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Dept of Local Government, Communities, Sport and Cultural Interests

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT REVIEW PHASE 1 SUBMISSION

Mayors`, Councillors`, role obligations

From my observations Mayors and Councillors depend on and are dominated by the agenda subject research, reports and recommendations provided by the relevant Council administration officers. Thus, most Mayors and Councillors comply with administration officers` recommendations.

Mayors` and Councillors` are also dominated by people with business, political party and private organisation interests, rather than being independent community minded ratepayers. Mayors and Councillors hold very serious and important role functions in local governments, therefore it is crucial that real independent people are appointed to make decisions for the overall ratepayers` and communities` best interests.

State public servants need approval from their departments to be employed in any additional position. Mayors and Councillors are also paid public servants with crucial community obligations they need to be working a minimum of 25 hours per week and approval for any secondary employment needs to be based on special financial circumstances. eg family separation, or bankruptcy. Only part time positions up to 20 hours per week.

Mayors` and Councillors` need to act on developing community initiatives and policies they were elected upon in association with regular digital communication surveys and or meetings with ratepayers every few months. Mayors` and Councillors` also need to be readily accessible to ratepayers and meet with them by request concerning valid, credible expressed issues, suggestions, including policy initiatives. Thus, Mayors` and Councillors` need to represent ratepayers` verified interests, suggestions and policies. ie voting decision making to be reflected in verified ratepayer survey, consultations.

Gifts

As state public servants are not to accept gifts from anyone in the performance of their duties, Mayors and Councillors are paid for their public services, thus gifts need to be denied and declined. Exceptional Mayors and Councillors can be given recognition by the provision of thank you cards, being named in community parks, arenas and street signs. These provisions avoid the issues of defining gifts, the quantity of gifts, the value of gifts, gift disclosure matters and risks of perceived corruption.

Qualifications and training

Given the serious and crucial roles, responsibilities of Mayors and Councillors the minimum educational qualifications need to be successful completion of Year 12 and or Certificate 3 qualification. All government employment of public servants requires minimum education, training qualifications.

Mandatory Mayoral and Councillor education, training needs to be provided via the Dept of Local Government with a standard curriculum for city and rural councils. Education, training to cover the overall roles, responsibilities and most likely situations that require ethical, moral decision making. Central TAFE could be commissioned to develop and implement the education, training in city and rural locations.

Ongoing mandatory relevant education, training in relation to legislation, policy development, community consultations and financial management decision making. Local Councils to have an option of 50% payment for ongoing mandatory education, training. Mayors`, Councillors` are able to claim tax deductions for education, training and any travel, accommodation costs.

A brief mandatory information introduction session for all interested prospective Mayors, Councillors in relation to city, rural locations prior to applications for elections. Relevant new Mayors and Councillor to receive orientation information, to engage in facilities visits and to confirm knowledge of role responsibilities and obligations.

Mayoral and Councillor behaviour standards

As Mayors and Councillors are paid public servants, it would be efficient and consistent for them to be subject to the state Public Service Act behaviour codes, standards and breach consequences. The Public Sector Commission`s Public Service Standards Unit to monitor Mayoral and Councillors performance and behaviour and to intervene with Councils as needed. Council performance and functioning reports also to be provided annually.

The Local Government Minister`s office to have authority in association with the Dept of Local Government to intervene in Council regular dysfunctional operations, unacceptable community decision making and individual Mayoral, Councillor major behavioural issues. The Minister to liaise with the Public Sector Commission`s Public Service Standards Unit on the latter as needed. The Minister to have authority with agreement from the Dept of Local Government and the Public Sector Commission to suspend any Mayoral and Councillor positions to be replaced by qualified, respected independent appropriate ratepayer persons until the particular issues are investigated and resolved. Mayors and Councillors to pay for their own legal costs.

CEO selection and important ratepayer obligations

The Dept of Local Government office to develop standard selection criteria for CEO`s for rural, remote and urban councils. The Dept of Local Government office to also facilitate CEO selection panels` compositions.

CEO`s to be obliged to disclose to ratepayers all documents, reports and research held by councils in relation to council funded services, events and facilities. Documents and reports to be available via council websites and to ratepayers by expressed request.

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