

# Aldermanic Professional Development



## Discussion Paper



City of HOBART

## Contents

1. Introduction and Good Governance .....	3
2. What is professional development and why is it important? .....	3
3. Current Arrangements.....	4
4. Questions for Consideration.....	5
5. How do you go about identifying professional development and broader training and development needs?.....	6
6. Development of a professional development and training plan....	7
7. Funding/Cost .....	8
8. Other Issues.....	9

## 1. Introduction and Good Governance

The City of Hobart is committed to achieving best practice governance by supporting its Aldermen in the development and enhancement of knowledge and skills necessary to support the performance of their roles and functions as elected representatives of the City of Hobart.

Local government plays a critical role in Tasmania: councils help to build resilient communities, contribute to the development of a healthy environment, and promote local economies. Good governance is critical to local government's success in carrying out these roles.

## 2. What is professional development and why is it important?

Professional development is defined as formal education, specialised training or other learning to improve knowledge, competence and effectiveness of the participant.

For City of Hobart Aldermen it enhances their capacity to perform their role as elected representatives of the community and to maintain and improve skills and stay in touch with issues relevant to the Council.

Professional development may be delivered through formal and informal training such as formal education and training courses, relevant seminars and peer programs.

Even experienced elected members say they can find it challenging to keep abreast of changes to the legislative and policy context for local government as well as changes to a council's policies and procedures.

Continuing professional development for elected members is an investment which will enhance the effectiveness of the council's performance in achieving its goals.

### 3. Current Arrangements

The Lord Mayor, in accordance with section 27 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, is responsible for considering and determining applications from Aldermen for professional development; in respect to applications from the Lord Mayor, the Deputy Lord Mayor is responsible.

For professional development applications other than those involving international travel, once approved by the Lord Mayor or Deputy Lord Mayor, the General Manager is to inform the Council at the first available ordinary meeting, for noting purposes only, details of the professional development application, as submitted by the attending Alderman.

As an exception to this arrangement, where international travel is involved as part of an application for professional development, the application will be referred directly to the Council for consideration and determination.

Each Alderman receives a professional development allocation up to \$5,000 per financial year with the total professional development allocation for each Alderman over a four year term being \$20,000. Any unused amount of an Alderman's PD yearly allocation does not accrue, except that in the case of proposals involving international travel, the Council has discretion to approve an increase in the PD yearly allocation for an Alderman to a maximum of \$10,000, so long as the total allocation in a term does not exceed \$20,000.

Upon returning from any activity approved under the City of Hobart's Aldermanic Development and Support policy, the attending Alderman must provide a report in the following format, within thirty days:

- (i) The name, location and date of the activity, together with a summary of the activity and details of any outcomes which may be considered appropriate for application to the City of Hobart.
- (ii) The report may be presented verbally or in writing to the relevant Council committee.

## 4. Questions for Consideration

In exploring the matter of Aldermanic professional development, some threshold concepts are proposed for consideration and discussion:

How do we define professional development?

- It seems appropriate to make a distinction between activities which are:
  - a) To improve the operations and capacity of the Council which also have residual professional benefit to an Alderman, and;
  - b) To provide professional development largely for the personal benefit of an Alderman which also have residual benefits to the Council.
- If Aldermen accepted this distinction, **a)** would represent **(non-discretionary) training and development** while **b)** would be defined as **(discretionary) professional development**.
- **Non- discretionary training and development** would include:
  - Induction
  - Local government sector development activities
  - Training offered to the Council as a whole, such as information sessions on relevant legislation, safety circle, code of conduct, team building activities etc
  - Conferences and seminars where an Alderman is **representing the Council**
  - Council initiated and organised study / inspection tours
- So what then constitutes appropriate **discretionary professional development activities**:
  - formal education
  - specialised training courses
  - conferences and seminars **not** covered above?
  - other learning opportunities to improve knowledge, competence and effectiveness of the participant?
- Should professional development activities be limited to opportunities within Australia?
- Are there benefits in undertaking a self-assessment process to identify areas for knowledge and skill development (see section 5)?
- Is the current process for identifying and undertaking professional development activities robust enough or should effort be placed into establishing a yearly professional development plan for Aldermen (see section 6)?
- What is considered an appropriate budget for professional development activities (see section 7)?
- There are a number of other issues which Alderman require consideration, such as any fringe benefit implications for extending attendance beyond the approved activity and reporting professional development activities in the Annual Report (see section 8).

## 5. How do you go about identifying professional development and broader training and development needs?

One mechanism which can be used to identify professional development needs (and wider training needs) could be a simple self-assessment checklist for Aldermen to identify areas for knowledge and skill development. The checklist can be used by Aldermen to help them to prioritise areas to cover in an ongoing training and development program and would form the basis of an individual professional development and training plan for Aldermen.

Each year the council could allocate a budget to support Aldermanic professional development to be undertaken in that year.

The checklist should be reviewed on a regular basis to check progress and identify any additional areas for professional development or training and development.

The checklist could include the following areas:

- Leadership skills
- Relationship Management
- Communication skills, including negotiating, conflict resolution, advocacy and lobbying
- Presentation skills
- Problem solving skills
- Teamwork skills
- Organisational skills
- Land use planning
- Strategy
- Financial management
- Environmental and asset management

## 6. Development of a professional development and training plan

The Council could also develop and adopt a whole-of-Aldermanic training and development plan each year.

This plan may include things such as:

- Training/development needs for the council as a whole and for individual councillors
- Priorities
- Timeframe for delivery
- Assigning responsibility for organising training/development
- Approval process
- Estimated cost
- Delivery mode/s

Each year the council could allocate a budget to support an Aldermanic training and development plan to be undertaken in that year.

## 7. Funding/Cost

A key question is what is the quantum of that allocation.

A table outlining Aldermanic professional development and training in other jurisdictions is provided at the end of this discussion paper.

### Examples of Aldermanic Training and Development guidelines/policy

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Training/Professional Development Budget</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>City of Hobart</b>	<b>\$5, 000 per person per annum \$60,000 in total per year</b>	<b>The total professional development allocation for each Aldermen over a four year term is \$20,000</b>
<b>City of Sydney</b>	<b>\$50,000 in total for the Lord Mayor and Aldermen</b>	
<b>Adelaide City Council</b>	<b>\$24,000 approximately in total for the Lord Mayor and Aldermen</b>	
<b>Darwin City Council</b>	<b>\$3, 600 per person per annum approximately</b>	<b>Extra meeting allowance for professional development courses/conferences that have approval and are in line with Council Policy.</b>
<b>Melbourne City Council</b>	<b>No localised budget; funds are derived from corporate budget for organisational training</b>	



## 8. Other Issues

- **Personal travel associated with the Council approved activities**

A limitation on the activities which can be undertaken by the Alderman outside the approved activity. There are Fringe Benefits Tax implications, as well as cost and perception issues. For example, the State Government has a general prohibition on work related travel being able to be extended beyond the approved activity - that is, no extensions even if at no cost to the employer. Similarly, if there is an accompanying person, there must be no additional cost to the Council due to another person travelling with the Alderman.

- What is the view of Aldermen on this issue?
- Clarification regarding the application for more than the annual allocation per Alderman.
  - \$10,000 allowed in one year, so long as the total does not exceed \$20,000 in a term.
- Clarification regarding the allocations for part-year time periods (such as in election years) and when an Alderman does not serve a full financial year due to a mid-term commencement or cessation of appointment.
  - This is included in the current policy.
- Clarification regarding the application of “conflict of interest” best practice when Council is discussing an application for such funds.
  - Should an Alderman be present when their professional development is being considered?
- Reporting of training and development undertaken by elected members under the policy be reported in the Annual Report and in addition any costs associated with these opportunities be recorded in the gifts and benefits register.
  - Is training and development considered a gift?

## Attachment

### City of Hobart staff training and development

In terms of the provision of training and development for City of Hobart staff, the following is provided:

#### **Study assistance**

- Support the acquisition and development of employee skills and knowledge necessary for the effective delivery of Council services;
- Enhance work performance and to increase the skills, capabilities, flexibility and effectiveness of employees;
- Meet the Council's workforce skills and knowledge requirements and ensure that employees are appropriately trained and qualified for their role.

There is an annual budget allocation of \$100,000.

#### **Training and Development**

- Training is directed at achieving the corporate objectives of the Council, and where compatible with the Council's objectives, to meeting the career needs and aspirations of employees;
- Training provided will be relevant to the services provided by the Council, meaningful to participants and directed at improving performance and capability;
- Training will be provided to ensure that the Council and employees (in their role with Council) meet statutory obligations in the delivery of Council services and programs.

There is an annual budget allocation of \$350,000.