



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEES

BUDGET ESTIMATES 2023-2024
Answers to Supplementary
questions

Portfolio Committee No. 8 – Customer Service

Local Government

Hearing: Friday 10 November 2023

Answers due by: Thursday 7 December 2023

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Questions from Dr Amanda Cohn MLC

Land sale by Central Coast Council

1. Land at Thompson Vale Road, Doyalson was acquired by Wyong Council in 2014 for \$7 million and sold by Central Coast Council in July 2022 for \$5.5 million. What is the system for administrators to assess market and land valuation?
2. Are administrators required to consider potential income streams as a result of keeping environmentally significant land assets with the goal of financial sustainability? (For example, by the Biodiversity Conservation Trust)
3. The Minister for the Central Coast and Member for Wyong has committed to examining the decision to sell the environmentally significant site to "ascertain whether correct procedures were followed." What work has or will be undertaken by the Office of Local Government regarding this?
4. Can sales of land by a council under administration be challenged on the grounds that false or inadequate information informed the sale?

ANSWER:

1 – 2. I am advised:

When administrators are appointed under the Local Government Act 1993, the administrator has all the functions of the Council under section 258. In the exercise of their functions, administrators are bound by the same obligations as the governing body. The decision to sell land is a matter for the administrator. The tender process is designed so that the best public value for the sale of the land is achieved.

3. This is a matter for the Minister for Central Coast and Member for Wyong.

4. I am advised:

The Local Government Act 1993 provides any person with the opportunity to seek an order from the NSW Land and Environment Court that there has been a breach in the requirements of the Act. However, this is a legal test and requires any applicant to demonstrate that there has been a legal failure of process.

Councillors Code of Conduct

5. Will the Minister's planned review of the Code of Conduct include reviewing the lack of councillors' right to appeal?

ANSWER:

The Code of Conduct review will consider a range of options.

Private certifiers

6. Will certification powers be returned to local councils?
- (a) What work is being done by the Minister to tighten regulatory control on private certifiers in the interim?
7. How is the Minister facilitating financial support or resource sharing to ensure councils have full access to Australian Building Standards, regardless of their capacity to pay for access?

ANSWER:

This matter falls under the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading.

Climate change, community safety and asset management

8. How is the Government supporting councils adapting to the warming climate and ensuring community safety?
9. What work is being done to ensure that councils who reconstruct infrastructure assets after natural disasters are not penalised through the Office of Local Government's financial benchmarking processes?

ANSWER:

8. This matter is within the jurisdiction of the NSW Reconstruction Authority, which falls under the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces.

9. I am advised:

The Office of Local Government is reviewing performance measurement and asset ratios. It is also assisting the NSW Reconstruction Authority in its development of guidance for Disaster Adaptation Plans.

Questions from the Hon. Chris Rath MLC (on behalf of the Opposition)

Local Small Commitments Allocation

10. In relation to the Local Small Commitments Allocation and your electorate of Heffron, how many local projects did you commit to fund?
- (a) Are you able to provide a list of those projects, including how much was allocated to each?
 - (b) Were you personally responsible for the allocation of these projects or were others involved?
11. What was the total amount of taxpayer money that you personally committed would be spent on local projects in your electorate of Heffron?
- (a) Did you spend the entire amount you were allocated?
 - (b) Who told you the amount you were allocated?
12. What was the process for recording these commitments to ensure that they would be honoured if Labor won Government?
- (a) Who did you seek approval from when it came to these announcements?
 - (b) Who kept record of these projects?
 - (c) Someone needed to track the commitments being made: who was responsible for that in your electorate?
13. Did you declare a conflict of interest in relation to any of these projects?
- (a) If so, who did you declare it to and how was the conflict managed?
 - (b) Are you aware of any conflict of interest provisions or rules in relation to this scheme?
 - i. Did you ask about the process or any obligations that you had?

ANSWER:

I am advised:

\$400,000 was committed to the Heffron electorate in the lead up to the March 2023 NSW State Election. All commitments are now subject to assessment in accordance with the Grants Administration Guide.

I am advised that details of successful grants will be made publicly available on the NSW Grants and Funding website at www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/lscg. Election commitments were submitted to the Parliamentary Budget Office.

All candidates for the Legislative Assembly who are current Members of Parliament are subject to the Code of Conduct for Members of the Legislative Assembly.

The Code outlines the ethical and legal obligations for Members of the Legislative Assembly and each member is expected to abide by these obligations.

Allocation of Housing and Productivity Contribution Funding to Local Government

14. The Minister for Planning and Public Spaces has indicated that \$1 billion will be allocated to Local Government over 10 years from the Housing and Productivity Contribution, can you advise how much is allocated to Local Government in:

- (a) FY 2023/24
- (b) FY 2024/25
- (c) FY 2025/26
- (d) FY 2026/27

ANSWER:

This matter falls under the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces.

Development Application Withdrawals by Council

15. Can the Minister please provide how many Development Applications have been withdrawn by council, in each of the following years:

- (a) FY 2021/22
- (b) FY 2022/23

ANSWER:

There were 9,040 DA withdrawals between July 2021 and July 2023. See **Appendix A** on page 39 for the full data.

Agency Invoices

16. How many invoices to suppliers or contactors from your portfolio agency were not paid on time since 28 March 2023, broken down by agency?
17. How many invoices to suppliers or contactors from your portfolio agency were paid over 30 days late on time since 28 March 2023, broken down by agency?
18. How many invoices to suppliers or contactors from your portfolio agency were paid over 60 days late on time since 28 March 2023, broken down by agency?
- (a) What was the penalty for paying suppliers or contactors late, broken down by agency?

ANSWER:

16-18. I am advised:

Details are contained in the Department of Planning and Environment's annual report under the heading 'account payment performance'.

Details for the period 28 March 2023 to 30 June 2023 form part of each department annual report for 2022-2023.

Details for the period of 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 will form part of the Department annual report for 2023-2024.

Car/Driver

19. Has your Ministerial car been subject to any traffic or parking fines?
- (a) If so, please provide details of each fine?
- (b) Who was driving the car at the time of each incident?
- (c) Who paid any of the fines?
- (d) What was the penalty for paying suppliers or contactors late, broken down by agency?
20. Has your Ministerial Car been pulled over by the police?
- (a) If so, who was driving the car?

ANSWER:

19. This matter is the subject of a *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (GIPA) (Cross-14) release, reference number PD_A5881802 that can be found on the Premier's Department disclosure log.

Where a fine is incurred the payment of the fine is the responsibility of the driver of the vehicle.

20. I am advised:

The Premier's Department does not record these types of events.

Complaints

21. Has the Minister been the subject of any workplace complaints, including bullying, harassment, and sexual harassment?

ANSWER:

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 and is published on the Cabinet Office's Website. 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.

Consultants

22. 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?

23. Have any Department/agencies within your portfolio responsibilities engaged any consultants to provide the following services or advice since 28 March 2023:

(a) Social media?

i. What were the cost of these services?

(b) Photography?

i. What were the cost of these services?

(c) Videography?

i. What were the cost of these services?

(d) Acting training?

i. What were the cost of these services?

(e) Ergonomics?

i. What were the cost of these services?

24. 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 to a competitive tender?

ANSWER:

22-24.

I am advised:

Legal costs for the period 28 March 2023 to 30 June 2023 form part of each department annual report for 2022-2023. Details for the period of 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 will form part of the Department annual report for 2023-2024.

Where these types of expenditure are incurred, the costs are disclosed in the Other Operating Expenses note of the audited financial statements within the annual reports of agencies and departments.

Details for the period 28 March 2023 to 30 June 2023 form part of each department annual report for 2022-2023. Also, details for the period of 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 will form part of the Department annual report for 2023-2024.

Departmental Credit cards

25. For each department, statutory agency and/or other body in the Minister's portfolio please report:

(a) How many credit cards are currently on issue for staff? i. 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 and what was the card holder's employment grade?
- (e) How many credit cards have been reported lost or stolen?
 - i. What was the cost to replace them?
- (f) How many credit card purchases were deemed to be illegitimate or contrary to agency policy?
 - i. What was the total value of those purchases?
 - ii. 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?
 - iii. Were all those amounts repaid?
 - iv. If no, how many were not repaid, and what was the total value thereof?
- (g) What was the largest purchase that was deemed illegitimate or contrary to agency policy and asked to be repaid, and what was the cardholder's employment grade?
 - i. What amount was repaid, in full?
 - ii. What amount was left unpaid?
- (h) 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?
- (i) Can a copy of the staff credit card policy please be provided?

ANSWER:

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.

Department/Agency Staffing

26. How many senior executive service employees were employed by each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities on:
- (a) 28 March 2023?
 - (b) 23 October 2023?
27. What is the expenditure on senior executive service employees employed by each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities since 28 March 2023?
28. How many individuals were employed as internal legal counsel by each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities on:
- (a) 28 March 2023?
 - (b) 23 October 2023?
29. What is the expenditure on internal legal counsel employees employed by each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities 28 March 2023?
30. How many redundancies were processed by each Department/agency 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?
31. Is any former employee from your ministerial office now employed by any Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities?
32. How many staff were dismissed from each Department/agency under your portfolio responsibilities since 28 March 2023?
- (a) Without identifying individuals, what were the reason(s) for each dismissal?
33. What was the total amount each of the Departments/agencies under your portfolio responsibilities spent on stationery since 28 March 2023?
34. How many employees in each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities are working in an 'acting' capacity?
35. What is the average number of days worked from home by employees in each Department/Agency within your portfolio responsibilities?

36. 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?

37. Do any senior executive service employees in any of the Departments/agencies under your portfolio responsibilities have a driver that is paid for by the Department/agency?

- (a) If so, what is the number of senior executive service employees that have a driver, and which senior executive service employees have a driver?
- (b) How much was spent on these drivers since 28 March 2023?

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

39. 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?
- (b) Of these, how many flights were taken in first class?

40. Since 28 March 2023, how much has been spent on overseas 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?

ANSWER:

26. I am advised:

Numbers of senior executives are publicly reported within annual reports as per standard practice.

27. I am advised:

Numbers and remuneration of senior executives are published in annual reports. Salaries and wages are included under employee related expenses in the financial statements of these annual reports.

28. I am advised:

Staff numbers are included in the annual reports of agencies and departments. Staff salaries are set by relevant awards, largely the Crown Employees (Public Sector – Salaries) award.

29. I am advised:

Staff numbers are included in the annual reports of agencies and departments. Staff salaries are set by relevant awards, largely the Crown Employees (Public Sector – Salaries) award.

30. I am advised:

Redundancies are published in the annual reports of agencies and departments under employee related expenses.

31. I am advised:

The employment of former Ministerial office staff is not tracked. Ministerial office staff must comply with their ethical obligations under the NSW Office Holder's Staff Code of Conduct, including after the cessation of employment.

32. I am advised:

The termination of an employee is treated confidentially and is managed in accordance with the Government Sector Employment Act 2013 and relevant accompanying policies.

33. This is contained in the Department's Annual Report.

34. I am advised:

Internal mobility is encouraged and acting arrangements are supported as part of agency/department Performance Development Frameworks.

35. I am advised:

Flexible work arrangements are tailored on an individual basis and are discussed as part of ongoing conversations which are embedded in agency/department Performance Development Frameworks.

36. This is contained in the Department's Annual Report.

37. I am advised:

No senior executive employed within my portfolio agencies/departments has a driver.

38. I am advised:

Charter flights are contained within the travel costs category in the Other Operating Expenses note of the audited financial statements within department/agency annual reports.

The travel costs for the period 28 March 2023 to 30 June 2023 will form part of each agency/department annual report for 2022-2023. Travel costs for the period of 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 will form part of each agency/department annual report for 2023-2024.

39. I am advised:

Domestic travel is contained within the travel costs category in the Other Operating Expenses note of the audited financial statements within department/agency annual reports.

Travel costs for the period 28 March 2023 to 30 June 2023 will form part of each agency/department annual report for 2022-2023. Travel costs for the period of 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 will form part of each agency/department annual report for 2023-24.

40. I am advised:

Travel costs for the period 28 March 2023 to 30 June 2023 will form part of each agency/department annual report for 2022-2023. Travel costs for the period of 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 will form part of each agency/department annual report for 2023-2024.

Efficiency Dividends

41. Has Was an efficiency dividend applied to any Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities in the 2023-24 NSW Budget?

(a) If so, what was the efficiency dividend applied to each Department/agency?

(b) What measures are being considered to achieve this efficiency dividend?

ANSWER:

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.

GIPA Applications

42. How many GIPA Applications have been received by your ministerial office since 28 March 2023?
- (a) How many of these Applications have been accepted?
 - (b) How many of these Applications have been rejected?
 - (c) If so, what were the reasons provided?
 - (d) How many of these Applications were re-assigned?
 - (e) How many of these Applications had fees waived/reduced?
 - (f) Please provide in table form the following details of each Application received by your office:
 - i. Date received.
 - ii. Date acknowledged.
 - iii. Date responded.
 - iv. The description provided for the information sought.
43. How many GIPA Applications have been received by each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities since 28 March 2023?
- (a) How many of these Applications have been accepted?
 - (b) How many of these Applications have been rejected?
 - i. If so, what were the reasons provided?
 - (c) How many of these Applications were re-assigned?
 - (d) How many of these Applications had fees waived/reduced?
 - (e) Please provide in table form the following details of each Application received by your office:
 - i. Date received.
 - ii. Date acknowledged
 - iii. Date responded
 - iv. The description provided for the information sought.

ANSWER:

42. 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.

43. I am advised:

Information concerning agency/department obligations under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (the Act) is included in the relevant agency/department annual report in accordance with section 125(1) of the Act.

Hospitality

44. How much has your ministerial office spent on hospitality, including catering and beverages, since 28 March 2023?

45. How much have Departments/agencies within your portfolio responsibilities spent on hospitality, including catering and beverages, since 28 March 2023?

46. Have you been the recipient of any free hospitality?

(a) What was the total value of the hospitality received?

47. 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 publicly?

(c) Do staff declare their gifts publicly?

ANSWER:

44. I am advised:

Catering provided for official purposes may be funded from the Ministerial Office Budget. 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.

45. I am advised:

Hospitality costs are contained within the other expenses category in the Other Operating Expenses note of the audited financial statements within each agency/department annual report.

The costs for the period 28 March 2023 to 30 June 2023 form part of each agency/department annual report for 2022-2023. Costs for the period of 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 will form part of each agency/department annual report for 2023-2024.

46. I am advised:

Ministers are required to declare to the Secretary of The Cabinet Office certain gifts and hospitality with a market value of more than \$500 under Part 4 of the schedule to the Ministerial Code.

This is a continuous obligation for which Ministers are personally responsible. I comply with my obligations under Part 4 of the Schedule to the Ministerial Code.

47. I am advised:

All Ministerial staff are required to comply with their disclosure obligations under the Gifts, Hospitality and Benefits Policy for Office Holder's 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. These disclosures are kept on the Office Holder's Register of Gifts and Benefits.

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.

Labour Hire Firms

48. Have any Departments/agencies within your portfolio responsibilities utilised the services of Labour Hire Firms since 28 March 2023? If yes, please advise in table form:

- (a) The names of the firms utilised.
- (b) The total amount paid to each firm engaged.
- (c) The average tenure period for an employee provided by a labour hire company.
- (d) The longest tenure for an employee provided by a labour hire company.
- (e) The duties conducted by employees engaged through a labour hire company.

- (f) The office locations of employees engaged through a labour hire company.
- (g) The highest hourly or daily rate paid to an employee provided by a labour hire company.

ANSWER:

I am advised:

Portfolio agencies make use of vendor management systems (VMS) contractor Central in accordance with the mandatory whole-of-government Contingent Workforce Scheme. Information on Contractor Central and the Scheme, including registered suppliers can be found on the NSW Procurement buy.nsw website.

Refer to contingent workers section of the DPE Annual Report, to be tabled December 2023. Details for the period 28 March 2023 to 30 June 2023 form part of each agency/department annual report for 2022-2023.

Media and Public Relations

49. How much has your ministerial office 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) WhatsApp
- (g) X (formerly known as Twitter)

50. 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) WhatsApp

(g) X (formerly known as Twitter)

51. Have you had media training or public speaking training?

(a) If yes, who paid for it?

(b) If paid by taxpayers, what was the amount paid since 28 March 2023?

52. How many media or public relations advisers are employed for each of your portfolio agencies and what is the total cost to employ these advisers?

53. What is the forecast for the current financial year for the number of media or public relations advisers to be employed in each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities and their total cost?

54. What is the total cost of media monitoring services used by each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities?

ANSWER:

49. I am advised no money has been spent by the Ministerial office on advertising or sponsored posts on social media platforms.

50. I am advised Department and agency expenditure is published in annual reports and on OpenGov NSW.

51. No.

52. I am advised staff numbers are included in the annual report for each department or agency. Staff salaries are set by the relevant award for each department or agency.

53. Please refer to answer 52.

54. I am advised:

Media monitoring services are procured under a whole-of-government contract. A whole-of-government contract reduces administration costs on individual departments and agencies, takes advantage of economies of scale, and avoids duplication in services and costs across government.

Isentia has recently secured the whole-of-government contract for the next three years, saving more than \$2 million compared to the previous contract. Details of the contract are available on the eTendering website.

Merchant Fees

55. Please provide a list of all transactions where customers need to pay a merchant fee on credit and/or debit card payments in each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities.
56. Please provide the percentage and/or amount of the merchant fees applied to all credit and/or debit card payments/transactions payments in each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities.
57. What was the total amount paid in merchant fees on credit and/or debit card payments made by each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities since 28 March 2023?

ANSWER:

55. I am advised agencies are expected to operate in line with Treasury Circular "TC18-18 Agency recouping of merchant interchange fees."
56. I am advised that merchant fees are embedded in individual credit card payments; percentages will vary by supplier and the nature of the transaction.
57. Please refer to answer 56

Ministerial disclosures

58. Did you make any updates to your Ministerial disclosure on or after 2 August 2023?
- (a) If yes, what prompted this update to your disclosure?

ANSWER:

I am advised:

Disclosure obligations for Ministers under Part 2 (Standing disclosure of interests), Part 3 (Conflicts of Interest) and Part 4 (Gifts and Hospitality) of the Schedule to the Ministerial Code are continuous. Ministers are required to:

- notify the Premier of a change to their pecuniary and other interests as soon as practicable after the change has occurred
- notify the Premier of a change to pecuniary and other interests held by their immediate family members, as soon as practicable after the change has occurred
- notify the Premier promptly of conflicts of interest
- disclose gifts and hospitality promptly to the TCO Secretary.

I make continuous disclosures of the matters that are covered by the Ministerial Code.

Office Administration

59. How many staff members were employed in your ministerial office at the MS6 grade for the following months:

- (a) April
- (b) May
- (c) June
- (d) July
- (e) August
- (f) September
- (g) October

60. How many staff members were employed in your ministerial office at the MS5 grade for the following months:

- (a) April
- (b) May
- (c) June
- (d) July
- (e) August
- (f) September
- (g) October

61. How many staff members were employed in your ministerial office at the MS4 grade for the following months:

- (a) April
- (b) May
- (c) June
- (d) July
- (e) August
- (f) September

(g) October

62. How many staff members were employed in your ministerial office at the MS3 grade for the following months:

(a) April

(b) May

(c) June

(d) July

(e) August

(f) September

(g) October

63. How many staff members were employed in your ministerial office at the MS2 grade for the following months:

(a) April

(b) May

(c) June

(d) July

(e) August

(f) September

(g) October

64. How many staff members were employed in your ministerial office at the MS1 grade for the following months:

(a) April

(b) May

(c) June

(d) July

(e) August

(f) September

(g) October

65. What is the average salary for staff members in your ministerial office since 28 March 2023?
66. How many DLOs were seconded to your ministerial office for the following months:
- (a) April
 - (b) May
 - (c) June
 - (d) July
 - (e) August
 - (f) September
 - (g) October
67. How many people are employed in your ministerial office as at 1 October 2023?
68. How many women are employed in your Ministerial office as at 1 October 2023?
69. How many staff employed in your ministerial office identify as culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) as at 1 October 2023?
70. How many staff employed in your ministerial office identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander as at 1 October 2023?
71. How many staff in your office are employed as media advisers or have responsibility for media/social media/communications?
72. How many staff in your office are employed as policy advisers or have responsibility for policy work?
73. How many staff in your office are employed as 'caucus liaison officers'?
- (a) What are the responsibilities allocated to 'caucus liaison officers'?
 - (b) Have 'caucus liaison officers' been directed to only work with Government MPs?
 - (c) Do 'caucus liaison officers' contact members of the Australian Labor Party as part of their regular work duties?
74. How many staff members employed in your office under the Members of Parliament Staff Act 2013 have been seconded from a NSW Government Department/agency?
- (a) Please list each Department/agency staff members have been seconded from.

75. What is your ministerial office budget for 2023-24?
- (a) How much of this budget is allocated to staff?
76. How many iPhones/Smart Phones are assigned to staff in your ministerial office?
- (a) For each phone, how much was each bill in 2022-23?
- (b) How many phones have been lost or replaced due to damage in your office?
- i. What is the cost of replacing those phones?
77. How many iPads or tablets are assigned to your ministerial office and to whom have they been issued?
- (a) What was the cost of providing iPads or tablets to your ministerial office in 2022-23?
- (b) How many iPads or tablets have been replaced due to lost or damage in 2022-23?
- i. What was the cost of replacing these devices?
78. How many laptops has the Premier's Department or The Cabinet Office assigned to your ministerial office and to whom have they been issued?
- (a) What was the cost of providing laptops to your ministerial office in 2022-23?
- (b) How many laptops have been replaced due to lost or damage in 2022-23?
- i. What was the cost of replacing these devices?
79. Has any artwork been purchased or leased for display in your ministerial office since 28 March 2023?
- (a) What is the cost of this?
80. Have any floral displays or indoor plants been hired or leased for display in your ministerial office since 28 March 2023?
- (a) If so, what was the cost of these items?
81. What was the total amount your office spent on stationery since 28 March 2023?
82. What brand of paper is used in your office?
- (a) Is it recycled paper?
- (b) Is it Australian made paper?
83. What was the total cost of all subscriptions by you and your staff to online news services, newspapers, magazines, journals, and periodicals since 28 March 2023?

(a) What are these services/newspapers/magazines/journals/periodicals?

84. What was the total value of all gifts purchased for use by you and your office since 28 March 2023?

(a) What were the gifts purchased?

i. Who were they gifted to?

85. What non-standard features are fitted to your ministerial vehicle?

86. What is the total spend for your office since 28 March 2023 for:

(a) Taxi hire?

(b) Ridesharing services?

(c) Hire car rental?

(d) Limousine/private car hire?

87. Were any planes or helicopters chartered by you or your office and paid for with public money since 28 March 2023?

(a) If yes, please provide details of the trip including the date of the trip, purpose of the trip, the method of transport and the cost?

ANSWER:

59-65. I am advised that Ministerial staff numbers and grades are published on the NSW Government website at <https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/the-cabinet-office/access-to-information/premier-and-ministers-staff-numbers>.

66. I am advised that information relating to Department Liaison Officers is available on the Premier's Department *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* Disclosure Log (reference number PD_A5833715).

67. I am advised that Ministerial staff numbers and grades are published on the NSW Government website at <https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/the-cabinet-office/access-to-information/premier-and-ministers-staff-numbers>.

68-70. We aim for an inclusive and diverse workforce in the Ministerial office that reflects the communities that we serve.

71-72. I am advised all staff are employed to assist the Minister in accordance with the Members of Parliament Staff Act 2013.

Ministerial staff numbers and grades are published on the NSW Government website at <https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/the-cabinet-office/access-to-information/premier-and-ministers-staff-numbers>.

73. I am advised:

All staff are employed to assist the Minister in accordance with the Members of Parliament Staff Act 2013 and staff are expected to comply with the NSW Office Holder's Staff Code of Conduct.

74. I am advised:

NSW Government sector employees may be seconded from agencies to Ministers' offices in accordance with clause 35 of the Government Sector Employment Regulation 2014 (GSE Regulation).

Ministerial staff numbers and grades are published on the NSW Government website at <https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/the-cabinet-office/access-to-information/premier-and-ministers-staff-numbers>.

75. I am advised:

Minister's office budgets are drawn from the Premier's Department annual financial allocation to cover employee related expenses, accommodation, and other operating expenses.

76-78. 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 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 the period 28 March 2023 to 30 June 2023 form part of the

Department of Premier and Cabinet Annual Report 2022-23.

79. I am advised:

Purchase or lease of artwork is in accordance with standard procurement arrangements.

The costs of purchasing or leasing artworks are contained within the other expenses category in the Other Operating Expenses note of the audited financial statements within the Premier's Department Annual Report. The costs for the period 28 March 2023 to 30 June 2023 form part of the Department of Premier and Cabinet Annual Report 2022-23

80. I am advised:

Hire or lease of floral displays or indoor plants is in accordance with standard procurement arrangements.

The costs of hiring or leasing floral displays or indoor plants are contained within the other expenses category in the Other Operating Expenses note of the audited financial statements within the Premier's Department Annual Report. The costs for the period 28 March 2023 to 30 June 2023 form part of the Department of Premier and Cabinet Annual Report 2022-23

81. I am advised:

Spending on office stationery is in accordance with standard procurement arrangements.

The costs of stationery are contained within the other expenses category in the Other Operating Expenses note of the audited financial statements within the Premier's Department Annual Report. The costs for the period 28 March 2023 to 30 June 2023 form part of the Department of Premier and Cabinet Annual Report 2022-23.

82. I am advised:

Office supplies are purchased in accordance with standard procurement arrangements.

83. I am advised:

The total cost of all subscriptions is in accordance with standard procurement arrangements.

The costs of subscriptions are contained within the other expenses category in the Other Operating Expenses note of the audited financial statements within the Premier's Department Annual Report. The costs for the period 28 March 2023 to 30 June 2023 form part of the Department of Premier and Cabinet Annual Report 2022-23.

84. 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.

In accordance with the Premier's Department and The Cabinet Office's Gifts and Hospitality Policy, a register of official gifts presented by the Minister will be reported by the Premier's Department at the end of each financial year as required under the provisions of Treasurer's Direction TD21-04 and TD22-27.

85. I am advised:

Non-standard accessories fitted to Ministerial vehicles are for business, security, and safety related reasons, in accordance with the NSW Government Motor Vehicle Operational guidelines.

86. I am advised:

The Ministers' Office Handbook outlines that taxis or ride share services are an option for business trips, including trips:

- Home after evening duty (e.g., when Parliament is sitting, when required to perform the duties of the job, etc.) where public transport is not reasonably available or where it may be unsafe to use public transport. Generally, use of taxis for these purposes would occur after 8:00pm.
- To or from the airport in connection with early morning or late-night flights on official trips.
- To meetings when it would be unsafe or uneconomical to use public transport.

Costs are managed within Ministerial office budgets.

87. I am advised the following:

All domestic and international travel bookings for official business must be made through the NSW Government's approved travel management supplier, this is currently FCM Travel Solutions.

Travel covered by the NSW Government contract includes:

- commercial and charter air travel
- Accommodation
- ground transport (car hire, rail, coach, and ferry).

Financial commitments for travel expenditure from the Ministers' office budget need to be made within office arrangements approved by the Chief of Staff as an authorised financial delegate.

Where a Minister, or employee of the Minister's office undertakes travel, travel is taken in accordance with the NSW government travel policy and the Ministers' Office Handbook.

The Premier's Department website also details PD_A5842315, "Domestic and international travel of NSW Ministers and their offices" that has been released under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*.

Overseas Trips

88. Have you had any overseas trips paid for using public funds since 28 March 2023?

(a) If yes, did any of your relatives or friends accompany you on these trips?

89. Have you undertaken any official overseas travel that was privately funded since 28 March 2023?

(a) If yes, what was the nature of these trips?

(b) Who paid for these trips?

ANSWER:

88. I am advised:

In line with M2015-05-Publication of Ministerial Diaries and Release of Overseas Travel Information, Ministers' overseas travel is published on the Premier's Department website.

89. I am advised:

In accordance with M2014-02 Ministerial Arrangements During Absences, Ministers who travel overseas are generally required to seek the Governor's authorisation for another Minister to act on their behalf. All acting arrangements approved by the Governor are published in the NSW Government Gazette.

Gifts and hospitality, including contributions to travel, are managed in accordance with the NSW Ministerial Code of Conduct.

Parliamentary Secretary

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

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

92. Has your Parliamentary Secretary spoken on any pieces of legislation on your behalf? If so which legislation?

93. What event/meetings has your Parliamentary Secretary attended on your behalf?

(a) Please provide in table form the date and the purpose of the event/meeting.

94. How often do you meet with your Parliamentary Secretary?

95. Has your Parliamentary Secretary travelled overseas since 28 March 2023?

(a) If so, when and where?

(b) If so, what was the cost of:

- i. Airfares?
- ii. Accommodation?
- iii. Food and beverage?
- iv. Transportation?
- v. Entertainment?

96. Has your Parliamentary Secretary travelled domestically since 28 March 2023?

(a) If so, when, and where?

(b) If so, what was the cost of:

- i. Airfares?
- ii. Accommodation?
- iii. Food and beverage?
- iv. Transportation?
- v. Entertainment?

97. Has your Parliamentary Secretary received training?

(a) If so, was it speech, voice, or media training?

- i. If yes, who provided this training, on what date and at what cost?

ANSWER:

90-97. I do not have a Parliamentary Secretary.

Probity Auditor

98. Has your office or department used a Probity Auditor or Probity Advisors, or similar, since 28 March 2023?

(a) If so please list the company and/or individual, the project, the engagement dates, and their total remuneration in tabular format.

ANSWER:

I am advised:

Under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (GIPA Act), agencies are required to register government contracts valued at \$150,000 (including GST) or more on the NSW Government eTendering website. Departments are required to include in their annual reports information in relation to consultants engaged by or on behalf of the agency, pursuant to Div. 7.3 of the Government Sector Finance Act 2018 and the NSW Treasury Policy and Guidelines – “TPG23-10 Annual Reporting Requirement”.

Qantas

99. Are you a Member of the Qantas Chairmans Club?

(b) Have you ever previously been a member? When did you cease to be a member?

(c) When did you initially become a member?

(d) When was this declared on the Ministerial gifts register?

ANSWER:

A copy of my most recent Ordinary return dated 12 September 2023 for the period 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023 disclosing receipt of Qantas Chairman’s Lounge membership is publicly available on the NSW Parliament’s website.

The membership was disclosed under Part 4 of the Schedule to the Ministerial Code on 21 July 2023.

Training

100. Have you received any training since becoming a Minister?

(a) If yes, please provide the details of what the training was.

101. Have you received any speech, vocal or performance training?

(a) If so, what was the cost?

(b) Was this cost covered by the taxpayer?

ANSWER:

100. I am advised:

All Cabinet Ministers have undertaken a program of Ministerial induction training. Ministers will undertake Respectful Workplace Policy Training that will commence in December.

Members of Parliament have a Skills Development Allowance that may be used in a manner consistent with the Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal.

101. No.

Website Usage

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

103. 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:

102-103. I am advised:

All use of network services must be lawful, appropriate, and ethical, in line with the Ministers' Staff Acceptable Use of Network Services Policy which is available in the Ministers' Office Handbook.

Questions from Ms Abigail Boyd MLC

Companion animals register

104. How many pets are registered on the companion animals register??

105. We were advised that a pilot for an updated pet registry was taking place last year - what is its status?

106. Are owners contacted to provide annual updates of their pets registration details at no cost?

(a) Why not?

(b) How many registration detail updates were recorded last financial year?

107. What steps are you taking to improve the registration rates of companion animals?

108. Will you consider a moratorium on penalties for registration and desexing fees after 6 months?

109. Will you consider an amnesty on registration fees entirely?

ANSWER:

104. This can be found at <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Total-Companion-Animals-Identified-or-Registered-by-Local-Government-Area-1.pdf>.

105. Please refer to Legislative Assembly Question on Notice 1643.

106. I am advised:

Pets are only registered once. If an owners details change, the onus is on owners to change their details. Councils may contact owners of unregistered companion animals.

There is no tracking of updates.

107. I am advised:

The new pet registry system will make it much easier for pet owners to keep their pet's details up to date. The new system will provide a range of informative notification messages to assist pet owners to comply with their legislative obligations. The pet registry upgrade will also include a detailed review and cleansing of the legacy pet registry databases to ensure cleansed, up-to-date data exist in the upgraded pet registry.

108-109. This is not currently being considered.

Desexing

110. What steps are you taking to increase rates of desexing?

ANSWER:

I am advised:

There are currently programs and incentives in place to encourage desexing, including through the registration system, grant funding to organisations, as well as education programs.

Euthanasia rates

111. Can you please advise of the euthanasia rates for each council pound or rehoming facility for each financial year from 2016/17 until 2022/23?

112. Following the review into Rehoming Practices, has there been consideration to the recording of methods of euthanasia at council pounds?

(a) Has there been any data collected for this?

113. Can the Minister confirm whether any NSW council pounds are still shooting impounded animals as a method of euthanasia?

ANSWER:

111. I am advised that euthanasia data for pounds is available on the Office of Local Government website. Data for 2022/23 will be published in December 2023.

112. This is not currently being considered.

113. This is a matter for the Minister for Agriculture and Regional NSW.

Death in pounds

114. How many animals were impounded for:

(a) FY 2021-22?

(b) FY 2022-23?

115. How many animals died of any cause while in the care of a council pound for:

(a) FY 2021-22?

(b) FY 2022-23?

116. How many animals died as a result of illness or injury for:

(a) FY 2021-22?

(b) FY 2022-23?

117. How many animals who died as a result of an illness or injury were attended to by a vet before their death for:

(a) FY 2021-22?

(b) FY 2022-23?

ANSWER:

114. I am advised data on pounds is on the OLG website. The pound data for 2022/23 will be available in December 2023.

115. Refer to answer 114.

116. Refer to answer 114.

117. This data is not currently captured by OLG.

Budget

118. Can you please advise why AWL and RSPCA were told not to make submissions to the September Budget?

119. Can you please advise why no funding was allocated to rehoming organisations in the September Budget?

120. Through various grant opportunities NSW OLG makes available public money to NSW councils to improve welfare outcomes in their pounds.

(a) What is the total funding allocation to council pounds under these grants for:

- i. FY 2021-2022?
- ii. FY 2022-2023?

121. Can you please advise why NSW has not followed the Victorian model to provide recurrent funding for rescue and welfare organisations, and why it is continuing an ad-hoc funding approach?

(a) Are there plans for funding to be dedicated to the welfare of non-companion animals, including farm animal rescue groups, e.g farm animals which are sometimes surrendered to pound facilities?

122. The Australian Institute of Local Government Rangers state that "OLG grants are rarely offered and are generally only available for targeted initiatives or other general activities that promote responsible pet ownership and is not available for the funding of pounds." Are there any current grant arrangements for pounds or animal welfare initiatives?

ANSWER:

118. This is a matter for the Minister for Agriculture and Regional NSW.

119. Matters relating to the allocation of funding in the Budget are a matter for Treasury.

120. The Office of Local Government currently returns 80% of registration fees to Councils to reflect the number of registrations they have collected each quarter.

In 2021 – 2022 - \$8.3M

In 2022 – 2023 - \$8.8M

This is designated for animal welfare activities, however, this is not specifically targeted just for pounds.

121. The NSW Government has provided annual funding to rescue and welfare organisations since 1997. The NSW Government is currently undertaking a review of funding for the approved charitable organisations tasked with enforcing animal cruelty laws.

122. There are no specific grants programs targeted at pounds

Greyhounds

123. Do you find it alarming that councils across NSW continue to receive abandoned microchipped greyhounds, despite the increased funding allocated to GAP each year?

124. Have you received any complaints or correspondence by councils regarding care for abandoned greyhounds in council pounds?

125. How many unmicrochipped greyhounds have been recorded in NSW Council pounds for:

(a) FY 2021-2022?

(b) FY 2022-2023?

126. How many greyhounds have been impounded as seized or surrendered in:

(a) FY 2021-2022?

(b) FY 2022-2023?

ANSWER:

123. The funding of the GAP program is a matter for Greyhound Racing NSW, which falls under the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Gaming and Racing.

124. I am advised that from a search conducted by the Office of Local Government, no complaints or correspondence have been located.

125. I am advised Councils are not required to report on this data.

126. I am advised Councils are not required to report on this data.

Eurobodalla shire council

127. Can you provide an update for the investigation by Eurobodalla Shire Council into breaches of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act at the Moruya New Years Day Rodeo event?

(a) Has your office been briefed on this?

ANSWER:

127. I am advised:

Two penalty infringement notices were issued by the RSPCA to the owner of a steer under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979*. The Penalty Infringement Notices were not issued to the licensee of the Moruya Rodeo.

(a) No.

Compliance of pounds

128. Please provide information on how many NSW council pounds have been inspected for standards of compliance or non-compliance, including specifically which pounds were inspected, the dates of inspections, what if any infringements were actioned, how many, the nature of these infringements, and whether any animal cruelty matters were involved:

- (a) by RSPCA NSW during the 2021-2022 financial year;
- (b) by AWL NSW during the 2021-2022 financial year;
- (c) by RSPCA NSW during the 2022-2023 financial year; and
- (d) by AWL NSW during the 2022-2023 financial year.

129. Since the passing of the Companion Animals Amendment (Rehoming Animals) Bill in February 2022, can the Minister confirm what audits have been undertaken or will be undertaken to ensure council pounds are following the legislation?

ANSWER:

128. This matter should be referred to the Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales

129. I am advised the Office of Local Government has informed stakeholders across animal welfare and local government of their legislative obligations under the Companion Animals Act

Appendix A – Table of DA withdrawals since July 2021 - July 2023

Council name	Count of Local DAs
Liverpool City Council	372
Central Coast Council	323
The Hills Shire Council	322
Canterbury-Bankstown Council	265
Inner West Council	248
Northern Beaches Council	242
Blacktown City Council	241
Wollongong City Council	232
Sutherland Shire Council	231
Lake Macquarie City Council	231
Council Of The City Of Sydney	219
Penrith City Council	213
Camden Council	204
Shoalhaven City Council	202
City Of Parramatta Council	200
Tweed Shire Council	192
Cumberland Council	187
Newcastle City Council	182
Wollondilly Shire Council	163
Blue Mountains City Council	155
Mid-Coast Council	155

Ku-Ring-Gai Council	145
Cessnock City Council	140
Maitland City Council	131
Ballina Shire Council	128
Wingecarribee Shire Council	118
Coffs Harbour City Council	115
Bayside Council	107
The Council Of The Shire Of Hornsby	106
Byron Shire Council	105
Port Macquarie-Hastings Council	101
Shellharbour City Council	97
Goulburn Mulwaree Council	94
Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council	93
Port Stephens Council	93
Randwick City Council	90
Clarence Valley Council	88
Campbelltown City Council	87
Hawkesbury City Council	84
Waverley Council	82
Bega Valley Shire Council	80
City Of Canada Bay Council	78
Murray River Council	77
Yass Valley Council	75
Wagga Wagga City Council	75

Willoughby City Council	72
Albury City Council	70
Eurobodalla Shire Council	68
Woollahra Municipal Council	68
Georges River Council	62
North Sydney Council	60
Mid-Western Regional Council	59
Fairfield City Council	59
The Council Of The Municipality Of Kiama	59
Ryde City Council	58
Orange City Council	54
Lismore City Council	52
Bathurst Regional Council	49
Snowy Monaro Regional Council	47
Tamworth Regional Council	42
Dubbo Regional Council	36
Singleton Council	36
Kempsey Shire Council	35
Griffith City Council	35
Federation Council	35
Upper Hunter Shire Council	32
Bellingen Shire Council	30
Strathfield Municipal Council	28
Mosman Municipal Council	28

Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council	25
Burwood Council	24
Hilltops Council	23
Gunnedah Shire Council	23
Lane Cove Municipal Council	23
Lithgow City Council	22
Wentworth Shire Council	21
Upper Lachlan Shire Council	20
Muswellbrook Shire Council	20
Nambucca Valley Council	20
Snowy Valleys Council	20
The Council Of The Municipality Of Hunters Hill	19
Berrigan Shire Council	19
Richmond Valley Council	18
Dungog Shire Council	18
Temora Shire Council	17
Moree Plains Shire Council	17
Kyogle Council	17
Cowra Shire Council	17
Cabonne Shire Council	16
Cobar Shire Council	16
Tenterfield Shire Council	16
Walgett Shire Council	14
Armidale Regional Council	14

Liverpool Plains Shire Council	14
Greater Hume Shire Council	13
Blayney Shire Council	13
Bland Shire Council	13
Leeton Shire Council	13
Junee Shire Council	11
Inverell Shire Council	11
Broken Hill City Council	10
Oberon Council	10
Forbes Shire Council	9
Uralla Shire Council	9
Murrumbidgee Council	9
Narrandera Shire Council	9
Coolamon Shire Council	8
Narromine Shire Council	7
Edward River Council	7
Gilgandra Shire Council	7
Lachlan Shire Council	6
Carrathool Shire Council	6
Coonamble Shire Council	5
Gwydir Shire Council	5
Bogan Shire Council	5
Warrumbungle Shire Council	5
Narrabri Shire Council	5

Weddin Shire Council	5
Parkes Shire Council	4
Hay Shire Council	4
Lockhart Shire Council	4
Balranald Shire Council	3
Glen Innes Severn Shire Council	3
Bourke Shire Council	2
Warren Shire Council	2
Walcha Council	2
Grand Total	9,040