

Cherie Burton

Questions taken on notice

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Ms Burton, I want to take you back to the error that you say needed correcting. I have an email—which I've got copies of, so I'll give it to the staff to hand out—to Kate Meagher, written by Matthew lemma, that you were cc'ed in on from 1 February 2024. It says:

Cherie has advised me that it has come to her attention that there was an error in the Sydney electorate ...

It lists seven organisations and funding allocations beside them. Could you confirm exactly where those figures came from—those numbers—for those particular projects?

CHERIE BURTON: I would assume that these are the original commitments, but I would have to take it on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: When you take it on notice, I just want to put to you that that list in that email from Matthew lemma does not exist in any of the other documents that have been provided to the House or to this Committee. The only other place that they exist are the handwritten notations that Damian O'Connor told us this morning was his handwriting. We are just very keen to understand where that particular list came from, given it wasn't in the original source of truth document and it hasn't been provided in any other way except for via this email. Would you be able to provide more insight into that for us?

CHERIE BURTON: I'd have to take that on notice.

As per my testimony on page 22 of the uncorrected transcript of the 24 March 2025 hearing, "The election commitments for Sydney that were made prior to the election were the ones that went forward for funding."

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Ms Burton, do you use Signal or any other kind of disappearing message app?

CHERIE BURTON: Pardon?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you use Signal or any other kind of disappearing message app?

CHERIE BURTON: I use lots of methods of communication.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: So, yes, you have Signal on your work phone? Is it one that you use?

CHERIE BURTON: I will take that on notice.

Like the former Coalition Government, the NSW Government uses a range of digital systems and communications that have been approved for use and may be utilised where there is a valid business requirement. This has been established practice under successive governments.

The Government complies with its obligations for orders for the production of documents under Standing Order 52 and also Government Information Public Access (GIPA) requests.

State records are a vital public asset, and access to Government information is essential to maintaining public trust in government. I comply with my obligations under the State Records Act 1998.

The Ministers' Staff Acceptable Use of Network Services Policy (available online in the Ministers' Office Handbook) confirms that computers, Ministers' Network, mobile devices, internet, remote access, email and any other type of service used for official communications must be used in a lawful, appropriate and ethical way.

Ministers' staff may use mobile telephones for business and (reasonable use) private purposes. I comply with the Ministers' Staff Acceptable Use of Network Services Policy.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: Just on the allocations in Sydney, the documents that we GIPAA'ed back in 2023 basically showed that within Sydney there was an amount of \$400,000 to be given to vulnerable people, which is a very noble cause, but at no point was that allocation broken down into different organisations. The way that the spreadsheet looks is that it was a single amount of \$400,000 to vulnerable people. At what point did that \$400,000 for vulnerable people get broken down into different organisations in the way that has been provided to us in the Matthew lemma email?

CHERIE BURTON: I've answered that question, and the answer is that they were the original commitments.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: The Matthew lemma?

CHERIE BURTON: The ones that went forward for processing were the original commitments, and I've taken this one on notice. I just need to make sure that this is the same. It is the first time I've seen this email. I've taken that on notice, so I will get back to the Committee on that.

As per my testimony on page 22 of the uncorrected transcript of the 24 March 2025 hearing, "The election commitments for Sydney that were made prior to the election were the ones that went forward for funding."

The CHAIR: Ms Burton, just on that, there was a statement made by Mr Greenwich. I now have the wording in front of me. This was made on 25 June this year. He said:

I asked if funding could be provided to organisations that were based in the electorate, including Wayside Chapel, Rough Edges and Canice's Kitchen. The result was that those organisations, which feed people who are homeless, all received funding to be able to feed more vulnerable people.

He's saying that he asked for that funding to be changed.

CHERIE BURTON: Can you read that again?

The CHAIR: Yes. I might just read from the beginning. I quote:

When I was informed about the Local Small Commitments Allocation grants, I highlighted that one of the organisations, Will2Live—a very worthy organisation—was not based in the Sydney

electorate. I asked if funding could be provided to organisations that were based in the electorate.

Are you saying that—

CHERIE BURTON: Do you have the final list that was approved?

The CHAIR: I've just put to you what Mr Greenwich said.

CHERIE BURTON: And I'm going to tell you again that the original list that was provided by the Labor candidate for Sydney were the ones that went forward. That's his view. That's what he wanted.

The CHAIR: That's fine. Are you saying—

CHERIE BURTON: But what I'm saying to you is the original election commitments went through. I cannot understand—

The CHAIR: I know. You keep saying that, but that is inconsistent now with what Mr Greenwich has—

CHERIE BURTON: No, it's not. It is not.

The CHAIR: It is inconsistent with Mr Greenwich saying that when he found out about what had been put forward during the election by Ms Tito, he asked for it to be changed and it was changed. Are you saying that Mr Greenwich has misled this Parliament?

CHERIE BURTON: He hasn't said that it was changed.

The CHAIR: He just said it. He said, "I highlighted that one of the organisations was not based in the Sydney electorate."

CHERIE BURTON: Yeah. He doesn't say it was changed. He just said that he highlighted that something wasn't in his electorate.

The CHAIR: He said, "I asked if funding could be provided to organisations that were based in the electorate."

CHERIE BURTON: But I think you will find that Will2Live went forward for funding, if you have a look.

The CHAIR: How much was promised to Will2Live during the election?

CHERIE BURTON: As I said, I'll take that on notice.

As per my testimony on page 22 of the uncorrected transcript of the 24 March 2025 hearing, "The election commitments for Sydney that were made prior to the election were the ones that went forward for funding."

Will2Live Limited received \$100,000 – this is publicly available information:

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/lscs/local-small-commitments-allocation-program-approved-grants>

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Just coming back to your conversations with Mr Greenwich, you said they started in the middle of 2023. The tranche went up to the Minister on 1 December. Would

you have had conversations with Mr Greenwich right through the second half of 2023, to the best of your recollection?

CHERIE BURTON: I'd have to take it on notice. I'm not sure. I have conversations with lots of MPs.

I do not recall.