

Circular No. 13-19
Date 19 April 2013
Doc ID. A296888

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GUIDELINES ON THE CLOSURE OF COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Purpose

To inform councils of guidelines on the closure of council and committee meetings.

Issue

- Meetings are the key forum in which councils make strategic and policy decisions on behalf of their communities. As elected institutions, councils are ultimately accountable to their communities for their decisions. It is therefore important that council meetings are open and can be attended by members of the community.
- There will, however, be occasions where councils are required to consider information which by its nature is confidential and ought not to be publicly disclosed. The Act recognises that on such occasions, the public interest in protecting confidential information will outweigh the public interest in ensuring accountability through open meetings.
- The Division of Local Government has developed guidelines, including common questions and best practice examples, on how councils can appropriately weigh these competing public interests and ensure that they comply with their obligations under the Act when closing meetings to the public.
- The Division has prepared these guidelines under Section 10B(5) of the *Local Government Act 1993* (the Act) to assist councils and the public in understanding the processes involved in closing meetings.

Action

Councils should consider these guidelines, which have been prepared in accordance with section 10B(5) of the *Local Government Act 1993*, when closing meetings to the public.



Steve Orr
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A Division of the Department of Premier and Cabinet