction, would it surprise you to know that New South Wales has received an application for a new style of gaming machine to be allowed in that is marketed as skill-based or gaming style gaming machines? They are designed specifically to attract new and younger users to use gaming machines—something that has been mentioned specifically in the memorandum of understanding between the Liberal Party and The Nationals and ClubsNSW. Do you think this is an appropriate machine to be rolled out across this State?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am sorry—I do not know anything about that machine. I will have to take that on notice as well. You are obviously much more up to date with those availabilities than I am.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Given we have the largest number of machines per capita in the world and lose more money per person than any other jurisdiction in the world, I would suggest it is something that probably should interest your government more. Can I put something across your desk? These are photos I recently took at Central train station. This is a very common thing to see—very large advertisements from both alcohol companies and gambling companies, and 100,000 children a day use the rail network in New South Wales. Do you think it is appropriate that so many of our young people are being exposed to advertising designed to attract people to drink and gamble?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Some of the standards of advertising you refer to are not within the jurisdiction of the New South Wales Government; some are Federal advertising laws and regulations.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: This is your property though.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I understand that, but our property is subject to the standards and guidelines which exist in all jurisdictions.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: You create advertising guidelines to specifically control this. The laws that have gone through New South Wales Parliament this year address these very issues.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I appreciate the concerns you raise. From time to time we do get issues raised about what is on government property by way of advertising. I know that in New South Wales we work hard to get the balance right. Again, it comes down to protecting the public but also allowing people to freely work within the community as well. Getting that right balance is always a challenge. I thank you for raising your concerns. We make sure that we are forever vigilant when it comes to these matters, that we are in step with community expectations but also in step with keeping the community safe, which is always the first priority of any government.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: There are specific rules for alcohol advertising that are supposed to prevent that advertising being seen by children. It seems there is a bit of an exemption here because there is incidental viewing by children using our public transport network because it is very heavily targeted by these industries. Can I ask you to please take it on notice or investigate how your government might be considering the impact that alcohol and gambling advertising is having on children who are exposed to this in our own State infrastructure?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: That is obviously an ongoing issue that concerns many of us and governments are always ever vigilant to make sure we get the balance right. Again, I thank you for raising your concerns, but I also stress that I am assuming that State government authorities would not allow anything on their property which was illegal. But I guess you are getting to the question of what is and what is not allowable and I am happy to take that on board.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: When does the Government expect to announce the winning tender to develop Barangaroo Central? Is it still on track for late this year before the election?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I might allow the secretary to deal with that issue.

Mr REARDON: The Barangaroo Delivery Authority is managing the development of Barangaroo Central between Barangaroo south and Barangaroo north. You may be aware that there is court action underway on Barangaroo Central at this point in time by some of the parties in that vicinity and it would not be appropriate to comment further on it at this point in time.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: That was my next question. Have legal proceedings been commenced by Crown against the Government in relation to the alleged promised sightlines to the harbour?

Mr REARDON: Those matters are being publicly made.

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Mr JUSTIN FIELD: So action has been commenced?

Mr REARDON: The nature of commencement—there has been representation that is public that legal proceedings are underway. I do not think we should comment on it further.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I think it is different to go out in public and say, "We are going to take legal action" compared with receiving notice of that. I am trying to get a sense of where it is at.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I only know what is on the public record.

Mr REARDON: And I will only comment on what is on the public record because if there are legal proceedings I would not want to prejudice them and it would not be appropriate to comment on them.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I do not think it is unreasonable to be able to say whether or not you have seen formal notice that proceedings or actions are being commenced. It is quite a different thing to make a public threat. I am trying to get to the bottom of where that is at.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We are happy to take that on notice.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I appreciate that it is subject to legal action potentially in the future, but this has been a pretty significant change to the cityscape. What has happened down in Barangaroo public space and private space has been a hotly contested development. Is it your intention to give in to James Packer's demands about his casino's proposed sightlines to the harbour?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I think what is important to mention about Barangaroo is that we returned foreshore land to the community that had been locked up for about 100 years. I think the many people who visit our beautiful city from across the State and international visitors appreciate the ability to access the foreshore in a way that it has never been accessed before and I am incredibly proud of that, and I have to pay due credit to my predecessor for making that possible, and to a former colleague of the Labor Opposition as well. But, in any event, I appreciate you wanting an update on what is happening in terms of the next stage of that development and I am happy to provide that.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I guess I am asking if you are going to hold firm or back down. James Packer got a chunk of that land as well—Crown did.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: You might know that the Barangaroo Delivery Authority has those negotiations on behalf of the Government, so they have a certain scope within which they have got to operate. They handle those negotiations on behalf of the Government; we leave them to do that. I am happy to provide any update if there is anything else to put on the public record.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: In 2008, while in opposition, I think you criticised the then Labor Government for not having filters on smokestacks and you made a range of claims about how there should be world's best practice for filtering tunnels. You now have plans for at least eight unfiltered smokestacks around proposed projects like the Iron Cove link in Rozelle, the Western Harbour Tunnel et cetera. What do you say to communities who heard you say one thing but now see you doing another?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am very pleased to say that since we have been in government we have made sure that our monitoring of air quality is world's best practice. The Chief Scientist used to never be involved in that process before, now they are. The Environment Protection Authority [EPA] was never involved in the way it is now; the EPA now has to issue licences for people monitoring air quality. We have made a number of significant decisions in relation to not only providing confidence to the community about air quality but improving air quality in relation to those issues. I am more than happy to provide you with detailed information because I highly value the involvement of the Chief Scientist as well as the EPA to an extent that has never happened before, to the extent where I want to provide assurance to the community at every stage that we are doing everything we can to ensure that we have best global policy when it comes to air quality.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: But will they be filtered?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I have answered the question.

The CHAIR: Following up a report by the President of the Legislative Council during estimates today, he indicated the pressures on Parliament House itself with the lack of room for increased staff facilities and so on. I raised with him whether the Government has considered taking over the Mitchell Library—not the one next door to us here but the stone building—as a Parliament House building and moving the library to another location.

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Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I think our State Library is one of the State's best assets and I would not want to touch its integrity, to be honest. I think it is a fantastic facility and is critical to our State's cultural contribution. In relation to the Parliament, if you have noticed we have expanded the opportunity for space up on level nine, there is new building there; we have improved, where we can, the functioning of the Parliament. I am not aware of any other request and that is obviously a matter for the Presiding Officers. But for my part, I think the integrity of the public library facilities should be maintained; I think they are part of our State's treasures.

The CHAIR: I am happy to retain them but in another location, in another building.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I have not heard of that before, to be honest. But, in any event, I take on your point. The most important thing to me is that everybody who works and visits the Parliament is subject to the occupational health and safety requirements that any other workplace is, and I think we have a responsibility to make sure that we adhere to obligations we would expect or impose on anybody else. Whether it is a private business or a community organisation or another government agency, there are occupational health and safety rules in place for a reason and I would expect the Parliament to comply with those rules, and if the Presiding Officers feel that there is any aberration to that, then of course the Government will consider those issues. But thank you for raising that.

The CHAIR: As you know, the Federal Parliament got into that same situation of lack of space and they finally had to resolve to build a new Parliament House and to restore the old one as a parliamentary museum, which is very effective. Maybe that scenario might apply to us.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No. It is fair to say that is not on the Government's agenda.

The CHAIR: I am proposing it as something to go on the list. You have probably seen the lead articles in the *Daily Telegraph* about issues affecting children with transgenderism and children confused about their gender, whether they are male or female. The concern I have, there may be some children who have those problems, and there used to be two or three going to a transgender clinic at the Children's Hospital in Sydney and Melbourne and now it is up to 250 children who are not sure about whether they are a boy or a girl. This could be related to the promotion of transgenderism in the State schools and through the Safe School program. Have you had any reports on that. Are you concerned about that development? I know the Prime Minister Scott Morrison made comments.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Yes, he has. I would say that I would hope that any parent or child in that situation would get the support they need, because at the end of the day the welfare of children and the welfare of families is our absolute priority. I have checked at a very superficial level this week when those reports were coming out, and I do not know of any proactive program anywhere, but I certainly know of mechanisms in place to support children, parents and families who might find themselves in that predicament. But I do not know of any proactive activity anywhere in the State in relation to those matters. It is the school community responding to a concern raised that might have been raised by a parent or a child. To my knowledge there is no proactive activity whatsoever in that regard. But having said that, you need to make sure that protecting children, and their health and safety is a priority and if those issues are raised by the child or the parent that that school community deals with them appropriately.

The CHAIR: As you know, there is a big debate about how to reduce electricity prices and the support for coal-fired powerhouses has now increased, especially with the current Federal Government. What is the State Government's attitude to a coal-fired powerhouse supported or funded by the State Government?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Reverend Nile, if I could take a second to talk about some of the initiatives we have taken to reduce the cost of energy bills? Through Service NSW—we are the first State to do this and I know the other States are interested in following suit—but if anyone contacts Service NSW on your behalf we can get you the best deal available from all the retailers and potentially save you hundreds of dollars every year on your bill. This is a unique service to New South Wales. We changed regulations to prevent retailers from charging if people want to get out of a deal. The biggest challenge for us is many consumers are not aware of their rights or do not know how they can get a better deal and we have made it easier for people by saying, "If you contact Service NSW we can potentially save you hundreds of dollars a year on your electricity bill." That is an important initiative.

We also have important initiatives around some of the opportunities we are providing through the Climate Change Fund, which again are putting downward pressure on energy consumption and also cost of business. If businesses reduce their power bills it obviously reduces the costs that they might otherwise pass on to customers.

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These are all important initiatives. In relation to our energy resilience and our energy generation in New South Wales, we are by far the most resilient State when it comes to energy. In fact, last summer we had to support Victoria when they were in strife with their energy requirements, and the summer before that we had to support South Australia who were in trouble because of their energy requirements.

We are a State that I believe has a good balance. We have a number of projects in the pipeline literally to support our energy requirements now and into the future. But I also want to assure you that we are the most resilient State because we have been very balanced on how we view our energy requirements. The two things that motivate us the most are, first, energy security. And having said that, every year we have asked an expert panel, which includes the chief scientist, to give us advice on a yearly basis as to how to withstand the summer months, which are the most stressful when it comes to energy requirements. I am pleased to say the last two summers we have been extremely resilient because of the measures we put in place, which those experts recommended to us. Of course, leading into this summer we will do the same: We will ask the expert panel, which includes the chief scientist, to give us advice as to what measures we need to take that we may not already be taking to provide that extra resilience to avoid the challenges that have been happening in other States.

In terms of the projects in New South Wales when it comes to existing sources of energy or renewables, we are confident that we have sufficient things in place to meet our energy requirements. But, or course, we are also interested to hear about discussions at a national level. Unfortunately, because we are part of a national grid what other States do impacts New South Wales and that is why we want to make sure that all States have the pressure put on them to be as responsible as New South Wales. Often it is New South Wales that is providing support to the other States that have moved too quickly to energy sources that are less reliable, do not deal with the peak and do not make them resilient. I hope that addresses the issues you raised.

The CHAIR: Those States that have been derelict in providing sufficient energy, you mentioned Victoria and South Australia, should New South Wales consider withdrawing from that national grid program because they are just soaking up the power from New South Wales?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It would be difficult for us to do that. What I would like to see is some type of assurance that States are not just being too expedient in avoiding difficult decisions and making sure that their State is as resilient as New South Wales. Having said that, Reverend Nile, I do not shy away from the fact that it is an ongoing project or ongoing mission for us to maintain that resilience. We make sure we get advice from the experts that everything we do leads us to a situation where New South Wales obviously secures our energy during the most stressful time, but also that we put downward pressure on bills.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I want to ask you this question as a former Treasurer, and this is about the second investment made by the Jobs for NSW equity fund: The Jobs for NSW program says it will abide by the New South Wales Government's competitive neutrality policy, but this is what oyster farmers on the South Coast are saying. One says, "Our tax dollars are now being used against us. Basically we are funding a big corporation to take business away from us." A second one says, "One potential conflict arises from the fact the Department of Industry runs the tender process for oyster leases. The tender will go to the person who puts up the most money. You now have a company that has millions behind it that can outprice everybody." Do you have concerns that these equity investments might be a breach of the Government's competitive neutrality policy?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am happy to take on any issue where community or people have raised concerns. We are very careful as a Government to have robust processes in place to protect not just the use of taxpayer dollars, but the integrity of taxpayer dollars, and I appreciate that is a very important issue. All the advice I have is decisions made, and that advice has come about by recent media interest in this issue. Obviously if there are concerns we will address them. But I also have confidence that every departmental agency or every person who is responsible for providing independent robust advice to Government does so. But if there are concerns I am more than happy to take those on notice and provide the Committee with further information because—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I appreciate, and certainly that was the view of your Treasurer as well, saying he would look at the issue as well.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Because I do not want to take away from the fact that the public deserves to know that the Government of the day cares about the integrity of every dollar we spend and—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: On the face of it these small oyster farmers are saying—

The CHAIR: Let the Premier finish her answer.

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The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: —"How can we compete against this public money?"

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: But having said that, can I stress that I do not want to cast aspersions on a process or on any decision that has been taken. You have raised a number of questions and I have said that I am more than happy to take them on notice. But, please do not let my agreement to do that lead you to consider that anything inappropriate has occurred.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Let me ask you this. I have raised concerns about oyster farmers, and small oyster farmers on the South Coast have raised concerns. They have lodged an appeal about this issue. That appeal may well go to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART], the agency that reports to you. Would you be happy to have the IPART run the ruler over this to ensure that it does—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Absolutely.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Thank you.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The IPART is there for a reason. I made this comment earlier in the hearing. We have in place a number of government agencies to protect the integrity of our government processes. If anybody feels aggrieved, if anybody raises concerns, I welcome those bodies running a fine-toothed comb over those concerns. If those bodies make recommendations which would be in the Government's interest to adopt, I am also open to that process.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I welcome that commitment.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I say that without casting any doubt or aspersions on what has happened because I do not know the details.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I understand the point you are making.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I do not know the details, but I will say, given that concerns that have been raised, I would be more than happy to take that on notice.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Premier, have you met long-term Liberal operative and HR Nicholls Society alumnus David Trebeck?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I do not know who that person is. I do not know if I have met them. If is not in my—if I have not disclosed it, I do not know who the person is.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Are you aware that he is the chair of Australia's Oyster Coast, the company that received the Government equity investment?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I do not know the person. I do not know anything about him, to be honest.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: You heard the comments before that he is a prominent Liberal identity, HR Nicholls Society—

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: He cannot be that prominent: None of us know him.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: You have said it three times. No-one knows him.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I do not know him.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: No-one has heard of him.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: We will have to research him.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Why were these connections not appropriately publicly disclosed?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Can I just say this: I do not know this person and if I have met them at a function with a thousand people, I apologise, because I do not know him. I do not know who he is.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: He will be upset to hear that, Premier. Are you aware—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Can I just finish the answer?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: —that the firm, Australia's Oyster Coast, which was the recipient of tens of millions of dollars—

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The Hon. NATALIE WARD: You have asked this.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: That is okay. He can ask again.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: —from the public superannuation and private equity funding, has now taken down all its key information from its website, which reads "File not found"?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I do not know any details of this issue. As I said to you in a previous similar question, I am more than happy it to take it on notice because I always ensure, as all in my team do, that there is utmost integrity in all of our government processes—again, without casting aspersion on anybody because I do not know the facts around these matters you have raised.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Understood. Let me put to you the real concern that is driving this. As I said before, there are 680,000 small businesses in this State. Many of them are struggling with the issues that this fund attempts to address—access to finance. Many of them would love to get tens of millions of dollars of public superannuation and private equity funding tipped into their business. Of the two companies that the Government equity firm has now invested in, one is chaired by the managing partner of the fund advising the investment and the other is chaired by this Liberal operative and member of the HR Nicholls Society. Is that not sending a terrible message to these other small businesses?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Mr Graham, you have asked me this question a number of times.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Turn the page.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I have taken on board that I will take it on notice. I am not aware of the detail that you raise or mention, but I am more than happy to provide the Committee with any information that responds to the issues you have raised.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Premier, do you accept that, on top of the \$729 million allocation in the budget papers relating to the Sydney Football Stadium rebuild, the revelation this week of an additional \$300 million loan facility that has been signed off by Treasury to the Sydney Cricket and Sports Ground [SCG] Trust to cover business disruption costs now means that the total coast of the Sydney Football Stadium rebuild alone is more than \$1 billion? Do you concede that now?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No, that is not correct. The business case for the rebuild of that stadium—the summary of it has been on the public record. I do not accept the assertion you are making. The cost to rebuild the stadium is, according to NSW and independent experts who have given government advice, the \$729 million—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: So you do not concede the business disruption costs are on top of that funding?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: That funding is not taxpayer dollars. That is funding which the trust has to provide.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes, public funds.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: What I want to stress is, to my knowledge and understanding, they are not taxpayer dollars. I will ask the secretary to comment on that, given his knowledge of the issue.

Mr REARDON: In the Moore Park precinct there are a range of sporting organisations. They will clearly need to be relocated and the SCG trust will need to manage the process of relocation so Infrastructure NSW can get on and deal with the actual rebuild of Allianz Stadium. The SCG trust has increased its debt ceiling to cover operational costs, which includes those business disruption costs during the construction of the stadium. Those costs, as the Premier pointed out, will not be paid by the New South Wales taxpayer. They are managed by the SCG trust through a loan facility, and that is all I have to say.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Premier, last year at estimates I asked the then secretary of your department, Mr Connolly, about the \$10,000 grant given to the Australia Multicultural Christian Society for a food van. Your department had been trying to recover that money for some years. Mr Connolly said last year that he was considering court action to recover those funds. Has court action now been commenced?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will refer it to my secretary because I do not have oversight of that issue.

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The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I am very happy for you to do so.

Mr REARDON: In terms of the Community Building Partnerships fund, just in context, I think somewhere around 12,000 applications have come into that fund, and to a very, very high proportion they have all been acquitted. They have provided good initiatives for the community. The one that was raised last year that you have mentioned, the response given was that we would seek to consider our position in terms of the cost of recovery of the \$10,000 and the amount that we might expend doing that, and also what next steps we would take. I would say at this point in time we are still considering the issue.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: After a whole year you have not reached a conclusion?

Mr REARDON: Yes, we are still considering it.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: That is a fairly extraordinary situation. It is a pretty clear-cut situation. The money was given, it has not been spent on what it was supposed to be—

Mr REARDON: If it was clear-cut, it would have been resolved.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: It does not take 12 months or more to decide what you should do, does it? You have been trying to recover this money for over three years.

Mr REARDON: I think I answered your question.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Fair enough. Premier, are you aware of the revelation that emerged in the police estimates hearings where the Chief Commissioner of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission [LECC] said that the Minister had improperly sought to influence him in the exercise of his functions?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am aware of the reporting of those matters. I am not aware of the matters themselves. I am aware of the reporting of those matters.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: That is a serious allegation to be made against a Minister in your government. Are you going to investigate that matter to clarify the situation?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I understand that the inspector of the bodies is looking at matters around—

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: That is the second matter I will come to, but I am talking about the allegation that has been made against the Minister by the LECC Chief Commissioner. That has not been referred to the inspector. The inspector has no jurisdiction. It is in your remit. He is your Minister. Are you going to look into that matter?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am certainly confident that the Minister has always acted within his responsibility. There is no reason for me to look further into that matter.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Premier, the Chief Commissioner of the LECC has made a serious allegation. He is a senior judge of the Supreme Court, an eminent Queens Counsel. He not only occupies a responsible position, but your government sought him out for that role, and he is your appointee. He is now making a serious complaint against your police Minister. Does that not warrant some investigation by you as Premier?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am confident that the person you describe has sufficient access to a whole range of opportunities to raise his concerns with relevant bodies. He is free to do that and, if he feels so, he should be encouraged to do that.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: To be clear, you are not going to take any action as the Premier of the Government?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: If there is any concern raised with me directly about that matter, which there has not been, I would consider that. But I have had no concern raised with me.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Premier, I am directly raising the concern with you. This is now on the public record. A serious allegation has been made against your police Minister. What are you going to do about that? Are you going to let matters drift?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No. There are appropriate bodies that can look at those matters. I have full confidence in the Minister, and if there are any concerns those concerns can be referred to the multiple appropriate bodies who investigate those matters.

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The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: To be clear, you are not going to refer them to anybody?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I know that we have made sure that all relevant bodies which could potentially investigate such allegations are fully resourced and have the means to look at those matters. I have full confidence in those robust bodies. There are bodies in place that refer to these matters. Mr Searle, can I put to you, given you have raised these concerns, that you can refer those concerns to a range of bodies that can specifically look at those concerns, as is our obligation as members of Parliament. If you feel there is something there which warrants investigation, you have the ability—in fact, the obligation—to raise those with the relevant body. The relevant body then takes it upon themselves, if they feel there is an issue to be investigated. They have the powers, resources and the ability to look at those matters.

I put to you, if there is anything you feel needs to be referred to a relevant body, please do so. I have not had anything brought to my attention around that matter that requires that. But we know that there are a number of bodies which look at such allegations. If you have any concerns, you are free to refer those matters. I understand in relation to other issues regarding that body that the inspector of that body is involved.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Yes. The police Minister referred a matter involving the LECC Chief Commissioner to the inspector, and I think he did so by way of a letter. That letter was issued, I believe, during the estimates hearing. It is signed by the Minister but not dated. It is as if the Minister already had it prepared before he came to estimates. Would it concern you if the Minister had known about the matters contained in his letter of complaint for some months but made no complaint about it until that day?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I have not had anything brought to my attention which in any way concerns me about the actions of the Minister. However, if you feel you have a concern, I would urge you to refer it to the relevant body and that body can then determine whether there is a case to answer. But, in the interim, I acknowledge the issue was raised. I acknowledge the inspector of that body is looking at matters within their jurisdiction. If there are any other issues you feel warrant investigation, you are at liberty—as is any member of Parliament or, in fact, any members of the public—to refer those to the relevant bodies. I always say to anyone who raises concerns: If you have information that is not on the public record that you want to have pursued, you are at liberty as a citizen or as a member of Parliament to make sure those concerns that you feel need to be addressed by relevant bodies are done so.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Thank you, Premier. I am aware of those matters but you are the Premier—he is your Minister—and a serious allegation, which I note he denies, has been made about his conduct. Do you not owe it to the public of this State to remove any cloud that might hang over any Minister in your Government, or have the standards of ministerial responsibility in your show got so low now you do not even care about these things?

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: That is outrageous.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Come on, Adam, put up or shut up. If you have got something, raise it.

The CHAIR: I think you have asked the same question two or three times now.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It is okay. But I would also say that not only do members of the public and members of the Parliament have the ability to refer matters, but those bodies to which I have referred have the ability to proactively investigate such matters. What is on the public record is on the public record. I have absolute confidence that, if any body—any body as in body of independent authority or regulatory body—had concerns, they would be investigating those and dealing with them. That is why we have these independent processes in place that are free and above politics. I have full confidence in the people involved in these entities who can at any stage proactively investigate any matter which, as a result of being aired in the public domain, causes them concern. Again I stress, if you have any additional information on this or any other matter, you should refer it to those bodies—but I, for one, have confidence that the relevant bodies are proactive. They know what is on the public record and if they have any concerns they can and do freely investigate those issues.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Premier, my questions might be more appropriately answered by Mr Schmidt. I have been looking at recent changes that have been made to the lobbyists register. It seems to have moved from a spreadsheet to a more interactive tool for looking at what is going on. A number of lobbying companies are listed on the register as being on the watchlist at the moment, and two of those are listed as suspended. As I understand it, you are required to maintain a Lobbyists Watch List that contains names and other identifying details of any lobbyist whom the Electoral Commission determines should be placed on the Lobbyists Watch List

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because of contraventions of the Act or of the lobbyists code, but there is no information on there about what contraventions have occurred. What is the reason that these eight lobbying businesses are on the watchlist?

Mr SCHMIDT: I will not talk to the individual matters—perhaps that might be better addressed on notice. In broad terms, lobbyists are required on a regular basis throughout the course of the year to update their particulars. One of the most common difficulties we have, particularly with some lobbyists who may not be particularly active, is their failure to comply with that requirement to actually return the information which we require on a regular basis. I could not go to the individual cases, of course, but I am happy to take an on-notice question.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I am happy to give them, but would failing to update their details be a contravention of the Act or the lobbyists code?

Mr SCHMIDT: They are required to respond, I think it is every four months, to update their details or give us a return about their details as a matter of course.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Some of these companies have a lot of business. They are companies that are quite active in New South Wales, so I cannot imagine that they are inactive. Of the eight, a number are described as "inactive" which might be an indicator that they have not provided updated details, but two are listed as "suspended": Asset Public Relations and Wise McBaron Communication. Without going into the specifics, how is a company that is suspended from lobbying for a period of time informed about that? How do you make decisions to conclude the suspension?

Mr SCHMIDT: I will come back to you with an answer on notice about the process. We do not do it unilaterally without advising the company or endeavouring to contact them to advise them of that action having been taken.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: If a company has been on the watchlist because it simply had not updated its details, as soon as it updates its details it will go back onto the active list, I assume. But there have been a few changes to how this information is recorded. On the old spreadsheet it was easier to see all of the information but there were some irregularities. One column described some of the lobbyists as having been cancelled as a result of contravention of the Act or the code. I assume many of these are just simply—

Mr SCHMIDT: Historical—

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: —yes, and they have chosen to no longer be lobbyists—but they are described in the next column as still being active. I am trying to get a sense of when they become active and inactive. A number of the dates at which certain decisions have been made, either for them to be suspended or unsuspended or to become active or inactive, are not well described on the new register either. There seems to be some data entry missing or some gaps in information. How we are supposed read this and understand the status of lobbyists operating in New South Wales?

Mr SCHMIDT: I would find it useful if you gave me particular examples. I am very happy to go back and examine those further. There have been some issues with the data presentation on the register. I must confess I cannot speak to you on how it looked and how it looks now; it would be much more useful if you drew my attention to that. The register is also being updated to reflect the recent legislative changes. We are taking steps to try to modernise or refresh the operation of the register. If you can draw to my attention those particular anomalies or matters where you think it is not clear, I would be very happy to take that on board.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I understand. It is useful to be able to search through the new lobbyists register compared to the old spreadsheet. When will we see a similar sort of searchable database for political donations in New South Wales?

Mr SCHMIDT: As you are aware, the legislation which passed the Parliament at the end of June, introduces—it is called real-time disclosure—near-time disclosure of political donations, which will apply in the lead-up to the 2019 State general election. The requirement for parties and political participants to make those disclosures commences on 1 October. I think the actual wording of the provision, which is subsection (2) of section 20 or 22 of the Act, requires the commission to post that information as soon as practicable after the due date. The due date for those political participants who must disclose is 21 days after the receipt. We have received funding to develop the appropriate portal. Having in mind that time lag, which is built in, I am not expecting a flood of donations to be disclosed in the first few weeks. My latest advice is that the portal will go live on 15 October.

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Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Will that be searchable to the extent that you could name a party, or a candidate or a donor and you could get a historical record, or will it just be a going-forward record of political donations made or received?

Mr SCHMIDT: I must confess, I cannot tell you off the cuff the full functionality of the register. But if you want to ask me a question on notice I will happily give you the answer.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: You might model it off the old Greens for Democracy for sale website. That was pretty useful back then.

Mr SCHMIDT: I have no comment.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: The Greens' new fundraiser.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Premier, the Committee on the Independent Commission against Corruption [ICAC] reported in November 2017. I think the Government responded in April to say that it will introduce a bill in relation to voluntary disclosures to the ICAC, taking into consideration the Government's review of the public interest disclosures regime. I was wondering where that is up to.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I might take that on notice, but from memory, we referred the relevant matter to the committee. To my mind, we have made various reforms in relation to some of the recommendations in that regard. But I will endeavour to get you a fulsome response. I will take that on notice and make sure I give you a fulsome response. I just cannot remember exactly which bit of reform you are referring to.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I understand. When will the Wilcannia weir be built?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Is this a question you asked the last time? No, this is Mr Blair. Is it Mr Blair?

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Mr Buckingham's favourite.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Yes.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: And the people of Wilcannia are pretty keen on the idea of having water as well.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I thought there was something missing from this hearing: It was his presence from last year.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Lucky us.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Can I take that on notice, because I do not know the answer?

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: You took a long time to notice. That is interesting.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: You seem to be well-versed. Unless my secretary or anybody else knows anything about that project?

Mr REARDON: On the specifics of Wilcannia weir, it is with a whole group of other projects we are looking at for water security in New South Wales under the Safe and Secure Water Program. The specific priority of it and where it is up to, we can take on notice.

The CHAIR: Just following up on a question for the New South Wales Electoral Commission. Mr Schmidt, we have passed the date by which parties had to register for the New South Wales State election 2019. Could you table a list of the registered parties that are now approved?

Mr SCHMIDT: Certainly. I can also direct anybody who wants to do it to have a look at our website. You will find a list of both parties registered for State elections and for local government elections. But I will certainly table the list as part of the questions on notice.

The CHAIR: I have noticed this week that a major advertising campaign has been launched by one party—United Australia Party—with billboards and radio spots on 2GB one after the other. I was wondering, have they registered for the New South Wales election? The United Australia Party. I think they are based in Queensland.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Probably Jeremy Buckingham set it up.

Mr SCHMIDT: No, and I am not sure whether they are advertising for a Federal election or for a State.

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The CHAIR: That is partly the basis of my question: Where are they going?

Mr SCHMIDT: Right.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Reverend Nile is interested in these matters.

The CHAIR: They sound like they think they are standing for this next State election. They think they are. They might not be registered in New South Wales.

Mr SCHMIDT: If they are not registered they might have some interesting discussions ahead.

The CHAIR: So, they might not be registered for New South Wales?

Mr SCHMIDT: I could check the website, but it does not spring to mind.

The CHAIR: It sounds as if it is unlikely that it is registered. It probably does not know the procedure.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Is it on the public record?

Mr SCHMIDT: Absolutely, it is on the public record.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Reverend Nile, you can ask someone to look it up for you. If they are registered, it will be on the list that Mr Schmidt provides.

The CHAIR: I did ask you to table a list, if you could.

Mr SCHMIDT: Yes, we will. We will certainly do that.

The CHAIR: A question was raised about the Crown resort, which in principle I supported at Darling Harbour, because Mr Packer agreed to my proposal that there would be no poker machines—only casino in the world with no poker machines. Apparently, he is running into trouble with the luxury units facing the harbour. Lendlease apparently has the land next to Crown resort, between Crown resort and the harbour. If they put up a skyscraper it would take away all the attraction of people going to Crown resort, and affect the tourism and our economy. I was wondering if the Government is aware of that problem. I know you cannot control or tell people where to build, but could you investigate that situation?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Certainly. This is an ongoing issue, which I mentioned in a previous question which was related. The Barangaroo development authority handles all those negotiations on behalf of stakeholders and the Government. I will ask the secretary to see if there is anything further that he wants to add.

Mr REARDON: We responded earlier that on the Barangaroo Central location we have a tender process that we have had underway for some time about developing Barangaroo Central. Barangaroo Central will benefit from the fact that we are also building a Sydney Metro station at Barangaroo and that will integrate into that location. It would be a great outcome for the precinct to have mass transit through there. The procurement of Barangaroo Central that the Barangaroo Delivery Authority [BDA] is doing, as I said, continues. Crown and Lendlease are working with the BDA in terms of the scale of all of their buildings and what they term so-called sightlines, which is basically their views.

I mentioned earlier that there has been public commentary that legal proceedings have been undertaken or commenced. I do not think it would be appropriate for us to discuss those legal proceedings here, but certainly the BDA is in charge of developing Barangaroo Central and is trying to do that to get the best value for taxpayers and integrate it in an appropriate fashion to the Sydney Metro station that will be there to support that precinct and provide a very good public transport mode share to the precinct and activate it even further.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Reverend Nile, Mr Schmidt has an answer to your previous question, if you are interested.

Mr SCHMIDT: I am happy to say, Mr Nile, that the website is working and the United Australia Party is registered neither at the State level nor the local government level in New South Wales.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: So, the answer is no.

The CHAIR: Good. I am not sure if everybody is pleased about that. They are running candidates in their imagination. I will not say who is in charge of that party; you probably know.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: We all know.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: No-one seems to know who is in charge of that party.

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The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Even the people in charge.

The CHAIR: Another issue that concerns me and that has been raised, I would say, for at least the past four or five years is the issue of accommodating cruise ships that come to Sydney and want to come to Sydney, and adequate terminals. Going by media reports, a lot of the cruise ship companies are very upset, if not angry, at the lack of facilities and may take Sydney off their cruise program, which would be a great loss for tourism to New South Wales if that happens. Are there any urgent plans to extend cruise terminals in Sydney Harbour or in Botany Bay?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Reverend Nile, I will ask my secretary to finish the answer, but essentially please rest assured the cruise industry is doing very well because of Sydney. In fact, it has experienced significant growth. But, obviously, it is concerned about the future, as are we. We want to make sure that we want to increase the number of visitors to our economy. And, obviously, we do not want to fall behind what are very healthy growth numbers in that sector. That is obviously our aim, to increase the number of visitors we have to our great State and also try to convince them to visit some of our regional centres as well, whilst they are here, in addition to visiting Sydney. That is part of the motivation we have through Destination NSW and other bodies. Obviously the challenge with the industry is that the size of the ships is such that they can no longer fit under the Harbour Bridge, which is why the Government did look at Garden Island in consultation with the Federal Government. That option seems not to be able to be pursued. So now the Government is part of a task force with the Federal Government looking at other options, including Botany Bay. I will ask the secretary if there is anything further he has to add by way of update.

We have a sense of urgency about this issue, as you do, because we want to increase and grow the number of visitors, and we certainly want to make sure that when they do come they have a positive experience. That positive experience means having access to other forms of transport and having access to nearby amenities depending on the length of their stay. Sometimes it is hours and sometimes it is days. We want to make sure that irrespective of that time frame we provide a tourist-positive experience. Rest assured, the Government is still motivated with a sense of urgency to find a solution to this issue, which is long term. We are confident we can deal with the challenges in the short and medium term, but beyond that time we want to make sure we are not prohibiting any further growth. I will ask the secretary if there is anything he wants to add.

Mr REARDON: Mainly on interim arrangements. As you know Circular Quay and White Bay are the two locations we have at the moment for cruise ships. The growth has been significant without a doubt over the past five to 10 years in particular. That has meant we have had much faster turnarounds with cruise ships than ever before, but they continue to grow and it is a very positive thing for the New South Wales economy. The Premier has pointed to longer-term options that are being explored for various other locations. I will not repeat that. Basically, we are doing all we can in the interim to make sure that we provide a positive experience for cruise ship customers coming in and out of the city because they clearly see Sydney as a massive destination on the world cruise radar. We are doing all we can on the land side to make sure we make that experience as positive as possible.

The CHAIR: My concern is if we lose the cruise ships it might be hard to get them back. We need to make sure we keep them. Thank you very much, Premier. That brings us to the end of the hearing. As you know, you have 21 days to supply answers to the questions you took on notice. I thank you and your staff for your attendance and your cooperation.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I thank you, Reverend Nile, and all members of your Committee. Rest assured I will comply with the 21-day deadline and provide all that information. I thank everybody for the hearing this afternoon.

(The witnesses withdrew)

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.