

Notice of Motion, Cr Mayne: Introduction of an online gift register for Councillors

17 May 2016

Motion

That the Future Melbourne Committee:

1. Commencing on July 1, 2016, requests officers maintain a gifts register for councillors on the City of Melbourne website for all council-related gifts from a single entity or individual (excluding family members) in a financial year above the value of \$150, with the website to be updated within 14 days of the gift being received.
2. Requests officers incorporate compliance with part 1 of this motion into the revised City of Melbourne code of conduct when it is brought to council for approval in June 2016.
3. Notes that six monthly disclosures by councillors on the register of interests will continue as currently practiced, so council-related gifts or donations above \$500 will effectively be disclosed twice, but firstly in a more timely manner on the new online City of Melbourne councillor gifts register.

Background

Under Victorian law, councils are not required to maintain a gift register for councillors, although such registers are common in the public and private sectors.

Instead, currently at the City of Melbourne, state legislation requires gifts above the value of \$500 to be disclosed every 6 months on the register of interests declaration by councillors. This is not available online and to be accessed requires a form to be filled in and a visit to the Melbourne Town Hall.

The Victorian Government is requiring councils to update their codes of conduct before this year's council elections and the Municipal Association of Victoria has recommended a gift register be incorporate in the updated code. Officers are planning to bring the updated code to the June council meeting.

In November 2015, the City of Melbourne CEO introduced a gift register for officers with a disclosure threshold of \$50. Previously, officers were required to inform their superior of gifts above the value of \$50.

The disparity between councillor and officer disclosure now appears excessive and in light of the advice from MAV, ongoing gift and travel disclosure transgressions involving the Lord Mayor of Perth and the state's requirements for a code of conduct review, it is appropriate for councillors to pro-actively intervene and introduce a contemporary online disclosure regime providing timely information on gifts above an appropriate threshold of \$150.

The July 1 2016 start date will give officers time to prepare the new register and will follow the introduction of the new code of conduct in June. A rolling financial year disclosure regime commencing in 2016-17 will also avoid the need for retrospective disclosures of any small gifts below the current \$500 threshold.

Moved: Cr Mayne