



MEDIA RELEASE: THURSDAY, 28 NOVEMBER, 2019

New policy and reporting for Strathbogrie Shire Councillors

Strathbogrie Shire Council has recently endorsed a new Councillor Support, Resources, Reimbursement and Reporting of Expenses Policy and published a breakdown of Councillor expenses for 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19.

The new policy and breakdown of councillor expenses can be viewed on Council's website by clicking the VAGO Action Plan button on the homepage www.strathbogrie.vic.gov.au.

This page also provides background information, Frequently Asked Questions and Council's Action Plan and progress.

This work is in response to the Victorian Auditor-General's Office report into fraud and corruption control in local government released in June 2019, in which Strathbogrie was one of four council's selected to participate.

Whilst the report concluded there was no fraud or corruption detected at Strathbogrie, it did identify expenditure where it was unclear how residents and ratepayers benefited, practices that may not meet public expectations and non-compliance with legislative requirements around annual reporting of councillor expenses.

Strathbogrie Shire Mayor Cr Amanda McClaren said councillors will now be equipped with more clear and stringent guidelines and process.

"We now have a very robust and clear policy and best practice guidelines which will ensure community confidence in councillor expenses when undertaking their civic duties," Mayor McClaren said.

"We are pleased to have completed nearly 70 percent of our Action Plan in response to the VAGO Audit and aim to have all actions completed by early 2020."

In the interest of public transparency and a best practice approach to reporting, quarterly reports of councillor expenses will be provided to the Audit Committee and Council for review prior to being published on Council's website.

Councillor expenses include expenses reimbursed to councillors and those paid directly by council as a result of costs incurred by a councillor performing their duties.

Expenses can vary quite substantially between councillors, often due to the variation in distances of travel, the number of meetings and events attended by each councillor and the personal decision of each councillor in choosing to claim or not claim their expenses. Mayoral expenses are often the highest given the role of the mayor as council's figurehead and chief community advocate.

Expenses must be reported by categories defined by the State Government, namely car mileage, child and family care, conferences and training, information and communication technology and travel expenses.

The 'other expenses' category has been created to cover other expenses that cannot be attributed to any of the defined categories and include costs such as printer cartridges and stationery.

If you have any questions relating to councillor expenses, please contact Council Offices on 1800 065 993 or email info@strathbogje.vic.gov.au.

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