

The NSW Planning Minister, a Whitsundays luxury yacht trip and a controversial planning agreement

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NSW Planning Minister Anthony Roberts is named in documents as party to a controversial property developer's planning agreement, raising conflict of interest questions given his well-known links to the company.

Lane Cove MP Mr Roberts, as the Minister for Planning, [is named alongside developer Gazcorp in the draft Voluntary Planning Agreement](#) (VPA) for the proposed Western Sydney development at 813 – 913 Wallgrove Road in Horsley Park.

Mr Roberts' ties to Gazcorp were publicly revealed as early as 2004, when he was elected to NSW parliament.



NSW Planning Minister Anthony Roberts. (AAP)

Between 2002 and 2003, Mr Roberts was a director of Flagship Communications, a lobbying and public relations firm used by Gazcorp.

Further connections between the MP and the developer were uncovered during the Independent Commission Against Corruption's (ICAC) Operation Spicer inquiry into illegal donations.

ICAC heard evidence Gazcorp paid for a luxury yachting trip in the Whitsundays in 2007, attended by then-opposition MPs Mr Roberts, Chris Hartcher and Andrew Humpherson.

The allegations were featured in an April 2014 story in [The Daily Telegraph](#) and widely reported in other media.

Mr Roberts was not called as a witness to the inquiry and no adverse finding was made against him.

The yacht was owned by the late Nabil Gazal Senior, then the director of Gazcorp.

Mr Gazal Sr and his son, Nabil Gazal Junior, were later found during the ICAC hearings to have funnelled funds through a sham company to the Liberal Party.



Gazcorp director Nabil Gazal leaves an Independent Commission Against Corruption hearing in Sydney. (AAP Image/Dean Lewins) (AAP)

In a statement, the Department said Mr Roberts was unaware of the VPA with Gazcorp.

"The Minister has delegated his role for approving all VPAs to the Department and the relevant Deputy Secretary," the statement said.

"This VPA relates to a development in the Western Sydney Employment area and is in line with similar developments in this area.

"The Minister was not aware of this agreement and has had no involvement in any negotiation or the decision to exhibit the draft.

"Neither the Minister or his office have been given a briefing on this matter.

"It is also important to note that the Minister is not the consent authority for this development. This will be undertaken by the Department or the Independent Planning Commission."

The VPA covers Gazcorp's contributions to necessary infrastructure at the proposed Gazcorp Industrial Estate.

Details of the VPA are published on the NSW Department of Environment and Planning website's VPA Register.

On the eve of the neck-and-neck NSW election, the document is in a "finalising" status.

A spokesman for Premier Gladys Berejiklian referred inquiries to Mr Roberts' office.

<https://www.9news.com.au/2019/03/22/14/45/news-nsw-planning-minister-anthony-roberts-conflict-of-interest>