

NATIONAL NSW

This was published 3 years ago

Lord mayor Clover Moore's team accused of blocking transparency by rejecting live streaming of council meetings

By [Lisa Visentin](#)

Updated March 22, 2017 – 6.52pm,



City of Sydney lord mayor Clover Moore's team has been accused of declaring a "war on transparency" by refusing to allow the live streaming of council meetings.

As the state's most well-funded council, the City of Sydney has an annual budget of more than \$500 million, but ratepayers are unable to observe the decision-making process unless they attend monthly council meetings and watch from the public gallery.



Confident in her record: Sydney lord mayor Clover Moore. ANNA KUCERA

"This would allow ratepayers to watch from their homes how decisions which affect them in the city are being rolled out."

At Monday's council meeting, Cr Chung will introduce a motion calling for a 12-month live-streaming trial to begin in May, in what will be his third attempt in six months to get the council to adopt the practice.

But the Lord Mayor confirmed on Wednesday she would oppose the move, saying she was confident in her record of delivering a corruption-free council.

"I will let the public compare my record on transparency in government to the old political parties."

The implementation of live streaming would bring the City of Sydney into line with other NSW councils, including Mosman, North Sydney, Inner West, North Beaches Ryde, Newcastle, Wollongong, Central Coast, and Wollondilly Council.



However, Cr Moore said only 5 per cent of the 565 local councils Australia-wide live stream their council meetings, with a reported audience of 10 to 106 people each meeting.

In a deepening rift over the issue, Cr Chung has slammed the Lord Mayor's intransigence as amounting to a "war on transparency".

"I've had quite a significant anti-transparency push by the Clover Moore team against live streaming," Cr Chung said.

Cr Jessica Scully has emerged as the most vocal opponent to live streaming, despite being the most digitally savvy of the councillors, with experience as a founding curator of Vivid Ideas and TedX Sydney.

She said Cr Chung's bid was "not about transparency" but rather a "political move from a political party", designed to allow councillors to grandstand on issues to further their political careers.

"The primary audience of this move is not the people of Sydney. It's the faceless men of the Liberal Party who are making their pre-selections."

She said the expense of implementing good quality live-streaming that met accessibility requirements, such as captioning, would cost in the tens of thousands of dollars, and had not been justified by a demand for the service.

"There has been no community demand for it at all – not an email, not a letter, not a tweet."

Cr Chung's motion, which also proposes permanently archiving the video streams on the council's website, has won the support of remaining elected members – fellow Liberal councillor Christine Forster, Labor's Linda Scott, and independent Angela Vithoulkas.



Cr Craig Chung is trying for the third time in six months to convince the City of Sydney council to live stream its meetings.



Cr Jessica Scully says the move to implement live-streaming of council meetings is not about transparency, but political grandstanding. BILL FARR

The City of Sydney's meeting process is antiquated when compared with other NSW councils, which have modernised through live-streaming measures and electronic voting.

The proceedings are recorded by minute-takers in handwritten notes. It can take up to three business days before the typed minutes are made available through the council's website.

While some councils, such as the Hills Shire council, make audio recordings of meetings accessible to the public, no such scheme exists at the City of Sydney.

Recordings of council meetings have also proved an important complaints review mechanism, and were heavily relied upon in the recent public inquiry into North Sydney council.



Lisa Visentin



Lisa Visentin is a state political reporter at The Sydney Morning Herald.