

## Minutes no. 96

Thursday 16 February 2023  
Portfolio Committee No. 7 – Planning and Environment  
Dixon Room, State Library of NSW, Sydney at 1.16 pm

### 1. Members present

Ms Higginson, *Chair*  
Ms Sharpe, *Deputy Chair* (for the public hearings on 15 and 16 February)  
Mr Barrett (via Webex)  
Mr Graham (substituting for Ms Jackson) (via Webex from 2.28 pm)  
Mrs MacDonald  
Mr Rath

### 2. Apologies

Mr Pearson  
Ms Jackson

### 3. Correspondence

The committee noted the following items of correspondence:

#### *Sent:*

- 15 February 2023 – Letter from the Chair to Mr Jeremy Greenwood, re-issuing invitation to appear at a public hearing on 23 February 2023
- 15 February 2023 – Letter from the Chair to Mr Charles Perrottet, re-iterating invitation to appear at public hearing on 23 February

### 4. Inquiry into allegations of impropriety against agents of The Hills Shire Council and property developers in the region

#### 4.1 Answers to questions on notice

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Graham: That the following answers to questions on notice be published, subject to redactions of contact details:

- answers to question on notice from Mr Michael Edgar, General Manager, The Hills Shire Council, received 16 February 2023

#### 4.2 Declarations of interest

Mrs MacDonald declared that she would recuse herself from today's hearing on the basis of a potential conflict of interest, having been a member of the Liberal Party State Executive at the same time as the witness, Dr Michelle Byrne.

Mr Rath declared that he would recuse himself from today's hearing on the basis of a potential conflict of interest, having been a member of the Liberal Party State Executive at the same time as the witness, Dr Michelle Byrne.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Rath: That the advice from the Committee Clerk to the Chair, endorsed by the Acting Clerk, regarding management of potential conflicts of interest by committee members, and the publication of tabled documents with an unknown source, be circulated to committee members and published.

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#### **4.3 Attempts to contact and serve summons on witnesses**

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Graham: That the Chair write to Ms Robyn Preston MP in relation to Cr Virginia Ellis, noting that the committee has been informed she is an electorate officer, inquiring about her whereabouts and asking for Ms Preston's assistance in seeking her co-operation.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Graham: That the committee publish written reports of the activities of committee staff to date in attempting to contact and serve summons on witnesses to this inquiry, subject to redactions of the names and contact details of committee staff and the contact details of witnesses and their staff.

#### **4.4 Witnesses for public hearing on Thursday 23 February**

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Graham: That Mr Jeff Egan be invited to give evidence on Thursday 23 February 2023.

#### **4.5 Public hearing**

##### ***Timeframe for return of questions on notice***

The committee noted that it has previously resolved that witnesses be asked to return answers to questions on notice within three days of receipt of the transcript.

##### ***Public hearing***

Witnesses, the public and the media were admitted.

The Chair made an opening statement regarding the broadcasting of proceedings, the recusal of Mrs MacDonald and Mr Rath, and other matters.

The following witness was sworn and examined:

- Dr Michelle Byrne, Former Mayor, The Hills Shire Council.

The evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

The public hearing concluded at 2.32 pm. The public and the media withdrew.

#### **5. Adjournment**

The committee adjourned at 2.39 pm until Thursday 23 February 2023 (public hearing).

Arizona Hart  
**Committee Clerk**