



Victorian Local Governance Association
Connecting Communities and Strengthening Democracy

Meeting The Sustainable Price Of Democracy

**FINAL SUBMISSION
For The
Councillor Remuneration Review Panel**

November 2007

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

In our August appearance before the Panel, the VLGA demonstrated why tying of Councillor Allowances to a percentage of State MP salaries was the most appropriate benchmark. This has subsequently been supported by other peaks bodies, and a majority of submitters to the Panel.

In order to fulfil their elected responsibilities, Councillors are never off duty, they have a 'mobile workplace' in local communities, and have to juggle more complex issues and competing interests than at any time since amalgamations.

While the same could be said for other Local Government sectors around Australia, there are fundamental differences in Victoria due to a range of structural, legislative, regulatory, and governance reforms just prior to and since the last Councillor Allowances Review in 2000.

Meeting The Sustainable Price of Democracy is the VLGA's Final Submission to the Panel, and should be read in conjunction with our Interim Submission *The Sustainable Price of Democracy*.

New content has been added to support 21 of our 22 original Recommendations, to place the above reforms in a wider context, and to demonstrate that fundamental changes in Local Government governance have occurred.

Councillors are clearly more engaged than ever before with this issue, ensuring that the data gathered and conclusions reached by the VLGA are both authoritative and credible. This is confirmed by the increased participation of Councillors from the first online survey, to the second online survey conducted in the first week of November 2007. While the former attracted a response rate of 28%, the second (details in Section 7), attracted a significant response rate of 44% of all Victorian Councillors. Clearly, Councillors keenly await the outcome of this Review with at least 2 out of 3 respondents indicating they will factor the outcome into their decision to re-stand at the November 2008 Elections.

The VLGA argues that the 'one-day-a-week corporate board' or 'volunteer' models applied to Councillor Allowances ceased to be relevant 10 years ago in Victoria, but that current Remuneration reflects this old thinking.

This situation was not advanced by the previous Review in 2000, largely due to insufficient Terms of Reference, and inadequate analysis of how changes had impacted on Councillor responsibilities.

There is considerable evidence that since 2000, these changes have seen a fundamental shift for Victorian Local Governments:

- **FROM** economic reform and competition
- **TO** representative democracy and community building, and finally
- **TOWARDS** participatory democracy and balancing growth, sustainability, equity & community vitality.

Victorian Councillors are now expected to be leaders, partners, relationship-builders, elected representatives, and strategic planners of more sustainable local communities. More than ever before, communities and citizens increasingly demand to be actively involved as genuine participants in their Local Governments.

The VLGA asserts that the Councillor Remuneration Review Panel now has the benefit of considerable evidence, never before presented, to justify significant increase in Councillor Remuneration and Support.

This will support a more diverse range of Councillors, and enable them to continue to involve local communities and citizens in decisions that improve their quality of life. More importantly, significant improvements in Allowances and Support will also enable Councillors to focus on expanding community decision-making to build local democracy and community wellbeing.

1.2 Summary Of Final Recommendations

Our Interim Submission contained 22 Recommendations. As a result of the feedback to date including the second online survey, the VLGA has received strong support for our position.

However, at this time there is insufficient support for Recommendation 15 dealing with donations and subscriptions in its current form.

Hence, in addition to the 21 Recommendations already made, the VLGA suggests another 7 as follows:

Recommendation 23

The VLGA recommends that the Panel reject any methodology that applies a further volunteer discount to Councillor Allowances.

Recommendation 24

Further to the VLGA's Recommendations 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14, a statewide mandatory Councillor Support Toolkit must at the least include internet connection and access; home computer, software and support; basic stationery (paper and print cartridges); mobile phone; administration support; home printer; telephone and fax line; as well as a training allowance.

Recommendation 25

The VLGA recommends that all new Councillors elected after 2008 be strongly supported and encouraged to attend at least 2 full days of training that covers governance, policy development and strategic planning, financial literacy, land-use planning, and CEO performance appraisals.

Recommendation 26

That, in collaboration with the sector, the State Government develops and funds a Program that delivers detailed information and advice to all potential candidates in the lead-up to the 2008 Local Government Elections. Topics should include roles, responsibilities and workloads of Councillors.

Recommendation 27

The VLGA recommends that the concern in the sector about inflexible meeting times must be urgently addressed, so as to remove any unreasonable barriers to participation.

This could be achieved by the State Government adding a requirement to regulations that sees Councillors and their CEOs having open and regular discussions on this topic.

Recommendation 28

That mandatory attendances not be increased or expanded at this time.

However, we recommend that further exploration by the sector in collaboration with the State Government should occur to agree on accountabilities.

Two possible tools for discussion could be:

- Agreements enshrined in the Councillor Code of Conduct for improved scheduling of meeting times would also need to be tackled, and
- Agreements published in a Collaborative Governance Framework adopted by Councillors and staff about how they will work together to better include Councillors, local communities and citizens.

Finally, if the State Government wishes to make further significant reforms in this area, this must only occur after widespread and deliberative consultation with Councillors.

Recommendation 29

The VLGA recommends that the Panel source submissions and decisions arising from the successful re-classification applications of 9 Local Governments since 2000, as further evidence of the changes in Councillor responsibilities.

2. Activities Undertaken Since August 2007

Since presenting its Interim Submission to the Panel (*The Sustainable Price of Democracy*), the VLGA has:

- Been in regular contact with all Councillors via emails, letters, surveys and SMS
- Attended all Panel hearings
- Conducted Briefings for MPs, Ministers & Local Government Spokespeople
- Built community awareness via direct contact with individuals, community groups as well as local and statewide media organisations
- Held a VLGA Leading Edge Forum, and
- Held weekly Board discussions.

As well as our visits and discussions with 60 Local Governments and Community Groups between May and July this year, the above activities were undertaken as part of our desire to inform and consult more stakeholders than ever before on this issue.

This complements previous work undertaken by the VLGA since 2004, including 233 Local Government and Community Group Briefings.

This Review, as distinct from any former reviews, now has the benefit of broad and detailed input from a range of stakeholders.

3. Councillor Responsibilities – Have They Changed?

During several of the Panel hearings, the challenge was posed to several submitters to justify significant increases, either by arguing that the previous Review in 2000 did not make the correct recommendations, or that Councillor responsibilities have fundamentally changed.

In relation to the previous Review, the VLGA supports the comments of the previous Chair, Cr Peter McMullin, that:

“... the current Panel appointed by the State Government has much wider Terms of Reference than we had in 2000. Unlike our Panel, the new Terms of Reference enable a much more informed decision to be taken.

I agree with the State Government that the Panel should ensure Mayoral and Councillor allowances reflect a fair and reasonable opportunity cost to those undertaking the role, and should not constitute a barrier to candidates nominating for election.

The last Panel that I chaired was not able to give sufficient weight to the impacts of the reduction of councils from 218 to 79 and the reduced number of Councillors. Victorian Councillors already represent more than twice as many residents as in any other State. This has had the effect of increasing the demands on Councillor’s time. Even ten years down the track, many Councils are today experiencing the impacts of amalgamations, as would be expected from such a significant change.

With the benefit of hindsight, our Panel in 2000 was not in a position to consider the on-the-ground impacts of amalgamations and growing community expectations of Councillors. In contrast, the current review has significant evidence that Local Government in Victoria has changed considerably, and workloads arising from amalgamations and other regulatory changes have gone up.

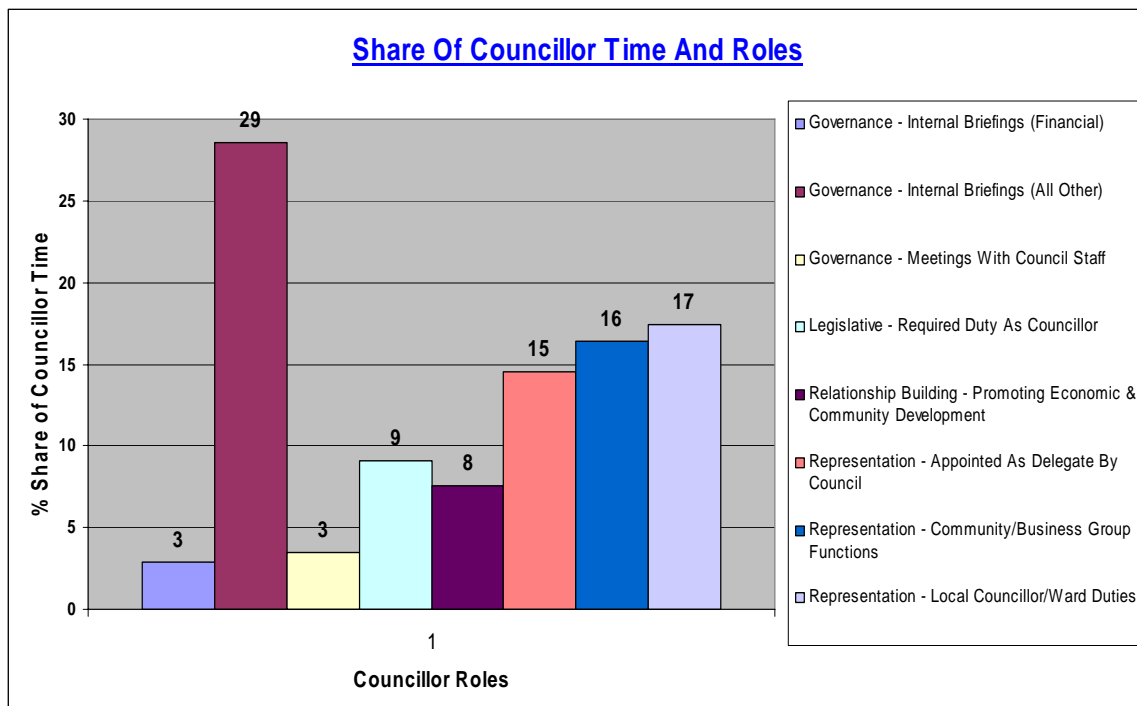
Changes that have occurred since 2000 lead me to support the Victorian Local Governance Association’s 22 Recommendations which I also believe deserve widespread support from the community and the State Government. There simply has not been enough progress on this issue and the health and diversity of local democracy deserves no less in the future. “

The VLGA agrees that the previous Review did not have adequate Terms of Reference to enable a detailed analysis of how amalgamations, and growing State Government and community expectations had impacted on Councillor responsibilities.

In relation to the argument that Councillor responsibilities and workloads have changed, this was discussed in our Interim Submission and materials provided to the Panel.

It is important to remember that 80% of Councillors devote more than 33 hours a week to their Councillor responsibilities, so the ‘one-day-a-week volunteer’ model no longer has any relevance.

It is instructive to also reflect on the share of councillor time devoted to each of their responsibilities, as shown below.



This data demonstrates that far from being restricted to operational issues such as 'rates, roads and rubbish', roughly equal time was devoted to:

- ensuring that Councillors understood the complex range of issues before them (35%)
- building and maintaining constructive relationships with staff, other governments and local communities (32%), as well as
- providing direct representation (33%).

It is not only Councillor responsibilities and community expectations that have increased. It is also important to explore the changing context since 2000.

4. Changes To Legislation Impacting On Local Governments

The VLGA has asked CEOs and Mayors to indicate what changes in either State or Federal statutes and regulations have led to increased responsibilities and workloads of both staff and Councillors.

These include:

- Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006
- Accident Compensation (WorkCover Insurance) Act 1993
- Aged Care Amendment (Residential Care) Act No 109/2007
- Australian Citizenship Act 1949 (and 2007 changes)
- Child Employment Act 2003
- Disability Services Act 1991
- Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act 1994
- Domestic Building Contracts Act 1995
- Environment Protection Act 1970
- Emergency Management Act 1986
- Fences Act 1968
- Food Act 1984
- Freedom of Information Act 1982
- Gambling Regulation Amendment Act No 39/2007 – Victoria
- Gaming Machine Control Act 1991
- Gaming No. 2 Act 1997
- Health Act 1958
- Health Records Act 2001
- Heritage Act 1995
- Human Rights & Responsibilities Charter 2006
- Information Privacy Act 2000
- Infringements Act 2006
- Land Act 1958
- Local Government Act 1989
- Local Government (Democratic Reform) Act 2003
- Major Events (Crowd Management) Act 2003
- Metropolitan Fire Brigades Act 1958
- Monetary Units Act 2004

- Planning & Environment Act 1987
- Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986
- Road Management Act 2004
- Sale of Land Act 1962 (Change to adverse possession)
- Second-Hand Dealers and Pawnbrokers Act 1989
- Tobacco Act 1987
- Valuation of Land Act 1960
- Whistleblowers Protection Act 2001

While the above list is not exhaustive, it provides an indication of the most extensive suite of legislative and regulatory changes in the history of Local Government in Victoria.

There are of also endless policy reviews and consultations conducted by both the State and Federal Governments requiring Councillor awareness and participation in an even more complex range of issues. Recent State Government examples include reviews into:

- Children's Services Regulations
- Planning scheme provisions applying to Waste Transfer Stations and materials recycling
- Five-yearly audit of Melbourne's long-term planning strategy *Melbourne 2030*, and
- Privacy Law amendments.

Nevertheless, this list is significant not because of what it includes or its length, (indeed it is possible to add at least another list of the same length), but because the changes included demonstrate that:

- The impact of legislative and regulatory changes is often felt years beyond the point of change, and
- In bringing together governments, local communities of interest and other stakeholders, Councillors have had to play a lead role to improve governance and accountability.

Both demonstrate that 'The Governance Journey' for Victorian Local Governments as described in Section 6 is ongoing, and requires a significant investment of Councillor time, leadership and other skills.

5. Fundamental Changes To The Local Government Act Since 2000

As stated before, both the community and State Government expect Councillors to be leaders and partners with a broader range of stakeholders. This has increased the range and complexity of the Councillor role since 2000.

At the time of the previous Review, the new Bracks Government had not yet operationalised its commitment to 'put community back into government' and the implications of a much more enabling role for Local Government were still largely unknown. The impacts on Councillor responsibilities and workloads were not even considered.

Important changes to the Local Government Act since 2000 recognised the need to improve governance practices and to enshrine legislative accountabilities. These changes moved the Local Government Act from being prescriptive to enabling. For the first time, there was an acknowledgement that all Councillors must devote time and energy to ongoing and collaborative dispute resolution processes, to meeting mandatory Codes of Conduct, and to utilising other innovative governance methods so that 'issues could be aired openly without dividing the council or the community in the process' (The Strategy Shop 2002: 11-13).

Attachment 2 compares the previous Local Government Act to amendments made since 2000, reflecting a shift from efficiency and effectiveness to empowerment in Local Government responsibilities and accountabilities.

This reflects the Review Panel's own list of 'major changes affecting Local Governments since 2000' as contained in your own *Issues Paper A*. What is less well understood, is that in order to be more strategic and accountable, Councillors in Victoria have had to devote much more time to be briefed and understand an increasing range and complexity of issues since the mid 1990s.

Additionally, a range of non-statutory changes have increased Councillor responsibilities and workloads, including:

- As community knowledge of, and involvement in Local Government policies and services increased, and accountability for these grows – Councillors have to spend more time working with senior management as well as with constituents and interest groups
- Greater awareness of the risk of litigation to individual Councillors for not complying correctly with statutory requirements
- Training regimes are now common place for Councillors – both new and continuing and cover statutory and policy changes, as well as improving governance and technical skills
- Advances in technology such as the internet and mobile phones have Councillors much more accessible and accountable. Councillor contact details and reports of participation are normally available on web sites together with publications, agendas and minutes, and
- Increased community expectations and media interest relating to individual Councillor behaviour, conduct and accountability in representing community interests.

Despite the extraordinary commitment of time required to move from old to new governance practices, some still view Councillors as 'part-time corporate boards' more akin to directors under *Corporations Law*. This view asserts that there are clearly delineated and separate roles for Councillors and management as 'steerers and rowers' respectively (Osborne and Gaebler 1992).

However, this view fails to recognise the stark differences between part-time corporate boards and Councillors. Whereby the former wear one 'hat of responsibility' to the company, Councillors wear 'three hats of responsibility' by being accountable to local communities, State Government regulations and policies, and also to their Local Government.

Another underlying assumption was that the 'real business' of Local Governments was to be undertaken by managers, while part-time Councillors merely provided oversight through their policy-setting function.

Whether this view has ever been the reality is of little consequence. What is important to note is that the fundamental changes to the Local Government Act from 2000 required a very different set of Councillor responsibilities than ever before.

6. The Governance Journey For Victorian Local Governments

The governance implications of council amalgamations - the main policy instrument of Local Government reform for well over a century (Dollery, Crase & O'Keefe 2005), have rarely been analysed. Local Government amalgamations have led to an Australia-wide reduction in the number of councils of 27 per cent from 1991 to 2004 (National Office of Local Government 2005).

Notably, a more radical restructuring of Victorian Local Governments (via forced amalgamations) resulted in a 61 per cent reduction of councils over the same period (National Office of Local Government 2005) and a 73 per cent reduction in the number of elected Councillors (Zwart 2006).

Before it is possible to outline the implications for local governance and for Victoria's 635 elected Councillors today, it is necessary to first place the 'governance journey' in a wider context.

The governance journey of Victorian Local Governments is not a static one. It is therefore difficult to place individual Local Governments at the start, end or middle point of the governance journey and to make pre and post-amalgamation comparisons.

What is clear, however, is that Local Governments in 2007 are very different to Local Governments of either 1993 or 2000, largely due to the governance journey they are undertaking as further described in Attachment 3.

6.1 Milestones Towards Governing *With* The People

Rapid change over the last 20 years has seen a shift from governing *for* the people towards governing *with* the people. Reforms of the Kennett and the Bracks Governments mark key milestones in this journey.

That is, since the mid 1990s there has been a distinct shift from old to new governance practices which saw Local Governments as 'more than a business', but increasingly about 'participation and interaction with communities'. The Local Government Board at that time found the Board of Directors model applied to elected Councillors did not 'take proper account of the 'community service/involvement obligations' (Local Government Board 1995: 11) that came with the elected Councillor role.

It is notable that the same Local Government Board re-iterated its view that 'local representation and advocacy will always be an important part of the Councillor's role, but this will be combined with a much broader range of corporate and policy responsibilities as Councils focus more heavily on economic development, metropolitan planning and other issues of regional and state significance' (Local Government Board 1995: 15).

Over four years from 1996 to 2000, amalgamated Local Governments were primarily focused on bringing together previously separate communities of interest, while meeting increased State Government reporting requirements. This ensured an initial priority 'on results at the expense of process' (Van Gramberg & Teicher 2002:14).

The messages sent to Victorian Local Governments during the 1990s were clear and still have continuing impacts. 'Getting your shop in order' was the priority, because Local Governments were seen by the Kennett Government as being 'inefficient, overstaffed and burdened by outdated management practices' (Munro 1997:77).

That is, the main game for Local Governments in their governance journey was seen to be a focus on efficiency. Unsurprisingly, research at this time confirmed the fact that while all Local Governments were endeavouring to become both 'efficient' and 'strategic' at the same time, some 'made the shift to an outcomes-oriented deliverer of local services while others have made much less progress, focusing 'on the traditional, compliance-oriented culture of Local Government administration' (Martin 1999:34).

The effect of this on many Local Governments was not that they 'managed strategically' as envisaged by numerous State Government reforms. Rather, most followed a 'co-ordination strategy' to meet an increasing range of mandated reporting requirements.

At this time, there was little ability to concentrate on a more sophisticated 'prioritising strategy', characterised by Local Governments 'exercising choice according to the perceived importance of a range of objectives' (Van Gramberg & Teicher 2002:14).

While the Kennett Government also argued that its reforms would lead to Local Governments becoming more open, accountable and, to some extent, encouraging of citizen involvement in decision making (Zwart 2006), Local Governments maintained an internal focus on reporting and accountability.

Some Local Governments were also able to maintain their outward focus and work with communities of interest throughout this period. But for the majority of Local Governments coping with substantial change, their 'community building' work was often an added extra in this period.

While there was a legislated requirement to consult with local communities on important processes such as the Corporate Plan, the emphasis on internal efficiency meant that most Local Governments only had the time and resources to follow minimalist community engagement strategies.

6.2 Sustainable And Connected Communities - Local Governments Leading the Way

Any view that community engagement was optional changed rapidly in the late 1990s. Victorian Local Governments recognised the value of community consultation and increased opportunities for citizens to become more directly involved in policy and program development and review (Zwart 2006).

Profound steps were being taken by Victorian Local Governments to become genuinely participatory, as a means to them fulfilling their potential 'as the level of government closest to the people' (Zwart 2006).

Before the election of the Bracks Government in October 1999, Local Governments were already consulting on a range of issues including:

- Major strategies and policies – municipal-wide, involve the whole population and present complex consultation challenges
- Policies and targeted strategies – include policy and strategy development on issues which impact on particular groups and/or areas;
- Operational/services – services and operational issues. Include all service reviews which will be a key focus of Best Value
- Projects/site specific – issues which relate to a specific site or sites. Include statutory building and planning matters and council developments, and
- Performance – council-wide and individual service/issue assessments of council performance often known as council satisfaction surveys (Victorian Local Governance Association 2001).

Hence, Local Government focus had already started to shift outwards, to consult and bring together separate communities of interest and a myriad of community organisations.

As Local Governments now started to shift from 'obligatory' to 'innovative' community engagement practices, this proved to be fertile ground for the new emphasis of the Bracks State Government. Taking our lead from the State Government's stated intention to involve citizens in decisions affecting them, this lent legitimacy to Local Government's community building efforts to govern in partnership with local communities.

While the focus on efficiency of the former State Government remained, less prescriptive and more consultative directions were pursued by the new State Government (e.g. Best Value) which 'created the scope for genuine strategy formation ... (and a) ... re-enfranchising (of) local communities' (Van Gramberg & Teicher 2002:14).

Moreover, the notion that all significant plans now had to be integrated with each other and much more strategic meant that the legislative requirement to consult widely with local communities and citizen views were intrinsic to the success of such plans.

From December 1999 to 2005, several landmark policies of the State Government would also increase expectations of Local Governments and elected Councillors. While not an exhaustive list, examples included:

- *State Planning Agenda – A Sensible Balance (1999)*
- *State and Local Government Governments Working Together To Build Stronger Communities (2005)*¹

¹ Significantly, for the first time in Victoria, next steps were identified to implement this Policy, including community strengthening as a part of the everyday business of Local Government; Local Governments as key facilitators and service brokers, integration of service planning and delivery; joint priority setting; partnership protocols; as well as planning and community strengthening research and tools.

- *A Fairer Victoria: Creating Opportunity and Addressing Disadvantage (2005)*, and
- *A Fairer Victoria: Progress and Next Steps (2006)*

6.3 People, Place And Sustainable Communities

Perhaps the largest area of reform that led to Victorian Local Governments taking on more complex responsibilities is land-use and development. While space in this Final submission does not allow a full exploration of the regulatory changes in land-use and development from late 1999 onwards, these are well summarised in *Making Local Policy Stronger: report of the Ministerial Working Group on Local Planning Policy* (Government of Victoria 2007: 4-14).

Of course there have also been increased expectations that metropolitan, interface as well as rural and regional Local Governments would be active partners in implementing the State Government's Melbourne 2030 policies, as well as new and more complex Rural and Farming Zones.

Many staff and Councillors have commented in reviews into the Planning System about the impact of having to complete Structure Plans, Urban Design Frameworks, Overlays, Planning Scheme Amendments, Municipal Strategic Statements, Masterplans, and other 'place-based' policies and strategies.

This work could not have been completed without hands-on involvement of Councillors in the policy development and community consultation processes. It is worth noting, that due to the contentious nature of land-use and development issues, Councillors must understand technical issues and bring change-management, community engagement, and leadership skills to the table.

This is a welcome change in the way that State and Local Governments work together, but the impact on Councillor responsibilities and workloads must be recognised as substantial.

It is instructive to note that for Melbourne 2030 alone, there nearly 30 other State Government strategies, policies and initiatives that Local Governments have to integrate with their local implementation actions, including:

- Active for Life
- Air Quality Improvement Plan
- Biotechnology Strategic Development Plan
- Building Great Communities
- Building Tomorrow's Businesses Today
- Community Building Strategy
- Connecting Victoria
- Environments for Health
- Growing Victoria Together
- Innovation Economy Policy
- Interim Report of the Infrastructure Planning Council
- Linking People and Spaces
- Linking Victoria
- Local Learning and Employment Networks

- Metropolitan Health Strategy
- Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy
- Partnerships Victoria
- Port Phillip Bay Environmental Management Plan
- Safer Streets and Homes – the Crime and Violence Prevention Strategy for Victoria 2002-05
- State Disability Plan
- Tourism Industry Strategic Plan 2002–06
- Victoria's Biodiversity: Directions in management 1997
- Victorian Coastal Strategy 2002
- Victorian Firewood Strategy
- Victorian Greenhouse Strategy
- Victorian River Health Strategy
- Victorian Rural Human Services Strategy, and the
- Water Resources Strategy for Greater Melbourne

In summary then, there is little doubt that these aforementioned reforms and policies of successive State Governments raised the expectation that Victorian Councillors would be more strategic and skilled, as well as being more accountable to communities of interest and stakeholders.

7. Second Online Survey

A second online survey was conducted by the VLGA during the first week of November 2007. This survey was conducted to:

- Gain views on questions raised by the Panel and/or submitters, as well as
- Test the robustness and veracity of the data gathered and conclusions reached from all the activities listed above

Significantly, there has been an increased participation in this process with 44% of all Councillors responding to the second online survey compared with 28% only four months ago.

The following results are presented in summary form, and should be read in conjunction with actual comments from survey respondents included in Attachment 4.

Figures coloured in red indicate significant demographic variations from the overall results.

7.1 Support For Increases Above CPI Foregone Since 2000

Respondents to the second online survey were asked whether they supported increases over and above CPI adjustments that have not been paid since 2000 (estimated at above 30%):

	Yes	No	Total
Overall	90	10	100
Rural/regional/interface	88	12	100
Metropolitan	95	5	100
Women	93	7	100
Under 45s	96	4	100

These strong results support the findings of the first online survey which showed that 20% of respondents supported increase of between 40-60%, while 38% supported increase of 80-100%.

It is also important to remember that 78% of all respondents in the first online survey said they would give up paid work if there were significant increases in Allowances as a result of State Government decisions resulting from this Review.

Respondent's comments relevant to this question are contained in Attachment 4 (*Second Online Survey Respondent Comments*), and demonstrate that a 30% increase would not be seen as a significant increase, given this would only restore allowances to 2000 levels, ignoring changes that have occurred since. An increase of above 80% would be the most acceptable outcome for respondents to both the first and second online surveys, and the VLGA is therefore confident that its original recommendations on the quantum and indexation of increases (VLGA 2007: 24) are appropriate.

7.2 Opposition To A Further ‘Volunteer Discount’ Of Allowances

Respondents to the second online survey were asked whether they supported a further financial discount or penalty to justify a volunteer image as recommended by the MAV:

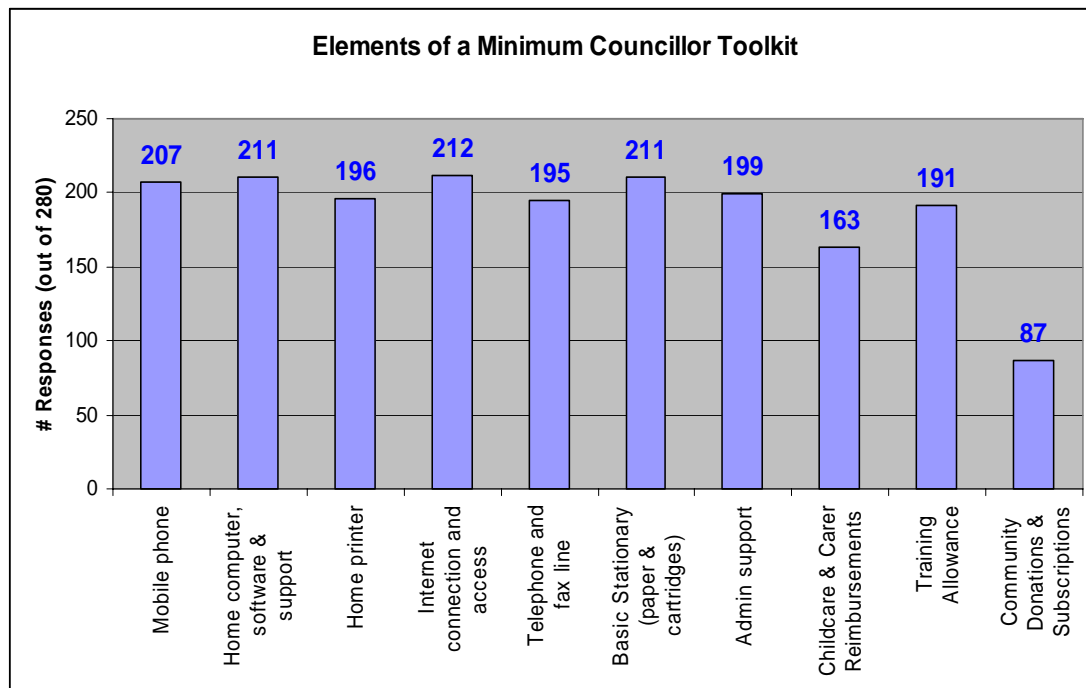
	Yes	No	Total
Overall	4	96	100
Rural/regional/interface	4	96	100
Metropolitan	3	97	100
Women	0	100	100
Under 45s	4	96	100

Female respondents were significantly more likely to oppose such a further discount. Respondent’s comments relevant to this question are contained in Attachment 4, and demonstrate that as Councillor Allowances are already heavily discounted (as are salaries for other elected representatives) they should not be further discounted as a result of this Review.

The VLGA therefore recommends that the Panel reject any methodology that builds-in a further volunteer discount into Councillor Allowances, as this would be a retrograde step.

7.3 Support For A Minimum Councillor Support Toolkit

Respondents to the second online survey were asked to indicate all the components they thought should be included as a minimum:



Out of 10 components, a similar number of respondents scored internet connection and access; home computer, software and support; basic stationery (paper and print cartridges); mobile phone; administration support; home printer; telephone and fax line; as well as a training allowance equally high.

These results strengthen the VLGA's argument for a statewide mandatory Councillor Toolkit to include these components, as contained in our original Recommendations 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14.

While support for childcare and carer reimbursements was lower in the second online survey, this reflects the demographics of the second online survey. Female respondents were much more likely to support the inclusion of this component (86%), compared to male respondents (65%).

Support for community donations and subscriptions was much lower and the VLGA therefore withdraws its original Recommendation 15 until further agreement can be reached.

Respondent's comments relevant to this question are contained in Attachment 4, and demonstrate that there is significant support for a mandatory and statewide Councillor Toolkit from which they can avail themselves of components required to fulfil their responsibilities.

7.4 Scheduling Of Meeting Times

Many submitters to the Panel have raised this issue as one of the most difficult challenges facing Victorian Councillors.

Survey respondents to the second online survey were asked whether they thought mandatory meetings should be scheduled at times that better reflect their family and community obligations, not only at times convenient for officers and other public servants:

	Yes	No	Total
Overall	91	9	100
Rural/regional/interface	90	10	100
Metropolitan	93	7	100
Women	97	3	100
Under 45s	91	9	100

While overall agreement was strong, significantly more metropolitan and female respondents highlighted the importance of better scheduling. These results and comments support the findings of the first online survey, where 93% of respondents indicated that weekend and weeknight meetings conflict with their family life, while 76% indicated that their paid work and family life had suffered as a result of their duties.

Respondent's comments relevant to this question are contained in Attachment 4, and these demonstrate that the scheduling of meeting times is a critical issue that requires further work by Local Governments.

The VLGA recommends that the concern in the sector about inflexible meeting times must be urgently addressed, so as to remove any unreasonable barriers to participation. This could be achieved by the State Government adding a

requirement to regulations that requires all Local Governments to have open and regular discussions on this topic.

7.5 Councillor Training

Respondents to the second online survey were asked to indicate whether their council currently provides adequate resources for training:

	Yes	No	Total
Overall	73	27	100
Rural/regional/interface	71	29	100
Metropolitan	79	21	100
Women	74	26	100
Under 45s	75	25	100

The most significant demographic variation in these results shows that rural/regional and interface respondents felt this support was less adequate than metropolitan respondents.

Survey respondents were also asked whether they thought training in financial literacy, land-use planning, and governance should be mandatory, optional or a mix of both:

	Mandatory	Optional	Mix mandatory/optional	Total
Overall	31	18	51	100
Rural/regional/interface	31	15	54	100
Metropolitan	29	27	44	100
Women	38	11	51	100
Under 45s	37	19	44	100

These results are the most extensive ever gathered on this issue, and there is an overwhelming majority of support for either optional or a mix of optional and mandatory training.

Respondent's comments relevant to this question are contained in Attachment 4, and demonstrate that while there is strong support for councillor training, many respondents are uncertain of what a move towards mandatory training would represent.

Therefore, the VLGA does not believe that the evidence exists to justify a mandatory requirement for training. Such a move would need to be agreed to by both spheres of government and a clear and engaged majority of all Victorian Councillors.

In the meantime, the VLGA notes strong support from survey respondents to encourage Councillor training by mandating access, funding and support for training.

We therefore re-iterate our support for our original Recommendation 14 for a Minimum Training Allowance to be included in the Local Government Act. This

would not only act as an immediate incentive, but also a springboard for further debate and agreement.

The VLGA also recommends that all new Councillors elected after 2008 be strongly supported and encouraged to attend at least 2 full days of training that covers governance, policy development and strategic planning, financial literacy, land-use planning, and CEO performance appraisals.

Further, there should be far more detailed information and advice provided to potential candidates in the lead-up to the 2008 Local Government Elections (beyond the current low-level, functional information provided). This information and advice should be developed by the State Government in collaboration with the sector and should aim to more thoroughly inform candidates about the roles, responsibilities and workloads of Councillors.

This is badly needed given that 70% of current Councillors believe that their responsibilities and workload far exceed that which they were led to believe would be required.

7.6 Councillor Interest In Outcomes Of This Review

Survey respondents were asked whether the outcome from this Review would affect their decision to re-stand in November 2008:

	Significantly	In part	Not at all	Total
Overall	27	40	33	100
Rural/regional/interface	28	36	36	100
Metropolitan	24	50	26	100
Women	37	38	25	100
Under 45s	42	35	23	100

Overall 2 out of 3 current Councillors consider that the outcome of this Review will affect their decision to re-stand either significantly or in part (67%). This is slightly lower for rural/regional and interface respondents (64%) while significantly higher for female and under 45's (75%) and metropolitan respondents (74%).

More than 10% of respondents who are either female or under 45 stated the outcome would more significantly influence their decision to re-stand. This supports the finding from the first online survey where compared to 36% of all respondents who said they would not be re-standing, the figure was much higher for women under 45 (50%), and all respondents under 45 (53%).

Respondent's comments relevant to this question are contained in Attachment 4, and demonstrate that the outcomes of this Review can significantly remove barriers to participation for these key groups.

7.7 Accountability For Attendances

The next section of the second online survey asked a range of questions on whether respondents would support a legislated requirement to attend a percentage of formal Council meetings, senior internal briefings (e.g. with CEO and Management), as well as community and delegated committee meetings.

It is important to note that this question was asked in the context of whether a significant increase to Allowances occurred as a result of this Review.

7.7.1 At Formal Council Meetings

Survey respondents were first asked whether they would support a legislated requirement to attend a percentage of formal Council meetings, if they received a significant increase to Allowances:

	Yes	No	Total
Overall	92	8	100
Rural/regional/interface	94	6	100
Metropolitan	87	13	100
Women	87	13	100
Under 45s	96	4	100

It should be noted that a legislated requirement already exists for formal council meetings and this accountability is therefore built into the Local Government Act. This survey reflects strong support for existing legislative arrangements.

In response to this question, respondents were then asked to indicate what share they thought was appropriate:

	50-70% of meetings	Above 70% of meetings	Do not agree	Total
Overall	28	66	6	100
Rural/regional/interface	27	67	6	100
Metropolitan	30	62	8	100
Women	30	59	11	100
Under 45s	40	56	4	100

Significant demographic variations were present for respondents who are female and respondents under 45 who either thought the share should be significantly less or disagreed with any share being legislatively required.

7.7.2 At Internal Senior Briefings

Survey respondents were next asked whether they would support a legislated requirement to attend a percentage of important senior briefings (e.g. with CEO and/or Management Team):

	Yes	No	Total
Overall	87	13	100
Rural/regional/interface	90	10	100
Metropolitan	79	21	100
Women	80	20	100
Under 45s	88	12	100

In response to this question, survey respondents were then asked to indicate what share they thought was appropriate:

	50-70% of meetings	Above 70% of meetings	Do not agree	Total
Overall	48	43	9	100
Rural/regional/interface	48	46	6	100
Metropolitan	46	37	17	100
Women	58	28	14	100
Under 45s	51	40	9	100

Significant demographic variations were present for respondents who are female or metropolitan respondents who either thought the share should be significantly less or disagreed with any share being legislatively required.

7.7.3 At Community And Delegated Committee Meetings

Survey respondents were next asked whether they would support a legislated requirement to attend a percentage of important community and delegated committee meetings:

	Yes	No	Total
Overall	83	17	100
Rural/regional/interface	88	12	100
Metropolitan	66	34	100
Women	79	21	100
Under 45s	75	25	100

In response to this question, survey respondents were then asked to indicate what share they thought was appropriate:

	50-70% of meetings	Above 70% of meetings	Do not agree	Total
Overall	51	35	14	100
Rural/regional/interface	53	38	9	100
Metropolitan	45	28	27	100
Women	55	29	16	100
Under 45s	44	34	22	100

Significant demographic variations were present for respondents who are metropolitan and under 45 who either thought the share should be significantly less or disagreed with any share being legislatively required.

7.8 Comments On Increased Accountability

Clearly respondents support the current legislative requirement for attendance at formal council meetings and believe that this is accountable.

However, there are significant variations in attitudes of the overall sample and specific demographic groupings in relation to internal senior briefings as well as community or delegated committees.

Currently all Local Governments publish information either in their Annual Reports or other documents that transparently indicate the level of attendance at certain specified meetings (but not for delegated or representative meetings/forums) of each Councillor.

Given respondent comments included in Attachment 4, more widespread consultation needs to occur in the future so that an informed debate and agreement can be realised.

Nevertheless, respondents suggested various tools by which greater accountability could be achieved in the meantime, noting this is conditional on a significant increase in Councillor Allowances occurring. Two of these tools could include:

- Agreements enshrined in the Councillor Code of Conduct for improved scheduling of meeting times would also need to be tackled, and
- Agreements published in a Collaborative Governance Framework adopted by Councillors and staff about how they will work together to better include Councillors, local communities and citizens.

The findings in Sections 7.5 through 7.7 support the VLGA's additional recommendation that further work be undertaken on such tools, which must be developed collaboratively between the State Government, Local Governments and local communities over the next four years.

8. Other Issues

8.1 Financial Impact On Smaller Local Governments

A small number of submitters to the Panel raised the issue of a significant financial impact to small Shires from increasing Councillor Allowances.

The VLGA has gathered financial information from 43 Victorian Local Governments to analyse the actual impacts which challenges this thinking.

That is, when taken as a percentage of current projected Gross Income (2007-2008) compared with projected Gross Income for 2008-2009, the range of impacts would be as follows:

	2007-2008 Percentage of Gross Revenue	2008-2009 Percentage of Gross Revenue
Category 1	0.335 – 0.720%	0.366 – 0.760%
Category 2	0.150 – 0.420%	0.157 – 0.397%
Category 3	0.123 – 0.324%	0.124 – 0.307%

The VLGA understands a small number of Victorian Local Governments will find the costs associated with our Recommendations more challenging than most.

However, peak bodies have identified that there are 6 Local Governments who are not financially secure, and we encourage other means to support them so that governance does not suffer. Communities in these Local Governments must not be further penalised by a lower range of allowances, and a lower level of support for strong local democracy and governance.

8.2 Council Reclassifications And Exceptional Circumstances

The VLGA is aware that since the last Review in 2000, approximately 9 local Governments have applied for and received a reclassification and progressed to a higher Remuneration Category. We would draw the Panel's attention to these reclassification considerations, and recommend that the submissions and decisions be sourced and analysed. We know that these documents contain a rich source of additional evidence of the changing circumstances for these Local Governments, and this information should therefore be in the public domain.

9. Concluding Observations

Governments, Family Life, Community Expectations & Corporate Governance Have Changed

As stated previously, reviews of Councillor Remuneration and Support in the past have not analysed the impact of the above changes on Councillor responsibilities and workloads.

Since 2004, the VLGA has consulted with hundreds of Councillors, CEOs and community groups, all of whom tell us that the aforementioned factors have led to fundamental changes for Councillor responsibilities. This means that in order to be strategic, accountable, better connected to local communities and stakeholders, and to juggle an increasing number of complex issues and competing interests, Councillors have no choice but to devote a great deal more time to these expanding responsibilities.

Councillor Remuneration And Support Must Reflect These Changes

There is still a minority view that suggests if Councillors are thinking more strategically, this would free-up more time for Councillors to undertake their representative roles. This view is inconsistent with evidence that strategic planning is very different in Local Government compared to other levels of government:

“There are clearly significant differences in the composition and structure of Local Government bodies compared with their state and Commonwealth counterparts. The more intimate relationship of councils to their communities, the membership of councils, the nature of political partisanship, the unique range of intergovernmental pressures, and the organisational format and scale of services all set Local Government apart from government in other spheres (Marshall and Dollery 1997: 8-9).

The VLGA asserts that the Councillor Remuneration Review Panel now has the benefit of considerable evidence, never before presented, to justify significant increase in Councillor Remuneration and Support.

The VLGA's Recommendations are supported by considerable evidence and analysis on what has changed since the last Review in 2000, as well as what actions are need to remove barriers to participation. Our Recommendations also build on the unique partnership that the Victorian State Government, Local Governments and local communities have embarked on, and the necessary governance journey to support this partnership.

The VLGA is confident the Panel will recognise the impacts of the State Government's own policies and initiatives since 2000 to bring the community back into government by embracing new thinking on governance and democracy.

A contemporary view recognises that strong local democracy and governance is a benefit rather than a cost.

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Attachment 1

Efficiency	Effectiveness	Empowerment
<p>Emphasis Economic reform and competition</p> <p>Public participation rationale Control and generally restrict community involvement to Council's service provision role</p> <p>Participants Ratepayers and customers</p> <p>Key Drivers Cost savings</p> <p>11 Key Characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Corporate governance• Corporate agenda setting• Managerial efficiency• Land-use Planning• Key performance indicators• Customer satisfaction surveys• Risk management• Public acquiescence & managing dissent• Complaints mechanism• Limited Consumer input• Financial control by officers	<p>Emphasis Representative democracy and community building</p> <p>Public participation rationale Influence Council decision-making to improve quality of life outcomes</p> <p>Participants Residents, service users and voters</p> <p>Key Drivers Good Council governance & organizational best practice</p> <p>11 Key Characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Council governance• Council visioning• Responsibility for professional development• Integrated Planning• Benchmarking• Community satisfaction surveys• Place management• Welfare rights, social justice & aff. action• Social cohesion & inclusion• Community engagement• Audit and share financial accountability	<p>Emphasis Participatory democracy and balancing growth, sustainability, equity & community vitality</p> <p>Public participation rationale Expand community decision-making to sustain community wellbeing and local democracy</p> <p>Participants Voters and active citizens</p> <p>Key Drivers Autonomy and shared power</p> <p>11 Key Characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community governance• Community visioning• Community capacity development• Holistic council-community strategic planning• Measuring & delivering wellbeing• Community control of own destiny• Public good outcomes• Human rights, equality & social justice• Interpersonal trust & ethical behaviour• Political engagement• Long-term financial security

© 2006 Based on "From Community Management to Community Empowerment" by Jenny Wills and Kate Nash.

Attachment 2 - Enabling Amendments to the Local Government Act from 2000-2005

Preamble

- (1) Section 74A(1) of the Constitution Act 1975 provides that **Local Government is a distinct and essential tier of government** consisting of Democratically elected Councils having the functions and powers that the Parliament considers are necessary to ensure the peace, order and good government of each municipal district.
- (2) It is the role of Councils in exercising those functions and powers to work in **partnership** with the Governments of Victoria and Australia.
- (3) It is necessary to ensure that the Councillors who comprise each Council are democratically elected by persons entitled to vote at municipal elections and that the **Council is responsible and accountable to the local community.**
- (4) It is the role of the Council to provide **governance and leadership for the local community through advocacy, decision making and action.**
- (5) It is essential that there is **a legislative framework that provides for Councils to be accountable to their local communities** in the performance of functions and the exercise of powers and the use of resources.

PART 1A—LOCAL GOVERNMENT CHARTER

3A. What is the purpose of Local Government?

The purpose of Local Government is to provide a system under which Councils perform the functions and exercise the powers conferred by or under this Act and any other Act for the peace, order and good government of their municipal districts.

3C. Objectives of a Council

- (1) **The primary objective of a Council is to endeavour to achieve the best outcomes for the local community having regard to the long term and cumulative effects of decisions.**

(2) **In seeking to achieve its primary objective, a Council must have regard to the following facilitating objectives—**

- (a) to **promote the social, economic and environmental viability and sustainability of the municipal district;**
- (b) to ensure that resources are used efficiently and effectively and services are provided in accordance with the Best Value Principles to best meet the needs of the local community;
- (c) to improve the overall quality of life of people in the local community;
- (d) to **promote appropriate business and employment opportunities;**
- (e) to ensure that **services and facilities provided by the Council are accessible and equitable;**
- (f) to ensure the equitable imposition of rates and charges;
- (g) to ensure **transparency and accountability in Council decision making.**

3D. What is the role of a Council?

- (1) A Council is elected to provide **leadership** for the **good governance** of the municipal district and the local community.
- (2) The role of a Council includes—
- (a) **acting as a representative government by taking into account the diverse needs of the local community in decision making;**
- (b) **providing leadership by establishing strategic objectives and monitoring their achievement;**
- (c) maintaining the viability of the Council by ensuring that resources are managed in a responsible and accountable manner;
- (d) **advocating the interests of the local community to other communities and governments;**
- (e) acting as a **responsible partner in government by taking into account the needs of other communities;**

- (f) fostering **community cohesion and encouraging active participation in civic life.**

3E. What are the functions of a Council?

(1) **The functions of a Council include—**

- (a) advocating and promoting proposals which are in the best interests of the local community;
- (b) planning for and providing services and facilities for the local community;
- (c) **providing and maintaining community infrastructure in the municipal district;**
- (d) **undertaking strategic and land use planning for the municipal district;**
- (e) raising revenue to enable the Council to perform its functions;
- (f) making and enforcing local laws;
- (g) exercising, performing and discharging the duties, functions and powers of Councils under this Act and other Acts;
- (h) any other function relating to the peace, order and good government of the municipal district.

- (2) **For the purpose of achieving its objectives, a Council may perform its functions inside and outside its municipal district.**

The Governance Journey: Victorian Local Government 1995 onwards

1995-2000

Kennett Government

'Putting business back into Councils'

- Functional role of Councils more important
- CEO/Council Rules
- Organisational efficiency
- Land-use planning
- Old format planning schemes
- Ad hoc State intervention in land-use planning
- Highly prescriptive reporting and regulation
- Race to 'scratch back credibility'
- Trauma.
- First legislated requirement to consult and report to community
- **By 1998, starting realization no longer us versus them—Councillors required to lead, rebuild relationships, stability, organizational capacity, officer-councillor relationships**

2000-2003

Bracks Government

'Putting communities back into Government'

- Best Value—services had to be relevant, responsive as well as efficient
- Integrated planning (4 pillar)
- Council-community strategic planning
- New format planning schemes
- Limits to land-use ministerial intervention, more aligned building and planning system and empowerment of local councils and the community (*State Planning Agenda – A Sensible Balance*)
- Less prescriptive regulation but still highly prescriptive reporting
- A genuine State-Local Government-communities partnership—*Growing Victoria Together*
- Regional, inter-government, collaborative partnerships

2003—today

Bracks Government

'Sustainable communities supported by strong local governance'

- Broader purpose, objectives, role and functions of Councils
- Focus on sustainability—people & place
- *A Fairer Victoria*
- Roles expanded to include
- Advocating local interests to other communities and levels of government;
- CEO/Council Relationships (e.g. Councillor Codes of Conduct)
- State-Local Government-Community Land-use Partnerships (e.g. Melbourne 2030, place-based strategies, rural and farming zones)
- Move towards enabling roles and objectives of Councils (see comparison of LGActs)
- State Constitutional Recognition of Local Government

WHAT CHANGED?

Efficiency

Effectiveness

Empowerment

Attachment 4 - Second Online Survey Respondent Comments

7.1 Support For Increases Above CPI Foregone Since 2000

- If Councillors are to truly commit long hours (I estimate my own contribution between 35 and 50 hours a week) to make a difference to their communities and tackle systemic issues like economic and social development, they need proper Remuneration and Support, and
- Without an allowance of approx \$40,000 plus superannuation which will allow those who work fulltime to reduce their full time work to 2 or 3 days per week and devote the rest of their time to working with the community, or part time with family responsibilities, to avail themselves of the necessary training and child care etc then many will not be able to offer themselves as Councillors.

7.2 Opposition To A Further 'Volunteer Discount' Of Allowances

- If we are volunteers, then so are federal and state government members. Will they apply a further volunteer discount to their wage?
- Almost every Councillor I know performs community service & volunteer work in addition to being a Councillor and the role of Local Government should never be confused with volunteer or community work. Volunteer work is not only BUT also!
- The Councillors duties in oversight of a large corporate entity with a \$100m budget exceeds those expected of a community volunteer regardless of the goodwill and community services aspects
- Of course this particularly impacts on Councillors who are young or single or women and thus skews the democratic representation to older, white collar, middle class and predominantly male representation
- The lack of adequate remuneration and resources diminishes the role of the councillor and creates an expectation of 'volunteerism' which in turn impacts upon who is attracted to councillor positions and ultimately hampers the ability of Councillors to contribute
- Financial independence should not be a pre-requisite for good governance and across community representation!
- I feel very strongly that Councillors should be on the same footing as Federal & State Government politicians, and
- Local Government is NOT 'community service' or 'volunteer work' it is the third tier of government in this country and should be recognised as such.

7.3 Support For A Minimum Councillor Support Toolkit

- Mobile phone should be palm pilot type so we can get emails on the run
- Also dedicated Councillors space with in council offices with internet connection landlines, printer and office space equivalent to the amenity of council staff - ie appropriate OH&S standards
- Travel costs covered for use of private car or provision of council owned car
- In any profession tools of the trade are required and to be able to undertake the role all necessary tools should be provided along with the necessary training to do perform the role to the best ability on behalf of the community
- In small Shires the amount of admin support is really minimal and Councillors need to run efficient home offices. If they are not at least supported with technology and core resources this will work as a disincentive for some

members of the community to participate as Councillors as many small shires also have a higher level of socioeconomic disadvantage

- Our Council already supplies all these items, which are well used and makes for much more efficient use of our time
- Stationery and administrative support should be available through council, and
- Council probably would provide adequate resources to all Councillors, but this needs to be made mandatory by the State to remove public backlash of Councillors having money wasted on them.

7.4 Scheduling Of Meeting Times

- In rural areas travel times to meetings can be excessive and sometimes you are unable to attend all shire meetings which may require travel to the meeting of up to two hours. Often the evening meetings finish 9:30 to 11.30 with a further two hours to get home
- There should be some consideration of whether the Council has an unsubdivided structure or a ward system when placing requirements around the meetings which must be attended
- Evening meetings, other than Council meetings, are suitable to those whose children have grown. Single parent, young kids = evenings not available
- The question is really whether the allowance is to truly reflect the 35+ hours a week spent on Council and whether it will be a big enough sum to enable people like me raising families to give up my "day job" so as not all council duties must occur in the evenings which is totally unsustainable as a mother with 3 school children.
- If you want diverse representation it must be regarded as almost full time work, and
- Unless you are in the fortunate position of being your own business person or being an electoral Officer for a pollie, you cannot readily attend to Council matters during the day.

7.5 Councillor Training

- There is no such legislated requirement for state and federal representatives.
- Councillors are usually reluctant to claim their personal expenses.
- Training would be good, so need to make sure if its mandatory, you can actually attend. Eg I have been to very few sessions because they are during business hours! The argument is circular
- In any profession tools of the trade are required and to be able to undertake the role all necessary tools should be provided along with the necessary training to do perform the role to the best ability on behalf of the community
- Many Councillors provide time in excess of 30 hours a week to fulfill what they believe to be their role in assisting the community. They willing provide this time but work and family can often suffer
- Provision of training would assist with ensuring they can receive ideas on balancing the role
- There should not be a training allowance but training should be partially compulsory and partially voluntary. All cost should be paid by Council
- Training should be available and easily accessed but I don't believe it should be legislated as compulsory. This is because it is not a requirement of nomination, nor should it be
- Training and meeting attendance expectations for elected representatives in Local Government should be no different to that expected of elected

representatives at State & Federal levels. I have a PhD (among other qualifications), together with 34 years work experience in the public sector, mostly at senior management level, and

- I disagree quite strongly with the notion that as a member of Local Government I am somehow in need of more training & proscribed attendance requirements than my local State MLA.

7.6 Councillor Interest In Outcomes Of This Review

- The key issue is for the State Government to mandate compensation and benefits and to avoid councils having discretion as this discretion is far too difficult politically for many councils to exercise and the poorer councils will ensure participation
- Due to my business the \$12,000 I received put me into the highest tax bracket and I lost 49% to the federal government in taxes. That is a ridiculous situation for both myself and the Council who may as well just send \$5,880 to the feds. I calculated that after tax is removed, I average per month, 63 hours of meetings only, not including reading and preparation, @ \$510 per month, which means I am earning \$8.06 per hour
- If you add in the time away from your business which is a huge cost in real terms or time away from family, then numbers just do not add up
- I will not be restanding as inadequate allowances, and
- I hope this helps other Councillors in the future.

7.7 Accountability For Attendances

- I cannot see why attendance should be compulsory for Councillors when it is not for other politicians. However, attendance at meetings can be recorded for public interest purposes as this is covered by FOI and annual reporting arrangements as applies for corporations. This will encourage Councillors to attend and hold them accountable
- I believe Cr's should attend all formal meetings, delegated meetings and briefings whenever possible. If meetings or briefings are scheduled at short notice or occasionally conflict with personal appointments an apology should be acceptable
- There should be some consideration of whether the Council has an unsubdivided structure or a ward system when placing requirements around the meetings which must be attended
- I agree that Councillors should attend more than 70% of important meetings, but the community/ratepayers will ensure that happens by not electing lazy Councillors. Legislation will only add more costs in administration, with little if any added benefit
- I support having some required commitment to attend community and delegated meetings but don't think a percentage of them would work. I think a better system would be for certain meetings to be 'accredited' and for Councillors to have to provide a public report on what meetings they have attended over a six month period. (so as to avoid the probs of Councillors inventing meetings to fill their report) That said, the on the ground work of being a councillor and working with people one on one is largely more important than many community meetings
- I would like to see alignment with the expectation of elected members of State and Fed govt. Therefore I am unsure about the mandatory attendance of briefings/meetings and whether this applies at other levels. I do however believe

that full involvement as a councillor requires a complete understanding of the issues and briefings and meetings attendance enable this

- I believe that as a Councillor, an elected representative of the people, I have an obligation to attend all Council meetings and discussions, I object to having this requirement legislated, it is reported in our annual report and the community can see for themselves if their Councillor has attended meetings
- Do the other two levels of government have these requirements imposed on them?
- Why are we constantly treated so differently like the poor cousin, most Councillors are more qualified and active than their state and federal counterparts?
- In relation to mandatory attendance at formal and informal council forums I believe there should be a mandatory requirement to attend important meetings. Having said that however, there does also need to be a built in flexibility within the system that allows Councillors leave of absence in special circumstances such as illness or unavailability due to other reasons, and
- I agree with proscribing a minimum attendance of at least 70%. However, informal meetings with CEO and Managers (like regular strategic briefing sessions and strategic weekends) should absolutely not have a formal requirement. This is because they have no legal standing, Councillors attend not as 'the Council', but as individual Councillors out of their own volition. Technically, the Mayor isn't even 'the Mayor' at informal meetings, but the person a group of individual Councillors choose to have chair the meeting. And mandatory attendance regulations for informal meetings undermines the status of local government and local Councillors as comparable to the job of politicians at other levels. Such a thing would not occur at higher levels of government.