



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEES

BUDGET ESTIMATES 2021-2022 Supplementary Questions

Portfolio Committee No. 7 – Planning and Environment

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Hearing: Tuesday 8 March 2022

Answers due by: 4 April 2022

Budget Estimates secretariat
Phone 9230 2112
BudgetEstimates@parliament.nsw.gov.au

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Questions from the Hon Mark Buttigieg MLC *(on behalf of the Opposition)*

Disability Employment

1. How many employees who identify with having a disability are employed by the Office of Local Government?
 - (a) How many senior managers who identify with having a disability are employed by the Office of Local Government?
 - (b) Does the Office of Local Government have a quota in terms on employing staff who have or identify as having a disability?
2. What provisions/protocols are in place at the Office of Local Government to specifically assist staff who have or identify in having a disability?
3. How many employees who identify with having a disability are employed by:
 - (a) Albury City Council
 - (b) Armidale Regional Council
 - (c) Ballina Shire Council
 - (d) Balranald Shire Council
 - (e) Bathurst Regional Council
 - (f) Bayside Council
 - (g) Bega Valley Shire Council
 - (h) Bellingen Shire Council
 - (i) Berrigan Shire Council
 - (j) Blacktown City Council
 - (k) Bland Shire Council
 - (l) Blayney Shire Council
 - (m) Blue Mountains City Council
 - (n) Bogan Shire Council
 - (o) Bourke Shire Council

- (p) Brewarrina Shire Council
- (q) Broken Hill City Council
- (r) Burwood Council
- (s) Byron Shire Council
- (t) Cabonne Council
- (u) Camden Council
- (v) Campbelltown City Council
- (w) City of Canada Bay Council
- (x) Canterbury Bankstown Council
- (y) Carrathool Shire Council
- (z) Central Coast Council
- (aa) Central Darling Shire Council
- (bb) Cessnock City Council
- (cc) Clarence Valley Council
- (dd) Cobar Shire Council
- (ee) Coffs Harbour City Council
- (ff) Coolamon Shire Council
- (gg) Coonamble Shire Council
- (hh) Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council
- (ii) Cowra Shire Council
- (jj) Cumberland Council
- (kk) Dubbo Regional Council
- (ll) Dungog Shire Council
- (mm) Edward River Council
- (nn) Eurobodalla Shire Council
- (oo) Fairfield City Council
- (pp) Federation Council

- (qq) Forbes Shire Council
- (rr) Georges River Council
- (ss) Gilgandra Shire Council
- (tt) Glen Innes Severn Council
- (uu) Goulburn Mulwaree Council
- (vv) Greater Hume Shire Council
- (ww) Griffith City Council
- (xx) Gunnedah Shire Council
- (yy) Gwydir Shire Council
- (zz) Hawkesbury City Council
- (aaa) Hay Shire Council
- (bbb) Hilltops Council
- (ccc) Hornsby Council
- (ddd) Hunters Hill Council
- (eee) Inner West Council
- (fff) Inverell Shire Council
- (ggg) Junee Shire Council
- (hhh) Kempsey Shire Council
- (iii) Kiama Municipal Council
- (jjj) Ku-ring-gai Council
- (kkk) Kyogle Council
- (lll) Lachlan Shire Council
- (mmm) Lake Macquarie City Council
- (nnn) Lane Cove Council
- (ooo) Leeton Shire Council
- (ppp) Lismore City Council
- (qqq) City of Lithgow Council

(rrr) Liverpool City Council
(sss) Liverpool Plains Shire Council
(ttt) Lockhart Shire Council
(uuu) Maitland City Council
(vvv) Mid-Coast Council
(www) Mid-Western Regional Council
(xxx) Moree Plains Shire Council
(yyy) Mosman Council
(zzz) Murray River Council
(aaaa) Murrumbidgee Council
(bbbb) Muswellbrook Shire Council
(cccc) Nambucca Valley Council
(dddd) Narrabri Shire Council
(eeee) Narrandera Shire Council
(ffff) Narromine Shire Council
(gggg) Newcastle City Council
(hhhh) North Sydney Council
(iiii) Northern Beaches Council
(jjjj) Oberon Council
(kkkk) Orange City Council
(llll) Parkes Shire Council
(mmmm) City of Parramatta Council
(nnnn) Penrith City Council
(oooo) Port Macquarie-Hastings Council
(pppp) Port Stephens Council
(qqqq) Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council
(rrrr) Randwick City Council

(ssss) Richmond Valley Council
(tttt) Council of the City of Ryde
(uuuu) Shellharbour City Council
(vvvv) Shoalhaven City Council
(wwww) Singleton Council
(xxxx) Snowy Monaro Regional Council
(yyyy) Snowy Valleys Council
(zzzz) Strathfield Municipal Council
(aaaa) Sutherland Shire Council
(bbbb) Council of the City of Sydney
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(eeee) Tenterfield Shire Council
(ffff) The Hills Shire Council
(gggg) Tweed Shire Council
(hhhh) Upper Hunter Shire Council
(iiii) Upper Lachlan Shire Council
(jjjj) Uralla Shire Council
(kkkk) Wagga Wagga City Council
(llll) Walcha Council
(mmmm) Walgett Shire Council
(nnnn) Warren Shire Council
(oooo) Warrumbungle Shire Council
(pppp) Waverley Council
(qqqq) Weddin Shire Council
(rrrr) Wentworth Shire Council
(ssss) Willoughby City Council

- (ttttt) Wingecarribee Shire Council
- (uuuuu) Wollondilly Shire Council
- (vvvvv) Wollongong City Council
- (wwwww) Woollahra Municipal Council
- (xxxxx) Yass Valley Council

4. How many senior managers who identify with having a disability are employed by:

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Councils in administration

5. What is the current financial state of Central Darling Shire?
 - (a) Do you anticipate Central Darling Shire Council's administration period will end before the current 2024 deadline?
 - (b) Do you anticipate Central Darling Shire Council's administration period will be extended beyond the 2024 deadline?
 - (c) What work has the Office of Local Government done with those at Central Darling Shire's Council to help the council find its way out of administration?
 - (d) What is the Office of Local Government doing with those at Central Darling Shire Council in the next 12 months to help the council find its way out administration?
 - (e) What is the longest a council in NSW has been placed in administration by the Minister for Local Government?
 - (f) Have you visited Central Darling Shire local government area since being appointed Minister for Local Government?
 - i. If not, when do you plan to visit the Central Darling Shire local government area?
 - (g) Have you personally spoken to anyone at Central Darling Shire Council since being appointed Minister for Local Government?
 - i. If so, when was that and who did you speak to?
 - ii. If not, when do you plan to?
6. What is the current financial state of Balranald Shire Council?
 - (a) When do you anticipate the administration period of Balranald Shire will cease?
 - (b) Have you spoken to anyone at Balranald Shire Council since being appointed Minister for Local Government?
 - i. If so, who and when?
 - ii. If not, when do you plan to?
7. Balranald Shire and Central Darling Shire are both located in the far west of the state. Has the Office of Local Government identified any particular reasons for the hardship experienced by councils in the far west?
 - (a) What is the Office of Local Government doing to specifically support councils in the far west?

8. Who are government appointed council administrators responsible to?
 - (a) What sanctions can be imposed on administrators who act improperly?
 - (b) In July 2021, Central Coast Council sold land in Warnervale to developer Winarch for \$27 million. Recently Winarch sold 25 lots on that parcel of land for \$120 million. Is that transaction being investigated by the Office of Local Government, the Minister for Local Government or the ministerial staff?
 - i. If so, where is that investigation up to?
 - ii. If not, why not?

Mobile coverage

9. What responsibility does the Office of Local Government have in terms of approving applications for mobile phone towers made on behalf of councils?
 - (a) What is the process for the Office of Local Government from the time the application is received to the time a determination is made?
 - (b) Is there any protocols in place to expedite the approvals process particularly in areas of known blackspots?
 - (c) Can the Office of Local Government provide a timeline for when the application for a mobile phone tower to cater for residents in the Ponds will be determined?
 - (d) How many applications for phone towers did the Office of Local Government receive so far in 21/22?
 - i. How many of those applications have been determined?
 - ii. How many of those applications were approved?
 - (e) How many applications for phone towers did the Office of Local Government receive in 20/21?
 - i. How many of those applications have been determined?
 - ii. How many of those applications were approved?

Code of Conduct

10. How many code of conduct complaints have been referred to the Office of Local Government so far in 2021/22?
 - (a) How many of those complaints have been resolved?

- (b) How many Office of Local Government staff members are tasked with investigating code of conduct complaints?
- (c) How many staff members were tasked with investigating code of conduct complaints in 2018/19?
- (d) How many staff members were tasked with investigating code of conduct complaints in 2015/16?

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Questions from Ms Abigail Boyd MLC

Council pounds and animal shelters

11. The NSW OLG oversees and manages the Companion Animals Fund (CAF) which is made up from registration fees collected from the NSW public.
 - (a) How much money was collected during the 2020/21 period and the amount re-distributed to NSW councils?
 - (b) How much of the fund has been used by local government councils to pay ways for rangers rather than into the direct care of impounded animals or community support and services from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2021?
12. During the March 2021 budget estimate hearings, I raised particular questions with the former Minister for Local Government about NSW OLG funding to RSPCA NSW. In written responses provided, it was confirmed that the Minister for Local Government announced \$10.5 million for RSPCA shelters at Yagoona and throughout regional NSW for capital works. A breakdown of the facilities and works that received funding through a recent funding round was also provided.
 - (a) Given your ministerial role which applies to council pounds but not shelters run by RSPCA NSW, can you confirm that RSPCA NSW was granted NSW OLG funding rather than that funding going towards NSW council pounds?
 - (b) Are you also aware that some of this money did not go towards animals including:
 - i. \$685,00 consisting of project coordination and management/engineering and consulting, state wide travel and motor vehicles, and IT project support,
 - ii. \$100,000 for a DPI puppy taskforce building, and
 - iii. \$20,000 for compliance works for the Tweed region, even though as I understand it RSPCA NSW have no public or community services in the Tweed region apart from an Op Shop used for their own fundraising purposes?
13. I understand the former Young council had a large amount of money budgeted or allocated to construct a new council pound. The issue became quite public after a campaign run by a prominent animal activist generated considerable media attention and shamed council for its housing of impounded animals in a non-compliant facility, its high kill rate as well as the number

of dogs contracting the deadly parvovirus disease whilst in the pound and either dying or needing to be euthanised.

- (a) Are you able to confirm the amount of money budgeted for the proposed new Young pound?
 - (b) Are you able to confirm the status of, or what became of the money budgeted for a new Young council pound?
14. Current legislation does, I understand, require NSW councils to ensure public access to their council pounds to assist owners to locate and reclaim missing or lost animals, and to promote adoption by members of the public or rescue by rescue and rehoming organisations. Given your personal hands-on experience with Hilltops council, are you able to explain why neither the Boorowa, Harden or Young pounds are ever open to the public?
15. The previous Minister for Local Government had committed to undertake discussions with the former Minister for Agriculture about the shooting of companion animals in council pounds.
- (a) Are you aware of any progress with such discussions?
 - (b) Are you prepared to continue these discussions with the new Minister for Agriculture so we can finally outlaw the shooting of animals in council pounds?
16. The previous Minister for Local Government indicated she was not aware of the level of non-compliance with NSW council pounds.
- (a) Are you aware or how will you make yourself aware through the independent auditing which is clearly urgently needed?
17. Minister are you familiar with the 15-step plan devised by Animal Liberation regarding urgently needed reforms for NSW noncompliant council pounds?
- (a) Would you personally be prepared to hold discussions about these 15-steps and the Animal Liberation proposed reforms?
18. Minister are you able to advise us how many animals impounded in council facilities have died or required urgent evacuation during the recent flooding events across NSW?
- (a) How many NSW councils have emergency plans in place for such situations (fires/floods) to protect impounded animals?