

INQUIRY INTO INTEGRITY, EFFICACY, AND VALUE FOR MONEY OF THE LOCAL SMALL COMMITMENTS ALLOCATION PROCESS

Hearing: 24 March 2025

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

Ms Philippa Scott, 2023 Labor Candidate, Balmain

1. What were the words or what kind of language was used to explain or describe to you the opportunity to distribute \$400,000 in project funding across your electorate?

That it was an equal allocation of funding across all 93 electorates; that the commitments will be honoured irrespective of the local result, if Labor forms government; and that is modelled on the Community Building Partnership program which is run by MPs annually.

2. When were you notified that you could distribute \$400,000 in project funding across your electorate?

In early 2023.

3. How were you notified that you could distribute \$400,000 in project funding across your electorate?

I became aware via the Campaign Bulletin.

4. Who notified you that you could distribute \$400,000 in project funding across your electorate?

I became aware via the Campaign Bulletin.

5. In your evidence you said that “we took representations from groups across the community about what projects were important to them. It was really key to understanding the community's priorities. That was a really core part of the Labor for Balmain campaign.”

- a. How did the campaign team plan and initiate discussions with groups across the community so that you could take these representations?

- b. How were the outcomes of these discussions recorded?

- a. The Labor for Balmain campaign engaged with community groups and their representatives. In some instances, community groups approached the campaign for an election commitment, such as the approach by Ms Zoi Gamble.

- b. Nominations were made via an online form, which was submitted to Labor campaign headquarters.

6. In your evidence it was noted that as of the election date there was only \$345,500 allocated to individual groups, and that you did not allocate the entire amount as you “weren’t looking to drain the account”. Given the actual allocation for the Balmain

electorate included \$249,500 for individual groups and \$150,500 to local councils, what can you tell us about the \$100,000 you allocated to individual groups that does not appear to have progressed?

In the hearing, the Chair stated that \$345,000 had been allocated from the Balmain campaign, and I accepted that her statement was accurate.

However, having looked at the NSW Government's *Local Small Commitments Allocation - Grants Approved* website at

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/lscs/local-small-commitments-allocation-program-approved-grants>, I believe she was incorrect, and the website accurately records that the full \$400,000 has been allocated, including \$249,500 for individual groups committed by the Labor for Balmain campaign, and \$150,500 to local councils which was the balance of the \$400,000.

I refer to evidence provided to the committee, in which I stated: "I've had no involvement in the post-election administration of these election commitments and no contact with anyone in the Government about how those election commitments would be delivered by the New South Wales Government."

7. When did you become aware that any unallocated amount would be diverted to local councils?

In early 2023.

8. Could you please clarify the circumstances in which the Labor for Balmain campaign team came to be in discussion with the Leichhardt Public School P&C Committee regarding a commitment for funding for a solar panels project? Specifically:
- Who did the P&C Committee president speak to about their solar panels project at the education forum?
 - Who did the P&C president provide their contact details to?
 - What words were used to invite the Labor candidate to a P&C meeting to discuss the project?

Ms Zoi Gamble, the P&C President, approached the Balmain Campaign Manager at a public forum seeking an election commitment. The subsequent interactions were largely via email. Ms Gamble has provided a partial set of those emails. The full set of correspondence between the Campaign Manager and the P&C President is attached, and provide further context of Ms Gamble's advocacy.

9. Why didn't you wish to participate in a "meet the candidates" forum with the Leichhardt Public School P&C committee?

Because they didn't invite me to one. I recall that the President of the P&C said that it would be sufficient that they would see me at the 9 March 2023 Balmain candidates' forum at Leichhardt Town Hall, which I did attend.

10. What do you see as the difference between a promise to deliver a new ferry service and a promise to deliver project funding to a local community group?

There is an obvious matter of cost and public impact.

I note that both Labor and the Greens committed to new ferry services, which Labor has since delivered. I also note the Greens candidate for Balmain committed to deliver a multibillion-dollar Light Rail system along Parramatta Road, for the second

consecutive election. The same Greens candidate is now a Member of Parliament and gave evidence indicating that she had not made any election promises, nor were any election commitment costings carried out.

11. You stated that your campaign “took representations from groups across the community about what projects were important to them. And so when we were able to identify a project or a good policy position that we could support, we were happy to do so”. How did you or your campaign identify what was a good project or policy position?
 - a. How did you differentiate between a good project or policy position and a bad policy position?
 - i. Are you confident this decision-making process was impartial and entirely merit-based?

I refer you to the rest of my evidence in that same answer, in which I said “We were understanding what the community desired and needed from an incoming government”. That is how we determined what was a good project that we wished to recommend for a commitment.

The Labor for Balmain campaign, and I, did act impartially in making recommendations.

The assessment by the Government post-election and the approval by the Minister was a merits-based process, which I was not involved in.

12. What was the process by which you nominated projects for funding?
 - a. Where was the list of projects nominated for funding kept for the Labor campaign?
 - b. Who sent this list to Labor head office for approval?

Nominations were made via an online form, which was submitted to Labor campaign headquarters.

13. Did you ever send an email to a member of Labor Head Office or the campaign regarding the grants scheme now known as the ‘Local Small Commitments Allocation’?
 - a. If so, what did you write in the email/s?

I don’t recall that I did.

14. Were you required to complete a conflict-of-interest declaration prior to the State election concerning each of the projects you were nominating on Labor’s behalf?

I refer you to my evidence in which I said there was a probity process, but I did not recall exactly what it was.

15. Were you required to complete a conflict-of-interest declaration after the State election concerning each of the projects you were nominating on Labor’s behalf?

I refer to you to my evidence in which I said I had no involvement in the post-election administration of the commitments.

16. What was the process and how was the program administered leading up to election day in March of 2023?

The involvement of the local campaign was limited to making recommendations to the Labor campaign headquarters.

17. Who was your contact to liaise with in Labor's head office regarding the program?

The Balmain Campaign Manager was responsible for liaison on this matter.

18. Who was your contact in the Leader of the Opposition's office to liaise with regarding the program prior to the March 2023 election?

The Balmain Campaign Manager was responsible for liaison on this matter.

Question on notice

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: Do you remember who was in charge of that probity process before the election?

PHILIPPA SCOTT: I do not recall.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: Would you be able to take that on notice?

PHILIPPA SCOTT: Yes, I could take that on notice

I sent my recommendations to Labor campaign headquarters for probity checks.

Email attachments for question 8

Batch one 20230214 part 1

(from the bottom up)

Monday 13 Feb 20.54 - Ash to Gamble

Tuesday 14 Feb 10.36 - Gamble to Ash

Tuesday 14 Feb 10.49 - Ash to Gamble

Tuesday 14 Feb 11.55 - Gamble to Ash

Tuesday 14 Feb 12.17 - Ash to Gamble

Tuesday 14 Feb 12.23 - Gamble to Ash

Tuesday 14 Feb 13.39 - Ash to Gamble

Batch two 20230214 part 2

Tuesday 14 Feb 15.48 - Gamble to Ash (replying by copying the email from 13.39 and adding her own text explaining what the school is seeking)

Emails from batch one appear below it except for 13.39

Batch three 20240308

After 13.39 from the bottom up

Wednesday 15 Feb 11.27 - Gamble to Ash

Wednesday 15 Feb 11.40 - Ash to Gamble

Wednesday 8 March 15.00 - Gamble to Ash

Wednesday 8 March 15.09 - Ash to Gamble

Philippa Scott visit to Leichhardt P&C

Philippa Scott

To: Zaaf

14 February 2023 at 13:39

Hey Zoi,

In summary, the program runs exactly like the existing CBP process and will sit alongside that grants process. The scope of funding is the same and the requirements are, generally, the same as the CBP process. A proper contract and deed process would be entered into if Labor forms government.

To support this request, I require from you - (and we can workshop this together on the phone) brief information on the following

- What are we committing to?
- What is the scope of funding required (not the total amount for the project, but what you are asking from the Labor candidate - in this case, \$20,000 as agreed)
- What is the community benefit? IE how will the school community benefit (reduced power bills, reduced emissions, more resilient infrastructure etc etc)
- What evidence is there that this is supported by the community? IE motions from the P&C, petitions, letters, etc - any documentation

Thanks! looking forward to our phone chat. This is an exciting project.

Regards,

On Tue, 14 Feb 2023 at 12:23, Zaaf

wrote:

Ah ok. Yep. Totally understand.

I just want to put some summary dot points together for the Exec. Chat after 4pm. Z

On Tue, 14 Feb 2023 at 12:17 pm, Philippa Scott

wrote:

Hi Zoi,

I am free after 4. I can talk you through the process then. The information I have RE LGC is internal to the campaign but I am happy to explain it over the phone.

Thanks,
Kieren

Sent from [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: Zaaf

Sent: Tuesday, February 14, 2023 11:55:35 AM

To: Philippa Scott

Subject: Re: Philippa Scott visit to Leichhardt P&C

Hi Kieren,

I am in a workshop until 3pm today. Can I call you then? In the meantime, can you send me a link to read through for the LCG?

Zoi

On Tue, 14 Feb 2023 at 10:49 am, Philippa Scott

wrote:

Hi Zoi,

Labor's Local Community Grants (LCG) program is based on the very successful Community Building Partnership (CBP) Grants. The funding is available **in addition** to the CBP Grants for 2023 (so we can come back later this year if Philippa is elected to bolster this funding commitment. You can use of course use the LCG funding as a co-contribution in your CBP application).

The LCG grant money is, of course, contingent on Labor forming government in NSW in March. I will have to get advice and confirm this, but I expect that LCG funding would be made available to successful applicants during the 2023-24 financial year.

Have just called to discuss - will need to get some details from you to lodge a commitment urgently.

Thanks,

On Tue, 14 Feb 2023 at 10:36, Zaaf

wrote:

Hi Kieren,

It was nice to meet with you to discuss our issues with providing solar to our school.

Confirming our P&C meeting starts promptly at 6:30pm. We will introduce Pippa straight after the meeting opens, so she doesn't have to sit through the whole meeting.

Can you provide a brief outline of the proposed funding agreement, so I can send it onto the Exec prior to the meeting please.

I mentioned the \$20,000 funding commitment last night to the P&C Exec, which will be in addition to any other grants we apply for, but I said we still had to work out timing. If you could provide more details so we can plan.

Thanks again,

Zoi

On Mon, 13 Feb 2023 at 20:54, Philippa Scott

wrote:

Hi Zoi,

Thanks for tonight and I hope you found it worthwhile. Just confirming Philippa's visit to the P&C next Monday night at 630pm.

Looking forward to meeting with your membership for an exciting announcement about how we can support your school to reduce your power bills and emissions.

I will call tomorrow to talk through some of the logistics of the visit. Pip is really looking forward to it!

Thanks,
Kieren
Campaign Director

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Kieren Ash

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To support this request, I require from you - (and we can workshop this together on the phone) brief information on the following

- What are we committing to? \$20,000 to install additional solar panels on the school canteen roof. Can you commit to providing the funds in 2023? (The current panels aren't enough to cope with the school capacity). The solar panels will assist with reducing energy consumption from the grid, but it will also mean DoE (who pay the electricity bills) will save money that can be spent elsewhere.

The other issue I wanted to raise is, that P&C's shouldn't have to raise funds to pay for solar panels, which directly save DoE money in electricity bills, while also reducing impacts on the environment. Wondering if Labour is able to commit to raising this if elected. I think you will find if there was a Business Case put forward, it would show while there would be an initial outlay, it would save the State Government a lot of money on energy bills especially for 'sealed' schools that have to run air con all year round, in addition to leaving some lights on for security reasons.

- What is the scope of funding required (not the total amount for the project, but what you are asking from the Labor candidate - in this case, \$20,000 as agreed) \$20,000 as agreed
- What is the community benefit? IE how will the school community benefit (reduced power bills, reduced emissions, more resilient infrastructure etc etc) Reduce emissions and drawing power from the grid, contributing to the school community's sustainability philosophy. The solar panels also saves the State Government money spent on power bills.
- What evidence is there that this is supported by the community? IE motions from the P&C, petitions, letters, etc - any documentation

The upgrade of the solar panels was endorsed by the P&C in 2022 to allow the sustainability sub committee to source funding for the \$50,000 upgrade/ additional panels.

Thanks! looking forward to our phone chat. This is an exciting project. Chat soon. Z

Regards,

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Philippa Scott

Philippa Scott visit to Leichhardt P&C

Philippa Scott

8 March 2023 at 15:09

To: Zaaf

Hi Zoi,

I'm not sure I understand what you are saying. Are you able to call to explain why this P&C can't accept grant funding? P&Cs regularly accept grant funding from a range of sources and for many projects. I'm not sure I've understood your email.

Thanks,
Kieren

Sent from [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: Zaaf

Sent: Wednesday, March 8, 2023 3:00:03 PM

To: Philippa Scott

Subject: Re: Philippa Scott visit to Leichhardt P&C

Hi Kieran,

The P&C met and we are unable to accept grant funding before we have applied for the funding which is a competitive process.

We understand we would need to apply and be assessed against the criteria along with other applicants, which we will do so when the grant becomes available should the P&C support submitting an application.

Thanks so much for your interest in our school community and should Pippa be elected we look forward to having further discussions on further grant funding opportunities.

Thanks, Zoi
LPS P&C President

On Wed, 15 Feb 2023 at 11:40, Philippa Scott

wrote:

Hi Zoi,

Just so I understand your email clearly, the invitation for Philippa to attend the P&C meeting and speak with the parent community about the projects they would like to have supported has been withdrawn?

I am keen to avoid any misunderstanding on our or the P&Cs behalf. I don't think I ever characterised her attendance on Monday as a "meet the candidates" type event. As you say, that would be inappropriate and I would agree. P&Cs should never be a political fora but an opportunity for parents to advocate to their local representatives and the bureaucracy about the issues affecting their school community.

It remains important that Philippa is able to consult with affected stakeholders about the policy commitments she is advocating to the Opposition on - in this instance, changes to school solar funding policy in the event of a change of government.

Again, I am keen to stress this was never a "meet the candidates" event I would welcome the opportunity to speak with you further about this - you have my number, I am free to take your call at anytime.

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Hi Kieren,

I have spoken to the P&C Exec and School Principal about the \$20,000 commitment and Pippa attending the Monday meeting. Our agenda for Monday has already gone out and we can't add anymore items. Our agenda is pretty full being our first meeting for the year and the Principal has a lot of updates, and we finish promptly at 8pm. As you can appreciate, I need to follow due process.

At the meeting on Monday, I will ask the P&C about inviting candidates to a future P&C meeting. The P&C Exec would like to invite all candidates as P&C's aren't politically aligned as you can appreciate. In the meantime, I can send communications out to LPS P&C encouraging people to attend the Meet the Candidates forum across the road at Leichhardt Townhall on 9 March, so they can be informed of policy commitments for funding installation of solar in schools.

Thanks, Zoi

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