

FILE NO: PSC2017-00739

TITLE: COUNCILLOR INDUCTION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

OWNER: GOVERNANCE SECTION MANAGER

1. PURPOSE:

1.1 The purpose of the Councillor Induction and Professional Development Policy (the policy) is to demonstrate Port Stephens Council's commitment to ensuring that the Mayor and Councillors have access to induction and ongoing professional development which will assist them to develop and maintain the skills and knowledge required to effectively perform their civic role and responsibilities under the Local Government Act 1993 ('the Act').

2. CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

2.1 The policy has been developed to recognise the diversity of elected officials from a professional development perspective. Those elected to Port Stephens Council come from different backgrounds and it is acknowledged that they will already have some skills and experience to assist them in carrying out their role as a Mayor or Councillor. In an effort to further assist elected officials with a greater understanding of the local government framework and complexities, professional development has been enacted in the Local Government (General) Regulation 2021.

3. SCOPE:

3.1 The policy applies to the Mayor and Councillors of Port Stephens Council.

4. DEFINITIONS:

4.1 An outline of the key definitions of terms included in the policy.

Act	means Local Government Act 1993.
Council	means Port Stephens Council.
Councillors	means Elected members of Port Stephens Council.
General Manager	means General Manager of Port Stephens Council.
Mayor	means Mayor of Port Stephens Council.
Year	means financial year.

5. STATEMENT:

Statement of commitment

5.1 Port Stephens Council is committed to developing an induction and ongoing professional development program for the Mayor and Councillors to ensure they can fulfil their statutory roles and responsibilities. As part of this program, the Mayor and each Councillor will have a professional development plan that identifies specific gaps in their capabilities (ie their knowledge, skills and attributes) and identify professional development activities to build these capabilities.

Induction program

5.2 Port Stephens Council will develop an induction program for new and returning Councillors as well as a supplementary program for the Mayor to ensure they are provided all the information they need to effectively fulfil their roles in the first few months of the Council term and feel confident in their ability to do so. The induction program will cover:

- a) an orientation to Council facilities and the local government area.
- b) an overview of the key issues and tasks for the new Council including Council's Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program, Operational Plan, Resourcing Strategy and Community Engagement Plan.
- c) the legislation, rules, principles and political context under which councils operate.
- d) the roles and responsibilities of Councillors and the Mayor.
- e) Council's organisational structure, Workforce Management Strategy and the roles and responsibilities of the General Manager and Council staff.
- f) what Council does and how it operates, including an overview of integrated planning and reporting, land-use planning, natural resource management, financial management and asset management by Council.
- g) key Council policies and procedures Councillors must comply with including the Code of Conduct.
- h) the role of Council meetings and how to participate effectively in them.
- i) the support available to the Mayor and Councillors and where they can go to get more information or assistance, and
- j) information on the process for taking the oath of office.
- k) other information that may be relevant at the time.

5.3 In the case of the Mayor, the program will also cover:

- a) how to be an effective leader of the governing body and the Council.
- b) the role of the Chair and how to chair Council meetings.
- c) the Mayor's role in integrated planning and reporting.
- d) the Mayor's role and responsibilities under the Code of Conduct.

- e) the Mayor's role and responsibilities in relation to the General Manager's employment.
 - f) the Mayor's role at regional and other representative bodies.
 - g) the Mayor's civic and ceremonial role.
- 5.4 The Mayor and Councillors must have a working knowledge and understanding of these areas by the end of the induction program.
- 5.5 The induction program will also include team building activities to help the governing body establish itself as a cohesive and collaborative team focused on a common purpose with shared values and goals. Activities will aim to ensure the Mayor and Councillors:
- a) identify how they would like to work together as a team and identify a common vision for the governing body.
 - b) build relationships with each other based on trust and mutual respect that facilitate collaboration.
 - c) contribute to a positive and ethical culture within the governing body.
 - d) work towards consensus as members of the governing body for the benefit of the community.
 - e) develop respectful negotiation skills and manage alternative views within the governing body without damaging relationships.
 - f) understand what supports or undermines the effective functioning of the governing body.
 - g) respect the diversity of skills and experiences on the governing body, and
 - h) communicate and uphold the decisions of Council in a respectful way, even if their own position was not adopted.
- 3.6 Activities should also help the Mayor, as the leader of the governing body, to:
- a) act as a stabilising influence and show leadership, and
 - b) promote a culture of integrity and accountability within Council and when representing Council in the community and elsewhere.
- 5.7 The Mayor and Councillors, including those re-elected to office, must attend all induction sessions.
- 5.8 Port Stephens Council will evaluate the induction program at the end of each Council term to determine whether it has achieved these outcomes, and to identify and address areas for improvement.

Ongoing professional development program

- 5.9 An individual ongoing professional development plan will be developed for the Mayor and each Councillor to address any gaps in the capabilities (ie the knowledge, skills and attributes) needed to effectively fulfil their role.
- 5.10 Each professional development plan will span the Council's term, and identify professional development activities that the Mayor or Councillor will participate in. Professional development activities will be prioritised according to need and approved by the General Manager where Council funds are required in accordance with Council's Payment of Expenses and Provision of Facilities to Mayor and Councillors Policy. The Mayor and Councillors are expected to complete all the activities included in their professional development plan.
- 5.11 Professional development activities will, wherever possible, follow the 70/20/10 principle. The 70/20/10 principle requires that:
- 70% of learning activities are provided via learning and developing from experience – for example, on-the-job training, self-directed learning, developmental roles, problem solving, exposure and practice
 - 20% of learning activities are provided via learning and training through others – for example, personal or professional networks, coaching, mentoring, feedback, memberships and professional associations, and
 - 10% of learning activities are provided via learning and developing through structured programs – for example, training courses, external or in-house workshops, seminars, webinars and other e-learning and briefing sessions conducted by the council, external training providers or industry bodies.
- 5.12 The timing of professional development activities for the Mayor and Councillors will be designed in such a way so as to not overload Councillors with learning activities in the early part of Council's term. The timing will reflect what knowledge and skills the Mayor and Councillors need at various points in Council's term to undertake their roles.
- 5.13 The Mayor and Councillors will be provided with as much notice as possible for upcoming induction and professional development activities.

Budget

- 5.14 An annual budget allocation will be provided to support the induction and professional development activities undertaken by the Mayor and Councillors. Expenditure will be monitored and reported on a 6 monthly basis.

5.15 Approval of training and/or expenses for professional development activities that require Council funds are to be approved by the General Manager in accordance with Council's Payment of Expenses and Provision of Facilities to Mayor and Councillors Policy.

Evaluation

5.16 Council will evaluate the professional development program at the end of each Council term to assess whether it was effective in assisting the Mayor and Councillors to develop the capabilities required to fulfil their civic roles.

Reporting

5.17 The General Manager will publically report each year in Council's Annual Report:

- a) the name of the Mayor and each individual Councillor that completed Council's induction program (where an induction program has been delivered during the relevant year).
- b) the name of the Mayor and each Councillor who participated in any ongoing professional development program during the year.
- c) the number of training and other activities provided to the Mayor and Councillors during the year as part of a professional development program.
- d) the total cost of induction and professional development activities and any other training provided to the Mayor and Councillors during the relevant year.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES:

- 6.1 The Mayor and each Councillor are responsible for making themselves available to attend any development activities identified in the professional development plan.
- 6.2 The Mayor and all Councillors must make all reasonable endeavours to attend and participate in the induction sessions and professional development activities arranged for them during the term of the Council.
- 6.3 The Governance Section Manager is responsible for planning, scheduling and facilitating induction and professional development activities for the Mayor and Councillors in consultation with the General Manager.
- 6.4 The General Manager has overall responsibility for Port Stephens Council's induction and professional development program.
- 6.5 The Governance Section Manager is responsible for monitoring, evaluating, reviewing and providing advice on the policy.

7. RELATED DOCUMENTS:

- 7.1 Local Government Act 1993
- 7.2 Local Government (General) Regulation 2021
- 7.3 Councillor Induction and Professional Development Guidelines 2018.

CONTROLLED DOCUMENT INFORMATION:

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VERSION HISTORY:

Version	Date	Author	Details	Minute No.
1.0	14/05/2019	Governance Section Manager	First version of policy based on the model policy provided in the Councillor Induction and Professional Development Guidelines 2018.	094
1.1	27/4/2021	Governance Section Manager	The policy was transferred into new policy template and updated version control. Minor review to the policy at: 1.1 – included policy title. 2.1 & 3.1 - replace “this” with “the”. 5.14 – included “on a 6 monthly basis” and removed “quarterly”.	102

Version	Date	Author	Details	Minute No.
1.2	14 May 2024	Governance Section Manager	<p>The policy has been reviewed and version control updated.</p> <p>Minor grammatical amendments.</p> <p>2.1 – Updated reference to the Local Government Regulation 2005 to 2021 regulation.</p> <p>3.1 – Inserted “The policy applies to the Mayor and Councillors of Port Stephens Council.”</p> <p>5.2 – Updated to insert “the Council”, deleting ‘Council’s term’.</p> <p>5.12 – Updated to provide consistency with wording ‘the Mayor and Councillors’.</p> <p>7.2 - Updated reference to the Local Government Regulation 2005 to 2021 regulation.</p> <p>5.15 – added ‘for’</p>	092