

Summary of oral submission to the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal forthcoming local government annual adjustment determination 2025

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Low remuneration is currently a barrier to attract and retain high performing councillors

- Councils need to be able to attract a diverse group of people who are financially literate and can with professional development act like ‘strategic board members’.
- Becoming a local councillor is a significant undertaking, with responsibility for large budgets that comes with low remuneration.
- Many councillors go financially backward by choosing to serve on a local council.
- Some councillors are working over 35 hours a week including on weekends and public holidays; the reading, travel, briefing and meeting time alone is easily 20 hours a week.
- Given their respective responsibilities, councillors are paid much less than other members of government at the State and Federal level.
- Currently, the role of councillor is only attractive to those who can dedicate the time and forego potential earnings to undertake it (mainly self-funded retirees).
- A higher level of remuneration would be a way to attract more young people, women and those from a diverse background, greatly improving councils’ performance.
- Higher remuneration/a dedicated allowance would allow more councillors to dedicate time to attending committees and engaging in further professional development, which is important to improve council performance.
- Another suggestion is pay councillors an additional amount for the heavy reading and time-consuming committees such as audit and risk.

Differences between metro and regional/rural councils and how they are remunerated

- The current remuneration framework does not reflect the unique challenges that come from working as a councillor in a rural or regional area.
- Many rural and regional areas are geographically very large, and the time commitment required to fulfill a councillor’s representative duties is not properly reflected in the current remuneration.

- For rural and regional councillors, not having a dedicated car allowance would be discriminatory, particularly for low-income councillors.

Financial and budgetary considerations

- It would be more appropriate that councillors receive remuneration that better reflects a basic living wage (which could be approximately \$65,000 p.a.).
- A greater focus needs to be given to councils and councillors that are performing well, as opposed to those who are performing poorly.
- Remediating councils' poor performance is very expensive. Increasing remuneration for councillors would directly and indirectly improve the performance of councils and would represent better value for money.
- The current remuneration review cycle is too long.