

Answers to Supplementary Questions

- 1. What role did you and ALP Head Office play in organising the phone banking in the NSW election campaign for the seat of Oatley by people from the group, Asian Women at Work? How many people were involved and for each of them, how many hours of phone banking did they complete?**

As General Secretary of NSW Labor I had no role in organising any phone banking by the group Asian Women and Work (AWAW), and no request was made to me by any member of staff for the Party Office to do so.

I am not aware of any further information regarding the campaign activities of individuals associated with the group beyond what was reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in early 2025.

- 2. Was a special list of phone banking targets/recipients compiled for use by Asian women? What are the details?**

I refer to my answer to Question 1.

To the best of my knowledge, the NSW Party Office was not involved in coordinating phone banking activities by any individuals associated with that group, and no list was provided by NSW Party Office for that purpose.

- 3. Who put you and the party office in contact with this group and said they were available for phone banking? When did this occur?**

I refer to my answer to Question 1.

I had no contact with AWAW, and I am not aware of there being contact between that group and NSW Labor Party Office.

- 4. What other ALP campaign assistance did the members of the Asian Women at Work (AWAW) group provide?**

I refer to my answer to Question 1.

I am not aware of other ALP campaign assistance, if any, provided by the AWAW group or individuals associated with it.

5. What discussions did any members of the AWAW group have with you, or to your knowledge, other candidates and organisers of the ALP campaign, about their funding needs in providing their service? What are the details?

I did not have any discussions with AWAW or its members. Furthermore, I was not privy to, nor do I have knowledge of, conversations between ALP candidates or organisers with the AWAW group.

6. What discussions did you have with the ALP candidate for Oatley or her campaign team about the funding needs of AWAW?

I did not have any discussions with the former ALP candidate for Oatley or her campaign team about the funding needs of AWAW.

7. Did you suggest to the ALP candidate in Oatley that the AWAW could receive LSCA funding?

No, I did not have any discussions with the ALP candidate for Oatley or her campaign team about the *Local Small Commitments Allocation* program or the funding needs of AWAW.

8. Normally when a party develops a new policy they launch it and seek maximum MSM and social media coverage. What did Labor do in this regard for the LSCA? What are the details?

The *Local Small Commitments Allocation program* was not a focus of the Party Office's strategic electoral priorities, campaign initiatives or resourcing.

The public policy was primarily designed by the State Parliamentary Labor Party as a mechanism to:

- accommodate the need for, or requests made on behalf of, community-based causes;
- help identify worthy projects by engaging with local candidates who were active members of their communities; and
- facilitate the equitable distribution of ALP election commitments of this nature to *all* seats (regardless of electoral status) following a nomination and funding approval process.

Rather, the focus of the Party Office's external statewide - and seat specific - campaigns was to use as many opportunities as possible to highlight our overall campaign priorities, such as

- Investments in roads, hospitals and schools;
- Concerns that privatisation of services was adding to the increasing cost of living;
- Ending the former State Government's wages cap and improving human infrastructure
- Stopping the privatisation of public infrastructure; and
- Concerns over the former government's plans for stamp duty and land tax.

In light of this, there was no centrally coordinated campaign to promote small commitments beyond communicating the program internally to our candidates and campaign teams.

9. So too, local ALP candidates would normally seek publicity in their electorates, announcing the program and seeking applications for grants through local and social media. Are you aware of any Labor candidate who did this in the lead up to the 2023 election? What are the details?

In the lead up to, and during, the 2023 election campaign, the Party Office decentralised a number of campaign elements.

One aspect of that approach to the *Local Small Commitment Allocation* program was that promotion of these election commitment was devolved to individual candidates and/or their teams.

As General Secretary during the busy election period, I was not directly monitoring the social media activity of individual ALP candidates over that time.

Furthermore, for reasons I have already specified, with respect to the Party Office's statewide and target seat specific campaigns, the *Local Small Commitment Allocation* program was not a strategic, tactical or resourcing priority.

10. What instructions did a) Labor Head Office and b) the then Opposition frontbench give to Labor's 93 candidates regarding i) publicity for the new LSCA program, ii) inviting grant applications and iii) contacting possible funding recipients directly in their electorates?

There was no centrally-coordinated campaign activity with respect to the *Local Small Commitment Allocation* program through the Party Office beyond communicating the program to our candidates and campaign teams.

These communications advised that:

- (i) small election commitment funding requests, up to a total of \$400,000 for each electorate, would be open to local campaigns,
- (ii) guidelines for assessment would have to be met as part of the program,
- (iii) commitment requests were required to be submitted for assessment by Labor's Expenditure Review Committee,
- (iv) local campaigns could determine the number and size of election commitments up to the seat limit, and
- (v) announcements should not be made unless nominated projects had been assessed and approved by the ERC.

Communications also included a link to the project nomination form.

I do not recall, nor do I retain records of, communications from the then Opposition frontbench in relation to the *Local Small Commitment Allocation* program.

11. The Member for Balmain gave evidence to the Committee that she only found out by accident the existence of the LSCA, that there had been no public promotion of it by the ALP? Why was Labor trying to hide the program from the media and broader public attention, instead of the usual practice of promoting the new policy initiatives of the parliamentary party?

I do not agree with the assertion that Labor was 'trying to hide' the *Local Small Commitment Allocation*.

As outlined in my answers to questions 8 and 9 above, the Party Office pursued a disciplined campaign that focused on key themes, issues and messages. This was particularly so given the complex modern political environment, where voter attention can be limited, and where information sources are increasingly fragmented.

With respect to individual candidates, they were encouraged to engage constructively with their local communities on this, and many other policy initiatives. One aspect of the approach to the *Local Small Commitment Allocation* program was that promotion of these localised election commitments was devolved to individual candidates and/or their teams to determine on the basis of their own campaign needs and priorities.

With respect to the Balmain campaign, I note and refer the Committee to the evidence of Labor's former candidate for Balmain and her campaign manager.

12. Who managed the application form which was sent to candidates as "part of the communication" from Labor head office?

I am not aware of which staff member was responsible for managing the project nomination form sent to candidates, and I am no longer able to access NSW Labor's systems to make further enquiries.

13. Can you confirm that at no point during the election campaign did you administer the list of approved projects for grant funding under the scheme now known as the Local Small Commitments allocation?

I confirm that I did not administer the list of approved projects under the *Local Small Commitments Allocation* program at any point during the election campaign.

14. Can you confirm that at no point during the election campaign did any staff member in Labor Head Office administer the list of approved projects for grant funding under the scheme now known as the Local Small Commitments allocation?

I am not aware of staff in the NSW Labor Party Office administering a consolidated list of approved election commitments projects under the *Local Small Commitment Allocation* program. As I have provided in evidence, nominated projects were assessed, and approved, by the State Parliamentary Labor Party.

15. You state that there existed “a policy unit that we (Labor head office) coordinated with”, composed of members or staff to members of the parliamentary party. Who were the members of this policy unit?

The State Parliamentary Labor Party was responsible for the development of policy, and for policy decisions. The role of NSW Labor Head Office in policy matters was to act as an interface between candidates (and their campaign teams) and the State Parliamentary Labor Party.

a) What did the policy unit’s coordination with yourself and Labor head office look like?

My primary point of communication with the State Parliamentary Labor Party was with the then Opposition Leader’s Chief of Staff. This communication was largely through emails and telephone conversations. The focus of my communication with the Leader’s Office was primarily on issues such as research, advertising, the political environment and campaign messaging.

16. Can you confirm that Labor head office has never provided a copy of the list of final projects under the scheme now known as the Local Small Commitments allocation to Cherie Burton? a) If not, why not?

The list of projects was not administered by NSW Labor Party Office. Furthermore, I am confident that no staff would have provided such a list because a request of that nature would have been required to be done through me – and that did not occur during my time as General Secretary.

17. Lyndal Howison posted an advertisement to social media, on 17 March 2023, stating “I’m so proud that a Minns Labor Government will build a new cultural community centre in Eastwood” It also says very clearly that you authorised this advertisement. Why did you authorised a misleading ad, in the knowledge that the funding would not, in fact, build a new cultural community centre in Eastwood (but rather would go towards design work)? a) Why did you authorise an advertisement which blatantly misleads the public?

I understand that the commitment from the *Local Small Commitment Allocation* program was to provide Ryde Council with funding for planning and design work for a new cultural centre in Eastwood. I refer to the evidence of the former Labor candidate for Ryde who has provided that, in retrospect, the wording of the social media post in question could have been more precise.

b) The cultural centre didn't even meet the internal guidelines of the LSCA program. Why was it appropriate to use as campaign material?

I refer to the evidence of the former Labor candidate for Ryde. My understanding is that the decision not to proceed with the funding for the cultural centre was made following written advice from the Ryde Council, after the election, indicating the Council no longer wished to proceed with the allocation.

As such, the commitment was made in good faith at the time, and my understanding is that the council will still receive funding, as per the program guidelines, for other purposes.

18. Can you confirm that Labor head office had absolutely no role in 'approving' projects nominated for funding? a) Which person or persons specifically had oversight of these approvals?

I can confirm that NSW Labor Head Office did not have any role in the approval process for projects nominated for the *Local Small Commitment Allocation* program. As I have noted in my evidence to the hearing, and in answers to other supplementary questions, the assessment, approval and tracking processes with respect to nominated projects from campaigns or candidates was a matter for the State Parliamentary Labor Party.

Ultimately, responsibility for financial commitments made during the election campaign, including through the *Local Small Commitment Allocation* program, rested with the Shadow Expenditure Review Committee.

b) If head office was contacted with any questions about the Local Small Commitments program, who specifically would these questions be referred to?

As I have noted in my evidence to the hearing, NSW Labor Party Office staff acted as the interface between candidates and the State Parliamentary Labor Party on this, and other, policy initiatives.

As such, seat Organisers may have contacted staff in the Leader, or Shadow Minister of State's office, from time to time, to respond to queries that they were unable to answer. I am not aware of which staff members would have had responsibility for handling the different nature of enquiries that may have arisen

Consistent with evidence received by the Committee, however, it is my recollection that the Opposition Leader's office communicated with candidates to advise them of the outcomes of the assessment process under the program.