

Submission to the Tribunal: Councillor Remuneration Increase

To the Tribunal,

I write as a newly appointed Councillor in a rural city to formally request a review and increase in Councillor remuneration. While I acknowledge that this review does not encompass the general roles and responsibilities of Councillors, it is essential to highlight the significant demands placed upon rural Councillors and the disparity between workload and remuneration.

The Importance of Council in Rural Areas

In rural areas like ours, the Council is not only the governing body but also one of the largest employers and the primary provider of essential services. Unlike metropolitan councils, which have access to a broader range of state and private sector services, rural councils fill critical gaps in community support, infrastructure maintenance, and local economic development. This places a higher level of responsibility on Councillors, who must advocate for, oversee, and engage with a community that is deeply reliant on Council functions.

Workload and Time Commitment

The workload for Councillors is substantial. In my role, I serve on multiple committees, attend regular community meetings, and represent my constituents across a geographically vast area. My own ward comprises [REDACTED], requiring me to:

- Attend [REDACTED] separate community development groups.
- Participate in key civic events such as Australia Day and ANZAC Day across multiple locations.
- Regularly travel significant distances to attend meetings, events, and engage with residents.

While a travel allowance is provided, it does not compensate for the extensive time commitment required. When I initially inquired about the role, I was informed it would take only a few hours per day, allowing me to maintain my primary employment. However, the reality has been far different—most days require at least six hours of work, often extending into evenings and weekends. The expectation for Councillors to be accessible, informed, and engaged in a wide range of strategic matters far exceeds the initial impression given to prospective candidates.

Attracting and Retaining High-Quality Candidates

The time demands and relatively low remuneration deter potential candidates from standing for election. In our Council area, some wards saw no challengers to sitting

Councillors, highlighting a lack of willingness or ability for community members to take on the role under current conditions. If we wish to attract capable, diverse, and highly skilled individuals to local government, remuneration must reflect the level of responsibility required.

Councillors operate at a high strategic level, making decisions that impact the long-term financial sustainability, infrastructure development, and social wellbeing of our communities. Yet, our remuneration is equivalent to that of a junior part-time Council officer rather than the executive-level responsibilities we bear. While we are not seeking pay parity with General Managers, it is reasonable to expect a remuneration level that acknowledges the professional demands of the role.

Conclusion

In summary, rural Councillors face significant workloads, long hours, and high expectations, yet remuneration does not adequately reflect these demands. The current structure disincentivizes community participation in local government and risks diminishing the quality of leadership available to our communities. I urge the Tribunal to consider these factors when determining an appropriate adjustment to Councillor remuneration.

Thank you for your consideration.

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I prefer to be de-identified in any publications.