

ICAC and Caputo: Abbott and Baird's Manly problem

By Peter Wicks

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Manly to become centre of political power with Prime Minister Tony Abbott and Premier Mike Baird

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Mike Baird and Tony Abbott share a wave in a celebrity surfing event at Manly Beach. Source: News Limited

MANLY has become the centre of political power in Australia.

Local MP Mike Baird is the new NSW Premier, making Manly the home office for the highest lawmaker in Australia's most populous state.

(Image screenshot dailytelegraph.com.au)

Last week, ICAC heard John Caputo, a key campaign fundraiser for both PM Tony Abbott and NSW Premier Mike Baird, has been allegedly passing dodgy donations to disgraced NSW Liberal MP Chris Hartcher that were subsequently laundered. [Peter Wicks from Wixxyleaks reports.](#)

IN THE ELECTORATE Tony Abbott shares with NSW Premier Mike Baird, things are heating up at the ICAC hearings.

A man has been [brought before ICAC to explain dodgy donations and his links to alleged slush funds](#) used to fund Liberal campaigns.

That man is John Caputo, the former Mayor of Warringah.

Caputo has admitted to [giving Chris Hartcher cheques made out to the Liberal Party](#). Hartcher, as we all know, is the [disgraced former NSW Energy Minister who was forced to resign after ICAC revelations and a police raid on his electorate office](#).

Caputo's alleged associate – an accountant by the name of Timothy Trumbull – is alleged to have organised donations for amounts above the legal cap to be put through under the names of his staff members in an alleged act of fraud. To make matters even more absurd, his staff were backpackers ineligible to vote in NSW.

Hartcher allegedly used these funds months later, after laundering the money through a trust account and then placing into a slush fund.

Caputo has some history behind him.

Media personality [Wendy Harmer](#) – a resident of the electorate – has had some experience with the suspicious goings on in the local Council.

From the *Sydney Morning Herald* ([13 June, 2002](#)):

A former local government reporter in Melbourne, Harmer is used to the rough and tumble of local politics but was slightly rattled when, during a campaign in the Collaroy area in 1997, she received a picture of the missing, presumed murdered, Sydney heiress Juanita Nielsen, which was covered in what appeared to be blood. She took this as a death threat and two detectives from Manly police interviewed her, but she heard nothing more.

A prominent councillor threatened to sue her for defamation when she mused that maybe real estate agents should not be allowed on the council.

Back to Mr Caputo.

Mr Caputo is a director of [First National Real Estate Dee Why, a real estate agency that employs many of the Caputo family](#) and the deputy to former Warringah Mayor Darren Jones.

Both of these men were at the forefront of another local dispute.

Mark Humphreys was a developer in the area who went to ICAC in 2001 with allegations he was being asked to pay bribes in order to have planning applications passed through council.

In April 2002, then NSW Upper House Greens MP [Lee Rhiannon claimed Humphreys](#) had made a statement to

"... relevant authorities alleging that the criminal conduct was on the part of Darren Jones, another senior councillor and the brother of that councillor."

Rhiannon claimed that Humphreys alleged he had been asked by the brother of one of the councillors to pay \$80,000 and \$50,000 in bribes so that his development applications for property at Dee Why, Collaroy and Ocean Grove would make it through Council.

John Caputo (Image via [abc.net.au](#))

John Caputo's brother Mark is reportedly a property developer and it would seem many of Caputo's family are in the real estate industry.

Humphreys' application ended up being rejected by the council and, despite an appeal to the Land and Environment Court, never got off the ground. Humphreys later sold the property.

In regards to the property sale, Lee Rhiannon [later said](#):

"It was purchased by associates of Mayor Jones and people who I understand to be Liberal Party supporters.

"Last year the new owners submitted the new development application for 26 Ocean Grove. Despite the proposed development being worse than the original, Jones and his majority faction moved to approve the development.

"Councillor John Caputo declared a pecuniary interest in the application. Many objectors to this development have alleged that they have been subject led to intimidation and harassment."

Mark Humphreys later died — allegedly committing suicide.

An address to State Parliament from Lee Rhiannon on other [matters involving John Caputo and Darren Jones can be read here](#).

Despite all of this and more, John Caputo does still have a few fans out there who clearly admire his way of doing things.

Two of his biggest fans are none other than Prime Minister Tony Abbott and the shiny new NSW Premier Mike Baird.

Mr Caputo is a committee member of Mr Abbott's Warringah federal electorate conference and vice-president of Mr Baird's Manly state electoral conference.

Prominent amongst his responsibilities is the raising of campaign funds.



Tony

Abbott and his fundraiser, John Caputo (Image via smh.com.au)

Tony Abbott is yet to answer queries or comment on the details surrounding [ICAC revelations concerning the Warringah Club](#) and its less than transparent approach to dealing with donations to his campaign.

[Mike Baird has also refused to answer questions in Parliament regarding undeclared donations from companies associated with developer Roger Massy-Greene](#) that came shortly before Baird [gave Massy-Greene](#) a lucrative consulting contract and a plum board appointment.

On top of this, we have a guy implicated in all manner of dodgy goings on at council, who allegedly gave a now disgraced Liberal MP donation cheques to launder through a trust account and slush fund — cheques not even made out to him that were, incredibly, said to have come from backpackers.

And this guy, John Caputo, is a central plank in the campaign fundraising efforts of both our prime minister and the NSW premier.

If there is one thing that is clear, it is that the campaign donation records of both Abbott and Baird need to be gone through with a fine tooth auditor's comb.

It seems ironic that Abbott and Coy have set up a Royal Commission into unions in a desperate attempt to smear the Labor Party and the union movement and find hidden illegal slush funds.

Meanwhile, ICAC is finding Liberal Party slush funds all over the place and is fast showing the current Liberal Party to be one of the most corrupt political party ever seen in Australia's political and criminal history.

Let us not also forget that Abbott has form with slush funds and that they are not always set up for campaign purposes — sometimes they are about political assassinations.

Australia's most [notorious slush fund was a fund run by Tony Abbott himself and was set up to destroy the One Nation Party and Pauline Hanson](#). Abbott sought to deny the country the democratic process by killing off One Nation and denying us the chance to vote against them.

Both One Nations' founders, [David Ettridge](#) and [Pauline Hanson](#), ended up in jail based on falsehoods before the charges were overturned a few weeks late and they were released from prison.

Now Abbott finds himself failing to be able to explain serious allegations involving his campaign funding and those who provide it as he leads a political party that is on the nose after having failed to deliver in every area and has shown itself, [along with its leader](#), to have serious problems with ethics and telling the truth.

In fact, some would say that the current Liberal Party is destroying the credibility of government in this country. We appear to be governed by a bunch of bullies, liars and crooks.

The next election cannot come soon enough.

Leader of the opposition Tony Abbott wipes out in front of NSW Shadow Treasurer Mike Baird. [#auspol](#)
pic.twitter.com/aRJH2CBmHk

— Sir Meta Starostin (@Snow_Crash) [April 16, 2014](#)

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