

**Submission
No 12**

**INQUIRY INTO INTEGRITY, EFFICACY, AND VALUE FOR
MONEY OF THE LOCAL SMALL COMMITMENTS
ALLOCATION PROCESS**

Name: Ms Suzanne Lawrence
Date Received: 20 March 2025

Ms Abigail Boyd, MLC
Parliamentary Chair
Parliament House
6 Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

20 March 2025

Dear Chair,

RE: Parliamentary Inquiry into the Integrity, Efficacy and Value for Money of the Local Small Allocations Process

I write to provide evidence to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Integrity, Efficacy and Value for Money of the Local Small Allocations Process.

I welcome the opportunity to address and correct claims made by Mr Ray Williams MP, Member for Kellyville, on 14 February 2025.

I also note with approval the correspondence the Committee received from Ms Angela Van Dyke, CEO of North West Community Services, formerly known as Riverstone Neighbourhood Centre and Community Aid Inc.

For context, I am very active in my local community. I am the President of the North West Business Chamber (NWBC) and a past board member of North West Community Services (NWCS).

Over the last ten years, I have sat on several advisory committees at Blacktown City Council. In 2022, I was named Blacktown City Council Citizen of the Year for my work within the community, particularly around emergency response to flooding and COVID-19.

I commenced employment with the NSW Parliament in April 2023 as the Senior Electorate Officer at the Riverstone Electoral Office. Before this time, I was not affiliated with a political party.

Due to my role in the NWBC and the Chamber's impartiality requirement, I was not involved in Mr Kirby's election campaign.

Riverstone is the centre of the North West Growth Area and has experienced exponential population growth in the past. Covid and flooding in the region have put many community members under financial stress.

This hardship has impacted the businesses and general community, and we saw a 300% increase in residents requiring emergency assistance. Facing this alarming increase, the Chamber, in collaboration with NWCS, began to advocate for funding from all levels of government.

On 22 November 2022, I represented North West Business Chamber as President in a joint meeting with NWCS CEO Angela Van Dyke and Mr Williams at his Rouse Hill office.

Ms Van Dyke had written to Mr Williams to request a meeting. All correspondence before and following the meeting where addresses by Ms Van Dyke CEO of NWCS, not me.

The purpose of the meeting was to advocate for investing in our community. The dollar value of the funding or provision of a resilience bus subsequently funded by the LSCA program was not mentioned.

Acknowledging the need for increased DCJ TEI funding, Mr Williams requested that Ms Van Dyke, as the CEO of NWCS, submit a request in writing so he could advocate to the Minister.

As requested, Ms Van Dyke wrote to Mr Williams on 1st December 2022 and received a response in February 2023. I was not included in the follow-up correspondence, but it is important to note there is no mention of \$50k for a resilience bus.

My first knowledge of the funding opportunity for the Resilience bus was on 21 March 2023 at the NWCS rebranding launch. Mr Kirby informed NWCS that if Labor were elected to the government, there would be an opportunity to apply for funding through the Local Small Commitments Allocation regardless of whether Mr Kirby was elected.

I was not involved in the grant application from NWCS or any election commitments by Mr Kirby.

I am confused and disappointed that Mr Williams's friendship with my family, my role in the community, and my involvement in seeking an MP's assistance to support the people of the North West seems to have been used as an opportunity for political point-scoring, with what appears to be little regard for the facts.

Despite the testimony presented to the committee, I wish to make it clear that I am not now, nor have I ever been, the head of NWCS. I have never held any position with NWCS that could be considered 'head of the organisation', I have never received any financial compensation from the organisation or held any financial interest in it.

I also wish to place on the record in relation to Mr Williams's comments about the Riverstone candidacy: during the meeting to which Mr Williams referred, Mr Williams asked if I intended to nominate for the Riverstone seat. I made it clear that I was not a party member and had no intention of running for elected office.

I would emphasise that I was not involved in the LSCA process and did not benefit from it. Thank you for the opportunity to correct the record.

Suzanne Lawrence
Senior Electoral Officer
Office of Warren Kirby MP