



Bayside Council

Serving Our Community

Councillor Professional Development Policy

28 May 2025



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Councillor Professional Development Policy
File: SF17/528 Document: 17/29816[v3]
Policy Register: F16/951 Policy No.: PP17/7
Class of document: Council Policy

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The Local Government Act 1993 prescribes that the role of councillors under section 232 requires responsibility *“to make all reasonable efforts to acquire and maintain the skills necessary to perform the role of Councillor”*.

The Local Government (General) Regulation 2021 requires the General Manager to ensure that induction training and to ensure that an ongoing professional development program is provided to the Mayor and Councillors. The Office of Local Government issued Guidelines on Councillor Induction and Professional Development to assist Councils in meeting the requires of the Local Government Act and its Regulation.

This policy addresses those requirements.

1.2 Definitions

The definitions of certain terms are:

Councillor/s:

Refers to all elected members of council including the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

Councillors Portal is the official repository and communication channel between council officials. It provides a link to the electronic business papers; council policies; news items; calendar of events; and all matters of relevance to councillors.

OLG:

The Office of Local Government.

Professional Development is an annual program for the ongoing educational development for all councillors during their term of office.

The Act:

The Local Government Act 1993.

The Regulation:

The Local Government (General) Regulation 2021.

1.3 Policy statement

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate Bayside 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 Act.

1.4 Scope of policy

This policy applies to all councillors of Bayside Council, including the Mayor.

2 Statement of Commitment

Bayside 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.

3 Induction Program

Bayside 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 Council's term and feel confident in their ability to do so. The induction program will cover:

- an orientation to council facilities and the local government area
- 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
- the legislation, rules, principles and political context under which councils operate
- the roles and responsibilities of councillors and the Mayor
- Council's organisational structure, workforce management strategy and the roles and responsibilities of the general manager and council staff
- 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
- key Council policies and procedures councillors must comply with including the code of conduct
- the role of Council Meetings and how to participate effectively in them
- the support available to the Mayor and councillors and where they can go to get more information or assistance, and
- information on the process for taking the oath of office and electing the Mayor at the first Council Meeting (where applicable).

In the case of the Mayor, the program will take into account the councillor's skills and experience and may typically cover:

- how to be an effective leader of the governing body and the council
- the role of the Chair and how to chair Council Meetings
- the Mayor's role in integrated planning and reporting
- the Mayor's role and responsibilities under the code of conduct
- the Mayor's role and responsibilities in relation to the general manager's employment
- the Mayor's role at regional and other representative bodies, and
- the Mayor's civic and ceremonial role.

The Mayor and councillors must have a working knowledge and understanding of these areas by the end of the induction program.

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 Mayors and councillors:

- identify how they would like to work together as a team and identify a common vision for the governing body
- build relationships with each other based on trust and mutual respect that facilitate collaboration • contribute to a positive and ethical culture within the governing body
- work towards consensus as members of the governing body for the benefit of the community
- develop respectful negotiation skills and manage alternative views within the governing body without damaging relationships
- understand what supports or undermines the effective functioning of the governing body
- respect the diversity of skills and experiences on the governing body, and
- communicate and uphold the decisions of Council in a respectful way, even if their own position was not adopted.

Activities should also help the Mayor, as the leader of the governing body, to:

- act as a stabilising influence and show leadership, and
- promote a culture of integrity and accountability within Council and when representing Council in the community and elsewhere.

The Mayor and councillors, including those re-elected to office, must attend all induction sessions. Bayside 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.

4 Ongoing Professional Development Program

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. 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 councillor and expenses and facilities policy. The Mayor and councillors are expected to complete all the activities included in their professional development plan.

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.

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 councillors and the Mayor need at various points in council's term to undertake their roles. The Mayor and councillors will be provided with as much notice as possible for upcoming induction and professional development activities.

Councillors, on a regular basis, via the Councillors Portal, and/or email, will be provided with a list of development opportunities available to them to undertake during their term in office.

The aim is that Councillors attend at least one professional development training session in a 12 month period in addition to any induction programs conducted by the Council.

Professional Development Programs are generally provided by Local Government NSW (LGNSW) being the peak Association of metropolitan and regional councils. However, other private companies may offer relevant training and development opportunities from time to time.

Councillors are to submit requests to the General Manager, Manager Mayoral & Councillor Support or the Councillor Support Officer, preferred via the Councillors Portal, to arrange attendance at any training or development courses in accordance with the provisions of the Expenses and Facilities Policy.

In addition to training courses or development opportunities identified by Councillors, Council will arrange for internal seminars and guest speakers to address Councillors on topics relevant to the whole Council.

Generally, the third Wednesday of each month will be available for internal Councillor training sessions. Council also may structure Committee meeting items and presentations to support the ongoing professional development of Councillors.

5 Policy implementation

5.1 Policy responsibilities

Council has an obligation under the Act to ensure a suitable program, and opportunities are provided to councillors to undertake a professional development program on an annual basis.

Council had the responsibility to 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.

The Mayor and each councillor are responsible for making themselves available to attend any development activities identified in the professional development plan. 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.

The Manager Mayoral & Councillor Support has responsibility to:

- Implement the program and policy development
- Seek the provision of professional development training and funding through the Council's Expenses and Facilities Policy.
- Seek an annual budget allocation to support the induction and professional development activities undertaken by the Mayor and councillors within the limits outlined in the Council's Expenses and Facilities Policy; and
- Monitor expenditure

The Manager Mayoral & Councillor Support will also ensure that each of Council's annual report includes:

- 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)
- the name of the Mayor and each councillor who participated in any ongoing professional development program during the year
- the number of training and other activities provided to the Mayor and councillors during the year as part of a professional development program, and
- the total cost of induction and professional development activities and any other training provided to the Mayor and councillors during the relevant year.

The Councillor Support Officer will also be responsible for coordinating training and maintaining a register for reporting councillor attendance at professional development programs provided and offered to councillors as outlined in this policy.

The General Manager has overall responsibility for Bayside Council's induction and professional development program.

5.2 Procedures

Procedures for implementing and reporting requirements outlined in this policy rests with the Manager Mayoral & Councillor Support.

5.3 Breaches

Breaches of this policy may be considered as a breach of the Council's Code of Conduct.

6 Document control

6.1 Review

This Policy will be reviewed prior to each general election in order for it to be kept up-to-date and in accordance with best practice.

The Manager Mayoral & Councillor Support may approve non-significant and/or minor editorial amendments that do not change the policy substance.

6.2 Related documents

Legislation, mandatory guidelines and/or Council policies and procedures relevant to the policy are:

- The Local Government Act 1993
- The Local Government (General) Regulation 2021
- Councillor Induction and Professional Development Guidelines 2018 (issued by Office of Local Government)
- The Code of Conduct
- Councillor Expenses & Facilities Policy

6.3 Version history

Version	Release Date	Author	Reason for Change
1.0	14/6/2017	Coordinator Governance	New document
2.0	23/11/2022	Manager Governance & Risk	Review and update to Model Policy
3.0	28/05/2025 (Council) 14/05/2025 (CP Com)	Manager Mayoral & Councillor Support	Review of Policy following the new term of Council