

Investigation into the conduct of certain City of Ryde councillors and others

ICAC FINDINGS

The ICAC found that Ivan Petch engaged in corrupt conduct by:

- arranging, through John Goubran, to convey a threat to then general manager, John Neish
- releasing confidential information concerning the discovery of adult material on Mr Neish's computer to various people in an attempt to encourage its reporting in the media so as to undermine Mr Neish's credibility and reputation and to cast doubt on his suitability to serve as the Council's general manager
- deliberately releasing confidential information in the form of advice from the Department of Planning and Infrastructure that was provided to Anthony Stavrinis on 26 November 2012 and an email from the Council's group manager of environment and planning that was sent to Norman Cerreto on 27 June 2012, in both cases with the intention that the information would be provided to Mr Goubran and used by him for his benefit
- attempting to improperly influence acting general manager Danielle Dickson in May 2013 to resolve, in favour of six defendant councillors (of which he was one), an ongoing costs dispute in relation to Supreme Court of NSW proceedings in which the Council was involved, by making a threat implying that if she did not do so, he and his fellow defendant councillors would not support her application to be appointed as the Council's general manager
- at the Council meeting of 26 March 2013, during consideration of a motion to split the Council's advertising between *The Weekly Times* and another newspaper, deliberately failing to disclose his pecuniary interest or conflict of interest arising from his financial dealing with John Booth (the owner and managing editor of *The Weekly Times*) and *The Weekly Times*
- deliberately releasing Council information that he knew to be confidential to Mr Cerreto, in relation to the Council waste collection and disposal contract
- deliberately releasing Council information that he knew to be confidential to John Mahony in relation to the proposed Ryde civic precinct redevelopment.

Mr Goubran engaged in corrupt conduct by arranging through Tony Abboud to convey a threat to Mr Neish implying that Mr Neish's position of Council general manager would not be safe after the 2012 local government elections unless Mr Neish agreed to establish a community consultative committee to consider the Ryde civic precinct redevelopment. The ultimate result of the establishment of this committee would be that the redevelopment would be delayed until after the local government elections.

Richard Henricus engaged in corrupt conduct when he approached Mr Pickering and told him that Mr Pickering would receive favourable publicity in *The Weekly Times* if he withdrew his opposition to a development application lodged by Mr Booth in relation to the property on which the office of *The Weekly Times* was located.

ICAC RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission is of the opinion that consideration should be given to obtaining the advice of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) with respect to the prosecution of Mr Petch, Mr Goubran, Mr Stavrinis, Mr Booth and Mr Henricus for various offences. The ICAC is of the opinion that consideration should be given to obtaining the advice of the DPP also with respect to the prosecution of Mr Petch, councillors Justin Li, Jeffrey Salvestro-Martin, Terry Perram and former councillor Victor Tagg for offences under the *Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981* in relation to advertising published in *The Weekly Times* in August and September 2012. The Commission also recommends that the Office of Local Government gives consideration to disciplinary action against Mr Petch, with a view to his dismissal.

Media contact: ICAC Manager Communications & Media Nicole Thomas 02 8281 5799 / 0417 467 801