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RELEASE OF REVISED COUNCILLOR EXPENSES AND FACILITIES GUIDELINES

The purpose of this circular is to advise councils of the release of revised *Guidelines for the payment of expenses and the provision of facilities for mayors and councillors in NSW*.

The revised Guidelines are based on the findings of a review of council policies on councillor expenses and facilities conducted in 2007 (Circular 08-03 refers), as well as feedback from councils.

The Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW were consulted during the revision.

Revisions include:

1. Addition that councillor expenses may not be used to support attendance by councillors at political fund-raising functions
2. Addition to and consolidation of the legal expenses provisions, including reference to matters before a council's Conduct Review Committee/Reviewer.
3. Addition that councils should establish and document an appropriate process to resolve any disputes that arise about expenses and facilities
4. Addition that gifts and benefits given by councillors should be of token value and in accordance with a policy developed by the council.
5. Addition to training and development expenses provisions
6. Clarification on the need for limits for all expenses
7. Clarification that policies should disallow general expense allowances and private benefit from expenses and facilities (unless incidental or reimbursement mechanism in place)
8. Clarification of processes for approval, reconciliation and reimbursement of expenses
9. Clarification that councillor annual fees do not fall within the scope of councillor expenses and facilities policies
10. Clarification that adopted expenses and facilities policies apply to Administrators of councils
11. Updates to legislative provisions and references

12. Restructuring of information and format to make the Guidelines easier to follow

Councils are required to submit their expenses and facilities policies to the Division of Local Government, Department of Premier and Cabinet by 30 November each year.

Councils have until **30 November 2009** to submit 2009/2010 policies that comply with these Guidelines.

Councils may contact the Division to seek a short extension to submit their 2009/2010 policy after this due date in order to take the revised Guidelines into account. Councils must clearly justify why an extension is required and propose an alternative policy submission date. The Division will confirm if an extension has been granted.

Councils that have already publicly exhibited a draft 2009/10 policy and/or adopted their 2009/10 policy based on the previous version of the Guidelines are not required to reconsider their 2009/10 policies in light of the revised Guidelines.

Councils that were awaiting the revised Guidelines to prepare their policies for 2008/2009 are not required to retrospectively revise and submit those policies to the Division of Local Government.

The revised Guidelines, which replace any previous versions of the Guidelines issued, is available from the 'Publications' page of the Division's website at www.dlg.nsw.gov.au.



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