



# NSW Legislative Assembly Hansard Full Day Transcript

## Proof

Extract from NSW Legislative Assembly Hansard and Papers Tuesday, 15 November 2005 (Proof).

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM

**Mr NEVILLE NEWELL:** My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Local Government.  
[ *Interruption*]

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I ask the honourable member for Tweed to reread his question. I cannot hear it.

**Mr NEVILLE NEWELL:** My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Local Government.  
[ *Interruption*]

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I call the honourable member for Wakehurst to order.

**Mr NEVILLE NEWELL:** What is the latest information on State Government efforts to restore public confidence in local government in New South Wales and related matters?

**Mr KERRY HICKEY:** I thank the honourable member for Tweed for his great question. Quite frankly, it is great to see a local member looking after his electorate. As members would be aware, the Tweed Shire Council was dismissed on 25 May this year following the release of the report on the first public inquiry by Professor Maurice Daly and its referral to the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC]. Investigations are ongoing and further material has been forwarded to ICAC as a result of matters raised in the second report that has been produced by Professor Daly.

The actions and motivations of the dismissed councillors have damaged public confidence in local government, both within and outside the Tweed shire area.

Remember the bad old days of North Coast land deals, when we spawned our own version of the white shoe brigade to rival the grubbiest that the Gold Coast could offer—the days when ICAC investigators were issued with subpoenas, broad-brimmed hats and block-out as they scoured the highways and byways of the North Coast, revealing scandal after scandal, created by the National Party and its dodgy cohorts?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

**Mr KERRY HICKEY:** It is not all ancient history. Whenever the opportunity presents itself to avoid making a full disclosure, to cut a corner, or to make a secret land deal, for some people the temptation is overwhelming. Honourable members would remember Don Beck, the former National Party member for Murwillumbah, where some of the worst excesses were planned. The ICAC concluded that Don Beck had played a key role in the corrupt attempt to have the Ocean Blue site at Fingal rezoned. The ICAC Report on Investigation into North Coast Land Development stated, at page 642-643:

I find there is evidence warranting consideration of the prosecution of Mr Beck for two offences of common law bribery. They arise respectively from the \$25,000 donation to the National Party made by Ocean Blue Club Resorts in May 1988, and the 410,000 donation made by Dr Munro ?

I can report that they are at it again! You only have to take your eyes off them for five minutes and they are off into the basement, dusting off the old plans, casting around for backers and conveniently bypassing the disclosure laws that were put in place to make sure that elected councillors fully disclose their pecuniary interests.

**Mr Brad Hazzard:** Point of order: I just cannot hear. I do not know whether the Minister is talking about Liverpool council, Rockdale council, Strathfield council, or another Labor-dominated corrupt council.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member for Wakehurst will resume his seat.

**Mr Brad Hazzard:** What is he talking about? Can he clarify it for us.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I call the honourable member for Wakehurst to order for the second time. The Chair had no difficulty hearing the Minister for Local Government. His remarks had nothing to do with what was suggested by the honourable member for Wakehurst.

**Mr KERRY HICKEY:** I can start again for the benefit of the Chamber.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I advise the Minister not to start again, and I advise the honourable member for Wakehurst to take his glass of water and resume his seat.

**Mr KERRY HICKEY:** Here they are, casting around for backers, conveniently bypassing disclosure laws that were put in place to make sure that elected councillors fully disclose their pecuniary interests. Who is the latest exponent? None other than the Queen of the Coast, Lynne Beck, sacked councillor and former Mayor of Tweed Shire Council, former National Party pre-selection candidate for the Tweed, and National Party heavyweight. She is the wife of the former member for Murwillumbah, Don Beck. As stated in the *Australian* on 8 November 2005 and the Tweed Heads *Daily News* on 9 November 2005:

Former Tweed Mayor Lynne Beck is at the centre of a new development row over an alleged \$5 million windfall if a major rezoning went ahead.

Cr Beck, sacked with other Tweed Shire councillors in May, allegedly stood to share in the money with her two

sisters who live locally.

The deal was allegedly on the proviso that family farmland at Cudgen was rezoned to allow a retail corporate giant ? to build a shopping centre and residential estate.

Councillor Beck's Cudgen property was zoned "agricultural protection". The *Australian* reported on 8 November that mortgage documents obtained by it disclosed that Councillor Beck and her two sisters were promised an extra \$5 million if the zonings were changed to retail and residential. If that rezoning did not happen, what then? Councillor Beck and her sisters would miss out on their \$5 million windfall! For the information of the House, I advise that Cudgen is a stone's throw from Fingal Head, the site of the Ocean Blue development and the subject of an ICAC investigation. It is precisely to avoid cases like this that every councillor in New South Wales is required to declare its pecuniary interests. If we did not have such laws, we would never know, without the most detailed searches, whether councillors were making a decision or voting on a proposal from which they stood to gain and make a profit. What was Councillor Beck's answer when asked why she did not declare her interests in the land?

**Mr Adrian Piccoli:** Point of order: The same answer that Eddie Obeid gave when not disclosing his interests in all those companies.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member for Murrumbidgee will state his point of order or resume his seat.

**Mr Adrian Piccoli:** What did you do? What did anyone opposite do? Nothing.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member for Murrumbidgee will resume his seat. I call him to order for the second time.

**Mr KERRY HICKEY:** Councillor Beck's answer was, "I did check it out and I was told you have to declare it once a year." The council was sacked in May this year, so, according to Councillor Beck, "I was sacked, so I have no conflict of interest." The really disturbing aspect to the revelation is that it is precisely the sort of deception that the National Party was infamous for along the North Coast.

**Mr Andrew Stoner:** Point of order: This is a clear abuse of parliamentary privilege. The Minister is dropping a bucket on people who do not have the opportunity to defend themselves in this place. You are a disgrace.

**Mr KERRY HICKEY:** You are a disgrace.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Chair is concerned about members of the public being referred to in the way the Minister is referring to a particular person. I ask him to resume his reply and to bring it to a speedy conclusion.

**Mr Ian Armstrong:** Point of order: Is the Minister prepared to make the same statements outside the cowards' castle, on the steps of the House?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member for Lachlan has been here long enough to know better than to behave in that way.

**Mr KERRY HICKEY:** My warning to the people of New South Wales is this: Given the opportunity, people associated with the other side will seize any opportunity to return to the old ways.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

**Mr KERRY HICKEY:** The Government shares community concerns that Councillor Beck may have sidestepped local government pecuniary interest report laws. Accordingly—

**Mr Andrew Stoner:** Point of order: The Minister has said that these matters have referred to the ICAC. Last week we heard in relation to the cross-city tunnel the Premier saying that these matters had been appropriately addressed by the ICAC, and he refused to answer.

**Mr KERRY HICKEY:** Sit down.

**Mr Andrew Stoner:** You have double standards.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of The Nationals will resume his seat. I do not uphold the point. However, I remind the Minister of my earlier ruling and my concerns about members of Parliament raising matters involving members of the public. I again ask the Minister to bring this reply to a speedy conclusion.

**Mr KERRY HICKEY:** Accordingly, the Government is urgently reviewing whether the reporting laws require amendment to ensure that all appropriate disclosures are made. Amendments, if required, will ensure that the Local Government Pecuniary Interest Register must be updated as soon as the pecuniary interest is acquired. Any new legislation introduced into this House should be known as the Lynne Beck Act. I thank the House for its attention.

**Mr George Souris:** Point of order: The Minister was clearly flouting your ruling.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! There is nothing before the House. There is no point of order. The Minister has concluded his answer.

**Questions without notice concluded.**