

SARAH LAU
PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE:
INQUIRY INTO THE INTEGRITY, EFFICIENCY AND VALUE FOR MONEY OF
NSW GOVERNMENT GRANT PROGRAMS
HEARING – 23 OCTOBER 2020
SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1

What other documents relating to the NSW Stronger Communities fund were shredded or deleted?

ANSWER:

The NSW Premier's Office complies with its obligations under the *State Records Act 1998*.

The *Ministers' Office Handbook* (the Handbook) provides policy and practice material for Ministers and their staff about employment and office management practices. The Handbook provides guidance for Ministers' offices on making and keeping records appropriately and complying with their obligations under the *State Records Act 1998*. The Handbook is provided to all ministerial staff on commencement of their employment and is publicly available at:

<https://publications.dpc.nsw.gov.au/ministers-office-handbook/managing-records-and-publishing-diaries/>

QUESTION 2

When did you delete the working advice notes? Was it in 2018, 2019 or 2020?

ANSWER:

I understand the Premier's Office has commissioned a search of electronic backup systems in response to a resolution of the NSW Legislative Council under Standing Order 52. I understand it is anticipated that these searches will be finalised by Wednesday, 25 November 2020.

I understand that due to the constraints of the document recovery process, which requires specialist IT resources, it is only possible at this time to observe that the relevant documents were disposed of after September 2018.

QUESTION 3

Can you outline the usual structure of a working advice note? Does it have standard headings?

ANSWER:

There is no usual structure to a working advice note.

QUESTION 4

What other working advice notes have you shredded? Please list any other topics/issues you're aware of using this similar record keeping?

ANSWER:

Please refer to my answer to Question 1.

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QUESTION 5

What other working advice notes have you deleted electronic files of? Please list any other topics/issues you're aware of using this similar record keeping?

ANSWER:

Please refer to my answer to Question 1.

QUESTION 6

What other working advice notes have you retained? What years are they from?

ANSWER:

Please refer to my answer to Question 1.

QUESTION 7

Have you or any staff from the Premier's office taken any steps in restoring the deleted electronic files?

ANSWER:

Please refer to my answer to Question 2.

QUESTION 8

Before the working advice notes were deleted did any other staff from the Premier's office view or copy the working advice notes?

ANSWER:

Please refer to pages 3-4 of the transcript of my attendance before the Public Accountability Committee.

QUESTION 9

Before the working advice notes were deleted did any other staff from the Department of Premier and Cabinet view or copy the notes?

ANSWER:

Not to my knowledge.

QUESTION 10

Are office policies regarding record management currently implemented at the Premier's office? If so, what are they?

ANSWER:

Please refer to my answer to Question 1.

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QUESTION 11

Are office policies regarding record management currently implemented at the Department of Premier and Cabinet? If so, what are they?

ANSWER:

This is a matter for the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

QUESTION 12

Have you completed any training on records management, specifically your obligations under the State Records Act 1998?

ANSWER:

Yes. At the Department of Premier and Cabinet, I attended training on records management in March 2016 and also undertook e-learning modules from time to time. Training for ministerial staff was also carried out in November 2018 and January 2019.

QUESTION 13

What training on records management does the Department of Premier and Cabinet offer staff? How often do these sessions occur?

ANSWER:

This is a question best directed to the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

QUESTION 14

Did anyone instruct you to shred the working advice notes relating to the Stronger Communities fund? If yes, who?

ANSWER:

No. As noted on page 5 of the transcript of my attendance before the Public Accountability Committee, documents were disposed of as part of my normal administrative practices.

QUESTION 15

Did anyone instruct you to delete the working advice notes relating to the Stronger Communities fund? If yes, who?

ANSWER:

No. As noted on page 5 of the transcript of my attendance before the Public Accountability Committee, documents were disposed of as part of my normal administrative practices.

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QUESTION 16

Have you kept any other electronic working advice notes? What are these?

ANSWER:

Please refer to my answer to Question 1.

QUESTION 17

As part of your usual records management, do you have specific timings for shredding documents?

ANSWER:

Please refer to my answer to Question 1.

QUESTION 18

Do you need to notify your supervisor before deleting any documents?

ANSWER:

Please refer to my answer to Question 1. As noted on page 5 of the transcript of my attendance before the Public Accountability Committee, documents were disposed of as part of my normal administrative practices.

QUESTION 19

How many times did you discuss the Stronger Communities Fund working advice notes with Mr Crocker? Did those discussions occur regularly or on an ad hoc basis?

ANSWER:

I cannot recall as these events occurred close to two and a half years ago.

QUESTION 20

Were you ever provided with any written notes from the discussions Mr Crocker had with the Premier? If yes, did you retain these or were they shredded?

ANSWER:

Not to my knowledge.

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QUESTION 21

Who provided you with the proposed list of councils to receive funding from the Stronger Communities Fund?

ANSWER:

Please refer to the transcript of my attendance before the Public Accountability Committee.

QUESTION 22

Who drafted the proposed list of councils to receive funding from the Stronger Communities Fund?

ANSWER:

Please refer to the transcript of my attendance before the Public Accountability Committee.

QUESTION 23

Does a copy of the proposed list of councils to receive funding still exist? If yes, can you provide a copy of the list?

ANSWER:

Documentation confirming which councils received funding under the Stronger Communities Fund has been provided to the NSW Legislative Council.

QUESTION 24

Do you use a notebook for office tasks? If so, did you retain this notebook?

ANSWER:

Please refer to my answer to Question 1.

QUESTION 25

Did the notebook include any details regarding the Stronger Communities Fund?

ANSWER:

Please refer to my answer to Question 1.

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QUESTION 26

Did the notebook include any details from any of your conversations with Mr Crocker?

ANSWER:

Please refer to my answer to Question 1.

QUESTION 27

Do you use an electronic notetaking system? If so, did you retain these notes?

ANSWER:

No.

QUESTION 28

Did the digital notetaking system include any details regarding the Stronger Communities' Fund?

ANSWER:

Please refer to my answer to Question 27.

QUESTION 29

Did the digital notetaking system include any details from any of your conversations with Mr Crocker?

ANSWER:

Please refer to my answer to Question 27.

QUESTION 30

What office policies are there that dictate how long records should be kept for before being destroyed? Do you shred documents and records relating to any other grants? If so, what grants have you shredded records from?

ANSWER:

Please refer to my answer to Question 1.

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QUESTION 31

How many documents relating to the Stronger Communities Fund did you actually shred?

ANSWER:

Please refer to my answer to Question 1.

QUESTION 32

How many digital documents and records relating to the Stronger Communities Fund did you delete?

ANSWER:

Please refer to my answer to Question 2.

QUESTION 33

Did anyone else delete digital documents and records relating to the Stronger Communities Fund?

ANSWER:

Not to my knowledge.

QUESTION 34

Are you aware of anyone else shredding documents relating to the Stronger Communities Fund?

ANSWER:

Not to my knowledge..

QUESTION 35

Are you aware of anyone else deleting documents relating to the Stronger Communities Fund?

ANSWER:

Not to my knowledge.

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QUESTION 36

What is the current document management plan for the Premier's office? Can you please provide a copy?

ANSWER:

Please refer to my answer to Question 1.

QUESTION 37

What is the current content management system or document tracking system used by the Premier's office?

ANSWER:

Please refer to my answer to Question 1.

QUESTION 38

Do you have a current internal governance document or a document that outlines delegated authority within the Premier's office? If yes, can you please provide a copy?

ANSWER:

I do not hold such a document. However, I understand there are employer delegations and financial delegations in place under the *Members of Parliament Staff Act 2013* and the *Public Finance and Audit Act 1983*.

QUESTION 39

Are you aware of any current NSW Government guidelines for ministerial advisors on record management?

ANSWER:

Please refer to my answer to Question 1.