

## Legislative Assembly Select Committee on Essential Worker Housing

### Response to Question on Notice, Committee Hearing on Friday 25 October 2024

#### QUESTION ON NOTICE

Mr STEPHEN BALI: Thank you for your presentations. You talked about affordable housing—or key worker housing, which is more directly our focus. We are still trying to work out whether there is a difference. Arguably, as you said, bus drivers et cetera and all the baristas—we are out of COVID, so every job that you have in the area is arguably precious. Looking at what council can do, Malcolm, I noticed in last year's annual report—you can take the figures on notice—you've got \$38,946,000 unallocated out of the \$150-odd million in cash that you hold at the council. We've had other presentations looking for the State Government and the Federal Government to contribute. We've had people saying that as part of key worker housing we should be looking at local government definitions—local government should be stepping in. I suppose there are two questions there.

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Would the council be prepared to really look into key worker housing? Given that you've got unallocated funding—\$10 million or \$15 million of that—if it is so important to council, why doesn't council partner up with perhaps a shared equity scheme? That way you're not giving away the money, you're actually investing into your own housing to get key workers or people like bus drivers et cetera that you need in the area but you can't find. What are the obstacles that council would have to allocate some of your unallocated cash reserves to support local housing, or to partner in local housing?

MALCOLM McDONALD: Just on the specifics in relation to the unallocated cash reserves, I need to take that on notice, if that's okay, and give some specifics.

Mr STEPHEN BALI: Of course.

#### ANSWER

The Committee noted Northern Beaches Council's unallocated cash and investments balance on 30 June 2023 was \$38.9 million. This balance included the prepayment of 100% of the Financial Assistance Grant for the 2023/24 financial year in June 2023 by the Australian Government (\$9.4 million).

A sufficient level of unallocated cash is required to maintain day to day liquidity and manage shocks such as natural disasters. It is important to note the first instalment of the LGA's rates notice is not due until 31 August each year, meaning the balance of

unallocated cash on 30 June must be sufficient to support the organisation for the first 2 months of the financial year.

For context, Northern Beaches Council is a half a billion-dollar organisation that provides a huge volume and diversity of services and infrastructure for more than 260,000 residents across 254 square kms making it the fourth largest Council in NSW.

Council manages \$3.9 billion in infrastructure assets including 6 libraries, 9 children's centres, 2 aquatic centres, 6 galleries, arts and performance spaces, 36 community centres, 122 sportfields, 15 rockpools and 219 playgrounds. We protect over 600 km of stormwater assets, protect and patrol 24 beaches, manage 845km of local roads and 37 wharves and provide a range of amenity and town centre cleaning programs.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. McDonald', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

1 November 2024

Malcolm McDonald  
Executive Manager, Strategic & Place Planning  
Northern Beaches Council