

## Media Release

# NSW Government to launch public inquiry into Liverpool City Council

**Thursday, 18 July 2024**

The NSW Government has today ordered a public inquiry into Liverpool City Council after an interim report provided to the Minister for Local Government detailed serious concerns about widespread dysfunction and maladministration.

The Minister has also written to the Mayor of Liverpool advising of his intention to suspend the Council and postpone the elections due in September while the inquiry is being conducted. The Council has been given seven days to respond.

The interim report provided to the Minister forms part of an investigation announced in April 2024 under Section 430 of the Local Government Act 1993.

The scope of the Section 430 investigation focused on recruitment matters including whether the Council had complied with its statutory obligations, if conflicts of interest influenced staff appointments and any other matters that may have impacted the governance and effective administration of the Council.

However, investigators have identified matters sufficient in seriousness and volume to warrant an immediate public inquiry into the Council.

The report details a number of areas of concern with regard to recruitment and staffing practices, procurement irregularities, allegations of inappropriate record keeping and widespread evidence of a toxic work environment.

The interim report reveals a strong likelihood that there are additional issues affecting the operations of the Council that have not yet been identified.

The report also outlines evidence of direct interference from the mayor and councillors in the assessment of development applications and other compliance and regulatory activities.

The widespread and serious nature of the report has left the NSW Government with little choice but to intervene.

Under Section 438U of the Local Government Act 1993, a public inquiry will now be launched into the functions and operations of the elected Council and the Council's administration.

Mr Ross Glover has been appointed as the Commissioner to undertake the inquiry. Mr Glover was appointed by the former government in 2021 to undertake the inquiry into Wingecarribee Shire Council.

Should the Council be suspended, an interim administrator will be appointed to perform the functions of a governing body.

The interim report from the Office of Local Government as well as the public inquiry Terms of Reference can be viewed here: <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/councils/misconduct-and-intervention/investigations/section-430-investigations/>

**Minister for Local Government Ron Hoenig said:**

“Communities expect their council to be operating with the highest level of integrity and in their best interests.

“It has become clear that is not the case at Liverpool City Council and there is major dysfunction across the entire organisation.

“These are very serious issues which are causing distress among staff and impacting the Council’s ability to deliver for its community, and they must be urgently addressed.

“A public inquiry is therefore a necessary measure to get all the issues out in the open and start the journey of restoring confidence in the Council.

“I want to ensure the Commissioner can oversee this inquiry without the politically charged environment of an election, which is why I believe it is in the public interest to postpone the September elections for Liverpool.

“Liverpool City Council has a vital role to play in the development of the Bradfield City Centre and the overall growth and economic success of Western Sydney.

“This action announced by the Government today is necessary to get to the bottom of some very serious and concerning matters.”

**MEDIA: Clare Dowswell | Minister Hoenig | 0448 540 073**