

Councillor Induction and Professional Development Programs

Overview

Amendments made to the *Local Government Act 1993* (the Act) by the *Local Government Amendment (Governance and Planning) Act 2016* in August 2016 saw the inclusion in the prescribed role of councillors under section 232 a responsibility “to make all reasonable efforts to acquire and maintain the skills necessary to perform the role of a councillor”.

In support of this, the amendments allow regulations to be made for induction and other professional development for mayors and councillors.

Background

The Office of Local Government (OLG) has prepared draft guidelines to assist councils to develop and deliver induction and ongoing professional development activities for their mayor and councillors in compliance with the proposed regulations. Under section 23A of the LG Act Council must consider these guidelines once approved by OLG when developing suitable programs for Councillors.

Under the guidelines, councils’ induction and professional development programs are to consist of three elements:

- **Pre-election candidate sessions** – these are to ensure prospective candidates are aware of what will be expected of them if elected (these are not mandatory but are encouraged)
- **Induction program** – this aims to equip mayors and councillors with the information they need to perform their role effectively over the first few months and has a particular focus on building positive, collaborative relationships between councillors and with staff
- **Professional development program** – this is to be developed in consultation with all councillors and delivered over the term of the council to build the skills, knowledge and personal attributes necessary to be an effective mayor or councillor.

Councils will be required to report to the council on the induction and ongoing professional development activities offered to the mayor and each councillor and whether they participated in them and to make this information publicly available on their websites.

Proposed Amendments to the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005

Once in effect the government will amend the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 to include:

- The general manager is to ensure an induction program is delivered for newly elected and returning councillors and a specialised supplementary induction program for the mayor within six months of their election.
- The general manager is to ensure an ongoing professional development program is delivered for the mayor and each councillor over the term of the council for the purposes of assisting them to acquire and maintain the knowledge and skills necessary to perform their roles.
- The content of the ongoing professional development program to be delivered to the mayor and councillors is to be determined in consultation with the mayor and

each councillor and is to have regard to the specific knowledge and skills required by the mayor, each individual councillor and the governing body as a whole to perform their roles.

- Mayors and councillors must make all reasonable efforts to participate in the activities offered to them as part of an induction or ongoing professional development program.
- The general manager is to report to the first council meeting held following the completion of the delivery of the induction program identifying the activities offered to the mayor and each councillor as part of the induction program, and whether or not the mayor and each councillor participated in the activities offered to them.
- The general manager is to report to the first council meeting held following 30 June in each year identifying the ongoing professional development activities offered to the mayor and each councillor in the year to 30 June as part of the professional development program, and whether or not the mayor and each councillor participated in the activities offered to them under the program.
- The general manager is to ensure these reports are published on the council's website.
- The Chief Executive of the Office of Local Government may, at the request of a general manager, exempt the council from the requirement to publish details of induction and ongoing professional development activities offered to the mayor or an individual councillor where he or she is satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances.

Budget

In accordance with Council's adopted Councillor Expenses and Facilities Policy, Councils budget allocation for the 2017-18 financial year is \$44,000 for Councillor Professional Development. There is approximately \$41,000 remaining available for this financial year.

Proposed Program

There are a range of options which will be presented and discussed at the Strategic Committee Meeting.