

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION

STATEMENT IN THE MATTER OF: Operation DASHA

OCCUPATION: Director Environment and Planning

DATE: 2 May 2017

States: -


1. This statement made by me accurately sets out the evidence which I would be prepared, if necessary, to give in Court as a witness. The statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief, and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

2. I am to 53 years of age.

3. I am a qualified Town Planner. I obtained a Bachelor of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of New England in 1983. I also have obtained a Master of Science in Planning Studies and Urban Growth Management in 1992 at Oxford Brooks University. In 2012 I obtained a Diploma of Management and Diploma of Project Management in 2013.

4. I've been employed in planning roles since 1987 in various councils including City of Ryde Council, Marrickville Council, Waverly Council and Botany Council.

Signature 

Witness 

**STATEMENT IN THE MATTER OF: Operation DASHA
NAME: Meryl Bishop**

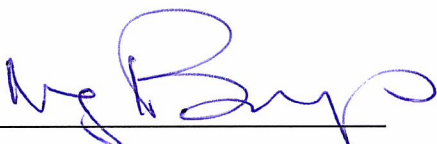
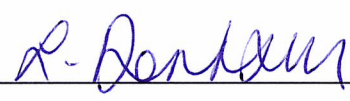
5. I currently hold the position of Director Environment and Planning at Georges River Council and have been in this position from October 2016. The Directorate has 3 Departments covering the following areas; Development and Building, Strategic Planning and Environment and Health Regulations.

6. My key duties and activities include

- Meeting with members of the community on development, planning and regulatory matters
- Responding to issues raised by the community and State/ Federal members on development, planning and regulatory matters
- Assessment and determination of development and building applications
- Review of correspondence and Council reports
- Performing corporate functions relating to Council and the management of the operational requirements of the Directorate – including reporting, budgets and management matters.

7. In November 2014, I became aware of a position being advertised at the City of Canterbury Council (“CCC”) for Director City Planning.

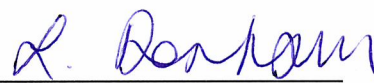
8. I reviewed the job advertisement and was aware that this was a full time position being offered and that the position was to be awarded on merit based selection.

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9. I prepared and submitted an application. As a result, I had conversations with Ms Judith Carpenter who was retained by CCC as the recruitment agency.
10. I was interviewed by Judith Carpenter and shortly after that process I was successful in obtaining the opportunity to attend a formal interview for the position.
11. On 17 November 2014, I attended the CCC for the purposes of participating in the formal interview. I was not provided the interview questions prior to the interview.
12. I recall the interview panel consisted of the General Manager Jim Montague (“Montague”), Councillor Michael Hawatt, Pierre Azzi and Mayor Brian Robson. Judith Carpenter was also present as the independent person.
13. No councillors contacted me or met with me prior to the interview taking place.
14. The interview was unusual. It was unprofessional and I felt that the panel asked questions that were odd, based on my experience. A number of the questions revolved around how I would deal with a direction from Council I did not support, how would I deal with a direction from the General Manager that I did not agree with but were required to implement, providing comment on particular development scenarios and approaches to upgrading the Campsie Town Centre.

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15. The questions were generally asked by Montague, however councillors Hawatt and Azzi asked questions and they did not appear to be scripted and I believe lacked appropriateness.
16. The interview was poorly managed and due to the level of interruption from the members of the Panel it was difficult for me to complete my answer to a question. I would commence answering a question and when I was mid-sentence I would be asked another very different question - requiring me to stop my answer and address the new point that was raised.
17. After this interview in late 2014, I spoke with Dominic Johnson the then Director of Environment and Planning at Ryde Council (now the acting General Manager of Mosman Council). I had a conversation with him and as a result of that conversation I am aware that a person associated with Canterbury Council called him and discussed whether he was interested in the position of Director City Planning at CCC. I am not aware of the details of those discussions.

Signature 

Witness 