

Loyalties put to test

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MOONEE Valley councillor Ange Kenos will be forced to either resign from council or quit his job working for a member of parliament.

The State Government has announced it will adopt recommendations from a Victorian Ombudsman report to ban councillors from working as electorate officers, ministerial or parliamentary advisers for state and federal MPs.

Cr Kenos (pictured) said he worked part-time for Western Metropolitan state Labor MP Khalil Eideh.

Ombudsman George Brouwer's recommendations, released this month, stem from his report that uncovered instances in Melbourne's west where Brimbank councillors duty to an MP affected their performance as councillors.

Cr Kenos said the conflict-of-interest issue was "bigger than me" and that he would choose his position as a councillor over his job. The West Ward councillor said he would never let his working relationship with Mr Eideh cloud his conduct with the council.

"The people of Moonee Valley elected me to represent them and I'm not going to let them down," Cr Kenos said. "This undue influence issue is bigger than all of us individually, but I have asked for legal opinion from the council regarding my employment and the appropriate code of conduct for council officers."

Victorian Local Governance Association president and Moonee Valley councillor Rose Iser said the VLGA called on the state and federal governments to discuss the best way to tackle "undue influence being exerted on councillors".

"I think we need to address the issue not of employment but the issue of the different forms influence can take in a comprehensive way," Cr Iser said.

She wanted to change a perception that local government had an "unattractive underbelly".

Dan Ward, a spokesman for Local Government Minister Richard Wynne, said the ban would start this year.

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