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MEDIA RELEASE

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More ICAC for Laxale

A recently announced formal investigation by Ryde Council and referral to the NSW ICAC of former Mayor and current Labor candidate for Bennelong, Jerome Laxale, is the latest in a series of associations Laxale has had with allegations of abusing entitlements.

In October 2020, it was reported in the Daily Telegraph that Laxale, as Mayor, directed his Labor councillors to use all of their Councillor communication allowance to buy stamps so Labor material could be sent to voters using Labor's central voter database. According to Laxale, this direct mail scheme was "more important than attending meetings with [Council] staff, or attending [Council duties]".

In 2019, following Laxale's failed tilt at the state seat of Ryde, Laxale was investigated by the NSW Electoral Commission for misusing voter information from the NSW Electoral Roll.

In 2018, Laxale was found to have breached the Ryde Council Code of Conduct for using local government material to benefit his own political interests.

In April this year, the Labor candidate for Bennelong was **referred to ICAC** for not declaring an interest when he voted, as Mayor, to award a Council grant to a business run by his current partner.

At the meeting of 24 April 2018, only Labor Councillor Penny Pedersen, Greens Councillor Chris Gordon, and Independent Councillor Edwina Clifton, declared an interest in the grant because they knew or were friends with the recipients.

In a 2GB interview with Ben Fordham on 28 April 2022, Laxale confirmed that "I knew my current partner in 2018", but in the same interview confirmed that "I voted on the vote".

Why did other councillors declare a conflict of interest in the grant but not Laxale?

Laxale has campaigned to "restore trust in politics" through transparency and accountability, yet he has been referred to the NSW ICAC **twice**, and already been found to have breached the Council Code of Conduct.

The Labor candidate has questions to answer.

- Did Laxale ever use his position as Mayor or as a Councillor to benefit his political interests or his current partner?
- What was the nature of the relationship with his current partner in 2018?
- Why did Laxale not make a declaration of interest about his relationship with his current partner, as other councillors did, when participating in the funding decision?
- Are there any other concerning issues during the Labor candidate's time on Council that the public should be informed about prior to the election?
- Has Anthony Albanese asked the Labor candidate these questions?