



**Shelley Hancock**  
Minister for Local Government

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO CENTRAL COAST COUNCIL**

The NSW Government has announced a public inquiry into Central Coast Council to investigate its financial management and ability to serve the local community.

Minister for Local Government Shelley Hancock said a public inquiry will provide an independent, open, and transparent process to help improve the council's performance and sustainability.

"The performance of Central Coast Council, particularly concerning financial management, has been of great concern to the local community," Mrs Hancock said.

"On behalf of all Central Coast ratepayers, I want to see Council performing in the best interest of the community and this public inquiry will help get to the bottom of the issues which have impacted its performance, resulting in my suspension of Councillors and appointment of an interim administrator.

"Any member of the public with concerns about the council can now raise them directly with the Commissioner of the public inquiry."

Mrs Hancock has appointed Ms Roslyn McCulloch as Commissioner to undertake the inquiry. Ms McCulloch has three decades of experience in local government and planning law and conducted the 2019 public inquiry into Balranald Shire Council.

At the conclusion of the inquiry, the Commissioner will present a report to the Minister. The Commissioner may make recommendations having regard to the findings of the inquiry, including issuing a Performance Improvement Order or dismissing Council.

Mrs Hancock said the decision to hold a public inquiry also means that the local government election scheduled for the Central Coast in September will now need to be postponed until late 2022.

"My decision to order a public inquiry aims to give the community the best possible chance to restore confidence in its Council," Mrs Hancock said.

"As such, I have formed the view that it is in the public interest for all Central Coast councillors to remain suspended during the public inquiry process."

Council was first suspended in October last year with interim administrator Dick Persson AM appointed to provide independent governance to address widespread

financial, reputational and organisational issues.

Mr Persson was joined by former local government general manager Rik Hart to oversee the council's operational recovery. Mr Hart will now assume the role of interim administrator in May following Mr Persson's decision to step down from the role.

"Dick Persson has worked hard since being appointed interim administrator, stepping into a challenging role at short notice and under difficult circumstances," Mrs Hancock said.

"Rik Hart has nearly two decades of experience as a local government general manager at councils including the City of Parramatta, Inner West Council and Warringah Council and of course Central Coast Council.

"Given his experience and involvement alongside the current interim administrator, Mr Hart is ideally placed to assist in resolving the current financial crisis and continuing the council's road to recovery."

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