

Questions from Ms Sue Higginson

Stronger Communities Grants

1. Will the Government be seeking the return of interest generated since 7 June by Hornsby Shire Council from the unspent Stronger Communities fund grants allocated to the Westleigh Park development?
 - (a) What is the funding that has been allocated to the recovery efforts by the Government from Hornsby Shire Council of the unspent \$36 million allocated to Westleigh Park?
 - (b) Will the Government be seeking the return of all unspent money and interest generated from Hornsby Shire Council if the matter proceeds to court?
2. Has the Stronger Communities fund grants allocated to the Hornsby Quarry been completely spent?
 - (a) If not, will the Government be requesting this money is also returned to the Government?
3. Did Hornsby Shire Council receive any additional funds from the NSW Government under any funding stream and allocated to the Westleigh Park development?
 - (a) Was there additional funding through grants made available to Hornsby Shire Council in June 2020?
 - i. What projects were these funds allocated to?
 - ii. How many of these projects have had the State funding committed to them?
 - iii. How many of these projects have commenced?
 - iv. How many of these projects have unspent funds?
 - v. What is the total value of the funds that were given to the Hornsby Shire Council in the form of grants between March 2019 and March 2023?
 - vi. What is the total remaining value of the funds that have not been spent?
 - (b) Will the Government be seeking to recover uncommitted or unspent grant funds from Hornsby Shire Council that were allocated to the Council in 2020?
 - i. Will the Government be seeking to recover interest generated by the Council on unspent grant funds?
 - (c) What is the total amount of money provided to Hornsby Shire Council by the NSW Government, through grants or other exceptional funding opportunities, between March 2011 and March 2023?

- i. How many individual grants or other exceptional funding opportunities were made available to Hornsby Shire Council over this period?
- ii. What is the process for establishing whether funds are completely spent on the correct project?
- iii. How many of these grants or other exceptional funding opportunities resulted in an incomplete spending of the money?
- iv. How instances of funding, from grants or other exceptional opportunities, cannot be verified if the amount of funding was completely disposed of on the intended project?
- v. What is the total value of grants or other exceptional funds provided by the NSW Government to Hornsby Shire Council have been allowed to return to the Council's general expenditure account?
- vi. How much interest has been generated by Hornsby Shire Council as a result of grants or other exceptional funds provided by the NSW Government to the Council?

ANSWER:

1. I am advised that the Office of Local Government (OLG) has written to Hornsby Shire Council to initiate the return of \$36 million in unspent Stronger Communities Grant funding. Council has responded and the Deputy Secretary of OLG is proposing to have a 'without-prejudice' meeting with Council in discussion of the matter. Budget allowances have been made should there be a need for legal action to recover the grant funds. The Government remains committed to recovering the unspent amount of the original grant.

2. I am advised that Hornsby Council has demonstrated significant progress towards completion of the Quarry project and there are no plans to recoup the funds provided through the Stronger Communities Fund.

3. (a) – (b) I am advised that if Hornsby Shire Council received additional NSW Government funds for Westleigh Park, those funding programs are not administered by OLG.

3. (c) I am advised:

Funds are dispersed to local government via multiple Government departments, depending on the proposed outcome of the expenditure. I am not able to provide you information on expenditure in other portfolios. In relation to the Local Government portfolio, two projects were funded under the Stronger Communities Fund: the Westleigh Park project and the Hornsby Quarry project.

All NSW Government agencies, including OLG, must now follow the NSW Grants Administration Guide. Under the Guide officials must ensure that information on the decisions made in relation to grants awarded is published on the NSW Government Grants and Funding Finder no later than 45 calendar days after the grant agreement takes effect or, if there is no grant agreement, no later than 45 calendar days after the first payment

is paid to the grantee. The Grants Administration Guide contains advice on the monitoring and acquittal of funds that agencies are required to follow when administering grants.

Questions from Hon Chris Rath MLC

Demerger

4. Given the prolonged nature of the demerger process for Cootamundra-Gundagai and the additional recent updates, will you commit to a firm deadline for the final decision on the demerger?

(a) What measures are being implemented to avoid further delays and additional costs?

(b) With ongoing operational challenges due to the demerger, including staff resignations and financial pressures, what specific interim support is being offered to the council to stabilize its operations?

(c) How are you ensuring that essential services continue uninterrupted during this period?

ANSWER:

4. (a) I am advised:

Under the Local Government Act, the Minister may not recommend that the Governor make a proclamation to dissolve a local government area until after a public inquiry has been held and the Minister has considered the report made as a consequence of the inquiry. Separately, a new local government area may not be established unless it has been referred for examination and report to the Local Government Boundaries Commission (the Commission).

To give effect to my predecessor's decision to demerge Cootamundra-Gundagai in accordance with the Local Government Act, I have referred the Council's proposal to the Boundaries Commission and set up a public inquiry and examination. As the Boundaries Commission is an independent body, I am unable to direct them as to how to conduct those inquiries.

4. (b) I am advised that OLG provided support to Council in the preparation of its business case and implementation plan.

4. (c) I am advised:

OLG continues to work with Council to address any challenges identified during consideration of the proposal for demerger. Council's Implementation Plan clearly outlines a framework for continued delivery of services and infrastructure during the transition to any new councils, if the proposal is recommended by the Boundaries Commission to proceed.

Code of conduct

5. The proposed reforms include financial penalties and enhanced powers for mayors. How will you ensure these measures are enforceable without creating new bureaucratic bottlenecks?
 - (a) What is the plan for training councils on these new responsibilities, and how will you measure their effectiveness?
6. The proposed reforms include making councillors personally liable for fines when they engage in serious misconduct. How will this approach ensure accountability without discouraging public service or being perceived as excessively punitive?
 - (a) What safeguards are in place to differentiate between genuine misconduct and errors made in good faith?
7. Balancing Act: While the aim is to deter misconduct, how do you plan to balance this with the need to attract and retain qualified individuals to serve as councillors?
 - (a) Are there concerns that the threat of personal financial penalties could deter capable individuals from standing for election?

ANSWER:

5. I am advised:

The NSW Government has proposed a range of changes to overhaul the broken Code of Conduct system for elected councillors, which is generating thousands of complaints making it almost impossible to act swiftly and fairly on matters of genuine concern. Consultation is open on a Discussion Paper setting out options for the review of the Councillor Conduct Framework. I am seeking the views of the community, key stakeholders and the local government sector on the proposed changes. Any plan to amend the Councillor Conduct Framework will be guided by industry feedback.

5. (a) See answer to question 5.

6. See answer to question 5.

6. (a) See answer to question 5.

7. See answer to question 5.

7. (a) See answer to question 5.

Transparency and Public Trust

8. Given the proposed changes to improve transparency, such as banning closed briefing sessions and enhancing meeting practices, how will you ensure that these reforms effectively restore public trust in local government?

(a) What mechanisms will be put in place for ongoing public reporting on the progress and outcomes of these changes?

ANSWER:

8. I am advised:

Consultation is open on the Discussion Paper regarding proposed changes to the Councillor Conduct Framework. A key component is ensuring the community can observe and hold to account their councillors when they debate issues of importance. Once the new Framework is implemented, I hope to see an improvement in councillor behaviour and trust in local government.

8. (a) See answer to question 5.

Financial Sustainability of Councils

9. What specific outcomes do you expect from the Inquiry, and how will these findings translate into concrete actions?
 - (a) Can you provide a timeline for when councils can expect to see changes implemented based on the Inquiry's recommendations?
10. Given many councils are already facing severe financial strain, what immediate measures are being taken to provide relief while the Inquiry is underway?
 - (a) How are you ensuring that councils can continue to provide essential services without compromising their financial stability?
11. How are you ensuring that the views and experiences of all councils, especially those in dire financial situations, are adequately represented in the Inquiry?
 - (a) What steps are being taken to actively involve councils in the process to ensure that the Inquiry addresses their specific needs and challenges?
12. Beyond the Inquiry, what mechanisms will be put in place to improve financial accountability and governance within councils?
 - (a) How will the government support councils in implementing best practices to enhance financial sustainability?

ANSWER:

9. I am advised:

The Inquiry into the ability of local governments to fund infrastructure and services is an important tool to support the ongoing sustainability of the local government sector. The timing of the final report and recommendations is a matter for the Standing Committee on State Development.

10. I am advised:

In 2023 Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) finalised a new rate peg methodology that incorporates a forward looking 'Base Cost Change' model. IPART use this new methodology when determining the 2024-25 rate peg for NSW councils.

The 2024-25 rate peg for each council ranges from 4.5% to 8.2% (including a population factor). 38% or 49 of NSW councils, received a final rate peg of 4.5% and the remaining 62% or 79 of councils, received final rate pegs of between 4.6% and 8.2%.

The Government has also made a \$252 million investment in local government capacity and capability through the apprentices and trainees program. This is one of the largest investments ever made by a State Government in Australia into local government workforce and capability.

Finally, the Government has also committed \$520 million that will benefit councils as part of the Transit Oriented Development program.

These direct investments represent a significant investment both in councils as well as supporting councils to provide infrastructure and services for local communities.

11. I referred terms of reference for an inquiry into local government financial capacity to the Standing Committee on State Development. I have encouraged all councils and stakeholders to make submissions to the Inquiry. I am advised that there have been 129 submissions to the Inquiry and ten public hearings: five at Parliament House in Sydney and one each in Goonellabah, Tamworth, Dubbo, Albury and Nowra.

11. (a) This is a matter for the Standing Committee on State Development.

12. I am advised:

The Government is awaiting the findings and recommendations of the Legislative Council Standing Committee on State Development Inquiry into the financial sustainability of local government.

I have made it clear that one of my key priorities is to improve the transparency of financial information to the governing body to enable better decision making.

12. (a) I am advised:

OLG continues to provide training and guidance to support all councils in applying best practice. As part of any Government response to the Inquiry currently being conducted by the Standing Committee on State Development, the Government will explore what other options are available to enhance such training and support. In addition, councils have access to expert and consistent auditing services from the Auditor General, as well as being able to have special rates proposals independently assessed by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal.

Financial Oversight and Governance at New England Weeds Authority

13. Has the administrator had the term of this contract extended?
14. With NEWA's reliance on competitive WAP grants and the risk of future funding being jeopardized, how will the government support NEWA in diversifying its funding sources?
- (a) What strategies are in place to reduce dependency on uncertain grants?
15. Given the serious governance issues highlighted, what specific reforms will be implemented to improve financial oversight and accountability within NEWA?
- (a) How will the state government ensure that similar governance failures do not occur in other regional councils?

ANSWER:

13. Yes.

14 - 15. I am advised:

The Government has appointed an Administrator for NEWA who has been tasked with the responsibility of advising the Government on strategies for the future of NEWA. The Administrator has examined the operation of NEWA and is looking at how its structural budget issues may be addressed.

15. (a) I am advised:

The Government has appointed an Administrator for NEWA who has been tasked with the responsibility of advising the Government on strategies for the future of NEWA. In addition, OLG maintains an ongoing dialogue with the Administrator that will inform any necessary advice and guidance to similar county councils with a view to preventing similar occurrences.

Strategic Policy Unit: Topic 5

16. The Strategic Policy Unit was reportedly established with staff seconded from other departments, focusing on the councillor conduct framework, financial sustainability, and improving the management of complaints. What are the measurable outcomes or achievements of the Strategic Policy Unit since its establishment?

(a) How are these outcomes being communicated to the broader local government sector?

ANSWER:

16. I am advised:

The NSW Government has provided increased funding of \$9 million a year over the next four years to the Office of Local Government to support critical reforms to the local government sector, to deliver greater financial security for councils and to bolster the OLG to become a more effective regulator of Councils. As part of this work, the Government has:

- released proposals for discussion with the local government sector on an updated Model Code of Conduct,
- created a new model for Rural and Remote Councils to restore democracy to Central Darling Shire Council,
- provided a legislative pathway for Council demergers,
- updated regulations in relation to local government elections,
- announced \$252.2 million for local government apprentices and trainees to improve local government workforce outcomes, and
- more effectively regulated Councils across the state facing financial and governance challenges.

The Government will continue to invest in the capacity of the Office of Local Government to meet its election commitments and introduce reforms to the Local Government sector that will improve transparency and financial outcomes. The Office of Local Government also looks forward to the report of the Inquiry into the ability of local government to fund infrastructure and services, and will work to implement any recommendations coming out of that inquiry that are supported by the Government.

16. (a) I am advised:

OLG provides updates on its policy work in its external newsletter, on its website and social media, and through council circulars. OLG also utilises engagement channels including specifically directed engagement managers, webinars on topics of interest and regular engagement with sector based networks such as the Local Government Finance Professionals and the General Managers Discussion Circle.

As Minister I am active in speaking about my proposals and reforms at Local Government forums, including Regional Organisations of Councils, with Local Government NSW, and the many meetings I have held with Mayors and General Managers across the State.

Animal Welfare – rehoming, RSPCA – Topic 6

17. The government committed to reviewing and developing a sustainable long-term funding model for animal welfare compliance and enforcement. What progress has been made on this commitment, and when can the RSPCA expect clarity on future funding to avoid operational disruptions?
18. With animal shelters at capacity and the RSPCA facing financial constraints, what specific steps is the government taking to support organisations involved in rehoming animals?
- (a) Are there any plans to expand shelter capacities or provide additional resources to assist with the growing demand?
19. Can you provide an update on the government's initiatives around cat containment and welfare?
- (a) How are these efforts being integrated into the broader animal welfare strategy in NSW?

ANSWER:

17. Further to the answers provided during the estimates hearing, I am advised that funding is part of ongoing broader animal welfare reforms, being run in coordination with the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. The funding of approved charitable organisations, including the RSPCA, is also subject to a Parliamentary Inquiry and the Government will be advised by the recommendations of that inquiry in providing further animal welfare enforcement funding.

18. The Minns-Labor Government honoured the former Government's one-off commitment, providing \$20.5 million to RSCPA NSW to enhance its enforcement of animal cruelty laws.

I am advised that the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development is leading a comprehensive reform agenda aimed at improving animal welfare outcomes. I have also committed to enquiring into ways to provide more coordination and consistency across government to the funding to animal welfare organisations. In doing so, the Government must take into account the budgetary implications of any change to current funding arrangements.

19. I have referred this matter to the Animal Welfare Committee to thoroughly inquire and test these issues. I am advised that the Committee will begin its work at the conclusion of the inquiry into *Proposed aerial shooting of brumbies in Kosciuszko National Park*.

Closure of Greyhound Rehoming Facility

20. The recent closure of the Greyhound Rehoming facility at Wyee has left a gap in services. Has the government reached out to other greyhound rehoming organisations to understand the impact on their operations, and what support is being provided to ensure continuity in rehoming efforts?

ANSWER:

20. This is a matter for the Minister for Gaming and Racing.

Media releases and statements

21. 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:

21. 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.

GIPA Applications – Department(s)/Agency(s)

22. Since 28 March 2023, have you and/or your ministerial office given instructions to your portfolio department(s)/agency(s) in relation to Government Information (Public Access) Act application(s)?

ANSWER:

22. I am advised:

The Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 provides that agencies are not subject to the direction or control of any Minister in the exercise of the agency's functions in dealing with a particular access application under the Act (subsection 9(2)). The Act also contains offences prohibiting agency officers from acting unlawfully, and prohibiting persons from directing agencies to make an unlawful decision in relation to an access application (sections 116 and 117 of the Act).

It is, however, generally appropriate for agencies to inform the responsible Minister where documents are to be released under the Act, for the Minister's information.

Signal

23. Are you on Signal?

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

ANSWER:

23. I am advised:

Like the former Coalition Government, a range of communications are used by the NSW Government.

I comply with the State Records Act 1998 and I expect all staff members to comply with their obligations under the State Records Act 1998.

CFMEU membership

24. Have you ever been a member of the Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union (CFMEU)?

(a) If yes, when?

ANSWER:

24. I am advised:

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

Clause 13 of the Regulation relevantly requires the disclosure of the name of each trade union and each professional or business association 'in which he or she held any position' as at specified dates. The Regulation does not require Members to disclose membership of a trade union.

Membership of Unions can be disclosed on a discretionary basis. The Clerk of the Parliaments has confirmed that this view is consistent with guidance provided to Members.

Department(s)/Agency(s) Annual Reports

25. In what month will the 2023-24 annual reports for each department / agency in your portfolio be published?

26. Will the 2023-24 annual reports for the department / agency in your portfolio include a printed copy?

(a) If yes, how much is budgeted for printing in 2024-25?

ANSWER:

25. I am advised:

The annual report of a reporting GSF agency is to be prepared, submitted and tabled in accordance with requirements under the Government Sector Finance Act 2018 and Treasurer's Direction 23-11.

26. I am advised:

As per the NSW Treasury Policy and Guidelines – Annual Reporting Requirements TPG23-10, agencies in the portfolio will be providing two printed copies of the annual report (via in house printing) to the Premier for tabling in both houses of Parliament.

ETU membership

27. Have you ever been a member of the Electrical Trades Union (ETU)?

(a) If yes, when?

ANSWER:

27. I am advised:

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

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Paper shredder

28. Does your ministerial office have a paper shredder?

ANSWER:

28. I am advised:

When the NSW Government was elected in 2023, shredders used by the former Liberal and National Government were left in Ministerial and Parliament offices.

Office equipment is purchased in line with NSW Government procurement rules.

Department(s)/Agency(s) in Portfolio

29. What department(s)/agency(s) are included in your portfolio?

ANSWER:

29. I am advised:

The Cabinet Office publishes a Governance Arrangements Chart containing information about Ministers, NSW Government agencies established under Schedule 1 to the Government Sector Employment Act 2013 and State Owned Corporations established under Schedule 5 to the State Owned Corporations Act 1989. The Governance Arrangements Chart outlines the agencies in the Premier and Cabinet portfolio.

The Governance Arrangements Chart may be accessed via The Cabinet Office's website at <https://www.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/noindex/2024-08/20240807-Governance-Arrangements-Chart.pdf>.

The Government Sector Employment Act 2013, and Administrative Arrangements Orders made under Part 7 of the Constitution Act 1902, are available on the NSW Legislation website (www.legislation.nsw.gov.au).

Former Ministerial Employees

30. Are there any former employee from your ministerial office now employed by any department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities?

(a) If yes, how many?

ANSWER:

30. I am advised:

The employment of former Ministerial office staff is not tracked.

Under the Government Sector Employment Act 2013, the Secretary of a Department exercises the employer functions of the Government in relation to departmental employees. The Secretary is not subject to the direction or control of a Minister in the exercise of those functions. Similarly, the head of a Public Service agency exercises the employer functions of the Government in relation to non-Public Service senior executives of the agency. A head of a Public Service agency is not subject to the direction or control of a Minister in the exercise of those functions.

All NSW government sector employees must comply with the Code of Ethics and Conduct for NSW government sector employees. Employees must also have regard to their relevant agency's code of conduct.

Ministerial office staff must comply with their ethical obligations under the NSW Office Holder's Staff Code of Conduct, including after the cessation of the employment.

Qantas Chairman's Club

31. Are you a Member of the Qantas Chairman's Club?

(a) If no, have you ever previously been a member?

(b) If yes, when did you cease to be a member?

(c) If yes, when did you initially become a member?

(d) If yes, when did you make a declaration to The Cabinet Office?

(e) If yes, how many times since 28 March 2023 have you used the Qantas Chairman's Club?

ANSWER:

31. 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 Staff – Local Government Councillors

32. As at 30 June 2024, how many of your ministerial staff were local government councillors?

33. What local government(s) did they serve?

ANSWER:

32. I am advised:

Ministerial staff are employed by Ministers, on behalf of the State, in their capacity as "political office holders" under Part 2 of the Members of Parliament Staff Act 2013 (Act).

All Ministerial staff are required to comply with the NSW Office Holder's Staff Code of Conduct, including obligations to seek approval for secondary employment, and to take reasonable steps to avoid, and in all cases disclose, any actual or potential conflicts of interest (real or apparent).

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Union membership fees

34. What was the expenditure for you to join a union in:

(a) 2022-23?

(b) 2023-24?

(c) 2024-25?

ANSWER:

34. I am advised:

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

Clause 13 of the Regulation relevantly requires the disclosure of the name of each trade union and each professional or business association 'in which he or she held any position' as at specified dates. The Regulation does not require Members to disclose membership of a trade union.

Membership of Unions can be disclosed on a discretionary basis. The Clerk of the Parliaments has confirmed that this view is consistent with guidance provided to Members.

ETU meetings

35. Given ministerial diary disclosures do not include all meetings and provide exceptions to disclosures, since 28 March 2023, have you met with the ETU?

ANSWER:

35. I am advised:

In accordance with the Premier's Memorandum 2015-05, 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>)

State Records Act

36. 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:

36. I am advised:

The Ministers' Office Handbook provides guidance in relation to these obligations to assist each Minister's office.

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

Legal Costs

37. How much did the Department/agencies within your portfolio responsibilities spend in legal costs since 28 March 2023?

(a) For what specific purposes or matters was legal advice sought?

38. Are you a member of a union?

(a) If yes, what union?

ANSWER:

37. I am advised:

Legal costs are included in the Other Operating Expenses of an agency's financial statement and further categorised in the note to Other Operating Expenses in accordance with the guidance in TPG24-05 Policy and Guidelines: Financial Reporting Code for NSW General Government Sector Agencies.

38. I am advised:

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

Clause 13 of the Regulation relevantly requires the disclosure of the name of each trade union and each professional or business association 'in which he or she held any position' as at specified dates. The Regulation does not require Members to disclose membership of a trade union.

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Advertising

39. How much has each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities spent on advertising or sponsored posts since 28 March 2023 on the following social media platforms:

- (a) Facebook
- (b) Instagram
- (c) LinkedIn
- (d) TikTok
- (e) YouTube
- (f) X (formerly known as Twitter)

ANSWER:

39. I am advised:

Department and agency expenditure is published in Annual Reports and on OpenGov NSW and data.nsw.gov.au.

Catering

40. How much of your ministerial budget was spent on catering in 2023-24?

41. Was catering used for external stakeholders?

(a) If yes, who were these external stakeholders?

ANSWER:

40. I am advised:

Catering provided for official purposes may be funded from the Ministerial office budget.

Catering costs for the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 will form part of the Premier's Department Agency Annual Report 2023-24.

As Members of Parliament, Ministers have credit facilities extended to them for dining and hospitality at Parliament House. The facilities may be used for business or private purposes.

41. I am advised:

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Parliamentary Secretary

42. Does your Parliamentary Secretary have pass access to your ministerial office?

43. Does your Parliamentary Secretary have a desk in your ministerial office?

44. Did any catering costs in 2023-24 include expenditure on alcohol?

ANSWER:

42. I do not have a Parliamentary Secretary.

43. See answer to question 42.

44. I am advised:

The NSW Office Holder's Staff Code of Conduct, which is Attachment B to the Ministers' Office Handbook, provides that all office holder staff must use State resources for the effective conduct of public business in a proper manner. Office holder staff must be economical and efficient in the use and management of public resources.

The Handbook can be found here: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/premiers-department/ministers-office-handbook>.

Senior Executive Drivers

45. How many senior executives in your portfolio department(s) / agency(s) have a driver?

ANSWER:

45. I am advised:

No senior executive employed by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure has a driver.

Speeches

46. Does your portfolio department(s) / agency(s) draft and write speeches for you?

47. How many public servants have undertaken writing speeches in your portfolio department(s)/agency(s)?

ANSWER:

46. I am advised:

Department and agency staff may contribute to factual information for speaking notes as part of their duties in line with longstanding practices in place under successive governments.

47. I am advised:

Department and agency staff may contribute to factual information for speaking notes as part of their duties in line with longstanding practices in place under successive governments.

Hard hats and/or vests

48. Do you have a hard hat and/or vest for visiting infrastructure sites?

(a) If yes, was it paid from your ministerial budget?

ANSWER:

48. I am advised:

Ministers are to comply with the appropriate use of personal protective equipment as per Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017.

The NSW Office Holder's Staff Code of Conduct, which is Attachment B to the Ministers' Office Handbook, provides that all office holder staff must use State resources for the effective conduct of public business in a proper manner. Office holder staff must be economical and efficient in the use and management of public resources. State resources are not to be subject to wasteful or extravagant use.

Gin

49. Since 28 March 2023, have you or your ministerial office purchased 'gin' using your ministerial budget?

ANSWER:

49. I am advised:

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The Handbook can be found here: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/premiers-department/ministers-office-handbook>.

Ministerial Advisers

50. How many staff members were employed in your ministerial office in 2023-24 FY?

51. What is the average salary for staff members in your ministerial office in 2023-24 FY?

ANSWER:

50. I am advised:

Ministerial Staffing numbers are proactively published on the NSW website - <https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/premiers-department/access-to-information/premier-and-ministers-staff-numbers>.

51. I am advised:

Ministerial Staffing information is proactively published on the NSW website - <https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/premiers-department/access-to-information/premier-and-ministers-staff-numbers>

Ministerial disclosures to The Cabinet Office

52. On what date did you last update/make a ministerial disclosure to The Cabinet Office?

ANSWER:

52. 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.

Stationery

53. How much of your ministerial budget was spent on stationery in 2023-24?

54. Did your stationery expenditure include gifts for external stakeholders?

(a) If yes, what was the gift(s)?

(b) If yes, who received the gift(s)?

ANSWER:

53. I am advised:

Spending on office stationery is in accordance with standard procurement arrangements. The costs of stationery are contained within the Premier's Department Annual Report.

54. I am advised:

The Ministers' Office Handbook outlines that the decision to present a gift is at the discretion of the Minister, having regard to both appropriateness and economy. Gifts may be appropriate, for example, where given as a memento of an official visit or as a small token of appreciation.

However, gifts should not be given with the purpose, or in circumstances where they could be perceived as having the purpose, of inducing favourable treatment. Gifts may be purchased as needed on an occasional basis or purchased and stored for future use. Gifts need to be purchased in accordance with NSW Government procurement policy.

GIPA Applications / Standing Order 52 – Ministerial Office

55. Does your ministerial office have staff member(s) to undertake Government Information (Public Access) Act application(s) and/or Standing Order 52 requests?

(a) If yes, has that ministerial staffer(s) received formal training about their legal obligations?

56. How many GIPA Applications have been received by your ministerial office since 28 March 2023?

ANSWER:

55. I am advised:

The Cabinet Office provides training for Ministerial staff on their obligations under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA Act) and the requirements for responding to orders for papers under Standing Order 52 of the Legislative Council.

56. I am advised:

Information concerning the obligations of a Minister's office as an agency under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (the Act) is required to be submitted to the Attorney General in accordance with section 125(2) of the Act. The information is included in the annual report of the Department of Communities and Justice in accordance with sections 125(3) and (5) of the Act.

Police Commissioner Gin

57. Have you received gin from the Police Commissioner?

ANSWER:

57. No.

E-Toll

58. Does your ministerial vehicle have an E-Toll?

(a) If yes, is expenditure paid by your by your ministerial budget?

ANSWER:

58. I am advised:

Ministers, the Leader of the Opposition, other nominated public office holders, and certain former office holders are provided with official cars and drivers. All costs associated with these vehicles need to be paid from the relevant approved budget.

Costs for e-tolls form part of the Premier's Department Annual Report.

Department(s)/Agency(s) Gifts and Hospitality Register

59. 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 URL?

ANSWER:

59. I am advised:

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

Workplace complaints

60. Have you been the subject of any workplace complaints, including bullying, harassment, and sexual harassment since 28 March 2023?

61. Has any member of your ministerial staff been the subject of any workplace complaints, including bullying, harassment, and sexual harassment since 28 March 2023?

ANSWER:

60. I am advised:

Any complaint or disclosure made under the Respectful Workplace Policy is confidential. The Respectful Workplace Policy applies to all Ministerial Offices and staff. As noted in the Goward review, a key aspect of effective workplace complaint policies is confidentiality in the complaint and investigation process. Confidentiality ensures that staff feel safe about raising concerns and confident that action will be taken in response.

61. I am advised:

Any complaint or disclosure made under the Respectful Workplace Policy is confidential. The Respectful Workplace Policy applies to all Ministerial Offices and staff. As noted in the Goward review, a key aspect of effective workplace complaint policies is confidentiality in the complaint and investigation process. Confidentiality ensures that staff feel safe about raising concerns and confident that action will be taken in response.

Ministerial Code of Conduct

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

(a) If yes, what was the breach?

ANSWER:

62. 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.

TikTok

63. Are you on TikTok?

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

ANSWER:

63. I can be followed @ronhoenig

63. (a) I am advised:

The Circular DCS-2023-01 Cyber Security NSW Directive - Protecting NSW Government information on government-issued devices sets out how NSW Government agencies are to manage the risk of using TikTok.

More information is available at: <https://arp.nsw.gov.au/dcs-2023-01-cyber-security-nsw-directive-protecting-nsw-government-information-on-government-issued-devices/>

CFMEU meeting

64. Given ministerial diary disclosures do not include all meetings and provide exceptions to disclosures, since 28 March 2023, have you met with the CFMEU?

ANSWER:

64. I am advised:

In accordance with the Premier's Memorandum 2015-05, 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>).

Credit Cards

65. Have you ever been issued with a credit card by a NSW Government department(s) and/or agency(s) since 28 March 2023?
- (a) If yes, under what circumstance?
 - (b) If yes, what items and expenditure was undertaken?
66. For each department, agency and/or other body in the Minister's portfolio please report:
- (a) How many credit cards are currently on issue for staff? (Please provide a break-down of this information by grade)
 - (b) What was the value of the largest reported purchase on a credit card for the last year?
 - (c) What was each largest reported purchase for?
 - (d) What was the largest amount outstanding on a single card at the end of a payment period?
 - (e) And what was the card holder's employment grade?
 - (f) How many credit cards have been reported lost or stolen?
 - (g) What was the cost to replace them?
 - (h) How many credit card purchases were deemed to be illegitimate or contrary to agency policy?
 - i. How many purchases were asked to be repaid on the basis that they were illegitimate or contrary to agency policy and what was the total value thereof?
 - ii. Were all those amounts repaid?
 - (i) Are any credit cards currently on issue connected to rewards schemes?
 - i. Do staff receive any personal benefit as a result of those reward schemes?
 - ii. Can a copy of the staff credit card policy please be provided?

ANSWER:

65. (a) - (b) I am advised:

Ministers and Ministerial Staff are not eligible to receive Departmental credit cards except in the case of overseas travel. In cases of overseas travel short-term cards will be issued

and returned at the completion of official travel together with a travel diary for fringe benefit tax purposes.

Where an NSW Government-issued credit card is provided the credit card must only be used for official overseas business trips and official business purposes, this includes for transport to/from the airport when departing/returning from the trip. NSW Government-issued credit cards for official business trips overseas will be held with government contract bankers and used within credit limits imposed. Credit cards are a useful means of expenditure control, but their use should never be for personal purposes. Costs associated with overseas travel are published on the NSW Government website in line with M2015-05.

66. (a) - (i) I am advised:

The use and management of purchasing (credit) cards for official purposes is in accordance with standard procurement arrangements of the NSW Government.

Further, each Department / Agency within the portfolio have a specified policy, these are attached.

Ministerial Vehicles and Driving Offences

67. Since 28 March 2023, have you personally driven your ministerial vehicle?

68. As a driver since 28 March 2023:

(a) Have you been pulled over by the NSW Police Force?

(b) Have you been fined for speeding?

(c) Have you been fined for school zone related offence?

(d) Have you been fined for red light related offence?

(e) Have you been involved in an accident that included the NSW Police attending the scene?

i. If yes to a) to e), did this include whilst driving your ministerial vehicle?

ANSWER:

67. I am advised:

Ministers, the Leader of the Opposition, other nominated public office holders, and certain former office holders are provided with official cars and drivers.

Office holders may drive themselves whenever they choose. Cars should be driven only by the office holder, officially employed drivers, the office holder's spouse or approved relative and any other person authorised by the office holder in those circumstances considered to be appropriate.

68. I am advised:

Ministers, like all members of the community are subject to the laws of New South Wales, including Road Rules 2014. Where a fine is incurred, the payment of the fine is the responsibility of the driver of the vehicle.

Department(s)/agency(s) desk or office

69. Do you have a desk or office in your portfolio department(s)/agency(s) building(s)?

ANSWER:

69. I am advised:

I make use of an office in 52 Martin Place, NSW Parliament and my Electorate office.

When travelling, Ministers may make ad hoc arrangements to work for periods in departmental offices.

Land audit – Department(s)/Agency(s)

70. Has your portfolio department(s)/agency(s) undertaken a land audit of surplus government property in any of the following postcodes:

(a) 2077?

(b) 2079?

(c) 2080?

(d) 2081?

(e) 2082?

(f) 2083?

(g) 2117?

(h) 2118?

(i) 2119?

(j) 2120?

(k) 2121?

(l) 2125?

(m) 2126?

(n) 2151?

(o) 2154?

(p) 2156?

(q) 2157?

(r) 2158?

(s) 2159?

(t) 2756?

(u) 2775?

i. If yes to (a) to (u), how many properties have been identified

ANSWER:

70. I am advised:

The NSW Government has been conducting an audit of government land to identify surplus sites that are suitable for social, affordable or market housing.

The locations of an initial set of 44 sites identified by the audit will be made public over the coming weeks and months as they are transferred to housing delivery agencies or brought to market.

Mobile Phones

71. How many mobile phones has your ministerial office been allocated as at 1 July 2024?

72. How many mobile phones in your ministerial office have been lost or stolen since 28 March 2023?

ANSWER:

71. I am advised:

Ministers' Staff Acceptable Use of Communication Devices Policy provides guidance on the use, loss, theft, and return of communication devices provided for business purposes. Minister's staff may use mobile telephones for business and (reasonable use) private purposes.

Under the current mobile plans all local and Australia-wide calls to land lines/mobiles and texts are included in the plan. Premium service calls, international calls and global roaming services are outside of the plan and may be still chargeable based on the principles below.

Ministers' staff mobile phone charges are paid from the Ministers' office budget except for the items listed below, which need to be paid as a private expense:

- Personal international calls from within Australia
- Personal travel related global roaming charges
- Personal premium number service calls

Any personal calls which are outside the plan need to be declared and paid for monthly. Declarations are not required otherwise.

The purchasing of technology items is in accordance with standard procurement arrangements. The costs form part of the Premier's Department Annual report.

72. I am advised:

Ministers' Staff Acceptable Use of Communication Devices Policy provides guidance on the use, loss, theft, and return of communication devices provided for business purposes. Minister's staff may use mobile telephones for business and (reasonable use) private purposes.

Under the current mobile plans all local and Australia-wide calls to land lines/mobiles and texts are included in the plan. Premium service calls, international calls and global roaming services are outside of the plan and may be still chargeable based on the principles below.

Ministers' staff mobile phone charges are paid from the Ministers' office budget except for the items listed below, which need to be paid as a private expense:

- Personal international calls from within Australia
- Personal travel related global roaming charges
- Personal premium number service calls

Any personal calls which are outside the plan need to be declared and paid for monthly. Declarations are not required otherwise.

The purchasing of technology items is in accordance with standard procurement arrangements. The costs for form part of the Premier's Department Annual report.

Efficiency dividends

73. Was an efficiency dividend applied to your portfolio department(s) / agency(s) within your portfolio responsibilities in:

(a) 2023-24?

(b) 2024-25?

i. If so, what was the efficiency dividend applied to each department/agency?

ii. What measures are being considered to achieve this efficiency dividend?

ANSWER:

73. I am advised:

The budget papers include detailed information on budgeted expenses, revenue and capital expenditure. This includes detailed financial statements for individual agencies as well as for government as a whole. The budget papers also outline the financial impact of measures in the budget on individual portfolios as well as for government as a whole.

Consultants

74. Since 28 March 2023, how many consultancy contracts have been signed in your portfolio agencies, broken down by agency?

- (a) What was the individual amount of each contract?
- (b) What is the purpose of each contract?
- (c) Who was the contract with?
- (d) Did the contract go through a competitive tender?

ANSWER:

74. I am advised:

Consultancy expenditure, including details of consulting engagements over \$50,000, are included in the annual reports of agencies and departments in accordance with the NSW Treasury Policy and Guidelines TPG23-10 - Annual Reporting Requirements.

Ministerial staff disclosure of gifts and/or hospitality

75. Does your ministerial office keep a register of gifts and/or hospitality for staff to make disclosures?

76. 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:

75. I am advised:

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

76. 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.

Department(s)/Agency(s) Travel

77. As Minister, do you approve overseas travel for public servants in your portfolio department(s) / Agency(s)?

(a) If yes, how many overseas trips have you approved since 28 March 2023?

78. Since 28 March 2023, how much has been spent on charter air flights by your portfolio agencies, broken down by agency?

79. Since 28 March 2023, how much has been spent on domestic flights by your portfolio agencies, broken down by agency?

(a) Of these, how many flights were taken in business class?

80. Since 28 March 2023, how much has been spent on international flights by your portfolio agencies, broken down by agency?

(a) Of these, how many flights were taken in business class?

(b) Of these, how many flights were taken in first class?

81. What was the total expenditure since 28 March 2023 by each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities on:

(a) Taxi hire?

(b) Ridesharing services?

(c) Limousine/private car hire?

(d) Hire car rental?

ANSWER:

77. 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. Information for the period prior to 30 June 2023 is available in agencies' 2022-23 annual reports. Information for the period between 1 July 2023 and 30 June 2024 will be available in agencies' 2023-24 annual reports.

78. I am advised:

Charter air flights are contained within the travel costs category in the Other Operating Expenses note of the audited financial statements within the Department / Agency's Annual Report. This is in accordance with the Treasury Direction TD23-11 Annual reporting requirements.

The travel costs for the period prior to 30 June 2023 form part of the Department of Premier and Cabinet / Agency Annual Report 2022-23.

Travel costs for the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 will form part of the Department / Agency Annual Report 2023-24.

79. I am advised:

Domestic travel is contained within the travel costs category in the Other Operating Expenses note of the audited financial statements within the Department / Agency's Annual Report. This is in accordance with the Treasury Direction TD23-11 Annual reporting requirements.

The travel costs for the period prior to 30 June 2023 form part of the Department of Premier and Cabinet / Agency Annual Report 2022-23.

Travel costs for the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 will form part of the Department / Agency Annual Report 2023-24.

Official travel is taken in accordance with the NSW government travel policy.

80. I am advised:

Domestic travel is contained within the travel costs category in the Other Operating Expenses note of the audited financial statements within the Department / Agency's Annual Report. This is in accordance with the Treasury Direction TD23-11 Annual reporting requirements.

The travel costs for the period prior to 30 June 2023 form part of the Department of Premier and Cabinet / Agency Annual Report 2022-23.

Travel costs for the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 will form part of the Department / Agency Annual Report 2023-24.

Official travel is taken in accordance with the NSW government travel policy.

81. I am advised:

The items are contained within the travel costs category in the Other Operating Expenses note of the audited financial statements within the Department / Agency's Annual Report.

This is in accordance with the Treasury Direction TD23-11 Annual reporting requirements.

The travel costs for the period prior to 30 June 2023 form part of the Department of Premier and Cabinet / Agency Annual Report 2022-23.

Travel costs for the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 will form part of the Department / Agency Annual Report 2023-24.

Training

82. 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:

82. I am advised:

Ministers have undertaken a program of Ministerial induction training.

Ministers have undertaken Respectful Workplace Policy Training.

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.

Cabinet documents

83. Since 28 March 2023, have you shared Cabinet documents with your Parliamentary Secretary?

ANSWER:

83. I do not have a Parliamentary Secretary.

Website usage

84. What were the top 20 most utilised (by data sent and received) unique domain names accessed by your ministerial office since 28 March 2023?

85. What were the top 20 most accessed (by number of times accessed) unique domain names accessed by your ministerial office since 28 March 2023?

ANSWER:

84. I am advised:

All acceptable use of IT services must be lawful, appropriate, and ethical.

The Ministers' Staff Acceptable Use of Network Services Policy is available in the Ministers' Office Handbook.

85. I am advised:

All acceptable use of IT services must be lawful, appropriate, and ethical.

The Ministers' Staff Acceptable Use of Network Services Policy is available in the Ministers' Office Handbook.

Department(s)/Agency(s) Employees

86. How many senior executive service employees were employed by each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities on:

(a) 28 March 2023?

(b) 1 July 2023?

(c) 1 January 2024?

(d) 1 July 2024?

87. How many public servants within your portfolio department(s)/agency(s) were paid more than the Premier in 2023-24?

88. How many redundancies were processed by each Department(s)/agency(s) within your portfolio responsibilities since 28 March 2023?

(a) Of these redundancies, how many were:

i. Voluntary?

ii. Forced?

(b) What was the total cost of all redundancies in each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities?

ANSWER:

86. I am advised:

The number of senior executives is publicly reported within Annual Reports.

87. I am advised:

The remuneration of public service senior executives is published in the respective Department(s)/Agency(s) Annual Reports.

88. I am advised:

Redundancies are published in the respective Department(s)/Agency(s) Annual Reports under employee related expenses.

Ministerial visits

89. Since 28 March 2023, have you visited any of these postcodes:

(a) 2077?

(b) 2079?

(c) 2080?

(d) 2081?

(e) 2082?

(f) 2083?

(g) 2117?

(h) 2118?

(i) 2119?

(j) 2120?

(k) 2121?

(l) 2125?

(m) 2126?

(n) 2151?

(o) 2154?

(p) 2156?

(q) 2157?

(r) 2158?

(s) 2159?

(t) 2756?

(u) 2775?

i. If yes to (a) to (u):

1. What was the purpose of the visit?

2. Did you make a funding announcement(s)?

ANSWER:

89. I am advised:

Ministers' diary disclosures are publicly available.

Premier's 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>

Camera, video recorder and microphones

90. Does your ministerial office have the following paid by your ministerial budget:

- (a) Handheld camera?
- (b) Handheld video recorder?
- (c) Microphone?

i. If yes to (a) to (c), how much is each worth when purchased?

ANSWER:

90.

I am advised:

Ministers' Staff Acceptable Use of Communication Devices Policy provides guidance on the use, loss, theft, and return of communication devices provided for business purposes.

The purchasing of technology items is in accordance with standard procurement arrangements. The costs form part of the Premier's Department Annual Report.

Cabinet Sub Committees

91. What cabinet sub committees are you a member of?

ANSWER:

91. I am advised:

Details of individual Cabinet committee members and the work of Cabinet committees are not generally made public. This reflects the longstanding Cabinet conventions of confidentiality and collective Ministerial responsibility, which are central to the Westminster system of government.

The NSW Cabinet Practice Manual is publicly available on the NSW Government website (www.nsw.gov.au) and provides information on operation of Cabinet and committees in NSW.

Questions from Ms Abigail Boyd MLC

Animals and domestic and family violence (DFV)

92. How much funding is provided to local councils to provide crisis accommodation in council run facilities for animals impacted by DFV?

(a) How many councils are provided with such funding by the NSW government?

ANSWER:

92. I am advised:

In 2023 the NSW Government distributed \$33.6 million in grants to non-government animal welfare organisations to improve companion animal welfare outcomes in NSW.

This included \$750,000 to Lucy's Project, to strengthen support services available to people with animals experiencing domestic and family violence.

RSPCA also used \$0.5m of their \$20.5 million grant from the NSW Government towards helping domestic violence clients via the Inspectorate and the OLG's complementary Community, Outreach and Education Programs.

I am advised that if councils receive NSW Government funds for animals impacted by DFV from another department or agency, those records are not held by OLG. OLG does not receive any detailed reporting on number of beds for animals at different locations.

Pet registry and community education

93. In answers to supplementary questions from Budget Estimates in March 2024, you said that engagement and education programs were under development. Will this include community engagement and education as well as stakeholder engagement?

(a) Of the \$21.6 million allocated toward the Pet Registry rollout, how much is specifically for community education and engagement?

(b) Will this include any targeted community education specifically in relation to desexing and microchipping?

ANSWER:

93. I am advised:

Yes. The new Pet Registry is a more user-friendly portal that gives OLG the ability to track and inform people of registration of their companion animal. The funding for the new Pet Registry is being used to educate councils and build capability for stakeholders, users and councils to correctly register companion animals.

Second-Generation Anticoagulant Rodenticides (SGARs)

94. Is DPI and or OLG aware of any councils in NSW that have successfully phased out or significantly reduced the use of SGARs in their management practices?
95. If so, what specific support or resources is DPI and or OLG providing to facilitate the sharing of these best practices and alternative control strategies with other councils across NSW?
96. Has the DPI and or OLG considered developing guidelines or a policy framework to assist councils in transitioning away from SGARs to more environmentally friendly rodent management methods?
97. What funding or support mechanisms, if any, are available to councils looking to implement alternative rodent management measures?

ANSWER:

- 94.** This is a matter for the Minister for the Environment, and the Minister for Agriculture.
- 95.** See answer to question 94.
- 96.** See answer to question 94.
- 97.** See answer to question 94.

Central Coast Council Administrator

98. Did the Central Coast Council Administrator Rik Hart consult with either the OLG or the Minister prior to reinstating the decision originally resolved at an Ordinary Council Meeting on 11 May 2021, to hold a referendum on 14 September 2024 with the question "do you favour a reduction in the number of Central Coast Councillors from fifteen to nine"?

99. Did the former Central Coast Council Administrator Dick Persson consult with either the OLG or the Minister at any time in relation to a potential referendum with the question "do you favour a reduction in the number of Central Coast Councillors from fifteen to nine"?

ANSWER:

98. I am advised:

Administrators of councils exercise all the functions of the governing body of the council. As with other councils, there is no requirement for councils under administration to consult with the Minister or OLG before making a decision to hold a referendum. While the Labor Party on the Central Coast supported a "no" vote for the referendum, the ability to run a referendum on this matter was within Mr Hart's powers.

99. I am advised:

Any consultation with the OLG that may have occurred would have predated my appointment as Minister.

Purchasing Card Policy (PCard)

Purpose of the policy

The Purchasing Card (PCard) policy specifies the requirements for using PCards, Virtual Cards and resources within the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (the department) are used efficiently and in a manner that maintains public trust, as is required by the department's Code of Ethics and Conduct.

This policy also establishes controls and procedures for the administration and use of PCards and identifies the accountability requirements for employees issued with a PCard, as well as those of their people leader (such as their manager).

In this policy, the term PCard also denotes a reference to a Virtual Card.

To whom this policy applies

Only permanent, temporary, and some casual employees are eligible for a PCard. Contractors and volunteers are not eligible for a PCard. Casual employees should seek guidance from the PCard Program Administrator to assess their eligibility.

This policy applies to all employees of the department. It also applies to employees of all Cluster entities that have people employed in or through the department.

This policy also applies to the Executive and Separate Agencies within the Cluster that have adopted this policy (see Table 1 – Policy Metadata).

Policy statement

Guiding principles

The department must be efficient, economical, and ethical in its use and management of public resources. The principles underpinning objectives of the department's PCard Policy are to:

- enable flexible, efficient, and cost-effective methods of purchasing business-related goods and services
 - ensure value for money in the procurement of quality goods and services
 - support the department to meet its obligations to suppliers
 - ensure accountability, consistency and alignment in financial management practices within the department and Cluster entities.
-

- identify sustainable and socially responsible purchasing solutions
- maintain standards of transparency, probity, ethics and integrity
- comply with NSW Government policy, namely TPP21-02 Use and Management of NSW Government Purchasing Cards.

The policy and associated procedure are consistent with the core requirements of NSW Treasury's TPP21-02 Use and Management of NSW Government Purchasing Cards:

- Core requirement 1: The Agency Head is ultimately responsible for the proper management and administration of PCards within the Agency
- Core requirement 2: Cardholders understand and are accountable for the responsible use of PCards.

PCards are:

- to be used for all business purchases under \$10,000 (inclusive of GST) where practicable and where the card limit permits
- to be used for travel-related expenses (meals, taxi, car parking and similar) where a travel allowance or reimbursement will not be claimed by the employee
- issued to individual employees, but the ownership of the PCard and the responsibility for payment to the Card Issuer is the Agency's responsibility
- provided to employees only where a legitimate ongoing business requirement can be demonstrated
- individually issued personally to the employee in the role that they are employed to undertake at the time of issue. Any changes to the role or Division of employment of the employee within the department or Cluster agency may necessitate return and closure of the PCard and, where appropriate, re-issuing of a new PCard.

Key requirements

The key requirements for the use and management of PCards are:

- prior to issue, an employee must enter into an agreement with both the department and the Card Issuer about the use of that PCard and complete a mandatory assessment to demonstrate their understanding of the responsibilities of holding a PCard.
- a register of PCards will be maintained by the Business Services Division

within Corporate Services to allow oversight of all current PCards in use by the department and Cluster agencies

- an audit of the PCard register will be undertaken by Corporate Services, at minimum, on an annual basis
- Corporate Services administer an assurance processes to detect inappropriate card use.

Failure to comply with this policy

Ethical and behavioural standards you are expected to demonstrate while working with the department are set out in the [Code of Ethics and Conduct](#). If you fail to meet those standards, corrective action may be taken in accordance with the [Code of Ethics and Conduct](#) and as outlined within the Roles and Responsibilities of this policy (for example making a PCard limit zero or revoking a manager's delegation.)

Review timeframe

The policy owner will review this policy no later than 3 years from the date the document is approved. The document may be reviewed earlier in response to post-implementation feedback, changes to legislation, or as necessary.

Related documents

Other documents that should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- PCard Procedures

Policy metadata

- Table 1. Policy metadata

Category	Description
Status	Approved
Date of approval	14 December 2021
Approver	Deputy Secretary Corporate Services
Group	Corporate Services
Division	Shared Services
Policy owner	Executive Director Shared Services
Branch	Finance Shared Services
Document location	DPE Intranet and Internet
Next review date	1 December 2024
Associated procedure	DPE PCard Procedures DPE Travel Procedures
Any additional applicability	N/A
Superseded document	DPE PCard Policy Dou PCard Policy OEH PCard Poicy
Further information	Finance.support@dpie.nsw.gov.au
Document Reference	Industry CM0 POL21/33

Version control

- Table 2. Version control

Version	Date issued	Change
1	20 December 2021	New policy
1.1	3 May 2022	Updated to reflect new branding and name change
1.2	12 February 2024	Updated to reflect new branding and name change

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Definitions

Appendix 2 - Roles and responsibilities

Appendix 3 – Cardholder Statement of Responsibility

Appendix 1 - Definitions

Term	Definition
Cardholder	Means the employee who has been issued with a PCard.
Card Issuer	Means the Government-nominated service provider for the administration and provision of PCards.
Controls	<p>Refers to the systems, policies, procedures, and processes that are designed to provide reasonable assurance regarding the achievement of objectives in the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> effectiveness and efficiency of operations reliability of financial reporting, and <p>compliance with laws and regulations.</p>
Employee	Comprises all who are defined as a 'government officer' at s. 2.9 Government Sector Finance Act 2018
Legitimate ongoing business requirement	Means that the expenditure has been undertaken for a purpose that is in direct connection with, or as a direct consequence of, the Cardholder's role responsibilities.
PCards Register	Means the register referred to in section Key Requirements
Purchasing card (PCard)	Refers to a credit card issued by a bank, building society or credit union which is used by a Cardholder to engage in transactions relating to the purchase of goods and services on behalf of the Agency. Purchasing cards are also known as corporate cards, Government cards, and procurement cards.
Virtual card (VCard)	Refers to a virtual version of a PCard, which works in the same way as a PCard without the physical card being issued. In this policy, the term PCard also denotes a reference to a VCard, for example the virtual PCard attached to the FCM travel booking system.

Appendix 2 – Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Agency Head	<p>Ensuring that an effective and appropriate PCard policy and associated procedure for the use and management of PCards are developed and implemented by the Corporate Services Group.</p>
Cardholder	<p>Complying with the requirements of this policy and associated procedure. Complying with the terms and conditions of the PCard issuers.</p> <p>Understanding and acknowledging the Cardholder Statement of Responsibility at Appendix 3.</p> <p>Safety and security of their PCard and account details, including storage of the PCard when not required for official business such as when the employee is on leave.</p> <p>Knowing the administrative conditions of their PCard and account, including relevant limits, thresholds and restrictions.</p> <p>Ensuring that the credit limits and delegation authorities are not exceeded (purchases must not be split to negate the credit transaction limits).</p> <p>Obtaining and retaining relevant documentation relating to transactions.</p> <p>Timely acquittal of transactions, which need to be acquitted within 28 days, If this is not adhered to their PCard limit may set to zero by the PCard Program Administrator.</p> <p>Reporting lost or stolen PCards to the Card Issuer and Shared Services.</p> <p>Timely reporting of unauthorised transactions.</p>
Finance Shared Services	<p>Maintaining a central register of purchasing cards.</p> <p>Ensuring a quality assurance process is in place that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyses PCard uptake and usage patterns, and • detects inappropriate PCard use. <p>Managing the relationship with the Card Issuer, including interactions between the Cardholder and the Card Issuer.</p>

Role	Responsibility
<p>PCard Program Administrator</p>	<p>Ensuring that responsibilities allocated to the Finance Shared Services team are discharged appropriately.</p> <p>Collating and confirming card accounts for the Secretary and executive members (senior executives reporting directly to the Secretary), as delegated by the Executive Director – Business Services.</p> <p>Preparation of regular credit card expenditure reports for the Secretary or Secretary’s delegate, detailing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a summary of credit card expenditure and usage for levels and types of use • any identified instances of inappropriate or fraudulent use, and • the appropriateness of credit limits. Providing advice and instructions on action required where there is evidence of misuse or concerns about the appropriate use of a PCard. <p>Ensuring the effective implementation of controls and oversight mechanisms for the PCard Program across the department and Cluster agencies.</p>
<p>People leader (such as Supervisor or Manager)</p>	<p>Monitoring PCard use.</p> <p>Reviewing and approving PCard reconciliations submitted by employees as well as ensuring compliance with the processes detailed in this policy and the associated procedure.</p> <p>Increasing the use of PCards through procurement processes.</p> <p>Assessing the business need for the retention of a PCard for an existing cardholder who is commencing a new role within their business unit.</p> <p>Arrange cancellation of the card with Finance Shared Services if the PCard is no longer applicable for the employee.</p> <p>Exercising their duties in accordance with this policy. In the event of a breach by a supervisor, the department or the cluster agency may choose to withdraw the supervisors’ delegation or commence internal disciplinary action. This will be done by the PCard Program Administrator.</p> <p>Notifying Finance Shared Services of the need to change a Cardholder’s existing credit limit and facility/entity should there be valid reason to do so.</p>

Appendix 3 – Cardholder statement of responsibility

The department has approved the issue of an NSW Government purchasing card (PCard) to you (the Cardholder). As a Cardholder you are required to read and comply with this Statement which outlines your responsibilities with respect to the use and management of your PCard. You must understand and agree to the following terms and conditions:

Safety and Security

- I sign my PCard which is only to be used by me.
- I understand that I am the only authorised user of this PCard.
- I am personally responsible for the security and safe keeping of my PCard and the relevant card account details, including my Personal Identification Number (PIN) and card number.
- If my card is stolen or lost, I will immediately report it to the Card Issuer and Finance Shared Services.

Official Business Use

- I will only use the PCard for Business Purposes in accordance with the Department's Purchasing Card (PCard) Policy and as per the Card Issuer's conditions of use. "Business Purposes" means that the expenditure has been undertaken for a purpose that is in direct connection with, or as a direct consequence of, my role/position responsibilities within the department.
- I will comply with the department's policies, processes, and procedures for authorised expenditure.
- I understand that all expenditure charged to my PCard is subject to examination and approval by a delegated Employee of the Department.
- I understand the relevant expenditure categories which are authorised for PCard expenditure.
- I will collect and retain the required documentation to support all transactions made with the PCard that are valued at \$30 or more. Where the required documentation to support a transaction has not been retained, I will complete a business declaration (through MyExpenses) or a statutory declaration (through Expense8) detailing the nature of the expense and confirming that the expense was for Business Purposes only.

- I will acquit and submit my card transactions to my manager in accordance with prescribed deadlines.
- I understand that I must not make cash withdrawals or seek cash advances using the PCard.
- I will not exceed my credit limit on the PCard unless I have obtained prior documented approval.
- I will not split transactions on the PCard to avoid exceeding transaction limits.
- I will not make deposits into the PCard account.

Disciplinary Sanctions

I understand that if I use the PCard for purposes other than Business Purposes, or in a manner which is inconsistent with the conditions of use, I may have my PCard withdrawn, and/or suspended or cancelled. I understand that I may also be subject to the consequences as detailed in the Breaches section of this policy department's Purchasing Card (PCard) Policy and associated procedure.

I understand that in the event of loss or theft through negligence or non-compliance with the conditions of use, I may be responsible for any liability incurred.

Change of Employment Conditions and/or Extended Leave

I agree to notify and return my PCard to the Director Shared Services in the following circumstances:

- if I leave my employment of my own accord
- if my employment is terminated
- if I am suspended pending an investigation into my conduct (whether related to PCard use or not)
- if I go on extended leave for more than 60 days
- if I am reassigned to a role or position where a PCard is not deemed necessary to the performance of my duties.

Privacy

- I am aware that my personal information has been collected and will be held by the department on an ongoing basis to meet the various requirements in relation to the administration of PCards. I understand that the department may need to

disclose my personal information to any party that is legally entitled to access the information.

- I am aware that any personal information related to the administration of PCards will be collected, retained, protected and disposed of by the department under the provisions of the *Privacy and Personal Information Act 1998*, and in line with the department's privacy management plan.