

Public Accountability Committee – 21 September 2020

**Inquiry into Integrity, Efficacy and Value for Money of
NSW Government Grant Programs**

Responses to Questions on Notice from Cr Darcy Byrne, Mayor Inner West Council

Funding received in Round 1

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Can I clarify whether it was \$10 million or \$20 million that went to Canterbury Bankstown?

Mr ASFOUR: It was \$10 million.

Mr BYRNE: Just to clarify—and I will seek clarification about this subsequently so I am happy to take it on notice—but my recollection is that there was \$10 million in administration costs for the cost of the merger and then \$10 million for infrastructure. I think in the end it was because we were three councils —

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: You got another \$5 million.

Mr BYRNE: Yes. All of that was overseen by the administrator.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Sure.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: So \$25 million.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: So yours was \$25 million. I suggest to you, Mr Asfour, that yours was \$20 million.

Further Answer:

Inner West Council received a total of \$25 million in the first stage of the Stronger Communities Fund. \$15 million was provided for each legacy Council – Ashfield, Leichhardt and Marrickville (\$5 million to each). A further \$10 million from the New Council Implementation Fund was provided for costs associated with the amalgamation.

1. IWC Resolution against Tied Grants Round

Mr BYRNE: Chair, just in relation to that, the Inner West Council has passed a unanimous resolution expressing its concern. Liberal, Labor, Greens and Independent councillors all agree that it was wrong that we had not been informed. I wrote to Mr Hurst on 24 August with a very long list of questions regarding the Stronger Communities Tied Grants Program. I am yet to receive a reply.

The CHAIR: Alright. Councillor Byrne, I invite you to table the council resolution and the correspondence in due course.

Mr BYRNE: I have tabled the correspondence already and I will forward the resolution.

Further Answer:

See PDF attached (Minutes of Ordinary Council Meeting held 9 June 2020)

2. Section 94 Developer Contributions (as of 21 September if possible)

The CHAIR: I do not know if that comment is fair. I think both councillors have said they do not necessarily prefer per capita but that in any event they require notice of it. I do not think you can characterise their answers as unresponsive.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Okay. You hold development contributions from developers, do you not?

Mr ASFOUR: Correct.

Mr BYRNE: Yes.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: How much do you hold in developer contributions?

Mr BYRNE: I will take that on notice but I do want to compliment the Government on a recent decision to free up the requirements around the use of developer contributions.

Because they are largely dedicated to specific works attached to a particular development, a change in regulations in response to COVID has enabled us to initiate a \$20 million stimulus package in which we are investing heavily in basic infrastructure. That has been very helpful.

Further Answer:

The opening balance for FY21 was \$64m. After transfers in and out, we have forecasted closing balance of \$31.9m. This is after funding capital projects using a S94 funding source and the \$20m Infrastructure COVID-19 Capital Projects.