



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY AND WORKS COMMITTEE

## MEDIA RELEASE

### REPORT TABLED: INQUIRY INTO THE APPOINTMENTS OF JOSH MURRAY TO THE POSITION OF SECRETARY OF TRANSPORT FOR NSW AND EMMA WATTS AS NSW CROSS-BORDER ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER, AND SENIOR EXECUTIVES AND DEPARTMENT LIAISON OFFICERS IN 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

16 May 2024

The Public Accountability and Works Committee today tabled its report into the appointments of Josh Murray to the position of Secretary of Transport for NSW and Emma Watts as NSW Cross-Border Assistant Commissioner, and Senior Executives and Department Liaison Officers in 2023.

The committee found that:

- while the recruitment process for the position of Secretary of Transport for NSW was conducted in accordance with the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013*, a direct appointment may have been more efficient and transparent.
- Mr Kieren Ash conducted political work contrary to the guidelines set out in circular *C2021-07 Department Liaison Officers* during his time as a Department Liaison Officer in the Office of the Minister for Transport.
- the suitability test leading to the appointment of Ms Emma Watts to the position of NSW Cross Border Assistant Commissioner was conducted in accordance with the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013*.

Committee Chair, Ms Abigail Boyd, said: 'Transparency and public accountability are important to safeguard the integrity of the public service. The inquiry was an opportunity to examine the fairness, and integrity of appointments to senior positions in the NSW Government, as well as the circumstances and processes leading up to the appointment of Department Liaison Officers seconded to ministerial offices and the creation of transition offices in the Government.'

'In particular, the committee's report highlights the importance of ensuring that the NSW public has confidence in the processes undertaken to appoint senior positions in the NSW Government, especially in cases where a potential candidates have, or may have, prior connections to a political party.'

The committee recommended that the NSW Government:

- consider merit-based recruitment processes when candidates have strong political connections.



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- update circular *C2021-07 Department Liaison Officers* to provide further clarity on the roles that should and should not be performed by Department Liaison Officers, and clarify that Department Liaison Officers cannot be chosen by a Minister's office but should instead be nominated by the relevant department.

The committee's report and other inquiry documents can be found on the committee's [webpage](#).

-ENDS-

*For further information please contact Committee Chair, Ms Abigail Boyd MLC on (02) 9230 3676*