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Good afternoon,

I would like to make a formal submission to the VIRT regarding the 2025 Determination for the allowances paid to Councillors. For women councillors the allowances provided by VIRT undermine the value a councillor commits to their role as indicated in the recent VLGA census whereby most councillors dedicate an average of 32 hours per week to the role. Research informs us that it is predominantly women who spend more hours per week on household domestic duties than their male counterparts. Research also found that women are more likely to be carers (as per the Carers Recognition Act 2012) than men. In my municipality, City of Kingston, up to 16% of residents identify themselves as carers and most households have two full time workers or one full time and one part time with children. Therefore a female councillor on average dedicates 32 hours per week to the role of a councillor, between 30-38 hours per week to their salaried employment, one-in-six of those are carers to elderly or chronically unwell family members, 43% of our population have children and the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) and The Journal of Marriage and Family found women typically spend 2-4 more hours daily than men on unpaid domestic duties, including housework and caregiving, which adds another 21 hours of work per week. Kingston Council is placed as a category 3 council however the allowance of \$40,769 does not value the commitment and dedication required to meet our obligations under the Local Government Act to fulfil the role of a Councillor and undertake Councillor duties. The current allowance, minus superannuation, minus tax equates to around \$18 per hour which is less than minimum wage. We obviously don't do this role for the money but I can earn four times that amount if I worked an extra day in my salaried employment. The irony is, to do the job as expected by the community we need to take absence from paid salaried employment to simply do what is expected of us by community and obliged under the Act. Also, category 3 council should receive a much higher allowance. Kingston council has an operating budget of \$252m and a capex of \$56m per annum, we currently have the largest major infrastructure projects happening in Kingston including the Suburban Rail Loop, the most Level Crossing Removals and a \$87m aquatic and leisure centre being built. There is no other category 3 council with a similar amount of accountability for councillors. We are grossly undervalued and undercompensated for these roles. I would like to see an additional category between 3 and 4. We should receive superannuation on top of, we should receive tax percentage on top of, and also be paid more in line with what a governance board of a not for profit would be paid (at the very least more than minimum wage!). We deserve equitable treatment for an unequal value. This is not an expense allowance, it is a right. Women's rights and equality are crucial to local government because they help create a fairer and stronger society for everyone. When women have the same opportunities to represent their community in leadership, they can contribute their skills and ideas to improve the community. This benefits everyone by bringing new solutions to problems, creating jobs, and fostering a better quality of life. Women should not be blocked from entering local government as a councillor because we don't give them a fair enough allowance to do the job. Increase the

allowance by at least double to actually show value for the community. State government officials receive a ridiculous amount of money and allowances and we receive breadcrumbs. It's discrimination against working parents.

Regards,

Cr Law

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