
Questions from Mr David Shoebridge MLC

Midwestern Regional Council

QUESTION

1. Minister, can you advise why you did not respond to our letter of 4 June 2014 regarding serious allegations of wrongdoing at Midwestern Regional Council?

ANSWER

In accordance with the Office of Local Government's Correspondence Management Policy, as the letter of 4 June 2014 was correctly addressed to the Council, with only a 'CC' to the Minister, it was appropriate that the Council reply to the correspondence.

QUESTION

2. Can you confirm that you received this correspondence?

ANSWER

Yes.

Business voting

QUESTION

3. What consultation was had with your department regarding the proposed business voting model?

ANSWER

I can advise that I consult regularly with the Office of Local Government.

QUESTION

4. What councils are currently being considered for this business voting model?

ANSWER

If the question is in regards to a Bill before Parliament, the Government cannot pre-empt the Parliamentary debate.

QUESTION

5. Will councils be consulted before this is applied in their area?

ANSWER

The Government consults regularly with the local government sector and individual local councils on a range of matters.

Loss of the amount of open space controlled by Councils

QUESTION

6. Your department's report :“Comparative Information on NSW Local Government: Measuring Local Government Performance” shows a reduction in the open space managed by councils from 144,528 hectares in 2002/03 to 122,188 in 2011/12 and 115,404 in 2012/13. What steps has the department taken to assess the impact of this loss of open space?

ANSWER

The provision and management of open space is a matter for individual councils to determine in accordance with their obligations under the Local Government Act 1993 and the Crown Lands Act 1989.

QUESTION

7. What steps has the department taken to gauge whether this is likely to be an ongoing trend across NSW?

ANSWER

The Office will continue to collect and publicly report, through the Comparative publication, data on the amount of local government managed open space in NSW, both at an aggregate and individual council level.

Oatley Bowling Club

QUESTION

8. Is the Minister aware of reports that Hurstville City Council has been excluding the community from decision making meetings about the future of the Oatley Bowling Club site?

ANSWER

Yes.

QUESTION

9. Have any meetings been held between the Government and Hurstville City Council in regard to the future of the former Oatley Bowling Club site?

ANSWER

Not that I am aware of.

QUESTION

10. If so, when and what was the result?

ANSWER

N/A

Local Government engagement with Aboriginal communities

QUESTION

11. How much money has been budgeted in 2014/15 by the Division of Local Government to promote projects that work in partnership with Aboriginal communities in NSW?
12. Has the Division of Local Government implemented any initiatives to improve the working relationship and consultation between Local Government and Local Aboriginal communities?

ANSWER

The Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework (IP&R) provisions of the *Local Government Act 1993* require that each council prepare and implement a Community Engagement Strategy based on social justice principles for engagement with the local community in developing the Community Strategic Plan. This includes engagement with Aboriginal communities, including Aboriginal Lands Councils.

The Office of Local Government continues to provide councils with assistance to implement IP&R and encourages councils to exchange innovative ideas, including on how to engage with Aboriginal communities. The Office's publication 'Engaging with local Aboriginal communities: A resource kit for Local Government in NSW' provides councils with specific advice in this area.

QUESTION

13. Does the Division of Local Government have any strategies or programs in place to assist Aboriginal communities to engage with Local Government? Has any money been budgeted for this purpose in 2014/15?

ANSWER

Please see answer to Question 11.

NSW Local Government Debt**QUESTION**

14. What is the size of the debt of Local Government in NSW?

ANSWER

Please refer to the Office of Local Government website.

QUESTION

15. Does this debt appear in State Government Accounts as a potential liability?

ANSWER

Please see budget papers.

QUESTION

16. If not, why not?

ANSWER

Councils are independent autonomous reporting entities as per the Australian Accounting Standards.

QUESTION

17. What role does the Department of Local Government have in ensuring the expenditure of Local Government is managed to ensure it is consistent with NSW Public Sector processes?

ANSWER

Councils are not a part of the NSW public sector and therefore NSW Public Sector processes do not, by default, apply to councils. The Office of Local Government sets the policy framework under which councils operate, in the context of the *Local Government Act 1993* and Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 and the Australian Accounting Standards.

The key framework under which councils must manage and report on their financial operations is the Local Government Code of Accounting Practice and Financial Reporting. This Code is updated annually and is generally consistent with the NSW Treasury guidelines for the NSW public sector.

QUESTION

18. Why is Local Government in NSW not under the aegis of NSW Auditor General as is the case in Victoria and Queensland?
19. What steps have been taken to implementing the recommendation of the Public Accounts Committee that responsibility for Local Government be transferred to the Auditor General?

ANSWER

This matter is addressed as part of the Government Response to the Independent Local Government Review Panel. Please refer to the Fit for the Future website (www.fitforthefuture.nsw.gov.au) for further information.

Questions from Hon Sophie Cotsis MLC

QUESTION

20. In relation to the Commonwealth Government's decision in its 2014-15 Budget to freeze indexation of Financial Assistance Grants to local councils:
- (a) Has the NSW Minister for Local Government written to the Commonwealth Government to inform the Commonwealth of the adverse impact this decision will have on NSW councils?
 - i. If so, to whom has the Minister written?
 - ii. What responses has the Minister received?
 - (b) Has the NSW Minister for Local Government issued any media releases objecting to the Commonwealth's decision to freeze indexation of Financial Assistance Grants?
 - (c) Has the NSW Minister for Local Government made any public speeches objecting to the Commonwealth's decision to freeze indexation of Financial Assistance Grants?

ANSWER

The NSW Government, through the Premier, has raised concerns about the impact of a range of Commonwealth Budgetary decisions.

QUESTION

(d) How much does the NSW Government estimate the decision to freeze the indexation of Financial Assistance Grants will cost each of the following councils, compared with the amount of Financial Assistance Grant funding that each council would have expected to receive had indexation continued:

- i. Albury City Council
- ii. Armidale Dumaresq Council
- iii. Ashfield Council
- iv. Auburn City Council
- v. Ballina Shire Council
- vi. Balranald Shire Council
- vii. Bankstown City Council
- viii. Bathurst Regional Council
- ix. Bega Valley Shire Council
- x. Bellingen Shire Council
- xi. Berrigan Shire Council
- xii. Blacktown City Council
- xiii. Bland Shire Council
- xiv. Blayney Shire Council
- xv. Blue Mountains City Council
- xvi. Bogan Shire Council
- xvii. Bombala Council
- xviii. Boorowa Council
- xix. The Council of the City of Botany Bay
- xx. Bourke Shire Council
- xxi. Brewarrina Shire Council
- xxii. Broken Hill City Council
- xxiii. Burwood Council
- xxiv. Byron Shire Council
- xxv. Cabonne Council
- xxvi. Camden Council
- xxvii. Campbelltown City Council
- xxviii. City of Canada Bay Council
- xxix. Canterbury City Council
- xxx. Carrathool Shire Council
- xxxi. Central Darling Shire Council
- xxxii. Cessnock City Council
- xxxiii. Clarence Valley Council
- xxxiv. Cobar Shire Council
- xxxv. Coffs Harbour City Council
- xxxvi. Conargo Shire Council
- xxxvii. Coolamon Shire Council
- xxxviii. Cooma-Monaro Shire Council
- xxxix. Coonamble Shire Council
- xl. Cootamundra Shire Council
- xli. Corowa Shire Council
- xl.ii. Cowra Shire Council
- xl.iii. Deniliquin Council
- xl. iv. Dubbo City Council
- xl. v. Dungog Shire Council
- xl. vi. Eurobodalla Shire Council
- xl. vii. Fairfield City Council
- xl. viii. Forbes Shire Council

- xlix. Gilgandra Shire Council
- l. Glen Innes Severn Council
- li. Gloucester Shire Council
- lii. Gosford City Council
- liii. Goulburn Mulwaree Council
- liv. Great Lakes Council
- lv. Greater Hume Shire Council
- lvi. Greater Taree City Council
- lvii. Griffith City Council
- lviii. Gundagai Shire Council
- lix. Gunnedah Shire Council
- lx. Guyra Shire Council
- lxi. Gwydir Shire Council
- lxii. Harden Shire Council
- lxiii. Hawkesbury City Council
- lxiv. Hay Shire Council
- lxv. The Hills Shire Council
- lxvi. Holroyd City Council
- lxvii. The Council of the Shire of Hornsby
- lxviii. The Council of the Municipality of Hunters Hill
- lxix. Hurstville City Council
- lxx. Inverell Shire Council
- lxxi. Jerilderie Shire Council
- lxxii. Junee Shire Council
- lxxiii. Kempsey Shire Council
- lxxiv. The Council of the Municipality of Kiama
- lxxv. Kogarah City Council
- lxxvi. Ku-ring-gai Council
- lxxvii. Kyogle Council
- lxxviii. Lachlan Shire Council
- lxxix. Lake Macquarie City Council
- lxxx. Lane Cove Municipal Council
- lxxxi. Leeton Shire Council
- lxxxii. Leichhardt Municipal Council
- lxxxiii. Lismore City Council
- lxxxiv. City of Lithgow Council
- lxxxv. Liverpool City Council
- lxxxvi. Liverpool Plains Shire Council
- lxxxvii. Lockhart Shire Council
- lxxxviii. Maitland City Council
- lxxxix. Manly Council
- xc. Marrickville Council
- xc. Mid-Western Regional Council
- xcii. Moree Plains Shire Council
- xciii. Mosman Municipal Council
- xciv. Murray Shire Council
- xcv. Murrumbidgee Shire Council
- xcvi. Muswellbrook Shire Council
- xcvii. Nambucca Shire Council
- xcviii. Narrabri Shire Council
- xcix. Narrandera Shire Council
- c. Narromine Shire Council
- ci. Newcastle City Council

- cii. North Sydney Council
- ciii. Oberon Council
- civ. Orange City Council
- cv. Palerang Council
- cvi. Parkes Shire Council
- cvii. Parramatta City Council
- cviii. Penrith City Council
- cix. Pittwater Council
- cx. Port Macquarie-Hastings Council
- cxii. Port Stephens Council
- cxiii. Queanbeyan City Council
- cxiiii. Randwick City Council
- cxv. Richmond Valley Council
- cxvi. Rockdale City Council
- cxvii. Council of the City of Ryde
- cxviii. Shellharbour City Council
- cxviiii. Shoalhaven City Council
- cxix. Singleton Council
- cxx. Snowy River Shire Council
- cxxi. Strathfield Municipal Council
- cxxii. Sutherland Shire Council
- cxxiii. Council of the City of Sydney
- cxxiv. Tamworth Regional Council
- cxxv. Temora Shire Council
- cxxvi. Tenterfield Shire Council
- cxxvii. Tumbarumba Shire Council
- cxxviii. Tumut Shire Council
- cxxix. Tweed Shire Council
- cxxx. Upper Hunter Shire Council
- cxxxi. Upper Lachlan Shire Council
- cxxxii. Uralla Shire Council
- cxxxiii. Urana Shire Council
- cxxxiv. Wagga Wagga City Council
- cxxxv. The Council of the Shire of Wakool
- cxxxvi. Walcha Council
- cxxxvii. Walgett Shire Council
- cxxxviii. Warren Shire Council
- cxxxix. Warringah Council
- cxli. Warrumbungle Shire Council
- cxlii. Waverley Council
- cxliii. Weddin Shire Council
- cxliiiii. Wellington Council
- cxlv. Wentworth Shire Council
- cxlvi. Willoughby City Council
- cxlvii. Wingecarribee Shire Council
- cxlviii. Wollondilly Shire Council
- cxlviiii. Wollongong City Council
- cxlix. Woollahra Municipal Council
- cli. Wyong Shire Council
- cli. Yass Valley Council
- clii. Young Shire Council

Please refer to the Commonwealth 2014/15 Budget Papers.

The NSW Grants Commission is committed to delivering improved grant outcomes to smaller rural communities that have the least capacity to raise revenue compared to those areas less reliant on the grant funding.

QUESTION

21. Does the Minister accept that the City of Sydney Amendment (Elections) Bill 2014 will increase the number of votes given to international corporations, or their wholly owned Australian subsidiaries, including corporations owned by foreign governments?
22. Does the Minister accept that granting up to 2 votes to corporations that the City of Sydney Amendment (Elections) Bill 2014 violates the fundamental democratic principal that each person, whether they be a natural person or a body corporate, should get one vote only?
23. Does the Minister accept that by removing the requirement for rate-paying lessees and occupiers to be ordinarily resident in NSW before being entitled to be enrolled that the City of Sydney Amendment (Elections) Bill 2014 increases the likelihood of City of Sydney elections being decided by people who have never have stepped foot in Sydney, let alone in NSW?
24. The City of Sydney Amendment (Elections) Bill 2014 proposes the omission of subs16(3) of the current Act, which would have the effect of allowing a single corporation who owns, leases or occupies multiple parcels of rateable land in the City vote for each parcel it owned, leased or occupied. Does the Minister accept that a single corporation being able to vote a number of times solely because of its wealth is another indefensible violation of the fundamental democratic principle that each person should get one vote only?
25. Does the Minister accept that the City of Sydney Amendment (Elections) Bill 2014 will increase the number of votes given to international corporations, or their wholly owned Australian subsidiaries, including corporations owned by foreign governments?
26. Does the Minister accept that granting up to 2 votes to corporations that the City of Sydney Amendment (Elections) Bill 2014 violates the fundamental democratic principal that each person, whether they be a natural person or a body corporate, should get one vote only?
27. Does the Minister accept that by removing the requirement for rate-paying lessees and occupiers to be ordinarily resident in NSW before being entitled to be enrolled that the City of Sydney Amendment (Elections) Bill 2014 increases the likelihood of City of Sydney elections being decided by people who have never have stepped foot in Sydney, let alone in NSW?

ANSWER

The *City of Sydney Amendment (Elections) Bill 2014* is currently before the NSW Parliament which is the most appropriate place to debate aspects of the Bill.

QUESTION

28. On 15 August 2014 the Minister for Local Government told the Western Advocate that "After 2015, if we are returned to government, there will be a pathway to go down to look at whether or not councils are financially viable and that means putting every council under the microscope". In relation to this:
 - (a) How will the 'microscope' that councils will be put under differ from the current oversight of councils undertaken by the NSW Government?
 - i. Will legislative changes be required to achieve this objective?

- ii. Will additional budgetary resources be provided to achieve this objective, and if so, what amount of additional resources will be provided?
- (b) What will the 'pathway' referred to be the Minister involve?
 - i. Will legislative changes be required to create this pathway?
 - ii. Will additional budgetary resources be provided to achieve this objective, and if so, what amount of additional resources will be provided?
- (c) Is the statement by the Minister to the Western Advocate on 15 August 2014 consistent with the Government's policy of 'no-forced amalgamations'?
- (d) Can the Minister guarantee that if the Liberals and Nationals are re-elected in March 2015 there will be no-forced amalgamations during the following four years?

ANSWER

This process is outlined as part of the Government Response to the Independent Local Government Review Panel. Please refer to the Fit for the Future website (www.fitforthefuture.nsw.gov.au) for further information.

QUESTION

29. During Budget Estimates for 2013-14, the former Minister for Local Government advised that the Independent Local Government Review Panel would cost \$1.8 million. What was the final cost for this review?

ANSWER

\$1,759,515

QUESTION

30. What was the cost of Destinations 2036?

ANSWER

2011/12: \$273,060
2012/13: \$303
2013/14: \$0

QUESTION

31. What was the cost of the Local Government Acts Taskforce?

ANSWER

2012/13: \$500,875
2013/14: \$381,399

QUESTION

32. What was the cost of the Local Government Infrastructure Audit?

ANSWER

2012/13: \$425,101.56
2013/14: Nil

QUESTION

33. What was the cost of the Review of the Intergovernmental Agreement?

ANSWER

\$0

QUESTION

34. What was the cost of TCorp's Assessment of the Financial Sustainability of Councils?

ANSWER

2012/13: \$2,245,000

2013/14: \$267,000

QUESTION

35. When were the final reports of the Independent Local Government Review Panel and the Local Government Acts Taskforce received by the Government?

ANSWER

Please refer to the Office of Local Government website.

QUESTION

36. When were the final reports of the Independent Local Government Review Panel and the Local Government Acts Taskforce released publicly?

- (a) Why did the Government then refer these reports for further consultation until April this year?
- (b) On what date will the Government release a formal response to these reports?

ANSWER

Please refer to the Fit for the Future website (www.fitforthefuture.nsw.gov.au) for information relating to the Government response to the final reports of the Independent Local Government Review Panel and Local Government Acts Taskforce. Submissions relating to the public consultation process are available on the Office of Local Government website (www.olg.nsw.gov.au).

QUESTION

37. The Independent Local Government Review Panel recommended that by February 2014 the Government should determine its response to the Panel report and commence implementation of a 'priority package' of reforms:

- (a) Did the Government implement this recommendation by February 2014?
- (b) What is the status of the implementation of this recommendation?
- (c) If the Government did not implement this recommendation in accordance with the indicative timeline recommended by the report, what was the reason for this?

38. Page 131 of the Independent Local Government Review Panel Final Report contains several reforms which the panel recommended should be implemented by March 2014.

- (a) Were these reforms implemented by March 2014?

(b) If not, why not?

39. Page 131 of the Independent Local Government Review Panel Final Report contains several reforms which the panel recommended should be implemented by June 2014.

(a) Were these reforms implemented by June 2014?

(b) If not, why not?

ANSWER

Please refer to the Fit for the Future website (www.fitforthefuture.nsw.gov.au) for information relating to the Government response to the final reports of the Independent Local Government Review Panel and Local Government Acts Taskforce.

QUESTION

40. Ministerial Circular 14-05 dated 15 August 2014 states that the Minister for Local Government's office will be relocating from its current location at Governor Macquarie Tower to 52 Martin Place.

(a) What is the cost of this office relocation?

(b) What is the cost of reprinting stationary with updated addresses caused by this office relocation?

ANSWER

The NSW Ministry has relocated to 52 Martin Place, and The Treasury and Department of Premier and Cabinet will relocate in the coming months. The relocation costs of the Minister for Local Government office is part of the Central Agencies Relocation Project and is not costed separately. The overall relocation generates \$90 million of savings over the 12 year life of the lease.

QUESTION

41. When was the decision made to change the Division of Local Government into the Office of Local Government?

(a) Who made this decision?

(b) Why was this decision made?

(c) What was the cost of this decision, for example in terms of reprinting stationary?

(d) What is the difference between a 'division' and an 'office'?

ANSWER

(a) The former Premier.

(b) This decision was made in order to enact the Government Sector Employment Act 2013.

(c) The OLG uses electronic letterhead and stationary, therefore no reprinting was required.

(d) The term 'Office' signifies that the organisation is now a stand-alone agency (known as an executive agency related to the Department of Planning and Environment)

QUESTION

42. Why does the Office of Local Government website still say that it is the 'Division of Local Government' in the Department of Premier and Cabinet? Why hasn't the website been updated?

(a) Why is the URL for the Office of Local Government website 'www.dlg.nsw.gov.au'?

(b) Should the URL for the Office of Local Government website be 'www.olg.nsw.gov.au'?

ANSWER

The URL for the website is www.olg.nsw.gov.au – there is a redirect on the old www.dlg.nsw.gov.au site

QUESTION

43. When the Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme (LIRS) was announced on 13 September 2011, the former Minister for Local Government stated that “the \$70 million in interest subsidies provided by the NSW Government on council borrowings will unlock about \$1 billion in extra infrastructure investment across NSW councils”. As of 19 August 2014, the Office for Local Government Website states that the LIRS only unlocked \$680 million of investment. Does this mean that LIRS has fallen \$320 million short of its original objective?

ANSWER

The figure of \$680million of infrastructure investment having been unlocked is based on rounds one and two only. A further round of LIRS assistance will be announced shortly.

QUESTION

44. Will the Government establish an integrated Fiscal Responsibility Program, coordinated by DLG and also involving TCorp, IPART and LGNSW to address the key findings and recommendations of TCorp’s financial sustainability review and DLG’s infrastructure audit, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
45. Will the Government adopt an agreed set of sustainability benchmarks, introduce more rigorous guidelines for Delivery Programs, commission TCorp to undertake regular follow-up sustainability assessments, provide additional training programs for councillors and staff and require all councils to employ an appropriately qualified Chief Financial Officer, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
46. Will the Government place local government audits under the aegis of the Auditor General, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
47. Will the Government ensure that the provisions of the State-Local Government Agreement are used effectively to address cost-shifting, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
48. Will the Government require councils to prepare and publish more rigorous Revenue Policies, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
49. Will the Government commission IPART to undertake a further review of the rating system, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
50. Will the Government either replace rate-pegging with a new system of ‘rate benchmarking’ or change current arrangements as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
51. Will the Government seek to redistribute federal Financial Assistance Grants and some State grants in order to channel additional support to councils and communities with the greatest needs, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
52. Will the Government establish a State- borrowing facility to encourage local government to make increased use of debt, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?

53. Will the Government encourage councils to make increased use of fees and charges and remove restrictions on fees for statutory approvals and inspections, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
54. Will the Government factor the need to address infrastructure backlogs into any future rate-pegging or local government cost index, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
55. Will the Government maintain the Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme (LIRS) for at least 5 years, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
56. Will the Government pool a proportion of funds from the roads component of federal Financial Assistance Grants and, if possible, the Roads to Recovery program in order to establish a Strategic Projects Fund for roads and bridges, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
57. If a Strategic Projects Fund is established, will the Government require councils applying for supplementary support from the Strategic Projects Fund to undergo independent assessments of their asset and financial management performance, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
58. Will the Government carefully examine any changes to development (infrastructure) contributions to ensure there are no unwarranted impacts on council finances and ratepayers, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
59. Will the Government adopt a similar model to Queensland's Regional Roads and Transport Groups, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
60. Will the Government establish Regional Water Alliances, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
61. Will the Government adopt a uniform core set of performance indicators for councils, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
62. Will the Government commission IPART to undertake a whole-of-government review of the regulatory, compliance and reporting burden on councils, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
63. Will the Government establish a new sector-wide program to promote, capture and disseminate innovation and best practice, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
64. Will the Government amend Integrated Planning and Reporting Guidelines to require councils to incorporate regular service reviews in their Delivery Programs, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
65. Will the Government strengthen requirements for internal and performance auditing, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
66. Will the Government introduce legislative provisions for councils to hold Annual General Meetings, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
67. Will the Government develop a NSW Local Government Workforce Strategy, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
68. Will the Government amend the Local Government Act to require councils to undertake regular 'representation reviews' covering matters such as the number of councillors, method of election and use of wards, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
69. Will the Government amend the Local Government Act to require all potential candidates for election to local government to attend an information session covering the roles and

- responsibilities of councillors and mayors, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
70. Will the Government amend the Local Government Act to amend the legislated role of councillors and mayors and introduce mandatory professional development programs, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
 71. Will the Government amend the legislated role and standard contract provisions of General Managers, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
 72. Will the Government amend the provisions for organisation reviews, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
 73. Will the Government develop a Good Governance Guide, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
 74. How will the Government provide a range of options to maintain local identity and representation in local government areas with large populations and/or diverse localities, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
 75. Will the Government establish new Joint Organisations, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
 76. Will the Government establish a working to further develop the concept of 'Rural Councils' for inclusion in the re-written Local Government Act, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
 77. Will the Government seek evidence-based responses from metropolitan councils to the Panel's proposals for mergers and major boundary changes, and refer both the proposals and responses for review, with the possibility of subsequent referrals to the Boundaries Commission, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
 78. How will the Government maximise utilisation of the available local government revenue base in order to free-up State resources for support to councils in less advantaged areas, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
 79. Will the Government establish Joint Organisations of councils for the purposes of strategic sub-regional planning, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
 80. Will the Government promote the establishment of a Metropolitan Council of Mayors, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
 81. Will the Government establish a Western Region Authority, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
 82. Will the Government complete updated sustainability assessments and revised long term asset and financial plans for non-metropolitan councils, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
 83. Will the Government establish a project team and reference group of key stakeholders within the DPC Regional Coordination Program to finalise proposal, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
 84. How will the Government use the State-Local Agreement as the framework for a lasting partnership, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
 85. Will the Government introduce new arrangements for collaborative, whole-of-government strategic planning at a regional level, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel? How will you do this?
 86. Will the Government amend the State Constitution to strengthen recognition of elected local government, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?

87. Has the Government sought advice from Local Government NSW on the measures it proposes to take to meet its obligations under the State-Local Agreement, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
88. How will the Government strengthen the focus of the government on sector development, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?
89. Will the Government establish a Ministerial Advisory Group and Project Management Office to implement reforms, as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel?

ANSWER

Please refer to the Fit for the Future website (www.fitforthefuture.nsw.gov.au) for information relating to the Government response to the final reports of the Independent Local Government Review Panel and Local Government Acts Taskforce.

QUESTION

90. When will the by-election for Lord Mayor of Newcastle caused by the resignation of Jeff McCloy be held?

ANSWER

This is a matter for the NSW Electoral Commissioner.

QUESTION

91. Will the by-election for Lord Mayor of Newcastle caused by the resignation of Jeff McCloy be conducted by the NSW Electoral Commission or by a private contractor?

ANSWER

I am advised that Newcastle City Council decided at its meeting of 26 August 2014, to engage the NSW Electoral Commissioner to administer the by-election.

QUESTION

92. Does the Minister agree with the Liberal Party's submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters Inquiry into the 2012 Local Government Elections which states that "it is the position of the Liberal Party of Australia (New South Wales Division) that, in order to ensure consistency, efficiency and cost effectiveness, all future local government elections in all Local Government Areas should be conducted by New South Wales Electoral Commission and no other entity". Will the Minister act to ensure that the by-election for Lord Mayor of Newcastle is conducted by the NSW Electoral Commission, consistent with the Liberal Party's stated position?

ANSWER

Section 296 of the *Local Government Act 1993* gives councils the option of administering their elections (including by-elections) themselves or engaging the NSW Electoral Commissioner to do so.

In this case, Newcastle City Council decided to engage the NSW Electoral Commissioner to conduct the by-election for the Lord Mayor at its meeting of 26 August 2014.

QUESTION

93. Concerns regarding the conduct of the 2012 local government elections in Port Stephens Council have been raised in the Newcastle Herald on dates including 28 February 2014, 2 March 2014, 5 March 2014, 6 March 2014, 5 May 2014. In relation to this:
- (a) Is the Government aware of the concerns raised in these reports?
 - (b) Has the Government taken any action in response to these reports?
 - i. If the Government has taken action in response to these reports, what has been the nature of this action?
 - ii. If the Government has not taken any action in response to these reports, why has it not done so?

ANSWER

The concerns raised largely relate to election funding issues. These have been raised with the Election Funding Authority which is responsible for the administration of the relevant legislation, the *Election Funding Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981*. The Election Funding Authority has advised that the issues raised would be considered as part of its compliance audit program.

QUESTION

94. On how many occasions has the Minister for Local Government met with lobbyists, and what were the dates of these meetings?
- (a) Which lobbyists has the Minister for Local Government met with, and what was discussed?

ANSWER

Meetings with lobbyists are in accordance with the NSW Lobbyist Code of Conduct. Information regarding scheduled meetings held with stakeholders, external organisations and individuals will be published in accordance with Memorandum 2014-07 - Publication of Ministerial Diaries.

QUESTION

95. How many staff work in the Minister for Local Government's office?
- (a) How many of these staff are employed on a full-time basis?
 - (b) How many of these staff are employed on a part-time basis?
 - (c) How many of these staff are employed permanent positions?
 - (d) How many of these staff are employed on a casual basis?
 - (e) How many of these staff are men?
 - (f) How many of these staff are women?

ANSWER

Ministerial staff numbers and salary bands are available on the DPC website at: http://www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/about/publications/premiers_and_ministers_staff_numbers.

QUESTION

96. How many staff work in the Office of Local Government?
- (a) How many of these staff are employed on a full-time basis?
 - (b) How many of these staff are employed on a part-time basis?

- (c) How many of these staff are employed permanent positions?
- (d) How many of these staff are employed on a casual basis?
- (e) How many of these staff are men?
- (f) How many of these staff are women?

ANSWER

Please refer to the website of the Office of Local Government for the Organisational Structure.

QUESTION

97. How many reports by consultants were commissioned by the Office for Local Government / Division for Local Government during 2014-15?
- (a) What was the cost of these reports?

ANSWER

Financial statements, including expenditure on consultants or contractors are available in agency reports.

QUESTION

98. Did the former Minister for Local Government report the outcomes of the Government's investigation into Sutherland Shire Council to Parliament?

ANSWER

Please refer to Legislative Assembly Question and Answer 5072.

QUESTION

99. In relation to the Office of Local Government's offices in Nowra:
- (a) Are the premises for this office owned by the NSW Government?
 - (b) If the premises for this office are not owned by the NSW Government, are they leased?
 - (c) If the premises for this office are leased, when does this lease expire?
 - (d) Can the Government guarantee that there are no plans to move the Office of Local Government from Nowra?

ANSWER

- (a) Yes
 - (b) N/A
 - (c) N/A
 - (d) There are no plans to move the Office of Local Government from Nowra.
-

QUESTION

100. Was the outcome of the Government's investigation into Sutherland Shire Council made publicly available on the Office of Local Government / Division for Local Government's website?

ANSWER

Please refer to Legislative Assembly Question and Answer 5072.

QUESTION

101. Queanbeyan City Council has recently passed a resolution asking you for help in giving it the power to write off backdated rates that it has imposed on businesses in Queanbeyan as a result of an internal audit. What advice have you received from your department regarding the action the Government could take to allow Queanbeyan City Council to write these rates off? What legal advice have you or the department had on the subject and what course of action do you propose to allow this to happen? Are you willing to amend the local Government regulation to make it clear that the Queanbeyan council can write off these rates?

ANSWER

The situation in which Queanbeyan City Council finds itself in is as a result of the Council's own decisions. The Minister and Office of Local Government are continuing to have discussions with the Council about how to move forward on this matter, as appropriate.

Donations

QUESTION

102. Given evidence at ICAC that Hunter Liberal Members of Parliament received cash from prohibited donors, can you guarantee that you did not receive an illegal donation at the last election?

ANSWER

I can guarantee that I have never accepted an illegal donation.

QUESTION

103. Last week the Premier put out a statement that said:

"I have always absolutely complied with the electoral funding laws and the records are there for all to see. Yes, I can guarantee that I have never accepted an illegal donation."

Will you make that same statement?

ANSWER

Yes

QUESTION

104. Do you think the people of NSW have a right to know who is making donations to candidates during election campaigns?

ANSWER

The Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981 requires the disclosure of political donations received and/or made, and electoral expenditure incurred, by or on behalf of parties, elected members, groups, candidates and third party campaigners. It also requires the disclosure of political donations of \$1000 or more made by major political donors.

QUESTION

105. Given that the Liberals channel all donations through a centralised accounting system which means most individual MPs do not disclose the people and organisations that personally donate

to their campaigns, will you fully disclose the source of all donations you received at the 2011 election campaign?

ANSWER

The Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981 requires the disclosure of political donations received and/or made, and electoral expenditure incurred, by or on behalf of parties, elected members, groups, candidates and third party campaigners. It also requires the disclosure of political donations of \$1000 or more made by major political donors.

QUESTION

106. Will you release the full list of donors who donated to your 2011 election campaign?

ANSWER

The Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981 requires the disclosure of political donations received and/or made, and electoral expenditure incurred, by or on behalf of parties, elected members, groups, candidates and third party campaigners. It also requires the disclosure of political donations of \$1000 or more made by major political donors.

QUESTION

107. In the interest of transparency and accountability, will you commit to publicly release the source of donations for the 2015 election?

ANSWER

The Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981 requires the disclosure of political donations received and/or made, and electoral expenditure incurred, by or on behalf of parties, elected members, groups, candidates and third party campaigners. It also requires the disclosure of political donations of \$1000 or more made by major political donors.

Cross Border Commissioner

QUESTION

108. How many times have you met with the Cross Border Commissioner:

- (a) In the last twelve months
- (b) Since the creation of the position.

109. What issues or topics have you referred to the Cross Border Commissioner:

- (a) In the last twelve months
- (b) Since the creation of the position.

ANSWER

Information regarding scheduled meetings held with stakeholders, external organisations and individuals will be published in accordance with Memorandum 2014-07 - Publication of Ministerial Diaries.

Labour Hire Firms

QUESTION

110. Do any Departments/agencies within your portfolio responsibilities utilise the services of Labour Hire Firms?

If yes, please advise in table form:

- (a) The names of the firms utilised
- (b) The total amount paid to each firm engaged
- (c) The average tenure period for an employee provided by a labour hire company
- (d) The longest tenure for an employee provided by a labour hire company
- (e) The duties conducted by employees engaged through a labour hire company
- (f) The office locations of employees engaged through a labour hire company

ANSWER

a)	b)
HAYS SPECIALIST RECRUITMENT (AUST)	\$58,718.7
RANDSTAD PTY LIMITED	\$48,083.7

- (c) 3 weeks
- (d) 12 months
- (e) Administrative Support and switchboard services
- (f) Nowra and Sydney

Consultancy Work

- 111. Has the consultancy company Crosby Textor done any consultancy work for the Dept of Primary Industries? If so what projects was Crosby Textor consulted on?
 - (a) What was the cost of the consultancy work for each project?
 - (b) Was there a tender process for these projects?
- 112. Does Crosby Textor currently have any contract work with the Department, if so, what is their role in the project?
- 113. Has the consultancy company Premier State done any consultancy work for the Dept of Primary Industries? If so what projects was Premier State consulted on?
- 114. What was the cost of the consultancy work for each project?
- 115. Was there a tender process for these projects?
- 116. Does Premier State currently have any contract work with the Department, if so, what is their role in the project?
- 117. Has the Government Contracting company Serco or its affiliates done any consultancy work for the Dept of Primary Industries? If so what projects was Serco or its affiliates assisted with?
 - (a) What was the cost of the consultancy work for each project?
 - (b) Was there a tender process for these projects?
- 118. Does Serco or any of its affiliates currently have any contract work with the Department, if so, what is their role in the project?

ANSWER

This is a matter for the Department of Primary Industries.

Phones/iPads

QUESTION

119. How many blackberries/smart phones are assigned to your staff?

ANSWER

204 phones have been issued to NSW Government Ministerial staff.

QUESTION

120. For each phone, how much was each bill in the 2013/14 financial year?

ANSWER

The 2013-14 total phone bill expenditure for NSW Government Ministerial offices is \$363,877 (63%) less than under the NSW Labor Government in 2008-09 of \$578,691 total expenditure.

QUESTION

121. How many have phones have been lost in your office?

ANSWER

9 phones were lost from the NSW Government Ministerial staff.

QUESTION

122. What is the cost of replacing those phones?

ANSWER

The cost is the normal contract price and this cost is claimed through the NSW Treasury Managed Fund.

QUESTION

123. How many iPads does DPC assign to your Ministerial office and to whom have they been issued?

ANSWER

96 iPads have been issued for the NSW Government Ministerial staff.

QUESTION

124. How many iPads have you purchased for your office and to whom have they been issued?

ANSWER

iPads are supplied by DPC and have not been purchased by NSW Government Ministerial staff.

QUESTION

125. How many iPhones does DPC assign to your Ministerial office and to whom have they been issued?

ANSWER

204 phones have been issued to the NSW Government Ministerial staff.

QUESTION

126. How many iPhones have you purchased for your office and to whom have they been issued?

ANSWER

iPhones or Smart Phones are supplied by DPC and have not been purchased by NSW Government Ministerial staff.

QUESTION

127. How many iPhones have been lost in your office?

ANSWER

9 phones were lost from the NSW Government Ministerial staff.

QUESTION

128. How many iPads have been lost in your office?

ANSWER

0 iPads were lost from the NSW Government Ministerial staff.

QUESTION

129. What is the cost of replacing those phones or iPads?

ANSWER

The cost is the normal contract price and this cost is claimed through the NSW Treasury Managed Fund.

Media/public relations

QUESTION

130. How many media or public relations advisers are employed for each of your portfolio agencies?

ANSWER

Nil

QUESTION

131. What is the forecast for 2014/15 for the number of media or public relations advisers to be employed and their total cost?

ANSWER

Nil

Overseas trips

QUESTION

132. Have any of your overseas trips in the past year been paid for in part or in full by using public money?

ANSWER

Information regarding Ministerial travel is available on the Minister's appropriate agency website, in accordance with Ministerial Memorandum M2009-10 *Release of Overseas Travel Information*.

QUESTION

133. If so, did any of your relatives or friends accompany you on these trips?

ANSWER

Information regarding Ministerial travel is available on the Minister's appropriate agency website, in accordance with Ministerial Memorandum M2009-10 *Release of Overseas Travel Information*.

Office costs

QUESTION

134. What is the annual remuneration package for your chief of staff?

135. What is the annual remuneration package for your head media advisor?

136. What is the annual remuneration package for each of your staff?

ANSWER

Ministerial staff numbers and salary bands are available on the DPC website at:

http://www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/about/publications/premiers_and_ministers_staff_numbers.

QUESTION

137. What is the estimated expenditure for your office budget in 2014/15?

ANSWER

The 2014-15 budget for NSW Government Ministerial offices is \$4,886,770 (10%) less than under the NSW Labor Government in 2009-10 of \$48,834,000.

QUESTION

138. Have any office renovations or fit outs been undertaken in your ministerial office since April, 2011?

ANSWER

Information in relation to repairs, maintenance and relocation for 2011-12 and 2012-13 is available on the Department of Premier and Cabinet Disclosure Log at http://www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/165616/Disclosure_Log_Information_-_Ministerial_Renovations.docx.pdf.

QUESTION

139. If so, could you give details of contracted costs?

ANSWER

Information in relation to repairs, maintenance and relocation for 2011-12 and 2012-13 is available on the Department of Premier and Cabinet Disclosure Log at http://www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/165616/Disclosure_Log_Information_-_Ministerial_Renovations.docx.pdf.

QUESTION

140. What is your Ministerial office budget for 2014/15?

ANSWER

The 2014-15 budget for NSW Government Ministerial offices is \$4,886,770 (10%) less than under the NSW Labor Government in 2009-10 of \$48,834,000.

QUESTION

141. How many political advisors are in your office?

142. How many administration staff?

ANSWER

Ministerial staff numbers and salary bands are available on the DPC website at:

http://www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/about/publications/premiers_and_ministers_staff_numbers.

QUESTION

143. How many Department Liaison Officers are assigned to your office?

ANSWER

Number of Department Liaison Officers for NSW Government Ministerial offices at 30 June 2014 was 56.

QUESTION

144. How many staff in the Department are assigned to Ministerial support duties?

ANSWER

All staff in the Office of Local Government support the Minister in his duties.

QUESTION

145. Are any contractors or consultants working in your ministerial office?

If so, in what capacities?

ANSWER

Financial statements, including expenditure on consultants, are available in agency annual reports.

QUESTION

146. How much did your Ministerial office spend on contractors or consultants?

ANSWER

Financial statements, including expenditure on consultants, are available in agency annual reports.

Cabcharge**QUESTION**

147. How much did your Ministerial office spend on taxi fares, including Cabcharge in the 2013/14 financial year?

ANSWER

The 2013-14 taxi expenditure for NSW Government Ministerial offices was \$117,783 (67%) less than under the NSW Labor Government in 2009-10 of \$175,776.

Restructure**QUESTION**

148. Are any of your portfolio agencies undergoing a restructure?
149. How many jobs are expected to be cut as a result of that restructure?
150. How many people are expected to have their wages cut as a result of that restructure?

ANSWER

Agencies and departments undertake internal reviews of its structure to ensure that its functions and priorities align with the changing needs of Government. This work has involved reviewing structures in various parts of the agency to achieve greater alignment with the Government's reform agenda and recommendations of the Commission of Audit.

QUESTION

151. How many voluntary redundancies were offered in your Departments since April 2011?
152. What has been the total cost of redundancies since April 2011?
153. How many voluntary redundancies were accepted from employees in your Departments since April 2011?
154. How many voluntary redundancies are expected to be offered in 2014/15?

ANSWER

The Government's program of voluntary redundancies remains on track. The target of 5,000 positions by June 2015 (announced in the 2011/12 Budget) was already exceeded by a further 1,789 positions by December 2013. The Labour Expense Cap introduced in the 2012/13 Budget is also well on track with Secretaries given as much flexibility as possible to achieve these savings in the most appropriate way to meet the service requirements of their agencies. Nurses, police officers and teachers in schools have been quarantined from this measure.

Agency costs**QUESTION**

155. How much did your Department(s) spend on catering in 2013/14?

ANSWER

\$11,442

QUESTION

156. How much did your Department(s) spend on stationary in 2013/14?

ANSWER

\$9,419

QUESTION

157. What is your Department's catering budget?

ANSWER

2013/14: \$14,040

2014/15: \$16,600

QUESTION

158. What is your Department's stationary budget?

ANSWER

2013/14: \$13,800

2014/15: \$9,300

QUESTION

159. Since April 2011 have any of the agencies in your Department(s) changed their branding?

ANSWER

Yes, the Division of Local Government has changed to the Office of Local Government.

QUESTION

160. If so, how much was spent on rebranding the agency?

ANSWER

\$0

Correspondence

QUESTION

161. How long is the average turnaround for responding to correspondence in your Department(s)?

162. How many pieces of correspondence have been outstanding for more than 60 days?

ANSWER

The Office of Local Government's recommended time frame for completing responses to correspondence from Ministers, Members of Parliament and members of the public is 20 working days from the department's receipt of the correspondence.

However, it is not always possible to comply with this time frame for any number of reasons including: the nature and complexity of the matter; stakeholder consultation; or further information required from other departments and sources.

Paying bills on time

QUESTION

163. In 2013/14 how many invoices has your Department(s) failed to pay a supplier or contractor for more than 30 days?

164. As a result of late payment, how much penalty interest has been paid to contractors since 1 January 2011?

165. How many invoices have been outstanding for longer than 60 days?

ANSWER

Information regarding “30 days to pay” policy is available at

<http://www.finance.nsw.gov.au/30days/how-government-will-report-policy>.

Grants to non-government organisations

QUESTION

166. Does your department provide recurrent grant funds to non-government organisations? If yes,

- (a) What are the names of all organisations in receipt of funding?
- (b) What is the total amount of funding received by each organisation including goods and services tax?
- (c) On what date was the funding advanced?
- (d) What was the purpose for each grant or funding advance?
- (e) Was any funding withheld or returned?
- (f) If so, what were the reasons for withholding or requiring the funding to be returned?
- (g) What is the indexation rate applied to non-recurrent grant funds in 2013/14?
- (h) What are the details of any costs involved in each study, audit, taskforce or review?

ANSWER

No.

Contractors

QUESTION

167. How many contractors has your Department(s) retained since 1 July 2014 and at what cost?

ANSWER

Financial statements, including expenditure on consultants or contractors, are available in agency reports.

Aboriginal employment

QUESTION

168. What is the current level of Aboriginal employment within your Department(s)?

ANSWER

The Public Service Commission collects workforce data from the NSW public sector, including information regarding levels of Aboriginal employment. The level of Aboriginal employment as at 30 June 2014 is estimated at 2.9%. This is still subject to final quality checks, prior to the November release of the Workforce Profile 2014.

QUESTION

169. How has that changed since 1 July 2013?

ANSWER

The 30 June 2014 estimate of Aboriginal employment in the sector is 2.9%. This compares to the Workforce Profile 2013 report which estimated the level of Aboriginal employment in the sector at 2.7%.

Charter air flights

QUESTION

170. Since 1 July 2011, how much has been spent on charter air flights by your Department(s)?

ANSWER

\$0.

Reviews and studies

QUESTION

171. In relation to feasibility studies, audits, taskforces and reviews:

Is your department currently undertaking any feasibility studies, audits, taskforces or reviews? If so; then;

- (a) What are the terms of reference or details of each study, audit, taskforce or review?
- (b) Who is conducting the study, audit, taskforce or review?
- (c) Was each study, audit, taskforce or review was publically advertised seeking expression of interest or competitive tenders?
- (d) Is there a contract in place detailing terms of engagement for the study, audit, taskforce or review?
- (e) What is the timeline of each study, audit, taskforce or review?
- (f) What are the details of any costs involved in each study, audit, taskforce or review?

ANSWER

As with previous NSW Governments, the Government undertakes feasibility studies, audits, taskforces and reviews to inform government decision making. A number of feasibility studies, audits, taskforces and reviews are currently being undertaken across the NSW Government.

Media training

QUESTION

172. Has the Minister been provided with Speech, Voice or Media Training since becoming Minister?

If so, then;

- (a) Who conducted the training?
- (b) When was it conducted?
- (c) Where was it conducted what were the costs of the training?
- (d) Who paid for the training?

ANSWER

No