

Responses to Questions on Notice

29 September 2025

1 Questions on notice 1

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: You say they're typographical errors. I'll take you to one example. The Northern Beaches Council special rate variation application was granted a partial approval, and then six days later the document was amended to make a number of corrections. The original report made multiple references and considered as a relevant factor in declining the SRV in full the impact on pensioners. The report made the claim that in order to be eligible for a pensioner discount, a certain number of volunteer hours must be demonstrated by these pensioners by the council. That is not and has never been a policy of the council, and IPART was required to make corrections on multiple pages to remove that entirely fabricated claim. That seems more than just typographical.

ANDREW NICHOLLS: There was a misunderstanding about how that particular arrangement was working with the council. IPART prides itself on ensuring that our documents are accurate and can be trusted, and we wanted to correct the record. The reason I say they're typographic is that they weren't substantive changes that would have changed the decision of the tribunal.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Where did that claim come from, though?

ANDREW NICHOLLS: Sorry?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: How does that kind of claim—that there's a policy that council has for requiring pensioners to do volunteer hours to be eligible for pensioner discount, which is completely not true and has never been true for Northern Beaches Council—make its way into the document in the first place?

ANDREW NICHOLLS: I believe it was a misunderstanding at an officer level, but I'm happy to take that question on notice.

Source: Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio area – Local Government, 2 September 2025, Transcript, uncorrected, pp 46-47.

1.1 IPART response

The error identified in the Northern Beaches Council - Special Variation Application for 2025-26 Final Report, occurred because of human error when the report was being drafted from various information sources. IPART has quality assurance processes in place. Due to an oversight in IPART's internal review procedures, the error was not identified prior to publication.

IPART acknowledges the importance of robust internal controls to ensure the accuracy and reliability of our published material. As a result, IPART is strengthening its Quality Assurance processes and will implement additional checks before the publication of future reports to reduce the likelihood of similar oversights occurring. IPART appreciates the opportunity to address this matter and is committed to continual improvement in its reporting.

2 Questions on notice 2

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Looking at that register of meetings, there have only been two meetings of elected members with IPART members since all the way back to 2022. The first one was with the member for Barwon, Roy Butler, relating to the investigation into Broken Hill and its loss of power. That makes sense. The other, on 7 March 2025, was the member for North Shore, Felicity Wilson, who met with the IPART chair, Carmel Donnelly, and IPART staff. What was that about, and why was it felt appropriate to meet with somebody who was actively lobbying for a decision, one way or the other, with IPART?

ANDREW NICHOLLS: The local member, as I understand it—I wasn't at that meeting, but there was certainly an IPART officer who was present, and the meeting has been recorded appropriately in our public registers. It was an opportunity to explain to the member about how the IPART processes work and what we can consider as part of our assessment. It was confined purely to process.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Could you provide on notice some minutes of that meeting?

ANDREW NICHOLLS: I believe we could take that on notice.

Source: Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio area – Local Government, 2 September 2025, Transcript, uncorrected, p 48.

2.1 IPART Response

The matters discussed in the meeting were limited to an explanation of the special variation assessment process. A file note of the meeting is at **Attachment B**.