

01/03/2023

The Hon Sue Higginson MLC
Chair
Portfolio Committee No 7 – Planning and Environment
NSW Parliament
6 Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Ms Higginson,

Having received some questions from a member of your committee in relation to the ongoing Hills Council Inquiry, and given my personal and family circumstances which prevent me from attending in person – I wish to provide written evidence for consideration by the Committee in relation to questions asked by the member:

With regards to the question asked about my relationship with Mr Christian Ellis:

I was formerly a close friend of Mr Ellis. Due to personal differences my friendship and almost all contact with Mr Ellis has not existed for a couple of years.

With regards to the question asked about my involvement in the Hills Shire Council area:

My primary area of involvement when I was a member of the NSW Liberal Party was never in the Hills. I have never been a branch member in branches relevant to that area. Along with dozens of others, I was briefly involved in the area on a preselection level when it was looking like a Hills Council preselection may occur. This never eventuated due to now widely reported decisions from state executive.

With regards to the question asked about my awareness of any money sought for branch recruitment operations:

I am not aware of any money sought for branch stacking activity or anything similar. During my time in the Liberal Party of Australia – NSW Division it was not uncommon for benefactors to contribute to young liberal and other liberal member engagement functions (bar tabs, venue hire, other engagement related activity). I am not aware of any money being used to pay for membership to the Liberal Party of Australia – NSW Division. I am also not aware of any prohibited donors (as per applicable NSW legislation) contributing financially in any way.

With regards to the question asked about whether I would have been aware of any money sought for branch recruitment operations:

As per the above comments re: money sought for branch recruitment - I can only comment on activities I witnessed. I am unable to speculate further.

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With regards to the question asked about whether I have received any advice about attending or co-operating with the inquiry:

I have received advice and/or discussed my attendance at the inquiry with a wide range of people including:

- Legal advisors
- Strategic/Communications experts
- My family
- Political experts
- Medical experts

Whilst views were varying between advising full cooperation to advising less cooperation, I made the clear to decision to cooperate with the inquiry to the fullest extent possible given my current personal and family circumstances.

I wish to reiterate my position that I refute any claims of impropriety or inappropriate conduct made against me in all of the anonymously sourced documents that have been tabled.

I also note that whilst it may not fall under my refutation above – the additional claims made in Chapter 3 about my introducing other individuals to Jean Nassif are also entirely false. I do not recall ever having engaged with Mr Nassif in my life and can only assume this allegation has occurred due to our mutual ethnic background.

I thank the committee for it's understanding of my personal circumstances during the very short time since first communication (less than one week) and hope this further exhibits my cooperation with the inquiry to the fullest extent possible.

Kind regards,

Robert Assaf