



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 8 – CUSTOMER SERVICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES 2025-2026

Supplementary questions

Portfolio Committee No. 8 – Customer Service

Local Government

(Hoenig)

Hearing: Tuesday 2 September 2025

Answers due by: Responses due by Monday 29 September 2025

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BUDGET ESTIMATES 2025-2026

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

Questions from Dr Amanda Cohn MLC
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LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Councillor Pecuniary Interests

- (1) What progress has been made towards the Minister's previous commitment to address councillors not fully disclosing their property holdings?

Companion Animals Amendment (Rehoming Animals) Act 2021

- (2) How many councils have been found to be non-compliant with mandatory requirements under the Companion Animals Amendment (Rehoming Animals) Act 2021?
- (a) The Act requires that councils retain records of their compliance to make available for inspection. How does the Office of Local Government monitor compliance with this requirement?
- (b) Has the Office of Local Government undertaken any enforcement action with any councils for non-adherence to the amendment since assent in 2022?

Companion Animal Care and Rehoming Grants

- (3) How many applications have been received for Companion Animal Care and Rehoming Grants?
- (a) How many applicants have received grant funding?

Employment of the General Manager

- (4) Should all Councillors have access to the General Manager's employment contract?
- (a) If not, should members of the General Managers Review Committee have access to the General Manager's employment contract?

Cooler Local Places Framework

- (5) What engagement has the OLG had in the development of the Cooler Local Places Framework being developed by the Premier's Department?

Questions from the Hon Mark Latham MLC

- (6) On which date did Mr Whitworth first advise the Minister of material received from ICAC concerning Bill Saravinovski?
- (7) What did Mr Whitworth fail to disclose regarding this matter, leading the Minister to tell the Estimates hearing, “That material that was disclosed on the ICAC website was not as fulsomely conveyed to me by Mr Whitworth”?
- (8) To Ms Fishburn:
 - (a) What conflict of interest in the Saravinovski matter did Minister Hoenig declare to you and when did he declare it?
 - (b) How was the declaration made?
 - (c) How then did Minister Hoenig manage the declared conflict?
- (9) When asked at the hearing if you had read Mr Whitworth’s Citizens’ Right of Reply you answered, “No, not in detail”. What does that mean?
- (10) Which parts of the Whitworth document had you read?
- (11) When you saw that Mr Whitworth had told the parliament that you had raised with him the Labor Bayside preselections what did you say to Mr Whitworth to clear up the contradiction?
- (12) Have you ever told Mr Whitworth that he risked disciplinary action if he failed to answer questions from the parliament to your satisfaction as Minister? What are the details?

Questions from the Opposition

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Newcastle City Council: GM Leave & ICAC Referral

- (13) On what date was the Office of Local Government (OLG) first notified of the complaint regarding the approval of extended leave for the CEO of Newcastle City Council?
- (14) Has the OLG commenced a formal investigation into this matter?
 - (a) If so, on what date did the investigation commence, and what is its expected completion date?
- (15) Has ICAC provided any advice, referral, or request for information to OLG in relation to this matter?
 - (a) If so, please provide the dates of correspondence.

- (16) What guidance has OLG issued to councils on the proper process for authorising “special leave” for a General Manager under the standard OLG contract?
- (17) What remedies or sanctions are available to OLG if a council has approved special leave without a council resolution?

Pet Registry & Companion Animals Fund

- (18) What was the original delivery schedule for the upgraded NSW Pet Registry, and what is the current revised delivery schedule?
 - (a) Which registry components are currently live, which remain in development, and what are the expected go-live dates (by quarter) for councils, vets, breeders, and rehoming organisations?
 - (b) Please breakdown milestones for vets, councils, and rehoming organisation portals?
- (19) What is the total spend to date on the Registry upgrade, and what is the projected final cost?
 - (a) Has funding been formally approved for the rehoming portal? If so, provide the approval date and funding amount. If not, when is a decision expected?
 - (b) What was the total Companion Animals Fund (CAF) revenue collected in 2022–23 and 2023–24? How much of this revenue was returned to councils, and how much was spent on:
 - i. Registry operations and upgrades
 - ii. Companion animal compliance and enforcement
 - iii. Rescue and rehoming organisation support
 - (c) What forward estimates have been approved for the Pet Registry (capital and operating) and for rescue/rehoming organisation funding for the years 2025–26 to 2028–29? What is the average grant size?
 - (d) Has the multi-year funding for rescues been considered, and if so, what options have been modelled?
- (20) How many rehoming organisations applied for funding in the last round, and how many received allocations?
 - (a) Why have some rehoming organisations reported delays in receiving funds, what is the cause of the bottleneck?

- (21) What SLA (service-level agreement) metrics are in place for system uptime, user support, and help-desk resolution times – and how are you currently tracking against them?

Local Government Sustainability Report

- (22) Regarding the 17 recommendations of the Local Government Sustainability Inquiry of which 15 recommendations were accepted by the Government, what is the implementation status of each?
- (23) Has the Government developed a formal implementation framework for these recommendations? If so, please provide details, including timelines and responsible agencies.
- (24) What additional resources have been allocated to OLG to oversee implementation of the accepted recommendations?
- (25) Has Treasury approved any funding to support councils in implementing reforms (e.g. rating system changes, procurement guidelines)? If so, how much and when?
- (26) Will the Government commit to tabling an annual public progress report or dashboard tracking implementation of the accepted recommendations?

Clarification of Contradictory Evidence

- (27) At Budget Estimates on 2 September 2025, the Minister for Local Government stated that, to his knowledge, Newcastle City Council was not under investigation. Later in the hearing, Mr Brett Whitworth stated that an investigation into Newcastle City Council is in fact underway.
- (a) On what date did OLG commence its investigation into Newcastle City Council?
- (b) On what date was the Minister first briefed about this investigation?
- (c) What is the scope of the investigation, and when is it expected to be completed?
- (d) Will the findings of this investigation be made public?

Land and Environment Court

- (28) Will Councillors before the Land and Environment Court under your new Disciplinary regime be provided with financial reimbursement or a grant by the State Government for legal representation, like the assistance provided to MPs when before the ICAC and other Inquiries?

- (a) ICAC recommended that a staff assessment report accompany all planning decisions. What safeguards are in place to ensure councils comply with this new requirement?
 - (b) Where councils make decisions contrary to staff recommendations, how will the department verify that councils are recording and publishing adequate reasons?
 - (c) Will the department conduct random audits of council planning decisions to test compliance?
- (29) Will proceedings before the Land and Environment Court be party and party costs, or will costs follow the judgment?
 - (30) What is the appeal process from the Land and Environment Court? If to the Supreme Court, will Councillors be provided with financial assistance from the State Government for legal representation?

Statewide Mutual and JLT Risk Solutions Pty Ltd

- (31) Minister, are you aware that Statewide Mutual Insurance and JLT Risk Solutions Pty Ltd are mainly funded by Councils across the State and thus public funds and is governed by Board primarily made up of General Managers/staff of Councils? Do you know that conflicts of interest could arise with such a governance structure?
- (32) In view of the Australian Financial Complaints Authority confirming it has no jurisdiction to receive complaints about Statewide Mutual and JLT Risk Solutions Pty Ltd will the Minister ensure some sort of regulation and independent complaints system is introduced to ensure accountability and the protection of millions of dollars of ratepayers' money?

Code of Conduct / Complaints

- (33) How many code of conduct and conflict of interest complaints has the Office of Local Government received in the past 12 months, broken down by councillor?
- (34) If this figure cannot be provided now, will the Minister table the aggregate number of complaints received per councillor in the past 12 months?
- (35) What measures does the Office of Local Government have in place to differentiate between the “weaponisation” of complaints and legitimate community scrutiny?
- (36) The new code strengthens provisions against disorder, including discriminatory behaviour and unauthorised recordings. How will the department ensure councils apply these provisions fairly, without silencing legitimate dissent to public participation?

- (37) What guidance will be issued to councils to balance order in meetings with democratic engagement?
- (38) How many offences under section 660 of the Local Government Act have been prosecuted in the past five years, and does the minister expect this number to increase under the new code?
- (39) Does the department intend to provide model templates to councils to adopt, or will each council be left to draft its own rules within the framework?
- (40) How many additional staff or resources within the Office of Local Government are being allocated to monitor compliance with the 2025 Model Meeting Code?
- (41) Does the minister accept responsibility if councils fail to meet the new standards, given that this reform is being driven by the government?

Council Financial Sustainability

- (42) Of the councils currently being monitored by OLG, how many are under performance improvement orders or financial intervention?
- (43) How many councils have sought or been granted special rate variations (SRVs) in the past 12 months, and what proportion of these applications were approved?
- (44) Since the Auditor-General's 2024 report identified significant risks to council financial sustainability, what specific support has the Government provided to councils to address these risks?

Dashboards & Recommendations

- (45) Will the Minister commit to proactively publishing OLG's monitoring dashboards so that councils and the public can access real-time progress information?
- (46) If not, what is the policy rationale for requiring members of the public to lodge GIPA applications in order to obtain these dashboards?

Pathways to Prevention Funding

- (47) Given that councils are expected to play a role in supporting implementation of the Pathways to Prevention strategy, what cross-departmental funding or support has the Office of Local Government secured to assist councils with this work?

- (48) Has the Office of Local Government undertaken any modelling on the likely costs to councils of implementing the Pathways to Prevention strategy, and if so, will this modelling be tabled?

BAYSIDE COUNCIL

- (49) Minister, at the Hearing on 28 February 2025 you Testified under Oath that your wife, Christine Stamper works for Bayside Council. You actually stated and I quote “*My wife has been working for that and its predecessor for about 35, 40 years*”. And yet you continued to participate and receive documents from the Independent Commission Against Corruption and Office of Local Government regarding serious allegations pertaining to that Council and its former Mayor, Bill Saravinovski, who you also admitted you had known for over 30 years ... Does your conduct not breach the ICAC’s Ministerial Code of Conduct?
- (50) The Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment (Ministerial Code of Conduct) Regulation 2014 at clause 7(3) states “A Minister must not, without the written approval of the Premier, make or participate in the making of any decision or take any other action in relation to a matter in which the Minister is aware they have a conflict of interest” – did you receive written approval from the Premier to participate in making decisions or taking any other action in relation to Bayside Council where your wife, Christine Stamper is a Manager and in relation to Mr Bill Saravinovski who you have had a close relationship with for over 30 years?

Centium Pty Ltd

- (51) In view of the damning and numerous adverse findings against Phil O’Toole, Managing Partner of Centium, by the Supreme Court of NSW in *Darley v City of Parramatta Council* [2025] NSWSC 990 can the Minister please advise:
- (a) In the last five years, how many complaints or requests for review/intervention, if any, were received by you and/or the Office of Local Government their conduct of Code of Conduct reviews/investigations?
- i. Mr O’Toole
 - ii. Ms Jennifer Perry
 - iii. Mr Roy Cottam
- (b) In the last five years, how many Practice Rulings or Guidance advice, if any, were given in relation to Code of Conduct reviews or investigations undertaken by:

- i. Mr O'Toole?
- ii. Ms Perry?
- iii. Mr Cottam

(c) In the last five years, how many complaints or requests for review/intervention, if any, were received by you and/or the Office of Local Government about Investigators employed or contracted by Centium and their conduct of Code of Conduct reviews/investigations?

(d) In the last five years, how many Practice Rulings or Guidance advice, if any, were given in relation to Code of Conduct reviews or investigations undertaken by Investigators employed or contracted by Centium?

(e) Will the Minister issue a Guideline to all Councils in NSW advising them of the findings of the Supreme Court and that they should not be using Centium Pty Ltd as Code of Conduct Investigators/Reviewers?

(f) Will the Minister undertake to set up a centralised pool of approved Code of Conduct Investigators/Reviewers, appointed by the Office of Local Government following full probity checks - like the Supreme Court's Costs Assessor appointments process?

(52) Will the Minister for Local Government ensure a full Independent Inquiry into Phillip O'Toole, Gail Connolly and Elizabeth Renneberg in view of the serious adverse findings by the NSW Supreme Court of NSW of improper conduct committed by them?

O'Connor Marsden & Associates Pty Ltd

(53) In the last five years, how many complaints or requests for review/intervention, if any, were received by you and/or the Office of Local Government about O'Connor Marsden & Associates Pty Ltd conduct of Code of Conduct reviews/investigations?

(54) In the last five years, how many Practice Rulings or Guidance advice, if any, were given in relation to Code of Conduct reviews or investigations undertaken by Pty Ltd?

(55) How many complaints since 2020 were received by the Minister for Local Government and/or Office of Local Government concerning the conduct of reviews/investigations by

- i. Nick Iorfino
- ii. Marion Parnaby
- iii. Catherine Geenty

- (56) Is it correct that a Practice Ruling was given by the Office of Local Government in relation to the conduct of a Code of Conduct investigation by Kieran Murphy and Andrew Marsden into then Councillor Leanne Farmer at Sutherland Shire Council whereby he acted improperly and failed to accord with the Procedures for the Administration of the Code of Conduct and common law requirements to afford an accused procedural fairness and a reasonable opportunity to respond?
- (57) Is it correct that, Practice Direction was not adhered to and then Councillor Farmer was improperly pursued?
- (58) What action will the Minister take to ensure that the former Sutherland Shire Councillor Leanne Farmer receives justice and an opportunity to have her name cleared? What options are available to Ms Farmer to recover the over \$48k she expended on legal advice which was ignored by O'Connor Marsden's Investigators and Sutherland Shire Council?
- (59) Will the Minister for Local Government ensure a full Independent Inquiry into Andrew Marsden and O'Connor Marsden's alleged improper conduct in relation to Sutherland Shire Council, particularly considering there appears to be a pattern of improper conduct with he and his company the subject of serious allegations made in 2021 during the Inquiry into the granting of contract number OoS17/18-021 by the Office of Sport and he and his company the subject of questioning before the Independent Commission Against Corruption's recent Hearing into School Infrastructure NSW - Operation Landan?

Council staff

- (60) Are council staff bound by a code of conduct?
- (61) Does this code extend to staff attendance at council related protests and strikes?
- (62) Should council staff act appropriately and respectfully even when they're protesting or striking against the council they work for?

Misconduct and Conflict of Interest Complaint Re Central Coast Councillor Corinne Lamont

- (63) Councillor Corinne Lamont has been charged with assault and affray and has an apprehended violence order against her. Criminal charges are now proceeding through the court. On top of this there are numerous code of conduct and conflict of complaints against her. The Office of Local Government has been made aware of this. When will your Department take action on these matters?

- (64) How can a person charged with assault and with an Apprehended Violence Order against her continue to represent Central Coast Council?
- (65) Do you agree that Councillor Lamont should be suspended from council until these matters are fully resolved?

Hawkesbury Sewerage Scheme

- (66) Minister, audited statements show the Windsor Sewer Scheme made surpluses over \$1m/year until 2022. Do you accept the losses since then are the result of executive decisions?
- (67) Will you investigate whether omitting the \$184m asset value, \$15m revenue loss, and \$0 transfer from resident letters constitutes maladministration?
- (68) Given this financial collapse, will you consider appointing an Administrator before the asset transfer proceeds?

Support for Blacktown and the Hills Shire Council

- (69) Is there intention for the NSW Government to compensate Councils for the work they do assessing State Significant Development Applications?
- (70) Will the NSW Government consider contributing funds to Local Government Councils' for animal shelter facilities, given the current overcrowding being experienced throughout NSW?

Diary disclosures

- (71) On the 1st of April your diary disclosure indicates you met with Central Coast Council on 'local government sector matters'. Why does the mayor have no record of this meeting?
- (72) Did you meet with the mayor at all?
- (73) Your changes to the Code of Conduct seem to be based in a principle of enfranchising local councillors; if you didn't meet with the mayor and instead met with council staff, aren't you rebuking your own principles?
- (74) Why has the local independent mayor not correctly disclosed this meeting?

RFS red fleet assets

- (75) The Public Accounts Committee found that the NSW RFS is the most appropriate legal owner of the red fleet assets under the *Rural Fires Act 1997*, but also that the Act itself does

not reflect the reality of asset ownership: what would be the cost implications of shifting the burden of asset ownership from local councils to the state government?

- (76) Would there be any practical maintenance issues of transferring ownership of red fleet assets to the NSW RFS?
- (77) Would new facilities be required to be built to facilitate a transfer of assets?
- (78) Are there any current plans to effect this change and vest ownership of the assets in the state government?

Public parks

- (79) Do you support North Sydney Council's proposal to introduce fees for groups of 21 people or more to use public parks?
- (80) Do you support council's charging personal trainers and commercial dog walkers for using public parks?

CFMEU meetings

- (81) Since 28 March 2023, have you met with the Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union (CFMEU) that was not disclosed in accordance with the Premier's Memorandum M2015-05 Publication of Ministerial Diaries and Release of Overseas Travel Information?

ETU meetings

- (82) Since 28 March 2023, have you met with the Electrical Trades Union (ETU) that was not disclosed in accordance with the Premier's Memorandum M2015-05 Publication of Ministerial Diaries and Release of Overseas Travel Information?

Ministerial disclosures to The Cabinet Office

- (83) On what date did you last update/make a ministerial disclosure to the Premier and the Secretary of The Cabinet Office?

Department(s)/Agency(s) Employees

- (84) In relation to redundancies, will this be made available in your respective Department(s)/Agency(s) Annual Reports?

Department(s)/Agency(s) Annual Reports

(85) Do you have plans to print the 2024-25 annual report(s) for each department / agency in your portfolio?

(a) If yes, what is the budgeted expenditure for printing for each department / agency?

State Records Act

(86) Have you and your ministerial office had training and/or a briefing about the State Records Act from State Records NSW and/or The Cabinet Office and/or Premier's Department?

(a) If yes, when?

Department(s)/Agency(s) Gifts and Hospitality Register

(87) Does your portfolio department(s)/agency(s) have a gifts and/or hospitality register?

(a) If yes, is it available online?

i. If yes, what is the website URL?

Ministerial staff disclosure of gifts and/or hospitality

(88) Does your ministerial office keep a register of gifts and/or hospitality for staff to make disclosures?

(a) If yes, what is the website URL?

(89) Have any staff members in your office been the recipient of any free hospitality?

(a) What was the total value of the hospitality received?

(b) Are these gifts of hospitality declared?

Ministerial Code of Conduct

(90) Since 28 March 2023, have you breached the Ministerial Code of Conduct?

(a) If yes, what was the breach?

Senior Executive Drivers

(91) As at 1 August 2025, how many senior executives in your portfolio department(s) / agency(s) have a driver?

GIPA Act - Disclosure Log & Ministerial Offices

(92) Does your Ministerial Office have a disclosure log in accordance with the Government Information (Public Access Act) 2009?

(a) If yes, what is the URL?

GIPA Act - Disclosure Log & Departments/Agencies

(93) What is the website URL for the Government Information (Public Access Act) 2009 disclosure log each of your portfolio department(s) / agency(s)?

TikTok

(94) Are you on TikTok?

(a) If yes, do you access TikTok from a NSW Government device?

Signal

(95) Are you on Signal?

(a) If yes, do you access Signal from a NSW Government device?

(b) If yes, does Signal comply with the State Records Act?

Training

(96) Since 28 March 2023, have you had training from an external stakeholder that included an invoice and payment paid for using your ministerial budget?

(a) If yes, what is the description of training?

(b) If yes, how much?

Parliamentary Secretary & Ministerial Vehicle

(97) Has your Parliamentary Secretary ever used a Ministerial driver from the pool?

(a) If yes, why?

Media releases and statements

(98) Are all the ministerial media releases and statements issued by you publicly available at <https://www.nsw.gov.au/media-releases>?

(a) If no, why?

Overseas Travel

(99) As Minister, do you approve overseas travel for public servants from your portfolio department(s)/agency(s)?

Data Breaches

(100) Does your portfolio department(s)/agency(s) keep a register of data breaches in accordance with the Privacy and Personal Information Protection (PPIP) Act?

(a) If yes, what is the website?

Discretionary Fund

(101) As Minister, do you have a discretionary fund?

(a) If yes, what department(s) / agency(s) administer it?

(b) If yes, what is the website URL detailing expenditure?

Airline Lounges

(102) Are you a member of the Qantas Chairmans Lounge?

(103) Are you a member of the Virgin Beyond Lounge?

Ministerial Overseas Travel

(104) Since 28 March 2023, have you formally applied to the Premier to travel overseas?

(a) If yes, was this application accepted?

Private Jet Charter

(105) Have you travelled on a private jet charter in your Ministerial capacity?

(a) If yes, was this value for money for taxpayers?

Ministerial Office renovations

(106) Since 28 March 2023, has your Ministerial Office at 52 Martin Place been renovated?

(a) If yes, how much was the expenditure?

Conflict of Interest

(107) Since 28 March 2023, have you formally written to the Premier with a conflict of interest?

(a) If yes, why?

Questions from Ms Abigail Boyd MLC

Council use of second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs)

- (108) In the last financial year, how many local government councils have contacted the Minister's office or the Office of Local Government seeking advice, guidance and/or support to transition away from using SGARs?
- (a) What advice was provided to these councils?
 - (b) What specific wildlife-safe alternative pest control methods, such as those being trialled by the City of Sydney, has the Office of Local Government recommended?
- (109) Has the NSW government allocated any funding in the last 5 financial years to support councils wishing to phase out the use of SGARs?
- (a) Are there any grants or programs available to help councils meet the costs of trialling alternative rodent management methods which are humane and environmentally safe?
 - (b) Are there any grants or programs available to help councils meet the costs of implementing innovative biological control programs, such as the reintroduction of native species?
- (110) In recent years, many councils have taken action to phase out SGARs, for example Camden Council which has eliminated their use, Albury and Coffs Harbour Councils which are phasing them out, and the City of Sydney Council which recently resolved to investigate how it can restrict or limit the use of these poisons, specifically by exploring contractor arrangements and tender language. Given this, what work is the Minister or the Office of Local Government doing to develop state-wide, best-practice procurement policies and template contract language that can be adopted by all NSW councils to ensure rodent management services are wildlife-friendly and prioritise non-toxic or less harmful alternatives?
- (a) Given the well-documented risk of secondary poisoning to native wildlife, including threatened species like the Powerful Owl, what proactive steps has the Minister or the Office of Local Government taken to inform councils of the above risks?
 - (b) What programs, guidelines or resources are available to assist councils in identifying and procuring safer, effective alternatives?
- (111) Given the admission of councils such as Blayney Shire Council for purchasing SGARs from supermarkets in breach of their own Procurement Policy (in the instance of Blayney Shire

Council's Procurement Policy, Section 5: Sustainable Procurement), what steps is the NSW government taking to audit council compliance with:

- (a) Clause 4.2 of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2021 requiring 'ethical and environmentally responsible procurement'?
- (b) Section 439 of the Local Government Act 1993, given SGARs' documented harm to threatened species like the Powerful Owl under the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016?

Assistance animals

- (112) Currently, inconsistencies in definitions of assistance animals between the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977, the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and Companion Animals Act 1998 creates confusion and uncertainty in NSW for both users of assistance animals and service providers (including businesses, accommodation and transport operators) about what their legal rights and responsibilities are. In relation to the ongoing review of the Companion Animals Act, is the Minister or the Office of Local Government considering changes to the definitions and requirements for assistance and/or therapy animals?
- (113) There are significant gaps in the current mechanisms for registering assistance animals, and there is currently work underway at a federal level to develop national principles for the regulation of assistance animals. In the absence of a national assistance animal framework and nationally consistent accreditation requirements and minimum training standards, is the Minister or the Office of Local Government considering a NSW mechanism for the accreditation of assistance animals and associated training organisations?
- (114) Tweed Shire Council is in the process of developing a new [Draft Policy on Assistance Animals in Council Places](#), which recognises that there are no laws in NSW about how people must train or certify assistance animals and aims to fill this gap. Is the Minister aware of any other councils who have such a policy in place?
 - (a) What support does the Office of Local Government provide to local councils seeking to develop policies and guidelines for overseeing assistance animals in council places?

Accessibility and universal design

- (115) What is the NSW government doing to raise awareness across local councils about the importance and benefits of accessibility and universal design?

- (116) What support is available for local councils seeking guidance on implementing disability accessibility and universal design principles, for example when designing beach infrastructure, toilets and other public infrastructure?

Greyhounds

- (117) Has the Minister or the Office of Local Government been notified by Taree Council of an incident regarding a recently-raced greyhound being found by staff dumped at a tip, with the greyhound unconscious and having been injected with poison?
- (a) If yes, when were you notified, and what action was taken in response?
- (118) How many times has the Minister or the Office of Local Government been notified of any other incidents regarding greyhounds being dumped or found in a suspicious manner at council facilities, in the last five years?

IPART

- (119) Does IPART have a lobbying policy?
- (120) Which members of IPART's staff were in attendance at the meeting with the Member for North Shore and the Chair of the Tribunal on 7 March 2025?
- (a) Were they the same staff members who wrote the determination report?
- (121) Does IPART have a policy regarding the use of artificial intelligence products in its work?
- (a) what is that policy and how is it regulated?
- (122) Does IPART use any artificial intelligence products at any stage of its workflow when assessing special rate variations?
- (123) In IPART's evidence, it was claimed that the amendments that were made to the determinations were merely "typographical" in nature. A typographical error is a mistake (such as a misspelled word) in typed or printed text. Please provide justification for each of the below points as to how they should be considered typographical rather than factual and/or substantive errors:
- (a) For Northern Beaches:
- i. Corrections have been made to the description of the council's voluntary pensioner concession policy. References to volunteer work being necessary for pensioners to qualify for an additional concession have been removed from pages 8 and 45 of the report.
- (b) For North Sydney

i. Corrections have been made to Table 10.3 on page 75 of this report. The data in the table has been updated to correctly show the ‘average of rates not on the minimum’, and the differences in dollars and percentage terms recalculated (columns through 5). The sources for the data in the table have been included.

ii. The percentage in the sentence "current minimum rate of \$715 is 31% lower than the average residential rate of those ratepayers who are paying above the minimum rate" (on page 74) has been changed to 55%.

iii. 2 Clarifications have been made to pages 2, 12, 71 and 73 to include footnotes and notes to tables to explain that the impact of the proposed minimum rate increases are partly offset by the council’s proposal to remove the additional levies that apply to minimum rates assessments. For minimum residential ratepayers, they previously paid on average around \$97 in levies per year (Minimum Rate Application Form Part B, p 13) that are now included in the proposed minimum rate for 2025-26.

iv. Clarifications have been made to pages 5 and 21 to include additional footnotes to explain that the cash expense cover ratio, as defined by the Office of Local Government (OLG) includes restricted funds, and therefore may overstate the liquidity levels the council has available to meet short term liabilities. We also explain that the cash expense cover ratio was one of several indicators used to assess financial need.

v. Clarifications have been made to page 43 to change the number of verbal speakers from 25 to 28. An additional footnote was inserted to explain the council is not required to adjourn a meeting to consider the content of public presentations at a council meeting.

vi. Amendments have been made to page 51 to change a statement related to the comparison of North Sydney Council’s average business rates with the average of councils with a Central Business District (CBD) as follows: • “North Sydney’s average business rate in 2024-25 is **similar** to the average of councils with a CBD”, has been changed to “North Sydney’s average business rate in 2024-25 is **significantly below** the average for councils with a CBD”

vii. • “But with the proposed SV, the average business rate in 2026-27 would be **higher**”, has been changed to “But with the proposed SV, the average business rate in 2026-27 would be **slightly below** the average for councils with a CBD”.

- (124) Following such a series of significant errors in these initial reports, what measures were undertaken to ensure significant errors aren't made by ipart employees in the future?
- (125) Does IPART consider its role as requiring high levels of public trust and confidence in its determinations?
- (a) What impact do you think such serious errors will have, if not properly addressed, on public confidence in the ability of IPART to fulfill its functions?