

**NSW LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SELECT
COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO THE PROPOSAL
TO DEVELOP ROSEHILL RACECOURSE**

Hearing: 9 August 2024

**Answers to Supplementary Questions – Mr Steve McMahon, Head of membership and Corporate Affairs, Australian Turf Club
17 September 2024**

	Question	Answer
(1)	<p>In paragraph 10 of your opening statement you said “In 2023 I had a number of meetings and discussions with stakeholders where it became clear that only increased housing density would make a Metro station a feasible option”. Who were the stakeholders, when did the meetings take place and who first told you that the full sale of Rosehill Racecourse was needed for an additional Metro station? When did this take place?</p>	<p>There were two key meetings where it was indicated that the housing density would need to be in the order of 40,000 dwellings to justify a Metro. The first was a meeting on 14 August 2023 with the newly formed independent Metro Audit Review team. The second was a meeting on 25 October 2023, with the newly appointed Secretary of the Department of Planning. After those meetings a number of things were clear to myself and the ATC’s property team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Firstly, that the timeframe to secure a Metro station was closing; - Secondly, that having a Metro station at Rosehill would significantly increase the rezoning and housing potential, and therefore the potential redevelopment value to the ATC; and - Thirdly, that having the Metro on the ATC’s land would provide a benefit to government because as it would reduce the cost to taxpayers given it was already in alignment with the Metro line and had lower contamination and flood risks than neighbouring sites. <p>Over a number of years including 2023, I also had various discussions with Western Sydney Dialogue, Business Western Sydney, Property Council and neighbouring Camellia landowners. These discussions, along with various media reporting, also contributed to my thinking that there was potentially a big opportunity for the ATC if it could consider a redevelopment of the entire Rosehill Racecourse, such that I determined to raise it with the ATC’s Chairman and CEO for consideration.</p>

(2)	Who at the 14 August 2023 meeting of the Independent Metro Audit Review team said that “having a Metro station at Rosehill would significantly increase the rezoning and housing potential”?	I cannot recall the names of the specific individuals.
(3)	Was your meeting with the Planning Secretary on 25 October 2023 separate from your attendance at the Camellia Rosehill Place Strategy meeting that same day where you said Rosehill Racecourse would never be sold? If so, did the Planning Secretary or any other Planning official say that the Rosehill Racecourse needed to be sold for housing to justify a metro station at Rosehill?	No, they were the same meeting. At that meeting, there was a general discussion with planning officials during which it was indicated that 40,000 dwellings would be needed to justify a metro station. They queried whether the ATC was open to redeveloping the entire site, including the racecourse. However, they did not say that Rosehill Racecourse needed to be sold for housing to justify a metro station. I replied that the ATC was not considering redeveloping the entire site because, at that time, it was the ATC’s position not to sell Rosehill Gardens.
(4)	At your meeting with the Premier and his Chief of Staff on 30 October 2023 what discussion took place about the political ramifications of the sale of Rosehill Racecourse? Did the Premier or his Chief of Staff say it would be good for the Government, giving them a big ‘vision’ initiative on housing supply, or words to that effect?	<p>There were no discussions at the meeting on 30 October 2023 about the political ramifications of the proposal regarding Rosehill.</p> <p>Neither the Premier nor his Chief of Staff said anything about it giving them a big “vision” initiative on housing supply or any words to that effect.</p> <p>As I referred to in my evidence at the Inquiry hearing (see transcript pages 4 and 5), my recollection of the discussion is that the Premier thought it was an interesting idea and we discussed the need for the ATC to use an appropriate process to bring its proposal to Government. The Premier advised that the Cabinet Office would come back to the ATC with its suggestion on the most appropriate process</p>
(5)	At the meeting with the Premier, who suggested that the Cabinet Office work on the means/method by which Rosehill could be sold?	At the meeting with the Premier on 30 October 2023, no one suggested to me that Cabinet Office work on the means or method by which Rosehill could be sold. The Premier’s Chief of Staff only referred me to the Cabinet Office to assist in determining the most appropriate process for the ATC to bring its proposal regarding Rosehill to the Government.
(6)	(6) After the meeting with the Premier, who in the Cabinet Office said to you that the USP process should be used and when did this occur?	To the best of my recollection, William Murphy from the Cabinet Office suggested the USP process would be an appropriate process for the ATC to use to bring its proposal to Government. I do not recall the exact date of this conversation but to the best of my recollection it was sometime in early November 2023.

(7)	<p>On and around November 20, how did you come to be working with the Cabinet Office on a press release for Chris Minns announcing the full sale of Rosehill. Given this was before the ATC Board had even considered the matter and most of the ATC membership would consider your job to be one impartial of party politics and never directly doing work for MPs, how do you explain this surprisingly partisan and political role?</p>	<p>The terms of the Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”) provided by Government required that neither the ATC nor the Government could make public statements about the MOU unless agreed by the other party. Therefore, I co-ordinated with the NSW Cabinet Office and provided input into a government press release which announced the signing of an MOU between the ATC and the NSW Government (via DEIT) in order to ensure that wording was accurate and consistent with the ATC’s planned communication to members. I note that the press release did not announce the sale of Rosehill, but rather the signing of the MOU.</p> <p>I was the key member of the ATC Leadership team managing the Rosehill-Camellia project. As government relations is a significant part of my current and previous roles with ATC, I have had regular dealings with current and former NSW governments in relation to Rosehill, and other ATC matters, over a period of 8 years and so was the appropriate person to provide input for the ATC on the Government’s proposed announcement regarding the signing of the MOU.</p>
(8)	<p>What further contamination testing has the ATC conducted at Rosehill Racecourse and what does this show?</p>	<p>Testing conducted to date has shown that contamination is minimal and can be remedied by conventional means.</p>
(9)	<p>What advice has the ATC now received regarding the difficulty in building a metro station box at Rosehill Racecourse and how will this delay the construction and opening of the Sydney West Metro? Have flooding and/or contamination issues caused the delay?</p>	<p>To the best of my knowledge, the ATC has not received any advice on the specifics or details for building of a metro station at Rosehill. I am therefore not able to provide any further assistance on the questions asked here.</p>
(10)	<p>In your opening statement, you state that “For as long as I’ve been at the ATC I’ve been involved in plans for the Camellia-Rosehill precinct around the edges of Rosehill racecourse. This has included discussions with neighbouring landowners and with government in relation to potential rezoning, and also seeking a metro station for the site. Throughout that time there have been many changes of policy direction and we have been navigating a challenging planning process”.</p>	<p>(a) We required the approval of the Camellia Place Strategy and subsequent rezoning of land surrounding the racecourse to “town centre” and/or high density residential.</p> <p>(b) The ATC met with officials from the NSW Department of Planning (Investment and Environment) many times over the period 2016 to 2023. The ATC also met with the Ministers Rob Stokes, Anthony Roberts, Kevin Anderson, Andrew Constance and their staff numerous times over this period. The only undertakings provided by Government were to continue to consider the ATC’s plans. During the period there were a number of “plan” and “strategies” released by Government which the ATC provided feedback on or responses to, however no formal approvals were provided.</p>

	<p>(a) What planning / zoning amendments were required by the ATC and neighbouring landholders to facilitate proposals for that precinct?</p> <p>(b) Which Ministers / department officials did the ATC directly discuss those requirements with between 2016-2023? Was a process advanced by the government to negotiate or assess those plans? If not, what undertakings were provided to the ATC following each representation?</p> <p>(c) Did the absence of a mainline Metro/heavy rail station impact patronage at the racecourse and/or the viability of proposed development plans for the precinct? If so, how?</p> <p>(d) What reasons were provided by government or planning officials during that period for any changes in policy direction; the lack of progress on advancing the ATC's specific proposals; or the absence of a planned mainline metro/heavy rail station in the precinct?</p>	<p>(c) Yes. Attendance numbers at Rosehill were impacted during the COVID period from 2020 and in my view the recovery of attendance post the COVID period has been significantly diminished by the absence of a mainline Metro/heavy rail station. The absence of a Metro station will impact the viability of any proposal to develop any part of the Rosehill-Camellia precinct.</p> <p>(d) Despite my continuous enquiries, to the best of my recollection, I was not provided with any specific reasons by government /planning officials for lack of progress. There were often changes in Ministers and key personnel over the period from 2016 to 2023. The Greater Sydney Commissions PIC report created even more delays. The reason often mentioned for lack of a Metro station was the desire to get from the City to Parramatta in 20 minutes and that extra stations delayed that time. Having sufficient density to support a Metro station was also mentioned.</p>
(11)	<p>Over the period of your involvement since 2016, have any circumstances given rise to your expectation that the ATC's plans or requests would be significantly advanced?</p> <p>(a) Have you formed the view that there will continue to be a lack of progress without a revised approach?</p>	<p>In 2023, the NSW public policy and associated media commentary regarding the housing crisis in Sydney led me to believe that a proposal of this kind from the ATC would be likely to be in line with the NSW Government's priorities. This was together with discussions (as outlined in my evidence at the Inquiry hearing) with members of the newly formed Independent Metro Audit Review Team in August 2023 and with the newly appointed secretary of the Department of Planning in October 2023, which also indicated that increased housing density would be required to support a decision to provide Metro Station at this location which was fair for landowners and taxpayers.</p>