



# **COUNCILLOR INDUCTION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY**

**Dungog Shire Council**

2023

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## **1 PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Policy is to demonstrate Dungog Shire Council's commitment to ensuring that the Mayor and Councillors have access to induction and ongoing professional development which will assist them to develop and maintain the skills and knowledge required to effectively perform their civic role and responsibilities under the Local Government Act 1993 (the Act).

## **2 SCOPE**

This Policy applies to all Councillors of Dungog Shire Council, including the Mayor.

## **3 POLICY STATEMENT**

Dungog Shire Council is committed to developing an induction and ongoing professional development program for the Mayor and Councillors to ensure they can fulfil their statutory roles and responsibilities.

As part of this program, the Mayor and each Councillor will have a professional development plan that identifies specific gaps in their capabilities (i.e. their knowledge, skills and attributes) and identify professional development activities to build these capabilities.

## **4 INDUCTION PROGRAM**

Dungog Shire Council will develop an induction program for new and returning Councillors as well as a supplementary program for the Mayor to ensure they are provided all the information they need to effectively fulfil their roles in the first few months of Council's term and feel confident in their ability to do so.

The induction program will cover:

- an orientation to council facilities and the local government area
- an overview of the key issues and tasks for the new council including council's community strategic plan, delivery program, operational plan, resourcing strategy and community engagement plan
- the legislation, rules, principles and political context under which councils operate
- the roles and responsibilities of Councillors and the Mayor
- Council's organisational structure, workforce management strategy and the roles and responsibilities of the General Manager and council staff
- what Council does and how it operates, including an overview of integrated planning and reporting, land-use planning, natural resource management, financial management and asset management by Council
- key Council policies and procedures Councillors must comply with including the code of conduct

- the role of Council meetings and how to participate effectively in them
- the support available to the Mayor and Councillors and where they can go to get more information or assistance, and
- information on the process for taking the oath of office and electing the Mayor at the first council meeting (where applicable).

In the case of the Mayor, the program will also cover:

- how to be an effective leader of the governing body and the council
- the role of the Chair and how to chair council meetings
- the Mayor's role in integrated planning and reporting
- the Mayor's role and responsibilities under the code of conduct
- the Mayor's role and responsibilities in relation to the General Manager's employment
- the Mayor's role at regional and other representative bodies, and
- the Mayor's civic and ceremonial role.

The Mayor and Councillors must have a working knowledge and understanding of these areas by the end of the induction program.

The induction program will also include team building activities to help the governing body establish itself as a cohesive and collaborative team focused on a common purpose with shared values and goals. Activities will aim to ensure Mayors and Councillors:

- identify how they would like to work together as a team and identify a common vision for the governing body
- build relationships with each other based on trust and mutual respect that facilitate collaboration
- contribute to a positive and ethical culture within the governing body
- work towards consensus as members of the governing body for the benefit of the community
- develop respectful negotiation skills and manage alternative views within the governing body without damaging relationships
- understand what supports or undermines the effective functioning of the governing body
- respect the diversity of skills and experiences on the governing body, and
- communicate and uphold the decisions of Council in a respectful way, even if their own position was not adopted.

Activities should also help the Mayor, as the leader of the governing body, to:

- act as a stabilising influence and show leadership, and
- promote a culture of integrity and accountability within Council and when representing Council in the community and elsewhere.

The Mayor and Councillors, including those re-elected to office, must attend all induction sessions.

Dungog Shire Council will evaluate the induction program at the end of each council term to determine whether it has achieved these outcomes, and to

identify and address areas for improvement.

## **5 ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

An individual ongoing professional development plan will be developed for the Mayor and each Councillor to address any gaps in the capabilities (ie the knowledge, skills and attributes) needed to effectively fulfil their role.

Each professional development plan will span the Council's term, and identify professional development activities that the Mayor or Councillor will participate in. Professional development activities will be prioritised according to need and approved by the General Manager where Council funds are required in accordance with Council's Councillor and Expenses and Facilities Policy. The Mayor and Councillors are expected to complete all the activities included in their professional development plan.

Professional development activities will, wherever possible, follow the following elements:

- learning activities provided via learning and developing from experience. For example, on-the-job training, self-directed learning, developmental roles, problem solving, exposure and practice
- learning activities provided via learning and training through others, for example, personal or professional networks, coaching, mentoring, feedback, memberships and professional associations, and
- learning activities provided via learning and developing through structured programs – for example, training courses, external or in-house workshops, seminars, webinars and other e-learning and briefing sessions conducted by the council, external training providers or industry bodies.

The timing of professional development activities for the Mayor and Councillors will be designed in such a way so as to not overload Councillors with learning activities in the early part of Council's term. The timing will reflect what knowledge and skills Councillors and the Mayor need at various points in council's term to undertake their roles.

The Mayor and Councillors will be provided with as much notice as possible for upcoming induction and professional development activities.

## **6 RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Mayor and each Councillor are responsible for making themselves available to attend any development activities identified in the professional development plan. The Mayor and all Councillors must make all reasonable endeavours to attend and participate in the induction sessions and professional development activities arranged for them during the term of the Council.

Council's Governance and Risk Officer is responsible for planning, scheduling and facilitating induction and professional development activities

for the Mayor and Councillors in consultation with the General Manager.

The General Manager has overall responsibility for Dungog Shire Council's induction and professional development program.

## **7 BUDGET**

An annual budget allocation will be provided to support the induction and professional development activities undertaken by the Mayor and Councillors. Expenditure will be monitored and reported quarterly.

## **8 APPROVAL OF TRAINING AND/OR EXPENSES**

Professional development activities that require Council funds are to be approved by the General Manager in accordance with Dungog Shire Council's Councillor Expenses and Facilities Policy.

## **9 EVALUATION**

Council will evaluate the professional development program at the end of each Council term to assess whether it was effective in assisting the Mayor and Councillors to develop the capabilities required to fulfil their civic roles.

## **10 REPORTING**

The General Manager will publically report each year in Council's annual report:

- the name of the Mayor and each individual Councillor that completed Council's induction program (where an induction program has been delivered during the relevant year)
- the name of the Mayor and each Councillor who participated in any ongoing professional development program during the year
- the number of training and other activities provided to the Mayor and Councillors during the year as part of a professional development program, and
- the total cost of induction and professional development activities and any other training provided to the Mayor and Councillors during the relevant year.

## **11 POLICY ADMINISTRATION**

Responsible Officer:	Governance and Risk Officer
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