

Liberal MP quits party after admitting seeking property payments

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NSW MP Daryl Maguire has resigned as a parliamentary secretary and quit the Liberal Party but will remain in parliament after admitting to an attempt to broker property deals for multiple clients across Sydney in 2016 during extraordinary proceedings at a corruption inquiry on Friday.



Daryl Maguire leaves the ICAC after giving evidence on Friday. Photo: Janie Barrett

The Independent Commission Against Corruption heard secret recordings of telephone conversations in which Mr Maguire, the MP for Wagga Wagga and the parliamentary secretary for counter-terrorism, admitted trying to earn payments by setting property developers up with investors, particularly large Chinese firms.

“I believe it was the intent,” Mr Maguire told counsel assisting the commission, David Buchanan SC, when asked whether he and Michael Hawatt, a former Canterbury councillor and Liberal party friend, were attempting to share commissions on property deals.

Mr Maguire, who faced immediate calls for his sacking from the Labor Opposition, was drawn into the inquiry into allegations of corruption at the former Canterbury Council through his friendship with Mr Hawatt.

In one conversation with Mr Hawatt recorded by ICAC in June 2016, Mr Maguire talked expansively about their business prospects.

"I've got half a dozen people that are always seeking stuff," Mr Maguire told Mr Hawatt. Mr Maguire admitted to being particularly close to Country Garden, a Chinese-backed developer whose Australian business manager, Tim Lakos, had become a friend. Country Garden might put him on retainer and pay him a "couple of grand a day," Mr Maguire was recorded as saying.

But even if Country Garden were not interested in projects, there were others about. "I've got the Malaysians, the guys that are building Green Square," Mr Maguire told Mr Hawatt, while suggesting to him there could be future work for them both.

"I need someone to do some door openings and do some lobby work and whatever. I can make all the appointments and do all that."

"We've got a big network now," he said. Mr Maguire said he had a company that he could "put things through" in a legal way, but work "has to be done at arms length."

However, Mr Maguire also told the commission that while he had sought deals, none had eventuated.

Outside ICAC, Mr Maguire apologised for his behaviour. The acting premier, John Barilaro, said Mr Maguire tendered his resignation from his parliamentary secretary's position, and from the parliamentary Liberal Party, and would also take leave.

But Mr Barilaro would not say Mr Maguire should leave Parliament.

"He has now resigned his parliamentary secretary position, which to us was the right thing to do," Mr Barilaro said.

Earlier, the inquiry heard that Mr Hawatt played a direct role in connecting Sydney developer Charlie Demian with Mr Maguire.

Mr Maguire told Mr Hawatt that he had a "mega big" client looking for deals.

"What I want ... I just don't want to f--- around," he told Mr Hawatt. "Have you got plans? Have you got the whole thing already done?"



Daryl Maguire, left, with Charbel Demian, (second from left with back to camera), an unknown male referred to as Ron (white shirt) and Michael Hawatt (right, back to camera) at a Sydney café. Photo: ICAC

"My client is mega big, OK.

"If he's interested my client is mega big and has got mega money and wants two or three DA approved projects right now. Today."

The conversation then turned to the commission that Mr Hawatt, who is under investigation for dishonestly exercising his functions as a councillor, might receive.

"If he's going to give you 1.5 per cent that's not enough," Mr Maguire told Mr Hawatt.

"1.5 per cent isn't enough divided by two if you know what I'm talking about."

He went on to say that 3 per cent was better.

Mr Maguire met with Mr Demian on multiple occasions. On one occasion, ICAC investigators photographed them with Mr Hawatt, and Country Garden's Mr Lakos.

Mr Demian provided Mr Maguire a list of his potential development sites, including properties at Parramatta, Canterbury and Camellia.

Mr Maguire said that in the back of his mind he hoped that if Country Garden was successfully established in Australia, it would make investments in his electorate of Wagga Wagga.

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/liberal-mp-quits-party-after-admitting-seeking-property-payments-20180713-p4zreu.html>