

Manly Daily

PANPA

COMMUNITY
NEWSPAPER
OF THE YEAR

news local

Revealed: Thousands spent on councillors' first conference

BONDING SESSIONS

Robbie Patterson

THE lavish Miramare Gardens resort has been chosen as an overnight venue for the first workshop of the 15 new Northern Beaches councillors.

The Terrey Hills venue will also host key council staff overnight next Thursday, costing ratepayers \$10,000.

Cr Vincent De Luca has criticised the move. "Most candidates promised to address the rate increase and cut wasteful expenditure. Whoever supports this is an absolute hypocrite," he said.

Council chief executive Mark Ferguson defended the workshop for setting the future direction of the new council. He said it also gave councillors and staff a chance to bond.

» Full report page 7

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2017 | MANLYDAILY.COM.AU

NEWS 07

TERREY HILLS

Council's \$10k conference

Ratepayers to foot bill for staff and councillors at midweek brainstorm at Miramare Gardens

Robbie Patterson

A LAVISH resort has been chosen for the first workshop for the 15 new Northern Beaches Councillors.

Miramare Gardens, at Terrey Hills, which costs up to \$269 a room a night according to booking websites, will also host key planning staff overnight at a cost of \$10,000 to ratepayers.

Independent councillor Vincent De Luca slammed his peers as "hypocrites" vowing to boycott the overnight stay after being elected on a platform of reducing rates.

"Most candidates promised to address the rate increase and cut wasteful expenditure," he said. "Whoever supports this is an absolute hypocrite and is breaching the community's trust."

He took aim at the council's staff, who he said did not

consult with incoming councillors before booking the accommodation.

Cr De Luca said he would attend the event if there was strategic workshops but would not stay at the resort.

"The days of five-star hotels and snouts in the trough should be over. The public expects better of us," he said.

"We have three council chambers, in-house caterers, numerous beautiful community centres and surf clubs, all with appropriate facilities and all councillors live locally.

"Why not use these free-of-charge facilities and councillors just travel from their homes instead of wasting thousands of dollars of ratepayers' money?"

Northern Beaches Mayor Michael Regan defended the workshop.

He said he had not decided



Deputy Mayor Candy Bingham and Mayor Michael Regan.

whether or not to stay.

"I have no issues with those who chose to and those who chose not to stay overnight," he said.

"The councillor workshop with the council's executive team is a good opportunity for team building with each other and the staff," he said. "It's no different to any other private or public company."

acres of lush, manicured gardens" with a Hamptons-inspired touch.

"You will feel at ease with modern chic touches and a distinctively breezy, airy relaxed atmosphere the moment you come through the sandstone porte cochere (archway)."

The event would be fully catered with breakfast, lunch and dinner as well as morning and afternoon tea.

Council chief executive officer Mark Ferguson said his staff initiated the workshop.

"It's an important investment into the future management of the council," he said. "The cost of not doing this team building could be huge."

Mr Ferguson said alcohol would not be paid for by the council.

The program, to start at noon next Thursday and fin-

ish Friday afternoon, would involve team building.

"It will go through a lot of our operations and delivery planning capital works, transport and parking projects and planning issues," he said.

Mr Ferguson said councillors had the option to stay.

"It is a really worthwhile investment of public money to share knowledge and build teamwork with the first ever council," he said.

"They need to spend some time together to familiarise themselves with all of the planning and policy issues of the new council.

"It is always best with these events to go offsite to ensure people retain focus specifically on the issues we discuss." Attempts were made to contact Miramare Gardens but they did not respond by deadline.