

Answers to Supplementary Questions

Questions from the Hon. Dr Amanda Cohn MLC

Councillor Pecuniary Interests
1. What progress has been made towards the Minister's previous commitment to address councillors not fully disclosing their property holdings?
ANSWER: 1. I am advised: This issue is being addressed as part of the review of the Model Code of Conduct. It is proposed that the requirement for councillors to disclose their property holdings will be consistent with those that apply to Members of the NSW Parliament under the proposed Constitution (Disclosures by Members) Regulation 2025.
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?
ANSWER: 2. I am advised: Councils are required to retain records in accordance with the <i>Information Management (GA28) Administrative Records</i> standard. While the Office of Local Government does not actively monitor compliance with this specific requirement, we do respond to complaints and have not received any to date.
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?

ANSWER:

3. I am advised:

The applications for Round 1 funding of \$1.5 million close on 1 October 2025. A maximum \$100,000 is available per applicant.

No applicants will receive funding until applications are assessed. Funding decisions will be made by a panel during October/November 2025.

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?

ANSWER:

4. I am advised:

Under section 338 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, general managers must be employed under the Standard Contract of Employment for General Managers. The standard contract is publicly available on the Office of Local Government's website: <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/councils/governance/standard-contracts-of-employment/standard-contracts-of-employment-for-general-managers-and-senior-staff/>

General managers are appointed by, and accountable to, the governing body of the Council for their performance and there is no reasonable basis on which any councillor should be denied access to their general manager's employment contract.

Councillors should also be aware the relevant remuneration schedule could contain personal information which is not to be made publicly available.

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?

ANSWER:**5. I am advised:**

The Office of Local Government has been consulted during the development of the Cooler Local Places framework.

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?

ANSWER:

6. I am advised:

I provided evidence to Budget Estimates on 28 February 2025 that it was about halfway through 2023. The details are available on page 20 of that transcript.

7. I am advised:

The premise of this question is not accurate.

The issue was answered in previous estimates hearings as to the high-level nature

of the information justifying the referral and the intended action. The ICAC has now published more detail on the action it has taken subsequent to the briefings the Minister received

8. I am advised:

Minister Hoenig has complied with all his requirements under the Ministerial Code of Conduct. The Ministerial Code requires reports of any conflict of interest to the Premier.

9 – 12. I am advised:

The Citizens' Right of Reply was made to address the repeated references in Legislative Council debates to matters where Mr Whitworth was bound by non-disclosure provisions under NCAT and ICAC legislation, limiting the ability to provide responses.

The decision to seek a Citizens' Right of Reply was a personal matter for Mr Whitworth.

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?

ANSWER:

13 - 15. I am advised:

The Office of Local Government does not disclose operational, or process matters related to potential code of conduct matters to preserve the integrity of its investigation function.

16. I am advised:

The Guidelines for the Appointment and Oversight of General Managers issued by the Office of Local Government allow for a mayor's role in the day-to-day management of the general manager, including the approval of leave. While no specific guidance has been provided in relation to the granting of special leave, the Guidelines suggest that the council's governing body should ensure adequate and appropriate policies are in place to guide the mayor in the day-to-day management of the general manager and keep those policies under regular review. The guidelines also suggest that one of the key policies the governing body should ensure is in place is one relating to leave.

17. I am advised:

A resolution of council is not required where, as suggested in the Guidelines for the Appointment and Oversight of General Managers, an appropriate delegation to the Mayor is in force that includes the power to approve special leave.

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?

ANSWER:

18. I am advised:

In March 2023 the previous Minister for Local Government announced the pilot for the Pet Registry would run until June 2023 and the first phase of the registry was expected to be rolled out across the State from the end of 2023. The first phase of the registry was completed by July 2024.

Delivery of the second stage, including various portals, is dependent on further funding. Pet owners and breeders can access the following functions live on the Pet Registry:

- Create a Pet Registry account
- Register pets and pay once-off lifetime registration fees
- Track key pet milestones, receive notifications for upcoming or completed tasks, add/change a photo, change pet location address
- Transfer pets within NSW, interstate or overseas, request to reverse transfer, view transfer history, send invites to a new owner to create a NSW Pet Registry account
- Apply for a Breeder Identification Number (BIN), update contact information, share profiles, send invitations to a new owner and create a NSW Pet Registry account
- Add litter, send litter information in for microchipping (email sent to vets with instructions)
- Help section with FAQs and support requests to Pets Helpline team

Components still to be designed and developed are portals for councils, vets, rehoming organisations and enforcement authorities. Go live dates are dependent on further funding.

19. I am advised:

Total spend to date is \$21.8 million.

- a) Funding has not been approved for the rehoming portal. Any decisions on future funding will depend on future government budget decisions.
- b) Total Companion Animal Fund (CAF) revenue:
 - 2022–23: \$11,137,829

- 2023–24: \$10,593,017

Returned to councils:

- 2022–23: \$8,910,263
- 2023–24: \$8,474,413

i. - iii. The Office of Local Government does not monitor how councils spend their allocations, but councils are required to use funds in accordance with the *Companion Animals Act 1998*.

- c) Future funding for the Pet Registry is dependent on future government budget decisions.

Announced on 3 September 2025, the Companion Animal Welfare and Rehoming Grant program will see \$1.5 million a year available per year for four years. Grants are between \$10,000 and \$100,000.

- d) The guidelines for the 2025-26 rehoming grants are available on <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/councils/responsible-pet-ownership/companion-animal-welfare-grants/>

The Office of Local Government will engage with the sector for future funding rounds.

20. I am advised:

In the 2023 Companion Animal Welfare Grants program, 80 applications were submitted, and 64 applications received funding.

Under the 2023 round, successful applicants were notified on 21 June 2023. Full payments were made to all but two successful applicants by 30 June 2023, pending the submission of information required under the Grants Guidelines. The two outstanding recipient organisations submitted the required documentation on 29 June 2023 and payments to these two organisations were processed in early July 2023.

21. I am advised:

As the Pet Registry system is still being developed there are no Service Level Agreements with the Department of Customer Service specifically to manage on-going operation. However, there are work orders that identify the relationship between the two agencies.

With the Pet Registry in the development phase, support continues to be provided within the development environment. Depending on the nature of the issue, resolution times can vary. The Pet Line (the help-desk), receives approximately 700 calls a week with an average wait time of less than 3 minutes and a target call time of 5 minutes to resolution.

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?

ANSWER:

22 - 23. I am advised:

This question was answered during the hearing. See transcript pages 65-66.

24. I am advised:

This question was answered during the hearing. See transcript pages 48-49.

25. I am advised:

The reforms, when implemented, will give councils greater flexibility to manage their revenue and expenditure.

26. I am advised:

This question was answered during the hearing. See transcript pages 65-66.

Ongoing communication will occur with the sector to ensure councils are aware of the progress of implementing the financial sustainability reforms.

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?

ANSWER:

27. I am advised:

It is clear from my evidence on page 34 of the transcript, and page 68 for Mr Whitworth, that there was no contradiction.

The Office of Local Government does not disclose operational, or process matters related to potential code of conduct matters, to preserve the integrity of its investigation function.

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?

ANSWER:

28. I am advised:

Under section 252 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, councils are only entitled to reimburse a councillors' expenses, including legal expenses, in accordance with a policy adopted under that section.

The new Model Code of Meeting Practice for Local Councils in NSW (Model Meeting Code) provides that a council or a council committee must receive a staff report containing an assessment and recommendation before making a final planning decision at a meeting. Where the council or committee makes a planning decision that is inconsistent with the recommendation made in a staff report, it must provide reasons for its decision and why it did not adopt the staff recommendation.

Reports and recommendations by council planning staff and the decisions councils make in relation to them are all a matter of public record. Questions on the degree to which councils are making adequate planning decisions should be directed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces.

29. I am advised:

The Bill is yet to be introduced in Parliament. The current policy intent is for costs to follow the judgement, in order to dissuade frivolous or vexatious actions.

30. I am advised:

See answer to supplementary question 28 in relation to financial assistance. It is intended that appeals from the Land and Environment Court would be to the Supreme Court.

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?

ANSWER:

31. I am advised:

The regulation of corporate entities is matter for the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC). General managers serving as director or any other corporate role must do so in accordance with their council's code of conduct and the requirements of the standard contract.

32. I am advised:

This is not a matter within the jurisdiction of the NSW Minister for Local Government.

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?

ANSWER:

33 - 34. I am advised:

Under Part 11 of the Procedures for the Administration of the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW, councils are required to report their annual code of conduct complaint statistics for the year to 30 September to the Office of Local Government by 30 December each year.

The annual code of conduct complaint statistics for the period of 1 October 2024 to 30 September 2025 are due to be reported to the Office of Local Government by 30 December 2025.

Complaints statistics for the July 2023 to June 2024 period are available on the Office of Local Government website [here](#).

35. I am advised:

The Office of Local Government has released a guideline of Free speech in Local Government in NSW, providing guidance to ensure councillors are free to engage with their communities on matters of public debate. The guidelines are available on the Office of Local Government: <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Free-speech-guidelines.pdf>

As the regulator of local government in NSW, the Office of Local Government monitors council performance to address legislative non-compliance. The Office of Local Government has power under the *Procedures for the Administration of the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW* to undertake reviews of code of conduct matters where the Procedures have not been complied with or the standards of conduct prescribed under the Model Code of Conduct have been misinterpreted or misapplied.

36. I am advised:

As the regulator of local government in NSW, the Office of Local Government monitors council performance to address legislative non-compliance.

Under the Model Code of Meeting Practice, it is a matter for the chairperson to rule on any acts of disorder in the first instance. The chairperson's ruling is then subject to oversight by the Council via a motion of dissent.

Refer to page 48 of the transcript regarding the expansion of the investigations and interventions teams.

37. I am advised:

The Office of Local Government has recently released a revised [Model Code of Meeting Practice](#) that prescribes a uniform set of meeting rules for councils across NSW to ensure meetings of councils and committees of councils comprising only of councillors are open, accessible, orderly, effective and efficient. The Office of Local Government has also recently released a guideline on [Free Speech in local government in NSW](#) to ensure councillors are free to engage with their communities and to participate in public debate on issues impacting the council and the community.

The Office of Local Government will also be issuing model best practice public forum rules for councils and updated guidance on livestreaming of council meetings and public forums.

38. I am advised:

Actions taken by the Office of Local Government are available on the OLG website: <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/councils/misconduct-and-intervention/councillor-misconduct/>

39. I am advised:

See answer to supplementary question 37.

Under section 360 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, the Office of Local Government prescribes a Model Code of Meeting Practice. Councils must adopt a code of meeting practice that incorporates mandatory provisions as well as non-mandatory provisions. A code adopted by the Council cannot contain provisions that are inconsistent with the mandatory provisions.

The Office of Local Government has issued a MS Word version of the Model Meeting Code to support councils adapting and adopting their local Model Meeting Codes.

40. I am advised:

Refer to page 48 of the transcript regarding the expansion of the investigations and interventions teams.

41. I am advised:

While the Government is working to improve transparency and accountability within local governments in NSW, it is the responsibility of each Council to ensure their conduct is in accordance with their legislative requirements under the *Local Government Act 1993*.

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?

ANSWER:

42. I am advised:

Information relating to council interventions (current and completed) can be found on the Office of Local Government website: <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/councils/misconduct-and-intervention/improvement-and-intervention/>

43. I am advised:

Details on special rate variations can be found on the IPART website: <https://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au/Home/Industries/Local-Government/Reviews/Special-Variations-Minimum-Rates/Special-Variations-and-Minimum-Rates-2025-26>

44. I am advised:

The question was addressed on pages 36-37 and pages 48-51 of the transcript by myself and Mr Whitworth respectively.

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?

ANSWER:

45 - 46. I am advised:

The Office of Local Government uses the Your Council website (<https://www.yourcouncil.nsw.gov.au/>) to provide the community with information as to the financial status of their council.

[Annual time series data reports](#) provide information about key performance indicators and service provision for each council. The OLG has published this data annually since 1995.

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?

ANSWER:

47 - 48. I am advised:

This is a matter for the Minister for Women and the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.

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?

ANSWER:

49-50. I am advised:

I have always acted in accordance with the Ministerial Code of Conduct.

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?

ANSWER:

51 - 57. I am advised:

The Office of Local Government does not disclose operational or process matters related to code of conduct matters, to preserve the integrity of its investigation function.

The release of any information about practice rulings might also release details of code of conduct complaints.

The NSW Government has committed to reforming the Councillor Conduct Framework to strengthen integrity, transparency, and accountability across local government.

The proposed framework will remove the requirements for conduct reviewers to review complaints about councillors which will address the concerns and some of the issues raised in the *Darley v City of Parramatta* matter.

58. I am advised:

Under section 252 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, councils are only entitled to reimburse a councillors' expenses, including legal expenses, in accordance with a policy adopted under that section.

59. I am advised:

If either I or the Office of Local Government becomes aware of information warranting a formal investigation under the *Local Government Act 1993*, I will consider requesting one.

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?

ANSWER:

60 - 62. I am advised:

Yes. Under section 440 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, council staff are required to comply with the applicable provisions of their council's code of conduct.

A copy of the Model Code of Conduct is available on the Office of Local Government website [here](#).

The code of conduct cannot restrict the legal and constitutional rights of council staff to engage in lawful industrial action or protests.

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?

ANSWER:

63 - 65. I am advised:

It would be inappropriate to comment on matters before the Court or upon individual misconduct matters.

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?

ANSWER:

66 - 68. I am advised:

This is a matter for the Minister for Water.

The oversight of local water utilities is the responsibility of the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

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?

ANSWER:

69. I am advised:

This is a matter for the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces.

70. I am advised:

The Government responded on 16 January 2025 to the findings and recommendations of the Pounds in New South Wales report. In that response, the Government notes it is reviewing the Companion Animals Fund, looking at the most effective ways to utilise revenue from companion animal registrations and annual permits to best support councils in meeting their management responsibilities towards dogs and cats.

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?

ANSWER:

71 - 74. I am advised:

On 1 April I met with Central Coast Council as part of a Community Cabinet held in Gosford, one of the Minns Labor Government's many visits outside Sydney to understand local issues.

The Mayor did not attend the meeting as I understand he was officiating a Citizenship Ceremony at that time.

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?

ANSWER:

75 - 78. I am advised:

The Government is preparing a response to the findings and recommendations to the Public Accounts Committee report *Assets, premises and funding of the NSW Rural Fire Service*. The response will be tabled and released in due course.

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?

ANSWER:

79 - 80. I am advised:

Under the *Local Government Act 1993*, councils are largely independent and self-governing bodies with rights and powers conferred by law. They are directly accountable to their community for the allocation of council resources for the benefit of their local area.

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?

ANSWER:

81. I am advised:

In accordance with the Premier's Memorandum M2015-05 *Publication of Ministerial Diaries and Release of Overseas Travel Information*, all Ministers publish extracts from their diaries, summarising details of scheduled meetings held with stakeholders, external organisations, third-party lobbyists and individuals. Ministers are not required to disclose details of the following meetings:

- meetings involving Ministers, ministerial staff, parliamentarians or government officials (whether from NSW or other jurisdictions)
- meetings that are strictly personal, electorate or party political
- social or public functions or events
- meetings held overseas (which must be disclosed in accordance with regulation 6(1)(b) of the Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2018 and Attachment B to the Memorandum), and
- matters for which there is an overriding public interest against disclosure.

Ministers' diary disclosures are published quarterly on The Cabinet Office's website <https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/the-cabinet-office/access-to-information/ministers-diary-disclosures>.

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?

ANSWER:

82. I am advised:

In accordance with the Premier's Memorandum M2015-05 *Publication of Ministerial Diaries and Release of Overseas Travel Information*, all Ministers publish extracts from their diaries, summarising details of scheduled meetings held with stakeholders, external organisations, third-party lobbyists and individuals. Ministers are not required to disclose details of the following meetings:

- meetings involving Ministers, ministerial staff, parliamentarians or government officials (whether from NSW or other jurisdictions)
- meetings that are strictly personal, electorate or party political
- social or public functions or events
- meetings held overseas (which must be disclosed in accordance with regulation 6(1)(b) of the Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2018 and Attachment B to the Memorandum), and
- matters for which there is an overriding public interest against disclosure.

Ministers' diary disclosures are published quarterly on The Cabinet Office's website <https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/the-cabinet-office/access-toinformation/ministers-diary-disclosures>.

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?

ANSWER:

83. I am advised:

The Ministerial Code of Conduct (Ministerial Code) requires Ministers to make certain disclosures to the Premier and the Secretary of The Cabinet Office. I comply with my obligations under the Ministerial Code.

Department(s)/Agency(s) Employees

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

ANSWER:

84. I am advised:

Information about any redundancies within agencies is published in the agency annual reports. Published annual reports can be accessed on agency websites.

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?

ANSWER:

85. I am advised:

Annual reports should be prepared in accordance with the Treasury Policy and Guidelines – Framework for Financial and Annual Reporting (TPG25-10).

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?

ANSWER:

86. I am advised:

The Ministers' Office Handbook provides guidance in relation to recordkeeping obligations under the *State Records Act 1998*.

The Cabinet Office also provide guidance, advice, training and support on these obligations for Ministers' offices.

Further information is available on State Records NSW's website:

www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/dciths/state-records-nsw

I expect my office to comply with their obligations under the *State Records Act 1998*.

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?

ANSWER:

87. I am advised:

The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (which includes network agencies) gifts, benefits and hospitality register is available at:
<https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/departments-of-planning-housing-and-infrastructure/information-access-governance-and-feedback/gifts-benefits-and-hospitality-register>

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?

ANSWER:

88. I am advised:

All Ministerial staff are required to comply with their disclosure obligations under the Gifts, Hospitality and Benefits Policy for Office Holder Staff attached to the Ministers' Office Handbook and available on the NSW Government website.

89. I am advised:

All Ministerial staff are required to comply with their disclosure obligations under the Gifts, Hospitality and Benefits Policy for Office Holder Staff and I expect them to do so.

A breach of the Policy may be a breach of the Office Holder's Staff Code of Conduct.

The Policy includes disclosure obligations for Ministerial staff in respect of gifts, hospitality and benefits over \$150.

If a Ministerial staff member is required by their role to accompany their Office Holder at an event that the Office Holder is attending as the State's representative, or where the Office Holder has asked the staff member to attend, then attendance at that event would not constitute a gift or benefit for the purposes of the Policy.

Ministerial Code of Conduct

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

(a) If yes, what was the breach?

ANSWER:

90. I am advised:

All Ministers are expected to comply with their obligations under the NSW Ministerial Code of Conduct (Ministerial Code) at all times. The Ministerial Code sets the ethical standards of behaviour required of Ministers and establishes practices and procedures to assist with compliance.

Among other matters, the Ministerial Code requires Ministers to:

- disclose their pecuniary interests and those of their immediate family members to the Premier
- seek rulings from the Premier if they wish to hold shares, directorships, other business interests or engage in secondary employment (known as 'prohibited interests')
- identify, avoid, disclose and manage conflicts of interest
- disclose gifts and hospitality with a market value over \$500.

A substantial breach of the Ministerial Code (including a knowing breach of any provision of the Schedule) may constitute corrupt conduct for the purposes of the *Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988*.

Senior Executive Drivers

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

ANSWER:

91. I am advised:

No senior executives employed within Departments of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure has 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)?

ANSWER:

92 - 93. I am advised:

Disclosure logs are published and are available on the DPHI website.

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/departments-of-planning-housing-and-infrastructure/information-access-governance-and-feedback/disclosure-log>

TikTok

94. Are you on TikTok?

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

ANSWER:

94. I am advised:

The Circular DCS-2025-01 Cyber Security NSW Directive - Restricted Applications List advises how NSW Government agencies are required to appropriately manage risks to NSW Government information on government-issued devices, or personal devices that are used for government business.

Signal

95. Are you and/or your ministerial staff 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?
ANSWER: 95. I am advised: 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. State records are a vital public asset, and access to Government information is essential to maintaining public trust in government. I comply with the <i>State Records Act 1998</i> and I expect all staff members to comply with their obligations under the <i>State Records Act 1998</i>.
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?
ANSWER: 96. I am advised: Ministers have undertaken a program of Ministerial induction training. Ministers have undertaken training on the Respectful Workplace Policy. Members of Parliament are provided with a Skills Development Allowance that may be used in a manner consistent with the Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal Annual Determination. Ministerial Office Budgets are managed in accordance with the Ministers' Office Handbook.
Parliamentary Secretary & Ministerial Vehicles
97. Has your Parliamentary Secretary ever used a Ministerial driver from the pool? (a) If yes, why?

ANSWER:

97. I am advised:

The Ministers' Office Handbook provides that the Premier's Department transport services may be used by Parliamentary Secretaries for official business trips in connection with their duties as Parliamentary Secretaries, with costs paid from the Ministers' office budget.

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?

ANSWER:

98. I am advised:

The Department of Customer Service (DCS) is responsible for managing www.nsw.gov.au/media-releases and the publication of media releases.

Overseas Travel

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

ANSWER:

99. I am advised:

The NSW Government Travel and Transport Policy provides a framework for NSW Government travelling employees and covers official air and land travel by public officials using public money.

Section 2.1 of that Policy sets out approvals required in relation to overseas travel. Further information in relation to the Policy can be found here:

<https://www.info.buy.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/travel-and-transport-policy>.

NSW Treasury Policy and Guidelines – Annual Reporting Requirements (TPG-10) requires agencies to include information on overseas visits by officers and employees in agency annual reports.

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?

ANSWER:

100. I am advised:

The Department of Planning, Housing, and Infrastructure keeps an internal register of eligible data breaches as required by section 59ZE, Part 6A of the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (PPIP Act). Agencies are required by section 59ZD of the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* (PPIP Act) to prepare, publish and make publicly available a data breach policy. The PPIP Act does not provide for the internal register to be made public.

Under clause 17 of Schedule 1 to the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*, it is conclusively presumed that there is an overriding public interest against disclosure of information contained in a document prepared for the assessment of an eligible data breach under the PPIP Act, Part 6A, if the information could worsen a public sector agency's cyber security or lead to further data breaches.

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/departments-of-planning-housing-and-infrastructure/information-access-governance-and-feedback>

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?

ANSWER:

101. I am advised:

Information about NSW Government grants can be found online.

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding>

Airline Lounges

102. Are you a member of the Qantas Chairmans Lounge?

103. Are you a member of the Virgin Beyond Lounge?

ANSWER:

102 – 103. I am advised:

The *Constitution (Disclosures by Members) Regulation 1983* (Regulation) sets out Members' obligations to disclose relevant pecuniary and other interests in periodic returns to Parliament.

The Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Parliamentary Privilege and Ethics Report on Review of the Code of Conduct, Aspects of Disclosure of Interests, and Related Issues (December 2010) notes that:

"Advice has been received from the Crown Solicitor that use of the Chairman's Lounge by invitation is not a "gift" for the purposes of clause 10 of the Regulation, as it does not involve disposition of property. However, when the membership leads to an upgrade valued at more than \$250, it becomes disclosable as a contribution to travel, and should be reported under clause 11 of the Regulation."

Clause 16 of the Regulation allows a Member to, at their discretion, disclose any direct or indirect benefit, advantage or liability, whether pecuniary or not.

Relevant disclosures have been made to the Cabinet Office and to the Parliament.

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?

ANSWER:

104. I am advised:

Ministerial overseas travel information is published online.

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/premiers-department/access-to-information/ministerial-overseas-travel-information>

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?

ANSWER:

105. I am advised:

Premier and Ministers' domestic travel information is published on the Premier's Department's website at:

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/premiers-department/access-to-information/premier-and-ministers-domestic-travel>

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?

ANSWER:

106. I am advised:

Leasehold improvements for Ministerial Offices are reported within the Premier's Department annual reports.

Conflict of Interest

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

(a) If yes, why

ANSWER:

107. I am advised:

All Ministers are expected to comply with their obligations under the NSW Ministerial Code of Conduct (Ministerial Code) at all times. The Ministerial Code sets the ethical standards of behaviour required of Ministers and establishes practices and procedures to assist with compliance.

Among other matters, the Ministerial Code requires Ministers to:

- disclose their pecuniary interests and those of their immediate family members to the Premier

- seek rulings from the Premier if they wish to hold shares, directorships, other business interests or engage in secondary employment (known as 'prohibited interests')
- identify, avoid, disclose and manage conflicts of interest
- disclose gifts and hospitality with a market value over \$500.

A substantial breach of the Ministerial Code (including a knowing breach of any provision of the Schedule) may constitute corrupt conduct for the purposes of the *Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988*.

Questions from The Hon. 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?

ANSWER:

108 - 110. I am advised:

As previously answered in supplementary questions from the Initial hearings of Budget Estimates 2024/25, this is a matter for the Minister for the Environment, and the Minister for Agriculture.

111. I am advised:

The Office of Local Government has recently commenced consultation on draft Procurement Guidelines for NSW Local Government:

<https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/councils/council-finances/consultation-on-new-procurement-guidelines-for-nsw-local-government/>

The Office of Local Government is seeking feedback on the draft Guidelines and is also establishing a Procurement Working Group to provide input into the Guidelines and assist with the development of the supplementary guidance materials and other procurement resources for councils.

A range of issues including social, environment and economic procurement will be considered as part of the review process.

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?

ANSWER:

112 - 113. I am advised:

The Office of Local Government is leading a review of the *Companion Animals Act 1998* and associated Regulation. As part of this process, matters relating to assistance and therapy animals, including definitions, accreditation, and the rights and responsibilities of users and service providers, will be considered to ensure clarity and consistency across relevant legislation.

114. I am advised:

The Federal Government's [*Disability Discrimination Act 1992*](#) (DDA) makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person with a disability who has an assistance animal, subject to certain exemptions. The DDA recognises suitably trained assistance animals and allows the dog, and their handler guaranteed access to public places and services.

The Office of Local Government is not aware of any other councils that have a Policy on Assistance Animals in Council Places in place.

The Office of Local Government has published the *Companion Animals Guideline 1 Registration Agents* which provides information on identifying assistance animals for the purpose of registration and registration fee exemptions and entitlement for a person to be accompanied by an assistance animal in public 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?

ANSWER:

115 - 116. I am advised:

Under section 12 of the *Disability Inclusion Act 2014*, each NSW council is required prepare and make a Disability Inclusion Action Plan setting out the measures it intends to put in place (in connection with the exercise of its functions) so that people with disability can access general supports and services available in the community and can participate fully in the community.

Further questions regarding guidance for councils about accessibility and universal design should be referred to the Minister for Disability Inclusion who has administrative responsibility for the *Disability Inclusion Act 2014*.

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?

ANSWER:

117 - 118. I am advised:

There is no record of notification regarding this incident from MidCoast Council to either the Minister or the Office of Local Government.

This matter falls within the jurisdiction of the Greyhound Welfare & Integrity Commission (GWIC), which is the independent regulator of the greyhound racing industry in NSW.

GWIC was established under the *Greyhound Racing Act 2017* and is also an enforcement body under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979*.

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?

ANSWER:

119 - 125. I am advised:

Refer to post-hearing responses submitted separately by IPART.