



MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday, 6 December 2017

SUPPORTING AND STRENGTHENING LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local Government Minister Gabrielle Upton has reaffirmed the NSW Government's commitment to strengthening integrity, sustainability and performance of local councils across the state.

Ms Upton told hundreds of councillors at the Local Government NSW Annual Conference in Sydney that the Government would continue to introduce measures to strengthen integrity and performance.

"The NSW Government is committed to supporting councillors to uphold the highest standards of governance, integrity and professionalism required of elected representatives," Ms Upton said.

The NSW Government is releasing a draft Model Code of Meeting Practice for consultation with the sector. For the first time there will be a uniform set of meeting rules for councils across the state to help ensure more accessible, orderly, effective and efficient meetings.

The draft code is focused on improving transparency and public involvement in council meetings and the decision making process. It is promoting the use of technology to reach more ratepayers by proposing the mandatory webcasting of ordinary meetings by all councils in NSW.

"The reality is that many of us are time poor and with our work and family responsibilities it is simply not practical to expect all ratepayers who wish to attend council meetings to be able to attend," Ms Upton said.

"I am also pleased to release the draft guidelines for induction and professional development training that will lead to improved councillor performance and stronger councils."

Councils will be required to deliver induction training within six months after an election and an ongoing professional development program over the term to help councillors acquire and maintain the knowledge and skills necessary to perform their roles.

Some of the measures the Government has already put in place to strengthen integrity include:

- Requiring candidates to disclose if they are a property developer
- Banning people from public office if they have been convicted of certain offences
- Forcing councillors to hand over any financial benefit derived from a pecuniary interest
- Releasing a new draft Model Code of Conduct.

"The Government has introduced these measures so the community can have confidence in the people who represent them. Integrity is at the very heart of a councillor's service," Ms Upton said.

The draft Model Code of Meeting Practice and the draft Councillor Induction and Professional Development Guidelines are on public exhibition until 16 March. The documents can be viewed on the Office of Local Government website at www.olg.nsw.gov.au.

MEDIA: Michael Cox 0429 465 227