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If the Labor Party did something like that, we'd be dead — Lord Mayoral candidate, Meredith Burgmann

# Clover under early fire

Menios Constantinou

LORD Mayor Clover Moore's bid for re-election has been overshadowed by a furore over her alleged use of council staff for a campaign launch outside Town Hall.

Cr Moore could be cautioned for breaching Sydney Council's code of conduct pending the outcome of a complaint lodged by Greens councillor Chris Harris on Friday.

The complaint prompted CEO Monica Barone to warn staff against working on councillors' campaigns.

At least two members of the Office of the Lord Mayor were present at the launch last Thursday, which the *Courier* also attended.

Council employee Jeff Lewis handed out promotional material containing Cr Moore's photo and the words "Vote 1 Clover Moore Independents".

Ms Barone said the launch had been held at lunchtime and that a number of council staff had "wandered past or stopped to watch or listen".

"Mr Lewis, who did work on the press conference, had volunteered his time and taken a pre-approved half-day of leave to do so," she said.

"Nevertheless I have counselled staff and reminded them that the code of conduct also refers to avoiding actions that can create an appearance of improper use of council resources."

Mr Lewis was contacted on Monday but declined to comment.

"These are allegations regarding council resources and I can't answer any of these questions while I'm at work," Mr Lewis said. "The questions



UNDER FIRE: Lord Mayor Clover Moore at her campaign launch last Thursday.

Photo: PHIL ROGERS

are politicised and I cannot use council resources to address them."

He said he would forward the questions to Cr Moore but the *Courier* had not heard back when going to press.

Cr Harris labelled Mr Lewis's explanation as a "lame excuse" and said he would ask Ms Barone to provide proof that he had formally applied for leave.

The Greens councillor, who is also running for the Lord Mayoralty, said Cr Moore had to be "very careful" about using public resources.

"She's been pretty brazen about it, so it raises the question of what else is going on," he said.

Labor's Lord Mayoral candidate, Meredith Burgmann, said Cr Moore had "never properly understood the clear lines of distinction between being a candidate, a Lord Mayor and a state MP".

"If the Labor Party did something like that, we'd be dead," Ms Burgmann said.

Liberal Lord Mayoral candidate Shayne Mallard said the controversy

served as a warning to councillors that they could not use council employees for political campaigning.

The code of conduct prohibits the use of council resources for any councillor's "private benefit or gain".

The director-general of the Department of Local Government, Garry Payne, said councillors had been sent a memo in May warning against the misuse of council resources.