



# Taylor's adviser airs just four of 18 papers in City travel bill saga

**Nick Bonyhady, David Crowe**

The office of embattled Energy and Emissions Reduction Minister Angus Taylor has refused to release information relating to an allegedly forged document he relied on to accuse City of Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore of hypocrisy on climate change.

In response to a Freedom of Information request filed by the *Herald*, Mr Taylor's senior adviser, Tim Neal, decided to release only four of 18 documents containing information about "the City of Sydney's travel expenditure" in full.

The office refused to release one document consisting of "messages between the minister's office and an external third party" because it contained "sensitive business information".

The unnamed third party, who was required to be consulted, put forward a "detailed case" arguing their correspondence with Mr Taylor's office should not be made public.

Making the third-party communications public "would not inform debate on a matter of public importance", Mr Neal decided, which is among the reasons he is allowed to consider in his role as an authorised decision-maker under freedom of information laws.

Mr Taylor faced intense political pressure late last year after his office provided an allegedly forged version of the City of Sydney's annual report containing inflated travel expense figures to *The Daily Telegraph*.

The report claimed the council had spent about \$15 million on

travel while pushing for stronger action on climate change, but the

real figure was a small fraction of that. The identity of the person responsible has not been disclosed.

An Australian Federal Police spokeswoman confirmed yesterday it was still evaluating a referral from NSW Police into the alleged forgery of the document.

Mr Taylor has denied that he or anyone in his office altered the annual report, but apologised "unreservedly" to Cr Moore for relying on the incorrect figures. There is no suggestion Mr Taylor was responsible for altering the document.

The City of Sydney has provided metadata showing no alterations to the document on its servers.

Mr Neal also refused to release internal messages between staff in Mr Taylor's office on the basis they were part of a "deliberative process" and doing so would be against the "public interest".

Access to another document containing a request for the minister's department to provide "input to a process" was refused by Mr Neal because, he wrote, "it would involve the premature release of the documents in isolation prior to the conclusion of the process".

Mr Neal released a number of other documents containing correspondence between Mr Taylor's office and Cr Moore's, which are already publicly available, along with largely redacted documents showing the progress of Mr Taylor's replies to Cr Moore.

In the decision, Mr Neal states that other documents were

exempt from release and so were not required to be produced.

Mr Taylor's office declined to comment, as did Cr Moore.



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Page 2 of 2

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Angus Taylor has denied that he or anyone in his office altered the annual report mentioning the travel figures. Photo: Alex Ellinghausen