Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal

Allowance payable to Mayors, Deputy Mayors and Councillors (Victoria) Determination No. 01/2026

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DETERMINATION

Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and Improving Parliamentary Standards Act 2019 (Vic)

Part 3— Determination of the allowance payable to Mayors, Deputy Mayors and Councillors.

Allowance payable to Mayors, Deputy Mayors and Councillors (Victoria) Determination No. 01/2026

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Part 1 – Legal matters and definitions

1. **Title:** This Determination is the *Allowance payable to Mayors, Deputy Mayors and Councillors (Victoria) Determination No. 01/2026* and is made under Part 3 of the *Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and Improving Parliamentary Standards Act 2019* (Vic) by the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal.

2. **Effective date:** This Determination takes effect on 1 July 2026.

3. **Definitions**

   3.1 Terms not defined in this Determination have the same meaning as in the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic), unless the contrary intention appears.

   3.2 In this Determination, unless the contrary intention appears:

   Eligible Local Governing Body means a council whose councillors are employees for the purposes of the *Superannuation Guarantee (Administration) Act 1992* (Cth) (as amended or replaced from time to time) and are entitled to Superannuation Guarantee Contributions under that Act, by virtue of the council having made a resolution under section 446-5 of Schedule 1 of the *Taxation Administration Act 1953* (Cth) (as amended or replaced from time to time);

   Eligible Location means, for a mayor, deputy mayor or councillor, the location or locations specified for the conduct of ordinary, special or committee meetings of their council, or any municipal or community functions which have been authorised by council resolution for that councillor to attend;

   Superannuation Guarantee Contribution means the minimum superannuation payments that an employer is required to make to a superannuation fund on an employee's behalf so as to avoid the superannuation guarantee charge under the *Superannuation Guarantee (Administration) Act 1992* (Cth) (as amended or replaced from time to time);

   VIRTIPS Act means the *Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and Improving Parliamentary Standards Act 2019* (Vic).

4. Coverage and application

4.1 This Determination sets the values of the allowances payable to mayors, deputy mayors and councillors, which include:

(a) a base allowance, which varies according to council allowance categories, set in Part 3 of this Determination;

(b) subject to eligibility requirements, a remote area travel allowance set in Part 4 of this Determination.

Part 2 – Council allowance categories

5. Council allowance categories

5.1 In accordance with section 23A of the VIRTIPS Act, Schedule A of this Determination provides for a council allowance category for each council.

5.2 The value of the base allowance that a mayor, deputy mayor or councillor is entitled to, set in Part 3 of this Determination, varies depending on the council allowance category that applies to their council.

Part 3 – Base allowance

6. Mayors, deputy mayors and councillors entitled to a base allowance

6.1 Each mayor, deputy mayor and councillor is entitled to a base allowance and is only entitled to receive one base allowance for any particular period of service.

Note: As explained in clause 8, the allowance values set in this Determination are inclusive of any applicable superannuation entitlements.

6.2 The values of the base allowances for mayors are set out in Table 1.

Table 1: Value of the base allowance for mayors, by council allowance category, from 1 July 2026

Council allowance category	Value of allowance ($ per annum)
Category A	103,400
Category B	124,080
Category C	146,640
Category D	157,920
Category E – Melbourne City Council	302,881

6.3 Subject to the transitional arrangements in clause 6.4, the values of the base allowances for deputy mayors are set out in Table 2.

Table 2: Value of the base allowance for deputy mayors, by council allowance category, from 1 July 2026

Council allowance category	Value of allowance ($ per annum)
Category A	45,807
Category B	50,388
Category C	59,549
Category D	64,130
Category E – Melbourne City Council	151,441

6.4 This clause applies to a deputy mayor or former deputy mayor of a council in Category B, C or D whose term as deputy mayor commenced in, or encompassed any part of, the period of 1 July 2026 to 31 August 2026 (both dates inclusive). From 1 July 2026 until the expiry of the relevant term only, the value of the base allowance for a deputy mayor to which this clause applies is the value set out in Table 3.

Note: The intent of this clause is to ensure that the allowance received by a deputy mayor whose term commenced on or prior to 31 August 2026 is not reduced for the part of their current or completed term that extends past 1 July 2026. However, the allowance for a deputy mayor who commences a new term after 31 August 2026, including a re-elected deputy mayor, will be the relevant value set out in Table 2. For the avoidance of doubt, this clause does not apply to the term of any deputy mayor that concluded before 1 July 2026.

Table 3: Transitional value of the base allowance for some deputy mayors, by council allowance category, from 1 July 2026 until the end of their term

Council allowance category	Value of allowance ($ per annum)
Category B	59,152
Category C	73,159
Category D	73,159

6.5 The values of the base allowances for councillors are set out in Table 4.

Table 4: Value of the base allowance for councillors, by council allowance category, from 1 July 2026

Council allowance category	Value of allowance ($ per annum)
Category A	35,000
Category B	38,500
Category C	45,500
Category D	49,000
Category E – Melbourne City Council	65,193

Part 4 – Remote area travel allowance

7. Remote area travel allowance

7.1 The remote area travel allowance is payable for each day that a mayor, deputy mayor or councillor spends travelling to, or returning from, an Eligible Location that is more than 50 kilometres from the location that they normally reside in, based on the shortest possible practicable road distance.

Note: The term Eligible Location is defined in clause 3.

Note: If a councillor is required to undertake travel on more than one day in order to attend a particular event at an Eligible Location, then the remote area travel allowance may be claimed for each day that travel is undertaken. For example, if a councillor travels to and attends an event on one day, is required to stay overnight (e.g. for safety reasons) at accommodation near that location and then travels home the next day, the remote area travel allowance is payable on each of those days.

7.2 Subject to clause 7.3, if the shortest possible practicable road distance between the Eligible Location and the location that the mayor, deputy mayor or councillor normally resides in is more than:

(a) 50 kilometres and no more than 100 kilometres, the amount they are entitled to be paid per day is $50.60;

(b) 100 kilometres, the amount they are entitled to be paid per day is $101.20.

7.3 Each mayor, deputy mayor or councillor can receive no more than $6,325 in remote area travel allowance in any one financial year.

Part 5 – Other matters

8. Allowance inclusive of superannuation entitlements

8.1 The value of the allowance payable to a mayor, deputy mayor or councillor is inclusive of any Superannuation Guarantee Contribution amount, or equivalent, that may be payable under Commonwealth law to them with respect to their service in that office (for example, due to their council being an Eligible Local Governing Body).

9. Annual indexation of allowances

9.1 For the purpose of s. 23A(7)(b) of the VIRTIPS Act, the values of allowances set in this Determination will be annually adjusted by the determinations made by the Tribunal under s. 23B of the VIRTIPS Act.

Warren McCann	Laurinda Gardner	Meredith Sussex AM
Chair	*Member*	*Member*
Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal	Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal	Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal

Date: 18 August 2026

Schedule A — council allowance category for each council

Category A

Alpine Shire Council	Loddon Shire Council
Ararat Rural City Council	Mansfield Shire Council
Benalla Rural City Council	Mount Alexander Shire Council
Borough of Queenscliffe Council	Murrindindi Shire Council
Buloke Shire Council	Northern Grampians Shire Council
Central Goldfields Shire Council	Pyrenees Shire Council
Corangamite Shire Council	Southern Grampians Shire Council
Gannawarra Shire Council	Strathbogie Shire Council
Hepburn Shire Council	Towong Shire Council
Hindmarsh Shire Council	West Wimmera Shire Council
Indigo Shire Council	Yarriambiack Shire Council

Category B

Bass Coast Shire Council	Maroondah City Council
Baw Baw Shire Council	Mildura Rural City Council
Bayside City Council	Mitchell Shire Council
Campaspe Shire Council	Moira Shire Council
Colac Otway Shire Council	Moorabool Shire Council
East Gippsland Shire Council	Moyne Shire Council
Glenelg Shire Council	Nillumbik Shire Council
Golden Plains Shire Council	South Gippsland Shire Council
Greater Shepparton City Council	Surf Coast Shire Council
Hobsons Bay City Council	Swan Hill Rural City Council
Horsham Rural City Council	Wangaratta Rural City Council
Latrobe City Council	Warrnambool City Council
Macedon Ranges Shire Council	Wellington Shire Council
Maribyrnong City Council	Wodonga City Council

Category C

Ballarat City Council	Knox City Council
Banyule City Council	Manningham City Council
Boroondara City Council	Merri-bek City Council
Brimbank City Council	Monash City Council
Cardinia Shire Council	Moonee Valley City Council
Darebin City Council	Mornington Peninsula Shire Council
Frankston City Council	Port Phillip City Council
Glen Eira City Council	Stonnington City Council
Greater Bendigo City Council	Whitehorse City Council
Greater Dandenong City Council	Yarra City Council
Kingston City Council	Yarra Ranges Shire Council

Category D

Casey City Council	Melton Shire Council
Greater Geelong City Council	Whittlesea City Council
Hume City Council	Wyndham City Council

Category E – Melbourne City Council

Melbourne City Council

Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal

Allowance payable to Mayors, Deputy Mayors and Councillors (Victoria) Determination No. 01/2026

Statement of Reasons

Contents

Abbreviations and glossary

Term or abbreviation	Definition
2022 Comprehensive Determination	*Allowance payable to Mayors, Deputy Mayors and Councillors (Victoria) Determination No. 01/2022*
2026 Comprehensive Determination	*Allowance payable to Mayors, Deputy Mayors and Councillors (Victoria) Determination No. 01/2026*
2026–27 State Budget	Victorian Budget 2026–27
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ALGWA Victoria	Australian Local Government Women's Association Victorian Branch
AWOTE	Average Weekly Ordinary Time Earnings
CBD	Central Business District
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
councillor	collective term describing mayors, deputy mayors and councillors
CPI	Consumer Price Index
Cth	Commonwealth
DTF	Department of Treasury and Finance
ELGB	eligible local governing body
ESC	Essential Services Commission
FWC	Fair Work Commission
FPAV	First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GGS	general government sector
GII	Government Infrastructure Investment
GSP	Gross State Product
LG Act 2020	*Local Government Act 2020* (Vic)
LG Amendment Act 2024	*Local Government Amendment (Governance and Integrity) Act 2024* (Vic)
LGA	local government area
LGI	Local Government Inspectorate
LGV	Local Government Victoria
MAV	Municipal Association of Victoria

Term or abbreviation	Definition
MP	Member of the Parliament of Victoria
NMW	National Minimum Wage
p.a.	per annum
PE	public entity
PSAS Act	*Parliamentary Salaries, Allowances and Superannuation Act 1968* (Vic)
RATA	remote area travel allowance
RBA	Reserve Bank of Australia
SG	Superannuation Guarantee
SGA Act	*Superannuation Guarantee (Administration) Act 1992* (Cth)
Tribunal	Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal
VAGO	Victorian Auditor-General's Office
VIRTIPS Act	*Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and Improving Parliamentary Standards Act 2019* (Vic)
VLGA	Victorian Local Governance Association
Wages Policy	Wages Policy and the Enterprise Bargaining Framework
WPI	Wage Price Index

Summary

The Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal sets the value of the allowances payable to all councillors, deputy mayors and mayors in Victoria.

This Determination — the *Allowance payable to Mayors, Deputy Mayors and Councillors (Victoria) Determination No. 01/2026* — provides an opportunity to review and, where appropriate, reset the allowances for councillors.

The Tribunal has determined a new allowance structure that is intended to better reflect the contemporary role of councillors, including the increasing professionalism and complexity of councillor work and the common responsibilities carried by councillors across all councils.

In reaching its decision, the Tribunal balanced the need for allowances that support effective performance of elected roles with community expectations and economic conditions — which both point to restraint. The Tribunal also noted the financial impact of the new allowances on councils, which it assessed as modest and affordable.

The Tribunal heard from a range of stakeholders and carefully considered their views in making this Determination. The Tribunal expresses its appreciation to all those who made submissions or otherwise participated in the consultation process and assisted the Tribunal to perform its functions.

Allowance values from 1 July 2026

The values of the allowances for councillors based on the allowance category for each council are shown in Table S.1. These values are inclusive of any superannuation contributions that may be payable under Commonwealth law.

Table S.1: Allowances for councillors, deputy mayors and mayors, from 1 July 2026

Council allowance category	Councillor ($ per annum)	Deputy mayor ($ per annum)	Mayor ($ per annum)
Category A	35,000	45,807	103,400
Category B	38,500	50,388	124,080
Category C	45,500	59,549	146,640
Category D	49,000	64,130	157,920
Category E — Melbourne City Council	65,193	151,441	302,881

The allocation of specific councils to each allowance category is set out in Chapter 9 of this Determination.

The remote area travel allowance recognises the additional travel time required of councillors representing large or remote municipalities. The Tribunal has introduced two daily rates — $50.60 for travel of 50–100 kilometres and $101.20 for travel over 100 kilometres, with an annual cap of $6,325. The allowance may also be claimed for each day of travel where attendance at an eligible event requires travel over more than one day.

The new allowance framework

The new framework is built around a minimum councillor base allowance, additional recognition of the responsibilities of mayors and an adjustment for differing levels of complexity across councils. It also introduces a new category for high-growth councils while retaining a separate category for Melbourne City Council.

Minimum base allowance for councillors, deputy mayors and mayors

The Tribunal established a minimum base allowance for councillors that recognises the common underlying functions and responsibilities that they perform.

In setting a minimum councillor allowance at $35,000 a year, the Tribunal had regard to evidence that most councillors work at least two days per week. It considered several wage benchmarks, including average weekly ordinary time earnings, median earnings and the National Minimum Wage.

Mayors carry significant additional responsibilities, including chairing council meetings, acting as the public face of the council and managing the relationship between the council and the chief executive officer. The Tribunal therefore set mayoral allowances that incorporate a responsibility loading that reflects these additional functions, and to recognise the largely full-time nature of the role.

For deputy mayors, the Tribunal accepted stakeholder concerns that the existing allowance was too closely tied to the mayoral allowance and did not reflect the relatively limited additional responsibilities of the role. The new deputy mayor allowance is therefore set with reference to the councillor base allowance rather than as a proportion of the mayoral allowance.

This results in a reduction in the allowances for deputy mayors in certain councils, and the Tribunal has put transitional arrangements in place for affected deputy mayors until their current term expires.

Allowance categories and complexity

The Tribunal retained the broad structure of the existing council categories for most councils but renamed them, such that Categories A–C correspond to the previous Categories 1–3. The principal structural change is the creation of Category D for the largest growth councils.

The Tribunal found that rapid growth can materially increase councillor workload and complexity. Councillors in growth areas may oversee substantial infrastructure and service investment, make decisions on complex and contentious planning matters, and represent large, rapidly growing and increasingly diverse communities. These circumstances can also increase the time commitment required of councillors, including where rapid growth creates challenges for social cohesion and local connections are limited. Category D therefore provides additional recognition for these councillors.

To reflect progressively higher work requirements, a complexity factor is applied to the Category A minimum base allowance. The factor is 10 per cent for Category B, 30 per cent for Category C and 40 per cent for Category D.

The Tribunal decided not to add further criteria to the method for allocating councils between categories. Although stakeholders proposed factors such as location and geographic size, the Tribunal concluded that retaining population and revenue provides a simpler and more readily understood method and avoids the additional judgment and complexity involved in weighting multiple factors.

Melbourne City Council

Melbourne City Council remains in a separate category because of its distinctive role, operating arrangements and importance to the Victorian economy. The Tribunal also noted that bespoke allowance arrangements for capital city councils are common in other jurisdictions.

The Tribunal nevertheless considered that the existing gap between Melbourne City Council and the new Category D councils was already substantial and potentially greater than circumstances warranted. It therefore applied a 3.5 per cent adjustment to the allowances for councillors, the Deputy Lord Mayor and the Lord Mayor, consistent with recent annual adjustments for Victorian Members of Parliament and public sector executives.

The Tribunal's approach was based on several important considerations

In its first comprehensive determination — the *Allowance payable to Mayors, Deputy Mayors and Councillors (Victoria) Determination No. 01/2022* — the Tribunal increased councillor allowances by 10 per cent, mayoral allowances by 20 per cent and introduced a deputy mayoral allowance equal to half the mayoral allowance.

In part, these increases sought to compensate for the significant passage of time since the previous comprehensive review of allowances in 2007–08. However, the Tribunal did not make further changes to an allowance structure that was based substantially on historical precedent.

The Tribunal now considers that the earlier framework gave insufficient weight to the constitutional status of local government, the common responsibilities of councillors, the effect of the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic) and subsequent reforms, and the additional complexity faced by some councils, particularly high-growth councils.

The contemporary councillor role

The Tribunal heard from stakeholders that the contemporary councillor role is multifaceted, with substantial governance and representative responsibilities. Councillors are increasingly expected to understand complex legislation, strategic and long-term financial documents, and a wide range of council policies and plans. Recent reforms have reinforced this trend, including additional mandatory training and professional development requirements and the introduction of single-member wards for many councils. Community expectations are also high and appear to have intensified.

Stakeholders argued that describing the councillor role as 'voluntary' no longer reflects its practical demands. The Tribunal accepted that the role has become more professional but considered that it should continue to retain an important element of community service. Allowances should therefore recognise both the public-service character of elected office and the time, responsibility and practical requirements involved in carrying it out.

Diversity and participation

The Tribunal also considered whether allowance settings may affect the diversity of people willing or able to stand for election and serve as councillors. It noted that — in some respects — the composition of councils does not reflect the broader Victorian population.

The Tribunal considers it likely that financial factors influence participation, particularly for people balancing council service with caring responsibilities or other employment, and for people with less financial security. That said, changes to allowances cannot address all barriers to participation — work requirements and practices, psychosocial risks and access to other forms of support for councillors may also be important.

Statutory requirements

The Tribunal considered statutory requirements for making a comprehensive determination, including:

- the Victorian Government's Wages Policy
- the financial position and fiscal strategy of the State of Victoria
- current and projected economic conditions and trends
- submissions received in relation to this Determination.

The Tribunal also took account of other statutory requirements specific to councillor allowances, including to:

- comprehensively review existing councillor allowances and allowance categories
- consider similar allowances for councillors in other jurisdictions and for 'persons elected to other voluntary part-time community bodies'
- provide for the annual indexation of allowances.

Finally, the Tribunal also considered the issues in the letter from the then-Minister for Local Government requesting that the Tribunal undertake this Determination.

Detailed information and data supporting the Tribunal analysis and consideration of these matters can be found in the various chapters of this Statement of Reasons.

1 About this Determination

The Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal provides transparent, accountable and evidence-based decision-making about the remuneration of mayors, deputy mayors and councillors (collectively referred to as councillors), as well as Members of the Parliament of Victoria (MPs) and public sector executives.

Under the *Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and Improving Parliamentary Standards Act 2019* (Vic) (VIRTIPS Act), the Tribunal must act independently and impartially in performing its functions and is not subject to the control or direction of any person, including the Minister responsible for the Tribunal.[1]

Following amendments to the VIRTIPS Act in 2020, the Tribunal made its first determination of the allowances for councillors — the *Allowance payable to Mayors, Deputy Mayors and Councillors (Victoria) Determination No. 01/2022* (2022 Comprehensive Determination) — in March 2022.[2]

That Determination set the value of the base allowance payable to councillors — which varied based on their position and the relevant allowance category for each council — and the value of the remote area travel allowance (RATA) payable to eligible councillors. Those allowance values took effect retrospectively from 18 December 2021.

Subsequently, the Tribunal has made annual adjustment determinations to adjust the values of the allowances set in that 2022 Comprehensive Determination. Those adjustments applied from 18 December 2022, and thereafter from 1 July in each of 2023, 2024 and 2025. The current allowances are discussed in Chapter 5.

1 VIRTIPS Act, s. 5.

2 Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2022b).

1.1 There is a strong case to review councillor allowances in 2026

A new comprehensive determination of councillor allowances must be made within six months after the 'relevant date', which is either the day on which every second general local council election is held, or the day that the Minister for Local Government requests that the Tribunal make a determination.[3] The next general local council election is scheduled for October 2028, meaning that the next comprehensive determination would be made in April 2029 absent an intervening request from the Minister for Local Government.

Stakeholder feedback to the Tribunal in 2025 during the making of its *Allowance payable to Mayors, Deputy Mayors and Councillors (Victoria) Annual Adjustment Determination 2025* raised several issues regarding councillor allowances, including:

- changes to the nature, complexity and workload of councillors, and the time required to perform the role
- challenges in attracting and retaining councillors with the skills and capabilities to perform the role and represent the diversity of Victoria's communities
- proposed changes to the structure and value of allowances and allowance categories.

The Tribunal judged that the issues raised by stakeholders were best addressed in a comprehensive determination, which provides for a structured review of relevant issues and, where appropriate, the ability to reset the structure and values of councillor allowances. A four-year period between comprehensive determinations is consistent with the approach for MPs and public sector executives and enables any changes to be implemented well-ahead of the next general local council election.

Accordingly, in June 2025, the Tribunal Chair wrote to the then-Minister for Local Government proposing that a new comprehensive determination be undertaken in 2026 (Appendix A).

[3] VIRTIPS Act, s. 23A.

The then-Minister for Local Government responded on 19 February 2026 requesting that the Tribunal make a new comprehensive determination, and consider matters relating to the expenses, resources and facilities provided to councillors and a 'councillor assist' program (Appendix B). The determination must be made by 19 August 2026.

1.2 The 2026 Comprehensive Determination applies to elected councillors

Section 23A of the VIRTIPS Act requires the Tribunal to set the quantum of the allowance payable to mayors, deputy mayors and councillors, and to provide for council allowance categories (which can be specified for a council or group of councils).

The *Allowance payable to mayors, deputy mayors and councillors (Victoria) Determination No. 01/2026* (2026 Comprehensive Determination) applies to every councillor in all 79 local councils in Victoria. At the most recent local council elections in October 2024, a total of 647 councillors were elected in 78 councils, with no elections held for Moira Shire following the dismissal of its council in 2023.[4]

The 2026 Comprehensive Determination sets:

- new values and allowance categories for the base allowance payable to councillors
- new values and eligibility criteria for the RATA.

The Tribunal does not determine arrangements for the reimbursement of expenses for councillors, or the resources and facilities provided to councillors by their council. These are matters for each council to determine, subject to the relevant provisions of the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic) (LG Act 2020).[5] However, consistent with the request from the then-Minister for Local Government, the Tribunal has considered the expenses, resources and facilities for councillors, and provided advice to the Minister on areas for improvement.

4 Victorian Electoral Commission (2025), pp. 19, 66, 116–143.
5 LG Act 2020, ss. 40–42.

1.3 This Determination takes account of statutory and other factors

The 2026 Comprehensive Determination has been made in accordance with the requirements of the VIRTIPS Act.

The Tribunal is required to:[6]

- comprehensively review existing councillor allowances and allowance categories
- take account of similar allowances for elected members of local governments in other states and allowances for 'persons elected to other voluntary part-time community bodies'
- provide for the annual indexation of allowances
- consider any statement or policy issued by the Government of Victoria which is in force with respect to its wages policy (or equivalent) and the remuneration and allowances of any specified occupational group
- consider the financial position and fiscal strategy of the State of Victoria
- consider current and projected economic conditions and trends
- consider submissions received in relation to this Determination.

The Tribunal may also provide for any other matter it considers relevant.[7]

The Minister for Local Government invited the Tribunal to consider specific issues

In the request for a new comprehensive determination, the then-Minister for Local Government invited the Tribunal to consider the following additional matters, as set out in his letter:

- any relationship between council allowances and the diversity and representation of councillors — particularly the representation of women
- the alignment of allowances for councillors with the roles, responsibilities and capabilities under the LG Act 2020
- guidance on consistent council arrangements for the expenses, resources and facilities reasonably necessary for councillors to perform their role

6 VIRTIPS Act, ss. 23A(7), 24(2).
7 VIRTIPS Act, s. 23A(7)(c).

- whether access to a 'councillor assist' program should be included in the available allowances for councillors
- any events that may be relevant to the purpose of allowances, including recent natural disasters and changes to the electoral framework for councils.

The Tribunal developed several objectives to guide its approach

The Tribunal developed the following suite of objectives — drawing on its approach over successive determinations — to guide its approach to setting new allowances. These were to:

- reflect the responsibilities and accountabilities of councillors, and the skills and capabilities required to perform these
- account for relevant similarities and differences in councillor roles within and across local councils
- reflect the community service dimension to the role of councillors
- facilitate the participation of candidates for local government elections that reflect the diversity of their communities
- support the effective operation and governance of councils.

1.4 Structure of this Statement of Reasons

Each determination must include a statement of reasons, which presents the statutory and other factors considered by the Tribunal, and any other relevant information.[8]

Chapter 2 provides a brief overview of the consultation undertaken by the Tribunal to inform its deliberations and the main issues raised by stakeholders — which are discussed further in later chapters.

The characteristics of local councils in Victoria are summarised in Chapter 3. The information set out in that chapter underpinned the discussion of the role of councillors, deputy mayors and mayors that is set out in Chapter 4, including reference to the evolution of these roles since 2022.

[8] VIRTIPS Act, s. 24(3).

The current allowance framework set by the Tribunal in its 2022 Comprehensive Determination and subsequent annual adjustments to the value of allowances for councillors are summarised in Chapter 5.

Chapter 6 presents the remuneration arrangements for comparable local council roles in other jurisdictions. Chapter 7 sets out the remuneration arrangements for other comparator roles, including members of ‘other voluntary part-time community bodies’.

The Tribunal’s analysis of the economic, financial and other policy considerations that informed it decisions are detailed in Chapter 8.

Chapter 9 brings together the overall considerations that underpin the Tribunal’s decision on the allowances payable to councillors, deputy mayors and mayors — and the allowance categories — which apply from 1 July 2026, but with transitional provisions for affected deputy mayors.

Other matters considered by the Tribunal — principally the expenses, resources and facilities provided to councillors and a ‘councillor assist’ program — are discussed in Chapter 10.

2 Stakeholder consultation

The Tribunal is required to consider the views of stakeholders when making a determination.[9]

This chapter provides an overview of the consultation process undertaken by the Tribunal and the issues raised by stakeholders, which are explored further in later chapters.

2.1 The Tribunal engaged extensively with stakeholders

Prior to making the 2026 Comprehensive Determination, the Tribunal:

- published notice of its intention to make a determination on its website on 4 March 2026, which included details about the proposed determination
- gave any affected person or a class of affected persons a reasonable opportunity to make a submission in relation to the proposed determination
- issued direct invitations to specific stakeholders to make a written or oral submission, or to participate in bi-lateral or roundtable discussions with the Tribunal.

Views were sought on a range of issues

The notice of intention invited parties to make a submission on:

- the roles of mayors, deputy mayors and councillors, including changes to these roles since the 2022 Comprehensive Determination
- current allowances, including whether the current values are appropriate and what factors should be considered in setting new values
- allowance categories, including the number of categories and the criteria used to allocate councils to specific categories
- relevant comparator roles, including councillors in other jurisdictions
- issues that should be considered in providing guidance on expenses, resources and facilities provided to councillors
- any other matter that the Tribunal should consider.

[9] VIRTIPS Act, s. 24(1).

Written submissions closed on 2 April 2026, with a total of 24 submissions received from:

- peak bodies in the local government sector — the Australian Local Government Women's Association Victorian Branch (ALGWA Victoria), the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) and the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA)
- Council Watch Victoria Inc.
- local councils — Boroondara City Council, Campaspe Shire Council, Glen Eira City Council, South Gippsland Shire Council and Swan Hill Rural City Council
- individual councillors (including former councillors).

A further four individuals made a separate verbal submission to the Tribunal.

The Tribunal has published the written submissions and an agreed summary of the verbal submissions it received on its website. The submissions are published in an identified form where permission to do so was given. Otherwise, the submissions are published in a de-identified form.

Councillors' views were sought via a questionnaire

All councillors were also invited to provide their views via an online questionnaire that was emailed to them.

A total of 206 responses were received, which represents approximately 32 per cent of elected councillors covered by the 2026 Comprehensive Determination. These responses provided valuable insights on matters including the distinct roles of councillors, deputy mayors and mayors, and on the level and structure of the allowances.

The responses to the questionnaire are summarised in Appendix C.

The Tribunal also sent a data request to all Victorian councils on several issues, including the RATA and the expenses, resources and facilities provided to councillors. The Tribunal received information from 65 councils.

The Tribunal met with a range of individuals and groups

To gain a broad understanding of relevant issues and information, the Tribunal also met with a range of stakeholders.

The Tribunal engaged with several individuals and groups, including government departments, governance and oversight agencies, councils and agencies in other jurisdictions. These discussions helped the Tribunal to better understand key issues such as the operating environment for councils, the role of councillors and the impact of the current allowance framework — both across different councils in Victoria and across jurisdictions.

The Tribunal also met with some submitters to further explore issues raised in their written submissions.

The Tribunal convened several 'roundtable' discussions with administrators and municipal monitors appointed to councils (currently, or from time-to-time), and a representative group of council chief executive officers (CEOs). The purpose of these discussions was to explore participants' views on the role of councillors in Victoria, and whether the role had changed since the 2022 Comprehensive Determination, as well as the effect of the current allowance framework, and other issues covered in the notice of intention.

2.2 Many stakeholders considered that a councillor's role is now more demanding

Stakeholders observed that councillors oversee organisations that can have responsibility for substantial public expenditure on infrastructure assets and service provision, alongside responsibility for land-use, planning and local regulation. Decisions made by councillors on these issues have long-term impacts on communities.

Councillors also perform a critical representation role as a conduit between their community and the council. This is embodied in a range of activities, including attendance at community meetings and events, and responding to queries from constituents.

Rural councils and councillors noted additional issues such as responding to economic transition, service delivery challenges (e.g. managing infrastructure deficits), greater exposure to natural disasters and disaster response, and representing dispersed communities. Some also noted that advocacy with the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments was an important function for councillors in regional communities.

Specific issues were also raised for councillors in rapidly growing areas. This has implications for the role and workload of councillors arising from, amongst other things, oversight of significant investment in infrastructure and service delivery as well as decisions on complex and contentious issues (e.g. planning).

The Tribunal also heard that councillors in these areas are representing large, rapidly growing and increasingly diverse populations. This can affect the workload of councillors in newer areas — particularly where there are challenges relating to social cohesion and local connections are still limited.

Some stakeholders consider that councillor roles have continued to evolve since the 2022 Comprehensive Determination

Several stakeholders expressed a view that a councillor's role has evolved as the requirements of the LG Act 2020 and subsequent amendments have been progressively embedded in council processes and practices.

These reforms emphasised the governance role of councillors, which requires them to understand and exercise judgement on decisions with significant legal, financial and reputational consequences. In parallel, there have been changes to the conduct and integrity frameworks for councillors and additional scrutiny from regulators and integrity bodies.

The Tribunal heard that the role of a councillor was becoming increasingly professionalised. This was reinforced by mandatory training requirements, particularly those introduced in the LG Act 2020 and clarified by the *Local Government Amendment (Governance and Integrity) Act 2024* (Vic) (LG Amendment Act 2024), including mayoral training, councillor induction training and annual professional development training.

Stakeholders identified several other developments that they believe have impacted the role of some or all councillors since the Tribunal's first determination. Specific issues raised with the Tribunal include changes to ward structures for the 2024 elections, enhanced audit and risk management functions, heightened community expectations, and the nature and level of engagement via social media.

Overall, being a councillor was characterised as an increasingly professionalised role. At the same time, it was emphasised that community service remains a significant aspect of the role, with many seeing this as their principal motivation for becoming a councillor.

There were mixed views on the workload of councillors and the time commitment required for the role

The Tribunal heard that preparation for and attendance at council meetings was a significant commitment, with councillors having to digest lengthy agenda papers, strategic plans, technical reports and other documents within compressed timeframes. Councillors need adequate time and resources to test assumptions, engage with council officers, understand community impacts and fulfil their governance obligations.

That said, some stakeholders advised the Tribunal that there may be scope for some councillors to reduce the time devoted to this aspect of their role. For example, briefing processes for councillors could be streamlined and additional support provided to councillors.

Community engagement and representation can also require a substantial time commitment from councillors. This was a particular issue for councillors in regional areas who may need to travel long distances for their role. Moreover, the professional and personal lives of councillors in regional areas may become conflated as they are recognised and engaged with in shops, schools, community events and social settings.

These factors can be exacerbated by the nature of council business which extends beyond traditional working hours to encompass evening meetings, weekend events and community engagement to create an irregular working pattern.

Mandatory training and other professional development also consume a significant amount of councillors' time, particularly in their first year of a council term.

There were mixed views on whether a councillor's role should be considered largely part-time or was becoming closer to a full-time role in some circumstances. The role of mayor was generally held to be more of a full-time commitment.

However, the time devoted to each of these roles varies significantly, and some stakeholders noted that councillors have considerable discretion over how they perform their role. For example, while some councillors appear to spend limited time on their role, others consider that it requires a full-time commitment to be performed effectively. The Tribunal also heard that some councillors effectively 'cap' their time commitment to balance council work alongside other work or family responsibilities.

Councillors also experience broader impacts due to their role

Many councillors reported that the role and required workload have broader impacts on their work or family responsibilities and on them personally.

'Out-of-hours' work can have a serious impact on the family life of councillors, especially for those with young or school-aged children or other caring responsibilities. Similarly, some councillors reported that they had to adjust their employment or business arrangements to perform their role, including reducing their working hours, using paid and un-paid leave entitlements to undertake council business, or leaving their current job.

Most stakeholders observed that councillors were exposed to substantial levels of stress. This can occur where councillors are the first point of contact for constituents dealing with complex and challenging issues, as well as responding to intra-council and community tensions. This can be exacerbated by instances of inappropriate behaviour, including bullying, intimidation, harassment and online abuse.

The *2025 Victorian Councillor Census* published by the VLGA reported that a significant proportion of councillors — particularly women — had experienced some form of threatening or intimidating behaviour from the public, or from other councillors.[10] Examples that the Tribunal was made aware of include offensive comments made to councillors and their families in-person and through social media, and hostile behaviour in community or council meetings.

Where this occurs, the cumulative impact translates into emotional fatigue, anxiety and feeling unsafe.

[10] VLGA (2026), p. 9.

2.3 Several issues were raised about the current allowances

There was a broad — but not universal — view that there is a material 'value' gap between the current allowance amounts and the time and other demands placed on councillors.

Most stakeholders contended that the current allowances undervalue the time commitment, public accountability and opportunity cost of the role. Individual councillors described foregone income, reduced employment, inability to take on paid work, impacts on their businesses, childcare costs, and family impacts.

Current allowances also appear to be a limiting factor for the time that some councillors are able or willing to dedicate to their role.

Allowances were seen as relevant for participation and diversity

Some participants considered that the current allowances adversely affect the willingness of individuals to stand — or re-stand — for election given the opportunity cost associated with the role. In turn, this was said to affect the representativeness and diversity of councillors, and limit the range of skills, experience and perspectives available in council decision-making.

The Tribunal heard from several stakeholders that current allowances favour people with financial security, but may discourage others including women, First Nations peoples, younger people, and people with disability. There may also be challenges for people in employment who face difficult choices between their work commitments and their role as a councillor. In this context, several stakeholders considered that changes to allowances could support participation and diversity by better compensating councillors for the opportunity cost of their time.

Most councillors are motivated by a desire to serve their community. However, the Tribunal also heard that the nature of the role, workload, and psychosocial risks can affect decisions to stand for election or re-election. In these circumstances, a number of stakeholders indicated that other measures may also be needed — including to working practices, reimbursement of expenses and other support for councillors in performing their role.

A mix of options were put to the Tribunal

Following on from the above, there was support for the Tribunal increasing the value of the base allowance for councillors. Suggested benchmarks included councillors in other jurisdictions and comparator roles in other organisations, while several submissions suggested basing allowances on the National Minimum Wage.

However, some stakeholders, including some councillors who responded to the Tribunal's questionnaire, commented that the allowances were broadly appropriate. One suggestion was that any changes should be limited to maintaining the inflation-adjusted value of allowances. The Tribunal also heard that increasing allowances would reward councillors who dedicate limited time to their role and was a blunt tool that may not be effective in addressing complex issues, such as the retention of councillors experiencing psychosocial risks.

Other options for the base allowance put to the Tribunal for its consideration included:

- adjusting the allowance relativities between councillors, deputy mayors and mayors
- either consolidating most councils into a single allowance category (to reflect common aspects of the role for all councillors), or creating additional categories (for example, to recognise the role of councillors in rapidly growing areas)
- using additional criteria to allocate councils to specific allowance categories — for example, geography, community dispersion, socio-economic diversity, asset base and population growth
- creating new allowances to reflect specific aspects of a councillor's role.

Proposals to amend the RATA included:

- adjusting or removing the daily and annual caps
- clarifying the eligibility requirements (e.g. the ability to claim the allowance where travel over two days is required for a single trip)
- changing the structure of the RATA to a tiered allowance based on time and/or distance travelled or adding a rural travel loading.

2.4 The Tribunal was asked to consider wider issues

Several stakeholders commented that the arrangements for expenses, resources and facilities to support councillors in performing their role were variable, often insufficient, and not aligned with the contemporary demands of the role — although this was not a universal view.

Reimbursement of work-related expenses was considered important

The Tribunal heard that some flexibility is important to meet local conditions, but also that inconsistencies in the ability to claim expenses — or access other support — can result in councillors having unequal access to financial and other resources to support them in performing their role. Several stakeholders also commented that public scrutiny can discourage councillors from claiming reimbursement of legitimate expenses. Many stakeholders spoke to a 'weaponisation' of expense claims by some councillors and members of the public that discourages councillors from seeking reimbursement of legitimate expenses incurred in performing their role.

Specific examples of contentious claims brought to the Tribunal's attention include claims for costs incurred for caring responsibilities and for professional development. Where expense reimbursement policies and processes are unclear, inconsistent or contentious, expenses that are directly related to undertaking council business may go unclaimed or unpaid, leaving these costs to be borne by councillors personally.

Limited administrative support was an issue for some stakeholders

Although there are exceptions, the Tribunal heard that councillors do not generally have access to dedicated administrative support, office space and meeting facilities. Instead, councillors are generally required to independently manage emails and community enquiries (including via social media), review documents and prepare for meetings. It was argued that, in these circumstances, councillors may be less able to engage with complex issues, or to represent their communities effectively.

Improving the psychosocial health of councillors was seen as important

Wellbeing and councillor assistance were also raised in recognition of psychosocial risk, harassment, conflict and burnout issues. Several submissions advocated for councillors to have access to an independent, state-wide support service that would provide confidential counselling, wellbeing support and professional advice.

Other issues put to the Tribunal included making recommendations to improve the transparency, performance and accountability arrangements for councillors. One proposal was that changes to allowances should be accompanied by mandatory activity reporting for all councillors and greater transparency in relation to mayoral diaries.

2.5 Summary

The Tribunal heard from a range of councillors and councils across metropolitan, regional and rural municipalities, as well as sector bodies, governance stakeholders, and a ratepayer group.

Stakeholders said the role of a councillor has changed over time. Councillors make decisions on complex issues, govern large organisations and represent their communities.

Some stakeholders also said the role is becoming more professional, which is reinforced by requirements to undertake mandatory professional development. However, community service remains a significant motivation for becoming a councillor.

The adequacy and structure of the current allowances was raised by many stakeholders. Although not a universally held view, many stakeholders contended that the current allowance settings no longer reflect the contemporary councillor role.

Other commonly raised issues included diversity of representation, councillor wellbeing, and expenses policies and processes.

These issues are explored further in the following chapters.

3 Role of councils

Local government in Victoria is regulated by the LG Act 2020. That Act gives effect to section 74A of the *Constitution Act 1975* (Vic), which states that:[11]

> *Local government is a distinct and essential tier of government consisting of democratically elected Councils having the functions and powers that the Parliament considers are necessary to ensure the peace, order and good government of each municipal district.*

Victoria is divided into 79 'municipal districts' — also known as municipalities or local government areas (LGAs) — comprising 34 cities, six rural cities, 38 shires, and one borough. In turn, many municipal districts are divided into multiple 'wards'.

Each municipal district is governed by a council whose role is to provide good governance for the benefit and wellbeing of the 'municipal community'. This community includes residents, ratepayers, traditional landowners, and those who conduct activities in the municipality.[12]

Local Government Victoria (LGV) classifies councils into five groups for comparative purposes:[13]

- 'Metropolitan' councils are urban in character and located within Melbourne's densely populated urban core (e.g. Yarra City Council, Maroondah City Council).
- 'Interface' councils are the nine councils that form a ring around metropolitan Melbourne (e.g. Casey City Council, Nillumbik Shire Council).
- 'Regional' or 'regional city' councils are urban and partly rural in character (e.g. Ballarat City Council, Mildura Rural City Council).
- 'Large shires' have more than 16,000 inhabitants and are mainly rural in character (e.g. East Gippsland Shire Council, Mitchell Shire Council).
- 'Small shires' have fewer than 16,000 inhabitants and are mainly rural in character (e.g. Towong Shire Council, Strathbogie Shire Council).

11 *Constitution Act 1975* (Vic), s. 74A(1).
12 LG Act 2020, ss. 3, 8(1).
13 Victorian Government (2025); Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) (2026a), Appendix C, p. 1.

While councils vary in size and serve diverse communities, they have broadly similar roles and responsibilities, including making local laws and providing services to their community.

This chapter discusses how councils are structured, outlines their roles and responsibilities, and summarises their characteristics.

3.1 Each council is made up of elected councillors and an administration

The governing body of each council consists of between five and 12 councillors, who are elected by the voters in their municipal district for a four-year term.[14] Depending on a council's electoral structure, each councillor is elected by voters in:

- where a council has single- or multi-member wards — their ward; or
- where a council is unsubdivided (i.e. has no wards) — the municipal district as a whole.

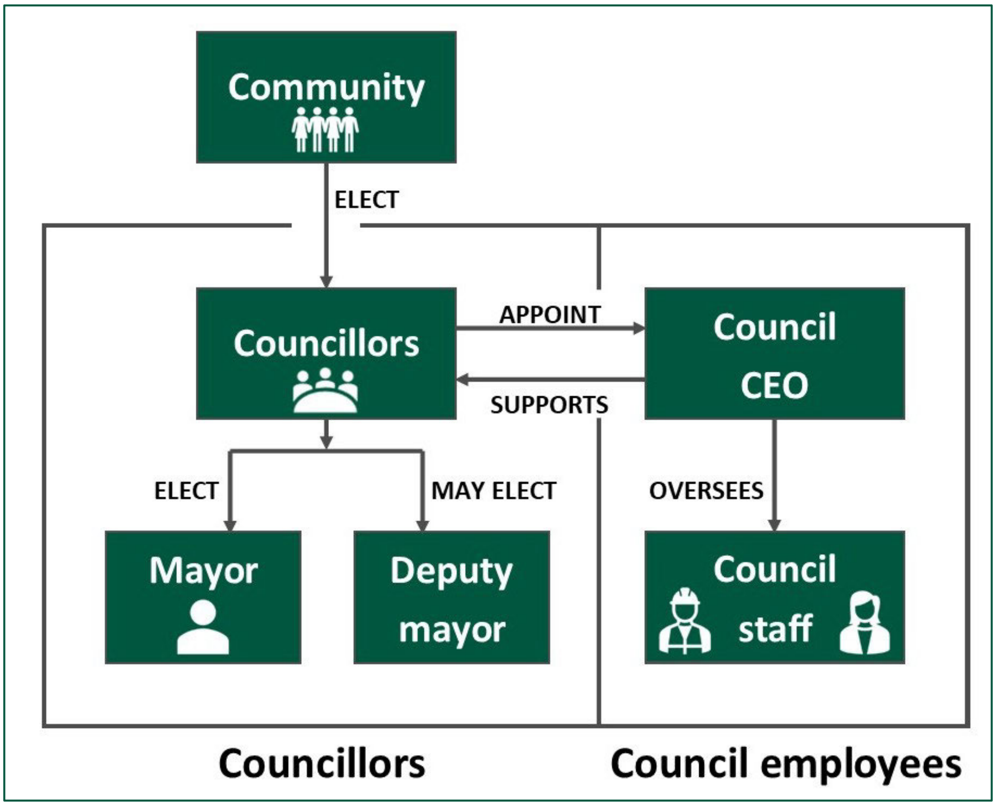
Councillors are collectively accountable for the council's decisions and actions, and are responsible for ensuring its good governance.[15] The duties and responsibilities of councillors, including the mayor and deputy mayor, are discussed in Chapter 4.

Councillors must appoint a CEO to head the council's administration.[16] The CEO oversees the day-to-day operations of the council and supports the mayor and councillors in performing their roles.[17] The CEO also employs and manages the council's staff, who deliver council services and projects.[18]

Figure 3.1 illustrates the structure of a council, drawing a distinction between the elected councillors and the council administration.

14 LG Act 2020, s. 13(1).
15 *Constitution Act 1975* (Vic), s. 74A(1A).
16 MAV (n.d.c).
17 LG Act 2020, s. 46.
18 MAV (n.d.c).

Figure 3.1: Structure of a council



Source: Adapted from MAV (n.d.c).

3.2 Councils have wide-ranging responsibilities

As the form of government that is closest to the community, local government has a significant impact on the lives of Victorians and provides many of the services that people use day to day.

According to MAV, Victoria's 79 councils have responsibilities under more than 120 pieces of Victorian legislation.[19] Collectively, they:[20]

- provide over 100 services to their local communities
- manage over $160 billion in local infrastructure and community assets[21]
- are responsible for more than 85 per cent of Victoria's road network.

[19] Submission from MAV.
[20] MAV (n.d.b).
[21] Tribunal analysis of data provided by LGV.

While certain services are provided by all councils, including statutory responsibilities like waste collection, individual councils have discretion to provide additional services that meet the needs of their local community.[22] Inner-city councils manage complex urban infrastructure including on-street paid parking, integrated bicycle networks, and automated traffic sensors, while some rural councils manage livestock exchanges and extensive drainage networks to prevent waterlogging in agricultural land. For example, Campaspe Shire Council owns and operates the Echuca & District Livestock Exchange, which holds regular cattle sales and provides facilities to support local livestock producers.[23]

Some of the more common services delivered by councils are shown in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2: Examples of services provided by Victorian councils

Source: Adapted from MAV (n.d.a).

The number of services provided by councils has increased over the decades from mainly property-related services through to a variety of social services. This is due to a range of factors, including the transfer of certain functions from other levels of government and changing community expectations around the types of services that councils should provide.[24]

22 MAV (n.d.a).
23 Campaspe Shire Council (n.d.).
24 Parliament of Victoria (2024b), pp. 181, 204, 207.

However, some councils have scaled back or ceased the provision of certain services in recent years, including for financial reasons. Common examples include the exit of some councils from the early years and aged care services sectors, and the scaling back of roadside mowing.[25]

Councils also have the power to make and enforce local laws on a range of matters, such as noise, fire hazards, abandoned vehicles and graffiti.[26]

Councils administer local planning schemes

Councils play a key role in Victoria's land-use planning system. Each council is responsible for developing strategic policies and frameworks in relation to land use and development, and for administering the planning scheme for their municipality.[27] This means that councils are responsible for issuing planning permits, making zoning decisions, and enforcing compliance with planning requirements.[28]

While many planning rules are set by the Victorian Government (see section 3.3), councils have a responsibility to guide the development and growth of their communities and to tailor the planning scheme to suit their local context.[29]

Councils play a key role in emergency management

Councils play a key role in supporting their local communities before, during and after emergencies and natural disasters.[30] Recent examples include the January 2026 bushfires and the December 2023–January 2024 storms and floods, both of which affected several municipalities.

The responsibilities of councils in relation to emergency management include:[31]

- establishing a municipal emergency management planning committee and developing an emergency management plan for their municipality (in partnership with other emergency services agencies)[32]
- conducting fire prevention activities including issuing fire prevention notices and working with fire agencies to reduce fire risks

25 Parliament of Victoria (2024b), pp. 72–73.
26 MAV (n.d.b); LG Act 2020, ss. 71–73.
27 MAV (2017).
28 MAV (2024), p. 24.
29 MAV (2024), p. 24.
30 MAV (2024), p. 25.
31 MAV (2024), p. 25.
32 Emergency Management Victoria (2024).

- addressing risks to properties from fire and flood via planning scheme controls
- operating relief and recovery centres during and after an emergency
- coordinating emergency shelter for displaced people and animals.

Councils are also responsible for coordinating and utilising a large portion of the funding made available after emergencies and disasters, and they have obligations under the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing's *Vulnerable People in Emergencies Policy*. This policy, which applies to 64 councils in rural, regional and peri-urban areas, requires councils to coordinate registers of vulnerable people, and develop and maintain lists of facilities or amenities where vulnerable people are likely to be situated.[33]

3.3 Councils operate within a changing regulatory and social landscape

Since the Tribunal made its 2022 Comprehensive Determination, there have been several notable changes to the regulatory and social environment for councils that have impacted their role to varying degrees. These are discussed below.

The LG Act 2020 has now been fully implemented

The LG Act 2020 and associated regulations provide the framework for the operation of Victoria's 79 councils. Passed in March 2020, it replaced much of the *Local Government Act 1989* (Vic), and aims to improve democracy, accountability, and service delivery in local government.[34]

The development of the LG Act 2020 was guided by five key principles:[35]

- community engagement — requiring councils to develop and utilise a community engagement policy
- strategic planning — requiring councils to develop integrated, long-term, and transparent approaches to support councillors in leading strategically
- public transparency — requiring councils to adopt and maintain a public transparency policy, aligned with the principles in the Act
- service performance — ensuring that councils deliver equitable, accessible, and good value services that meet the needs of their communities

33 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (2025), pp. 8, 11–12.
34 Department of Government Services (n.d.c).
35 Department of Government Services (n.d.d).

- financial management — supporting councils with a legislative environment that embraces innovation, modern business practices, and microeconomic reform.

The LG Act 2020 introduced new requirements for council electoral structures. Single-member wards became the 'default' and one of three permissible electoral structures, alongside uniform multi-member wards and unsubdivided.[36] Additionally, where a council has wards, each ward must have an approximately equal number of voters per councillor, with a deviation of no more than 10 per cent from the average.[37]

To ensure compliance with these requirements, the Victorian Government amended the electoral structures of 39 councils ahead of the 2024 council elections, and following an extensive review process (Box 3.1).[38]

During consultation, some stakeholders commented on these changes and their implications for the role of councillors, including perceived or potential impacts on workload. These are discussed in Chapter 4.

[36] Department of Government Services (n.d.a).
[37] LG Act 2020, s. 15(2).
[38] Department of Government Services (n.d.a).

Box 3.1: Changes to council electoral structures

In April 2020, the then-Minister for Local Government gazetted a notice specifying that:

- all metropolitan, interface and regional city councils must have single-member ward electoral structures — according to LGV, this is to 'enable residents to receive direct representation, and to ensure councillors are more accountable to local communities'
- all large and small shire councils are permitted to have any of the three permissible electoral structures — according to LGV, this recognises that 'in some cases it may be impractical to divide these councils into single-member wards, for example, councils with large geographical areas and small populations'.

In October 2022, the then-Minister for Local Government established two electoral representation advisory panels, whose purpose was to review and provide advice on the electoral structures of 39 councils that were non-compliant.

The panels considered a range of factors, including projected population growth, electoral trends (e.g. nominations, uncontested elections), communities of interest (i.e. groups of people in a municipality who share common concerns or aspirations), voter distribution, and land area and its impact on councillor workloads.

Following the reviews:

- 30 metropolitan, interface and regional city councils moved to single-member wards
- five small and large councils moved to an unsubdivided structure
- four small and large councils moved to a uniform multi-member ward structure

Two case studies are provided below.

Case study #1: Casey City Council

Prior to the changes, Casey City Council had six wards — five of which were represented by two councillors each, and one represented by a single councillor. As an interface council, Casey was required to have a single-member ward structure. While noting that 'the geographic features and uneven distribution of voters' across Casey made its task a challenging one, the panel ultimately recommended a new structure of 12 single-member wards.

Case study #2: Campaspe Shire Council

Prior to the changes, Campaspe Shire Council had five wards — two of which were represented by three councillors each, and three represented by one councillor each. As a large shire, Campaspe was permitted to have a multi-member ward structure, but the number of councillors in each ward has to be uniform (i.e. equal). The panel determined that Campaspe should have nine councillors and move to an unsubdivided structure. In making its recommendation, the panel noted Campaspe's 'history of uncontested elections and low candidate numbers' for its existing single-member wards. It determined that an unsubdivided structure 'would remove the risk of uncontested elections, provide a greater selection of candidates for voters, and could also encourage a more diverse council that better represented the community'.

Sources: Department of Government Services (n.d.a); Electoral Representation Advisory Panel (2023); Electoral Representation Advisory Panel (2024).

Stronger compliance measures are being implemented

The LG Amendment Act 2024 amended the LG Act 2020 to include additional compliance measures aimed at improving 'council integrity, accountability and governance'.[39]

The LG Amendment Act 2024 provided the Chief Municipal Inspector with additional powers, enabling them to serve infringement notices to any individual believed to have committed an offence against the LG Act 2020. The Inspector was also given the ability to report to parliament on any examination or investigation into a council's operations.[40]

The LG Amendment Act 2024 also enabled the introduction of a Model Councillor Code of Conduct, which was implemented in October 2024.[41] Councillor induction training, mayoral training and professional development training requirements were also established (see Chapter 4).[42]

LGV commenced work on two additional compliance measures in 2026:[43]

- model governance rules — intended to promote best practice council meeting procedures
- a model transparency policy — intended to promote council openness and transparency.

Recent planning changes have impacted councils

In recent years, the Victorian Government has introduced several reforms to the planning system to make it more modern and 'fit-for-purpose', and to support its efforts to increase housing supply and improve affordability.[44]

The Victorian Government's Development Facilitation Program, established in 2023 and subsequently expanded, allows certain planning permit applications to be made directly to the Minister for Planning, rather than to the relevant council. These include applications for significant economic developments and residential developments with affordable housing.[45] The program complements the

39 Department of Government Services (n.d.f).
40 LG Amendment Act 2024, s. 21.
41 LG Amendment Act 2024, s. 49; Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Amendment Regulations 2024 (Vic), s. 12.
42 Department of Government Services (2024a), p. 5.
43 Department of Government Services (n.d.e).
44 Victorian Government (2026a).
45 Department of Transport and Planning (2023); Department of Transport and Planning (2024); Department of Transport and Planning (2025a).

Minister's existing ability to 'call in' planning applications, whereby the Minister may intervene in and decide on a planning application that would ordinarily be decided by a council.[46]

'Deemed to comply' standards for townhouses and low-rise apartment buildings were approved in 2025.[47] Under the standards, councils are only required to assess aspects of a planning permit application that are non-compliant, with compliant elements automatically classed as meeting development objectives.[48] A parliamentary inquiry into the amendments found that they prioritise speed and certainty over decision-making discretion, with the latter typically exercised by councils (as the relevant planning authority).[49]

Although these changes reduce councils' planning responsibilities, they play an important role in advocating for their communities and attempting to influence planning changes that impact them.

Community satisfaction with council performance has increased following a period of decline

LGV administers the annual Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey, which compiles community feedback on councils across eight performance areas. Between 2022 — when the Tribunal made its 2022 Comprehensive Determination — and 2025, satisfaction with council performance gradually declined.[50]

The report on the 2025 survey results noted that several factors may have contributed to the negative sentiment. These include rate and fee increases, recent investigations or criminal charges against councillors and council staff, changes to council service delivery, controversial planning decisions, and perceptions that council services do not provide value for money in the context of cost-of-living pressures.[51] More broadly, VLGA has noted that distrust in public institutions is rising, and that 'nowhere is this truer than at a local level'.[52]

46 *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (Vic), s. 97B.
47 Department of Transport and Planning (2026).
48 Department of Transport and Planning (2025b).
49 Parliament of Victoria (2025).
50 JWS Research (2025), pp. 19–20.
51 JWS Research (2025), p. 5.
52 VLGA (2025b).

Despite this, the 2026 survey revealed a substantial increase in community satisfaction with councils. Perceptions of overall performance increased to 58 points (out of 100), compared to 53 points in 2025 and 59 points in 2022.[53] The improvement appears to be broad-based, with rises in all eight measures, including four which have returned to or exceed their 2022 levels. Key drivers appear to include improved perceptions of council performance in:[54]

- the delivery of core services, including waste management (+7 points compared to 2025) and sealed local roads (+9 points)
- community consultation (+5 points).

3.4 Most councils are in good financial health, but there are risks

Councils are a significant part of the Victorian economy, collectively spending more than $11 billion on service delivery annually and over $4 billion on capital works in 2024–25. They also own and manage over $150 billion in community assets and infrastructure, and employ over 50,000 employees.[55]

Key sources of council revenue include:[56]

- rates and charges
- user fees and charges
- statutory fees and fines
- interest and investment revenue
- grants and contributions, from both state and federal governments.

Council rates and charges, which form the largest component of council revenue, can be increased each year up to an annual cap. The rate cap is set by the Minister for Local Government and has generally followed forecast growth in the Melbourne Consumer Price Index (CPI).[57]

53 Klein (2026), p. 26.
54 Klein (2026), p. 7.
55 Victorian Government (2025d), pp. 3–4.
56 VAGO (2026a), Appendix C, p. 5.
57 MAV (2025b), p. 1.

In December 2025, a rate cap of 2.75 per cent was announced for the 2026–27 financial year.[58] This is consistent with the forecast for Melbourne CPI growth published in the 2025–26 Budget Update.[59] Since rate capping was introduced in 2016, the average cap has been 2.3 per cent, while the average annual increase in council rates for the decade prior to capping was 6 per cent.[60]

Councils can apply to the Essential Services Commission (ESC) to implement a rate increase higher than the rate cap, if they believe that the cap would financially inhibit their capacity to perform their duties and exercise their powers.[61]

The Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) conducts annual audits of the financial performance and management of councils. In its most recent audit, (published in March 2026), VAGO observed that the sector as a whole increased its cash reserves — with 75 councils reporting an operating surplus in 2024–25 — while debt levels remain low.[62]

More broadly, VAGO has observed that most councils have operated sustainably since rate capping was introduced.[63] However, it has also noted that some small councils are under financial pressure due to their limited rate base and reliance on government funding, with implications for their longer-term financial sustainability.[64]

During consultation, the Tribunal heard about the financial challenges facing some councils. For example, the submission from MAV observed that some smaller rural and regional councils 'operate with smaller rate bases, limited revenue diversity and higher service delivery costs due to [their] geography and dispersed populations'.

Similarly, the Victorian Budget 2026–27 (2026–27 State Budget) highlights that rural and interface councils face challenges resulting from population movements and local economic circumstances.[65]

58 ESC (n.d.a).
59 Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF) (2025), p. 10.
60 Premier of Victoria (2025).
61 ESC (n.d.b).
62 VAGO (2026a), p. 1.
63 VAGO (2025b), p. 1.
64 VAGO (2026a), p. 1.
65 DTF (2026b), p. 104.

3.5 Councils and their municipalities vary in size

Victoria's 79 LGAs differ significantly in their demographic and geographical characteristics, and there is also considerable variation in council finances (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Average population, land area, recurrent revenue and asset values by council category

Council category (no. of councils)	Estimated resident population	Land area (km^2)	Total recurrent revenue for 2024-25 ($ million)	Total asset value for 2024-25 ($ million)
Metropolitan (22)	148,854	66	257	3,270
Interface (9)	229,262	820	474	5,088
Regional (10)	88,188	3,938	206	1,902
Large shire (19)	34,609	4,912	94	1,003
Small shire (19)	10,281	4,509	35	406
All councils (79)	*89,531*	*2,876*	*183*	*2,070*

Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2026b); ABS (2026g); data provided to the Tribunal by LGV, March 2026.

According to the most recent data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the City of Casey had the most residents (as at June 2025) with approximately 415,000, followed by the City of Wyndham with 348,000. While the average resident population across all LGAs is around 90,000, eight small shires have less than 10,000 residents — the smallest, the Borough of Queenscliffe, is home to 3,300 people.[66]

The City of Melbourne experienced the highest population growth of any LGA since the Tribunal made its 2022 Comprehensive Determination, with an overall increase of 22 per cent between June 2022 and June 2025. The City of Melton had the next highest growth with 20 per cent. Across all LGAs, the average increase over this period was 4 per cent, and four other LGAs experienced growth of over 10 per cent. By contrast, the populations of 14 LGAs — mostly small and large shires — have declined since 2022.[67]

The Rural City of Mildura is Victoria's largest LGA in terms of land area, covering approximately 22,000 km^2, followed by the Shire of East Gippsland (21,000 km^2). The average LGA has a land area of 2,876 km^2, although 28 LGAs are less than 500 km^2 in size. The Borough of Queenscliffe, at 9 km^2, is the smallest LGA by land area, while the next smallest, the City of Yarra, covers 20 km^2.[68]

66 ABS (2026g).

67 ABS (2026g).

68 ABS (2026b).

Council finances also vary widely. Wyndham City Council reported the highest recurrent revenue in the 2024–25 financial year at $865 million, followed by Melton City Council at $665 million. Councils reported an average of $183 million in recurrent revenue, although five councils had revenues of less than $30 million. The Borough of Queenscliffe Council had the lowest revenue with $14 million.[69]

Across all 79 councils, recurrent revenue increased by an average of 23 per cent (in nominal terms) between 2021–22 and 2024–25. The largest increases were experienced by interface councils, which experienced average revenue growth of 30 per cent over the period.[70]

Casey City Council managed the most assets at June 2025 (valued at $8.4 billion), followed by Wyndham City Council ($7.7 billion). By contrast, the Borough of Queenscliffe Council managed assets worth $181 million — far below the average of $2.1 billion across all 79 councils.[71]

The value of the assets managed by each council increased by an average of 24 per cent in nominal terms between June 2022 and June 2025. This reflects both new assets and the revaluation of existing assets held by councils.[72]

The municipality of the City of Melbourne, encompassing the Melbourne central business district (CBD) and surrounding suburbs, is unique among Victoria's LGAs. It is the seat of the Victorian Government and home to numerous peak bodies and national and international companies. Despite its size — it covers an area of 38 km^2, and has a population of around 194,000 — the City of Melbourne generates $127 billion in gross local product, or approximately 22 per cent of the total production of the Victorian economy.[73]

3.6 Summary

The Victorian local government sector is comprised of 79 councils that provide a wide range of services to their municipalities. Elected councillors form the governing body of a council, while an administration — headed by a CEO — manages day-to-day operations, including the delivery of services and projects.

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69 Based on data provided to the Tribunal by LGV, March 2026.
70 Based on data provided to the Tribunal by LGV, March 2026.
71 Based on data provided to the Tribunal by LGV, March 2026.
72 Based on data provided to the Tribunal by LGV, March 2026.
73 City of Melbourne (2025), pp. 11, 48; ABS (2026b).

There have been changes to the regulatory and social landscape for councils since the 2022 Comprehensive Determination. The LG Act 2020 has now been fully implemented, and the LG Amendment Act 2024 has mandated additional compliance measures for councils. Community satisfaction with council performance has recently increased following a period of decline, while recent changes to the planning system have affected the role played by councils in the development and growth of their communities.

Council finances have remained relatively healthy since 2022. However, VAGO has noted declines in some indicators of fiscal sustainability and emerging risks.

In Chapter 4, the Tribunal turns to discussing the roles and responsibilities of elected councillors, including the mayor and deputy mayor.

4 Roles and responsibilities of councillors

Voters in each municipal district elect councillors to serve on their council's governing body. Councillors are collectively accountable for their council's decisions and actions, and are responsible for ensuring its good governance.[74]

According to MAV, councillors:[75]

> *engage in collaborative efforts to shape policies, allocate resources, and address the diverse needs of their communities.*
>
> *They play a pivotal role in guiding the formulation of strategic plans, local policies, establishing service standards and priorities, overseeing the performance of the CEO and the [council] organisation.*

No formal qualifications are required to be a councillor or to stand for election. Generally speaking, a person is qualified to be a councillor if they are at least 18 years of age, an Australian citizen or eligible British subject, and enrolled on the voters' roll for the council for which they intend to stand.[76]

The Tribunal heard — and research has shown — that most councillors are motivated to stand by a desire to serve their community.[77] Prospective candidates are required to complete training before they can nominate,[78] and a person may be disqualified from standing for council in particular circumstances (e.g. if they have been convicted of certain offences, or if they are a member of parliament).[79]

This chapter outlines the duties and responsibilities of councillors, including the additional responsibilities of the mayor and deputy mayor. It also examines available data on the amount of time councillors dedicate to their role, including key factors influencing councillor workloads, and how the roles have evolved since the Tribunal's last comprehensive review in 2021–22.

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74 *Constitution Act 1975* (Vic), s. 74A(1A).
75 MAV (2024), p. 40.
76 LG Act 2020, s. 34(1).
77 For example, VLGA's 2025 councillor census — which surveyed over 300 serving councillors — found that this was a motivation for 84 per cent of councillors. VLGA (2026), p. 3.
78 LG Act 2020, s. 256(7).
79 LG Act 2020, s. 34(2).

4.1 The LG Act 2020 sets out the core duties and responsibilities of councillors

Section 28(1) of the LG Act 2020 specifies that the role of every councillor in representing their municipal community includes, but is not limited to:[80]

- participating in the decision-making of the council
- representing the interests of the municipal community in that decision-making
- contributing to the strategic direction of the council through the development and review of key strategic documents of the council, including the council plan.

When undertaking their role, every councillor must:[81]

- consider the diversity of interests and needs of the municipal community
- support the role of the council
- acknowledge and support the role of the mayor
- act lawfully and in accordance with the oath or affirmation of office
- act in accordance with the Model Councillor Code of Conduct
- comply with council procedures required for good governance.

The role of a councillor is therefore multifaceted, encompassing both representational and governance aspects, with the latter coming into sharper focus since the passing of the LG Act 2020.

As outlined in the previous chapter, there is a distinction between the duties and responsibilities of elected councillors and those of the council administration — while the former set the council's strategic direction and make high-level decisions, it is the latter who have responsibility for day-to-day operations and service delivery. To that end, the LG Act 2020 stipulates that the role of a councillor does not include the performance of any responsibilities or functions of the CEO,[82] and it prohibits councillors from directing a member of council staff.[83]

80 The wording of section 28(1) of the LG Act 2020 was amended in 2024 to clarify that it is not intended to be an exhaustive description of the role of a councillor. Parliament of Victoria (2024a), p. 14.
81 LG Act 2020, s. 28(2).
82 LG Act 2020, s. 28(3).
83 LG Act 2020, s. 124.

The Tribunal heard that, in practice, there can be tension, or even a disconnect, between the statutory definition of the role of a councillor — with its emphasis on governance and oversight — and how some members of the community understand the role. For example, according to one councillor who responded to the Tribunal's questionnaire:

> *Community expectations are sometimes uninformed. Some in the community believe that [councillors] are ... part of the [council's] Operational Executive Team and can make operational decisions.*

While another said:

> *[T]he community expects councillors to follow up their issues instead of ringing [the council's] customer service.*

Some councillors also reported that the role is different from what they expected. In the words of one first-term councillor:

> *The reality has been quite different [from what I expected] ... [T]he role feels less focused on championing community outcomes and more oriented toward accountability ... and navigating internal governance. While important, this leaves limited room for the community-facing work that motivated many of us to stand in the first place.*

On the other hand, other first-term councillors said that the level of community engagement, including attendance at community events, was greater than they anticipated.

4.2 Mayors and deputy mayors have additional responsibilities

Each council must elect a councillor to serve as mayor, and may also elect another councillor to serve as deputy mayor, for one- or two-year terms.[84] The exception is Melbourne City Council, where voters directly elect a Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor on a joint ticket to serve for the entire four-year council term.[85]

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[84] Where a council has not established an office of deputy mayor, it may appoint a councillor to be acting mayor when the mayor is unavailable. At the time of making this Determination, the Tribunal was aware of only one council that did not have a deputy mayor. LG Act 2020, ss. 20A, 20B, 25–27.

[85] *City of Melbourne Act 2001* (Vic), ss. 1(b), 12, 14–15.

As the Tribunal noted in its 2022 Comprehensive Determination, mayors play an important leadership role in relation to other councillors and the municipal community, and are the main conduit between the elected council and the CEO.[86]

Under the LG Act 2020, the role of the mayor is to:[87]

- chair council meetings
- be the council's principal spokesperson
- lead engagement with the municipal community on the development of the council plan, and report to the municipal community at least once each year on its implementation
- promote behaviour among councillors that is consistent with the Model Councillor Code of Conduct
- assist councillors to understand their role
- take a leadership role in ensuring the regular review of the performance of the CEO
- provide advice to the CEO in setting the agenda for council meetings
- perform civic and ceremonial duties on behalf of the council.

The LG Act 2020 also gives mayors specific powers to:[88]

- exercise a casting vote in the event of a tie at a council meeting
- appoint a councillor to be the chair of a delegated committee[89]
- direct a councillor, subject to any procedures or limitations specified in the governance rules, to leave a council meeting if their behaviour is preventing the council from conducting its business
- require the CEO to report to the council on the implementation of a council decision.

Under the LG Act 2020, the role of a deputy mayor is to perform the role of the mayor and exercise any of the powers of that role if:[90]

- the mayor is unable for any reason to attend a council meeting (or part of one)
- the mayor is incapable of performing their duties for any reason, including illness
- the office of mayor is vacant.

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86 Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2022b), pp. 46–49.

87 LG Act 2020, s. 18(1).

88 LG Act 2020, ss. 19(1), 61(5)(d).

89 A 'delegated committee' is a committee established by a council, which must consist of at least two councillors and may also include council staff or community members, that is empowered to make decisions on behalf of the council. LG Act 2020, s. 63.

90 LG Act 2020, s. 21.

During consultation, the Tribunal heard mixed views about the deputy mayoral role and, in particular, the extent to which its responsibilities and level of accountability differ in practice from those of other councillors (Box 4.1). Broadly speaking, these ranged from a view that the role is akin to a 'second-in-command' who supports the mayor, through to seeing the deputy mayor as simply a councillor who fills in when the mayor is absent.

Box 4.1: Stakeholder views about the role of deputy mayor

Written submission from MAV

'[T]he role of Deputy Mayor varies considerably from council to council. In many councils, representational and civic duties are shared across the councillor group.'

Written submission from VLGA

'While the deputy Mayor's statutory role has streamlined situations where the mayor is absent from meetings and the deputy seamlessly steps into that role, it is debatable as to whether this occurs on a sufficient number of occasions …

'We would argue that … the notion of [the deputy mayor role] providing a 'traineeship' for the deputy mayor to become the mayor may be misguided. The election of mayors and deputy mayors is essentially a political outcome, rather than a skills or competency-based outcome.'

Written submission from Council Watch

'The deputy mayoral role is [not] uniform. In some councils, the deputy mayor performs meaningful leadership, represents the council at events, chairs meetings when required and supports the mayor. In other councils, the deputy mayor role is largely ceremonial or intermittent.'

Responses to the councillor questionnaire

'The Deputy Mayor is essentially just a Councillor who is also back up to the Mayor. They play no other role at our Council.' (third-term councillor, metropolitan council)

'Deputy requires additional time commitments and additional understanding of legislative requirements than just a councillor. The deputy is a conduit between the mayor and councillors and in my experience the deputy acts like a council whip following up and coordinating the council group.' (ex-deputy mayor, regional city council)

'In my experience, the expectation of a Deputy Mayor is slightly greater than that of a Councillor. More so, it's the capacity to step in on behalf of the Mayor or the role of acting Mayor, and having the additional skills to do so effectively. Having said that, it depends on how active the Mayor is in their role. Additionally, there is greater expectation within the community of a Deputy Mayor to that of a Councillor, and the need to represent the views of Council.' (ex-mayor and deputy mayor, metropolitan council)

Source: Responses to the Tribunal's councillor questionnaire.

This divergence of views suggests that the role of deputy mayor is, to some extent, what councils make of it. The nature and extent of any additional responsibilities depend on how individual mayors and deputy mayors approach their respective roles, as well as the dynamics within each council.

4.3 Councillors undertake a variety of activities

As a member of the council's governing body and an elected representative, each councillor (including the mayor and deputy mayor) is required and expected to participate in a variety of activities. These range from participating at council meetings and engaging with the local community to overseeing the development of key strategic documents.

Debating and decision-making

Councillors are required to attend council meetings where they debate and vote on various matters, including policies, strategic plans, and budgetary matters.[91] Council meetings are generally open to the public, and councils have a duty to be accessible and transparent in their decision-making.[92] Decisions made by council — known as 'resolutions' — are decided by a majority of the councillors present at the meeting.[93]

The frequency of council meetings varies. While most councils meet monthly (with the possible exception of January), some councils (e.g. Stonnington City Council) hold fortnightly meetings.[94]

Prior to each meeting, councillors receive an agenda, briefings and relevant reports from council officers. The purpose of the reports is to provide councillors with sufficient information and advice on the matters being considered at the meeting so that they can make informed decisions.[95] However, these vary between councils — the Tribunal heard that they can be hundreds of pages long at some councils. It is ultimately the responsibility of each councillor to ensure that they are properly informed and make considered decisions in the best interests of the whole community.[96]

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91 MAV (2024), p. 43.
92 LG Act 2020, ss. 58, 66.
93 LG Act 2020, ss. 59, 61.
94 Tribunal data request to councils.
95 MAV (2024), p. 43.
96 MAV (2024), p. 43.

Councillors may also attend meetings of committees of which they are a member. Councils may establish 'delegated committees' which are authorised to exercise certain powers, and make decisions on its behalf. Such committees must include at least two councillors, and may also include members of council staff and the community.[97] For example, many councils delegate their planning powers to a dedicated planning committee. Some councils have also established a committee to oversee the appointment and remuneration of the CEO.[98]

Community engagement and accountability

As the public face of the council, councillors are expected to attend and participate in a variety of civic and community events, such as citizenship ceremonies, local festivals, and official openings of local facilities and infrastructure. These events provide opportunities for councillors to build connections with the community, and to engage with community members to understand their needs and values.[99]

More broadly, the Tribunal heard that councillors are expected to be accessible and responsive to members of the community who may contact them with queries, concerns and requests for information. Councillors' mobile phone numbers and their council email addresses are typically published on the council's website, and many have public-facing social media profiles.

Some councillors, particularly those from rural areas, told the Tribunal that they are often approached by community members while going about their daily lives, such as when they are out shopping, walking the dog, or attending a local sporting match. One councillor who responded to the Tribunal's questionnaire said:

> *Being in a small rural shire, just going into town and down the street to shop or have a meal becomes Council work given the amount of [people who] take the time to speak with me about Council matters whilst I'm not at any formal Council event.*

97 LG Act 2020, s. 63.
98 The City of Monash is one example. City of Monash (n.d.).
99 MAV (2024), p. 41.

Advocacy and representation

As elected representatives, councillors provide a critical link between the local community and the council administration. They play an active role in addressing and advocating for the needs and interests of their community, meeting with residents, organisations and businesses to understand their needs and seek their input to help shape council policy.[100]

During consultation, the Tribunal heard that members of the community are increasingly looking to councillors to assist them with matters that lie outside of the council's formal control or remit, or to advocate on their behalf.

Councillors also collaborate with and lobby other levels of government for funding and resources, and may build alliances with community groups and other councils to support local initiatives and raise awareness of local issues.[101]

Governance, financial management and oversight

Councillors are responsible for setting the strategic direction for their municipality through the development of key strategic and financial planning documents, including the council plan, asset plan, and revenue and rating plan.[102]

They also approve the council's annual budget, which involves setting priorities for the year ahead and allocating resources to achieve the initiatives outlined in the council plan, and monitor expenditure and the achievement of council objectives.[103]

In its submission, MAV noted that:

> *The [LG Act 2020] introduced a principles-based governance framework that places greater responsibility on councillors to exercise judgement, oversight and leadership rather than relying on prescriptive regulatory guidance. This change has elevated expectations of councillor capability in areas such as governance, financial oversight, risk management and strategic planning.*

[100] MAV (2024), p. 41.
[101] MAV (2024), p. 41.
[102] MAV (2024), p. 42.
[103] MAV (2024), p. 43.

Each council is required to establish an Audit and Risk Committee whose membership must include councillors, although the chairperson and a majority of members must be independent.[104] Audit and Risk Committees have the following functions and responsibilities under the LG Act 2020:[105]

- monitoring the compliance of council policies and procedures with overarching governance principles, the LG Act 2020, and any ministerial directions
- monitoring council financial and performance reporting
- monitoring and providing advice on risk management and fraud prevention systems and controls
- overseeing internal and external audit functions.

Land use planning and development

According to MAV, land use planning can be a challenging and time-consuming responsibility for councillors. While many planning decisions are delegated to council officers, councillors play an important role in developing and reviewing the strategic land use and development policies for their municipality.[106]

Councillors are required to work with council staff to understand the needs of the community and to identify current and emerging challenges affecting their municipality. These can include the availability of housing, economic development, environmental protection, and climate change.[107]

Councillors are sometimes tasked with deciding on contentious development proposals. Such decisions are made within a complex legislative framework requiring councillors to perform a ‘quasi-judicial’ role, while balancing strategic policy considerations, and sometimes heated debate in the community.[108]

[104] LG Act 2020, s. 53.
[105] LG Act 2020, s. 54(2).
[106] MAV (2024), p. 44.
[107] MAV (2024), p. 44.
[108] MAV (2024), p. 44; Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2022b), p. 37.

4.4 Time commitment varies, but many councillors reported spending significant time on their role

The role of a councillor is somewhat unusual in that councillors do not have set work hours or days, and can essentially choose how much time to dedicate to their role. As such, time commitments can vary widely from councillor to councillor. This partly reflects the nature of the role, as well as the fact that, historically, it has been seen as a voluntary, part-time commitment rather than a job or profession — although the appropriateness and relevance of this view is contested (see section 4.6).[109]

The mayoral role is an exception, in that it has generally been acknowledged as a full-time commitment for some time, including by the Tribunal in 2022.[110] Even so, there is no formal requirement that mayors perform the role on a full-time basis, although the demands of the role and community expectations may necessitate it.

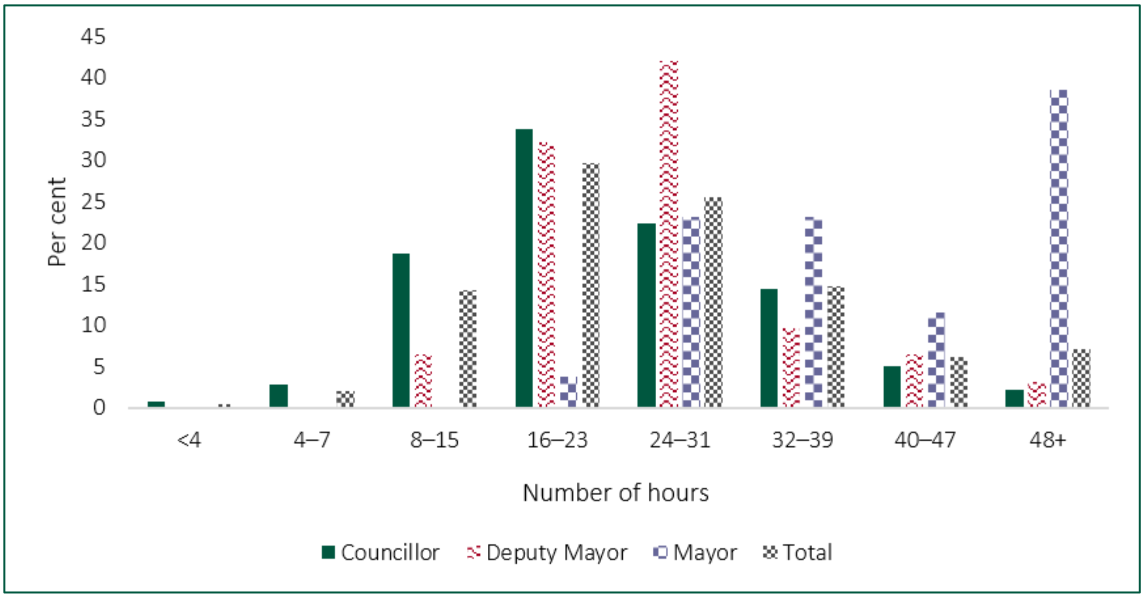
Notably, councillors generally do not have access to personal staff or dedicated administrative support (unlike MPs),[111] although council staff may provide limited support (e.g. with diary management).

When the Tribunal made its 2022 Comprehensive Determination, VLGA advised that an average week for a councillor involved a 23-hour time commitment, while MAV estimated that councillors generally spent 10–20 hours per week performing their role.[112] Over half of the councillors who responded to the Tribunal's questionnaire in 2021 reported spending between 16 and 31 hours on their role in a typical week.[113]

[109] For example, in a 2008 policy statement, the Victorian Government noted that it 'views Councillor allowances not as a form of salary but as some recognition of the contributions made by those elected to voluntary, part-time roles in the community'. Victorian Government (2008), p. 1.
[110] Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2022b), p. 119.
[111] Submission from MAV.
[112] Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2022b), pp. 41–42.
[113] Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2022b), p. 148.

The Tribunal's questionnaire asked current councillors about their time commitment (Figure 4.1). The results were broadly similar to those from the previous questionnaire, with a majority of respondents again reporting a weekly time commitment of between 16 and 31 hours. Three-quarters of deputy mayors reported a time commitment in this range, while half of all mayors said they work at least 40 hours per week. On the whole, metropolitan councillors — including mayors and deputy mayors — reported greater time commitments than their rural counterparts.

Figure 4.1: Councillor questionnaire — responses to 'During a typical week, how many hours (not including travel time) do you personally dedicate to your role?'



Note: Based on a total of 196 responses, including 26 mayors and 31 deputy mayors.
Source: Tribunal analysis of questionnaire responses.

These responses suggest that while for many the role of a councillor is still a part-time commitment, that is not the case across the board.

Questionnaire respondents indicated that they spend the most time preparing for and attending meetings and briefings, which accounts for 43 per cent of their weekly time commitment on average. Engaging with the community and other stakeholders followed at 30 per cent, while developing and reviewing strategic documents was reported at 16 per cent.

Many first-term councillors said that the workload was higher, and the role more demanding, than they expected. For example, one said:

> *[M]y understanding of the role was that it would require approximately four hours one night per week. However, in practice, this has not been the case*

> *at all. My workload is significantly higher, averaging around 30 hours per week, and at times exceeding this depending on council demands.*

Another observed that:

> *[T]he role has been far more demanding and complex than I anticipated. The volume of work, the time required to review lengthy reports and policy documents, and the level of responsiveness expected by residents means the role extends well beyond formal meetings. There is also a constant expectation to be available to the public, respond to complaints and concerns, and engage with community issues that arise at any time.*

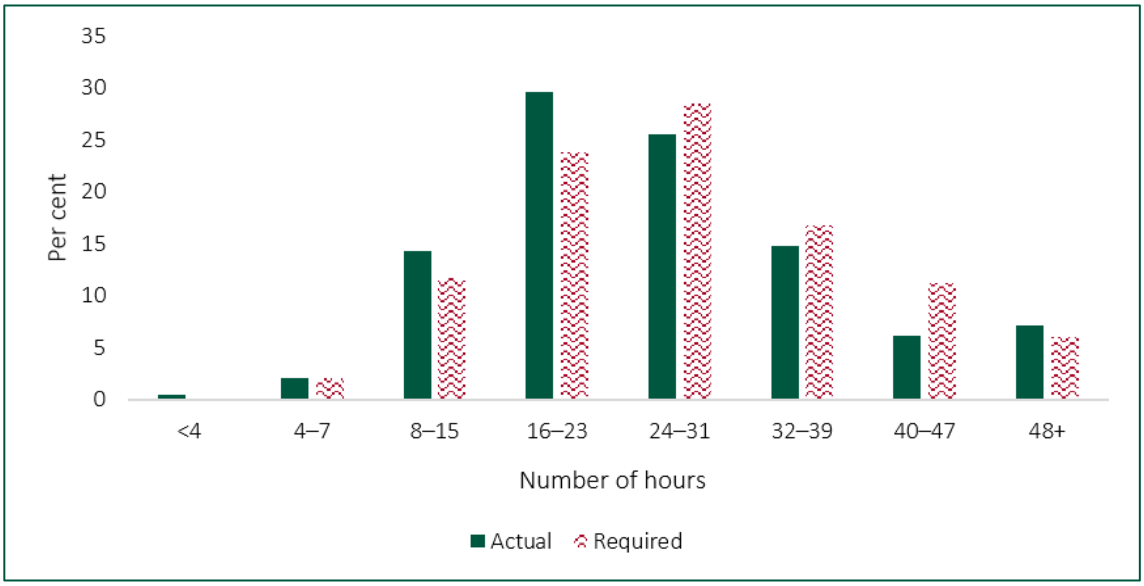
On the other hand, the Tribunal heard that some councillors dedicate only a small amount of time to performing their role, potentially limited to attending council meetings. However, this appears to be a small minority — of the councillors who responded to the Tribunal's questionnaire, over 80 per cent reported a time commitment of at least 16 hours per week, while only 3 per cent said they work fewer than 8 hours per week.

Some councillors spend less time on the role than they think is required, including for financial reasons

Councillors were asked to indicate how much time they think is required to perform their role effectively (Figure 4.2). Notably, around a third of respondents reported that they spend less time on their role than they think is required. Compared to councillors in rural areas, metropolitan councillors generally indicated that more time was required to perform their role effectively.

This reflects what the Tribunal heard through its broader consultation, which is that some councillors consciously limit the amount of time they spend on councillor duties based on what they can afford and/or what their circumstances allow. For some councillors, the value of the allowance appears to be a limiting factor on the time they are able and/or willing to dedicate to their role.

Figure 4.2: Councillor questionnaire — responses to questions about actual and required time commitment



Note: Based on 196 (actual) and 197 (required) responses.
Source: Tribunal analysis of questionnaire responses.

For example, in his submission to the Tribunal, Cr Clark Holloway noted:

> *There is easily 40+ hours per week Councillor work for me out there. Not only is there the community advocacy, but all of the other duties of Councillors: briefings, strategic plans, budgets, sitting on committees ..., mandatory training, attending events, general admin ... But since I ... have to ensure that I can pay my own bills, I must throttle the amount of liaising I can do with the community to only what I can afford. For me this means capping the amount of work I do as Councillor at 15-20 hours per week at an absolute maximum.*

Dale Martin, a former councillor at the City of Merri-bek, similarly observed:

> *Throughout my term, I consistently worked between 20 and 30 hours per week as a councillor while also maintaining full-time and eventually part-time employment. This represented the maximum capacity available outside paid work, not the full extent of what the role demanded or what I was willing to contribute.*

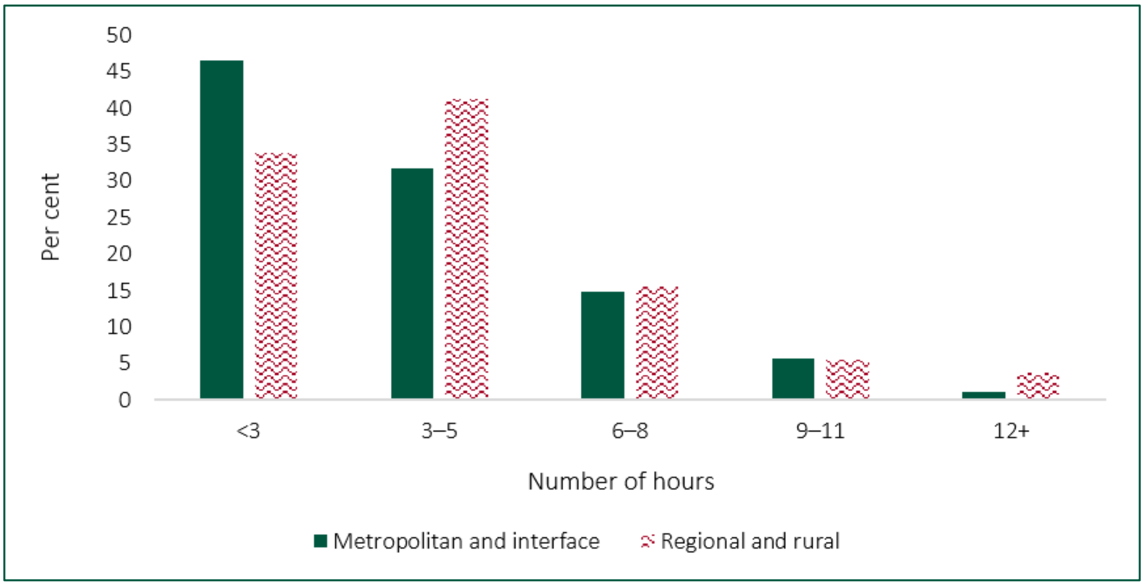
On the other hand, around one-in-five councillors reported spending more time on their role than they think is required to perform it effectively. Age seems to be a key driver, with older councillors more likely than younger councillors to report working the same or a greater number of hours than they think is required. This may partly reflect the fact that financial security generally increases with age, meaning that older individuals may be in a better position to dedicate more time to their role if they so choose. They may also have broader experience (e.g. in governance and/or finance), enabling them to engage more fully in certain aspects of the role (e.g. budget setting).

Travel represents a significant additional time commitment for some councillors, particularly in rural areas

During consultation, the Tribunal heard from many councillors — particularly those from rural areas — who said they are required to travel regularly and/or for long distances in the course of performing their role. For example, the submission from Campaspe Shire Council referred to the 'tyranny of distance', which it says amplifies councillor workloads and leads to fatigue.

The Tribunal's questionnaire asked councillors to indicate how many hours they spend travelling to fulfil their duties in a typical week. Around half of all councillors in metropolitan or interface councils spend fewer than three hours travelling each week. By comparison, two-thirds of regional or rural councillors travel for at least three hours, while a quarter travel for six or more hours (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3: Councillor questionnaire — responses to 'During a typical week, how many hours do you spend travelling to fulfil your council duties and responsibilities?'



Note: Based on 197 responses, comprising 88 metropolitan or interface councillors and 109 regional or rural councillors.
Source: Tribunal analysis of questionnaire responses.

VLGA's councillor census also asked councillors about their time commitment

Respondents to VLGA's first councillor census, conducted in 2024 and completed by 301 councillors, reported an average time commitment of 29 hours per week during the 2020–2024 council term.[114] Meanwhile, the 329 councillors who completed VLGA's 2025 census reported an average of 39 hours per week over the first year of the current term (2024–2028).[115] Councillors in metropolitan and interface councils reported an average of 43 hours per week, compared to 35 hours for regional and rural councillors — however, the VLGA noted that these estimates do not include travel time.[116]

VLGA also advised the Tribunal that the median time commitment for respondents to the 2025 census was 23 hours.[117] The substantial difference (16 hours) between the average and median time commitments suggests that some councillors reported very high individual time commitments — potentially well in excess of 40 hours per week — thereby 'skewing' the average. A typical councillor is likely to have a time commitment closer to the median.

The increase in average time commitment partly reflects differences in what councillors were asked to report — in 2025, respondents were explicitly asked to include time spent on advocacy and attending councillor briefings. According to VLGA, this provides a more accurate and holistic view of a councillor's time commitment.[118] However, it also noted that some of the increase in time commitment is explained by the following factors:[119]

- many first-time councillors were elected in 2024 (representing 57 per cent of the total), and are still becoming accustomed to the demands of the role
- the introduction of mandatory training and professional development (see section 4.6)
- growing community expectations of councils and councillors, along with increased social media and in-person engagement with the community and other key stakeholders.

114 VLGA (2025c), p. 5.
115 VLGA (2026), pp. 2, 5.
116 VLGA (2026), p. 5.
117 Supplementary submission from VLGA.
118 Supplementary submission from VLGA.
119 Supplementary submission from VLGA.

4.5 Councillors are subject to various accountability and integrity mechanisms

As elected representatives, councillors are ultimately accountable to the voters in their ward or municipal district. If voters are dissatisfied with the performance of the councillor or councillors that represent them, they can vote for another candidate at the next council elections, which are held every four years.[120]

The LG Act 2020 also established a variety of mechanisms to ensure that councillors are held accountable for their decisions and actions, perform their role effectively, and provide good governance for their municipality during the council term.

From 26 October 2024, all councillors have been obliged to observe the Model Councillor Code of Conduct outlined in the Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020 (Vic). The Model Councillor Code of Conduct replaced the codes previously adopted by individual councils, and established 'clear standards for the behaviour and responsibilities of councillors'.[121] It is designed to:[122]

- ensure that councillors can perform their duties and functions effectively and in a manner that reflects the values of transparency, respect and accountability
- foster a spirit of cooperation and collaboration among councillors and council staff
- strengthen public confidence and trust in local government.

The LG Act 2020 established a framework for dealing with councillor misconduct, including serious and gross misconduct, and gives the Minister for Local Government broad oversight powers in relation to councils and councillors. For example, the Minister may appoint a municipal monitor to:

- monitor a council's governance processes and practices[123]
- report to the Minister on a councillor who is creating a serious risk to the health and safety of others or preventing a council from performing its functions.[124]

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[120] The exception is where an election is uncontested. This refers to a scenario in which the number of candidates is equal to the number of vacancies to be filled.
[121] Department of Government Services (2024b), p. 5.
[122] Department of Government Services (2024b), p. 5.
[123] LG Act 2020, s. 180(a).
[124] LG Act 2020, s. 180(ca).

Where serious issues are identified at a particular council, the Governor in Council may (on the recommendation of the Minister) dismiss the elected council, and appoint one or more administrators to perform its duties and functions.[125] The Minister may also recommend that an individual councillor be suspended for a period of up to 12 months.[126] An order that gives effect to the dismissal or suspension of a council or councillor must be laid before the Parliament, and may be disallowed by a resolution of either house within seven days thereafter.[127]

Various integrity and oversight bodies also play a role in holding councillors accountable. In particular:[128]

- The Local Government Inspectorate (LGI) is responsible for ensuring that councils comply with the LG Act 2020, including by investigating potential breaches by councils and councillors.
- The Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission can investigate suspected corruption and misconduct (for example, Operation Sandon was an investigation into allegations of corrupt conduct involving property developers and councillors at Casey City Council).[129]
- The Victorian Ombudsman can hear complaints about council actions and decisions.

4.6 The role of councillor continues to evolve

The Tribunal asked councillors and other stakeholders how the role of councillor has changed since the Tribunal made its 2022 Comprehensive Determination, including in terms of responsibilities, workload and complexity.

Many stakeholders pointed to the ongoing impact of the LG Act 2020, with its heightened focus on governance and accountability, and the increasing 'professionalisation' of the role of councillor. For example, VLGA said:

> *The [LG Act 2020] changed the way in which councillors, mayors, deputy mayors and the elected council operated.... The modern councillor must have a sound understanding of scores of legislative documents, strategic plans, long term financial documents and strategies.*

[125] LG Act 2020, ss. 230(1), 231(1)(a).
[126] LG Act 2020, s. 229A(1).
[127] LG Act 2020, ss. 229A(5)(b), 230(7)(b).
[128] LGI (2025).
[129] Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (n.d.).

> *The [LG Act 2020] also saw the introduction of CEO Employment and Remuneration Committees and more rigor around the CEO performance review process … [and] Audit and Risk Committees also have far greater accountabilities …*

More broadly, stakeholders told the Tribunal that the traditional characterisation of the role as 'voluntary' is outdated and no longer appropriate nor accurate given the significant demands and expectations on councillors.

For example, VLGA submitted that the changes introduced by the LG Act 2020 are 'moving the councillor role away from [a] 'volunteer' role'. MAV said that 'public and institutional expectations [of councillors] increasingly reflect a full-time public leadership role', while allowances 'remain anchored in a conception of part-time civic service'.

Some stakeholders suggested that the civic nature of the role may be more appropriately or accurately described in terms of community service, as opposed to volunteerism. This reflects the fact that most councillors are motivated primarily by a desire to serve their community, while recognising that the demands of the role exceed those of other roles commonly described as voluntary.

The Tribunal heard that the role has continued to evolve in response to legislative and regulatory changes and community expectations, with some submitting that the rate of change has accelerated since the COVID-19 pandemic. Voicing this view, MAV told the Tribunal:

> *Since the Tribunal's 2022 determination, the role of councillors has continued to evolve significantly. Councillors now operate in a highly visible, complex and demanding environment characterised by increasing community expectations of accessibility and responsiveness; a near-continuous engagement model driven by digital communication; governance of organisations delivering multi-billion-dollar services and infrastructure programs; and decision-making within an increasingly complex legislative and regulatory framework.*

Stakeholders also suggested that there have been some specific changes to the role since 2022, which principally relate to:

- community expectations
- the introduction of mandatory training and professional development

- the move to single-member wards
- emergencies and natural disasters
- heightened incivility, harassment and bullying towards councillors from other councillors and the public.

Community expectations of councillors have intensified

During consultation for the 2022 Comprehensive Determination, the Tribunal heard that community expectations of councillors had grown over the preceding years, particularly in terms of increased responsiveness and accessibility.[130] At the time, it was unclear how much of this reflected the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused disruptions across many aspects of society. In particular, pandemic-related restrictions forced many Victorians to spend more time in their local community, which may have heightened their focus on local issues.

Feedback from stakeholders suggests that community expectations of councillors have not decreased, and may even have intensified since 2022. For example, Cr Rosie Annear told the Tribunal:

> *I feel that community expectations have risen since the Covid-era, and remain incredibly high, while, concurrently, personal responsibility continues to diminish – everything is Council's job, Council's problem, and Council's fault.*

Many councillors highlighted the ongoing role played by social media, with some suggesting that their communities expect councillors to respond to queries in real-time, and to be always accessible. According to MAV:

> *Constituents increasingly expect councillors to be accessible and responsive in real time. Residents frequently contact councillors directly via email, phone and social media and expect prompt responses during business hours. Many residents also assume councillors perform a role equivalent to that of state or federal MPs. They assess accessibility and responsiveness through that lens.*

[130] Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2022b), pp. 38–39.

Other councillors noted that they can be the first point of contact for people in the community who are experiencing hardship or distress, and adverted to the emotional toll this can have on councillors. This may be exacerbated where cost-of-living pressures are impacting on the community, including at the present time.

Cr Connie Boglis observed that:

> *The role … carries a significant psychological and emotional component. Councillors are frequently the first point of contact for residents experiencing distress, frustration, or crisis, and are required to navigate complex, and at times adversarial, interactions in public and private settings.*

Similarly, Cr Clark Holloway said:

> *Often, particularly among the more vulnerable segments of our community, [people] are disenfranchised from the Shire organisation that should be assisting them, and don't know where to turn.... People quite often feel safer speaking with [a councillor] than with a professional staff member, because the very fact that we are elected representatives mean that we work for them.*

Councillors are now required to undertake training and regular professional development

The LG Act 2020 introduced mandatory training and professional development for all councillors elected at the 2024 council elections and thereafter.

Councillors are now required to complete induction training within four months of taking the oath or affirmation of office,[131] and must undertake regular professional development training to ensure that they understand their role and responsibilities.[132] Mayors and deputy mayors are also required to complete mayoral training within one month of their election to the role.[133]

[131] LG Act 2020, s. 32.
[132] LG Act 2020, s. 33A.
[133] LG Act 2020, s. 27A(1).

Stakeholders were generally supportive of the training, which aims to build councillors' capabilities in areas such as governance, budgeting and financial oversight. At the same time, many said that the training represented a substantial time commitment, and reduces the amount of time that councillors can dedicate to other activities (e.g. community engagement).

For example, one councillor said:

> *I have undertaken [a lot] more professional development and dedicated myself to this more. To manage workload and time, I now mostly only go to events in my ward ...*

While noting that approaches to training vary widely from council to council, VLGA estimated that the training program for the second year of the current council term could take around 32 hours to complete. Its submission noted:

> *[I]n order to do justice to the intent of the new mandated training regime, councillors must dedicate many hours to completing meaningful workshops and training sessions.... [F]rom our experience, many councils [are devoting] up to three additional days [to training], or around 2 hours per topic ... The Year 2 program, as set out in Local Government Victoria guidance, requires 16 modules ... to be completed – that is 32 hours - or nearly an additional week's work.*

The Tribunal also heard that some councillors have had to take leave from their paid employment to complete their training. According to one councillor:

> *The Councillor induction and compulsory training has required me to take in excess of 8 days leave from work as well as miss a greater amount of family time.*

Single-member wards have altered relationships between councillors and constituents, and may impact workload

As outlined in the previous chapter, starting from the 2024 council elections, all metropolitan, interface and regional city councils are required to have single-member wards.

In comparison to other electoral structures, single-member wards arguably strengthen the link between councillors and local communities, as residents know exactly who 'their' councillor is. For example, Cr Jeff Marriot said:

> *My Ward is long and comprises 5 distinct Community areas. If there was a second or third Councillor for my Ward I feel it could easily get disjointed and harder to form the relationships with the constituents.*

By the same token, the Tribunal heard that single-member wards may encourage some councillors to focus on issues relevant to their ward, potentially at the expense of other issues affecting the broader municipality. Unless managed, this could have implications for the relationships between councillors, and for the effectiveness and collegiality of the elected council.

Some stakeholders said that single-member wards can also intensify workload, although impacts do not appear to be consistent or uniform. According to VLGA, this can occur in several ways:

> *[M]embers of the community have reverted to wanting to speak to their ward councillor, and … there can be a disproportionate workload on councillors where issues are … based within a particular suburb or township.*
>
> *In rural areas, councillors with large towns can often face a disproportionate load of enquiries, calls and emails while others with a lesser population may have significant distances of over 100 kilometres to travel to get from one end of their ward to another.*

Similarly, ALGWA Victoria noted that councillors in a single-member ward 'carry sole accountability for defined geographic communities', and that this increases 'casework, advocacy demands and direct representational responsibilities'. By comparison, councillors in a multi-member ward can share the representational workload between them.

On the other hand, by their very nature, single-member ward structures tend to have more wards than multi-member ward structures. This means that single-member wards are generally smaller in both population and area than multi-member wards, which may (partially) offset any impact on workload.

Single-member wards may also reduce the need for councillors to attend functions and events across the entire municipality. This is because councillors may primarily be expected to attend functions and events in their ward.

A notable exception is the mayor, who — as their council's principal spokesperson — is expected to attend events across the municipal district. Similarly, councillors in unsubdivided councils may be required or expected to attend events and meet residents across the entire municipality. This may increase their travel burden, particularly in councils that cover a large geographical area and/or that have multiple, dispersed townships.

Councillors play an important role in emergencies and natural disasters

A number of stakeholders told the Tribunal that councillors — and mayors in particular — are increasingly playing a recognised role in times of emergency and disaster response and recovery. While not directly involved in an operational sense, members of the community may look to their local councillors for support and reassurance, or to advocate on their behalf.

As VLGA describes it:

> *In times of crisis, local councillors are the most prominent spokespeople within the community and have to carry the burden of supporting community members in significant distress, often with little training or support themselves in dealing with deep and cumulative mental health impacts.*

Emergencies attract significant media attention and external scrutiny, and as the council's principal spokesperson, the task of responding often falls to the mayor.

According to Cr Tony Marwood, there can be a perception that the council is leading the emergency response, even though formal responsibility lies with government agencies (e.g. Victorian State Emergency Service). However, Cr Marwood noted that councils play an important role in clean-up and recovery efforts following an emergency or disaster.

While these are not necessarily new developments, it was put to the Tribunal that natural disasters, particularly bushfires and floods, are increasing in frequency and severity, and have a long tail. For example, VLGA's submission noted that several regional councils that have been impacted by natural disasters in 2026, including bushfires and flash floods, are still recovering from floods that occurred in 2022.

Councillors are experiencing increasing levels of incivility and other negative behaviours

A key theme that arose during consultation is the high level of incivility, harassment and bullying that councillors are experiencing, including from other councillors, and from members of the public.

According to VLGA's *2025 Councillor Census*, more than half of female councillors, and a quarter of male councillors, had experienced bullying and non-sexual harassment from members of the public. Just under two-thirds of councillors said they had experienced threatening or intimating behaviour while performing their role, while around 40 per cent said that they had received a higher-than-expected level of hostility from other councillors and from the public.[134]

Several stakeholders told the Tribunal that levels of anger and distrust in the community have increased since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and that some of this is being directed at councillors due to their accessibility and proximity to the community.

For example, Cr Rosie Annear observed that:

> *[T]he councillor role has become more challenging over the last few years, largely due to more extreme and unreasonable behaviour from community members…. Many people are … facing additional stressors, such as the cost of living and housing crises, childcare and healthcare shortages, and the impacts of increased weather and emergency events. Widespread social media use … and [the] erosion of respectful communication, continue to exacerbate issues and polarise communities, leading to further disharmony, frustration, contempt, and anger…. There is extensive distrust of, and anger towards, all levels of Government and, as the closest tier to the communities they serve, Councils are bearing the brunt of this.*

The Tribunal's questionnaire asked councillors what factors (besides the allowance) would influence their decision to stand, or to not stand, at the next council elections. Many respondents cited incivility and the challenging work environment as key factors.

[134] VLGA (2026), pp. 9–10.

For example, one councillor said:

> *[A] significant factor is the experience of bullying and negative behaviour, both within the role and externally. This can create a challenging environment and has the potential to impact wellbeing and long-term sustainability in the role.*

4.7 Summary

Councillors are elected by the voters in their ward or municipal district to represent them, and to provide good governance.

The LG Act 2020 sets out the core duties and responsibilities of councillors, which include participating in council decision-making, representing the interests of the municipal community, and contributing to the council's strategic direction.

Each council is led by a mayor, who — other than in the case of Melbourne City Council — is a councillor elected by their fellow councillors to chair council meetings and be the council's principal spokesperson. The vast majority of councils have elected another councillor to be deputy mayor, who performs the mayor's role in the mayor's absence. Deputy mayors may also undertake other responsibilities, although this varies from council to council.

Many councillors dedicate a significant amount of their time to their role, in some cases approaching, or comparable to, a full-time commitment. However, the allowance appears to be a limiting factor on time commitment for some.

Stakeholders told the Tribunal that the role has continued to evolve since the 2022 Comprehensive Determination. Key factors and developments cited include heightened community expectations, mandatory training and professional development, the impact of single-member wards, the increased frequency and severity of natural disasters, and the high levels of incivility and negative behaviours being experienced by councillors.

5 Current local government allowances

This chapter provides an overview of the current allowance framework for councillors in Victoria, including stakeholder feedback on the current arrangements.

5.1 The statutory framework sets the parameters for councillor allowances

The statutory framework for local government allowances is established by the LG Act 2020 and provides that a councillor, deputy mayor or mayor is entitled to receive an allowance in accordance with a Tribunal determination.[135]

The LG Act 2020 also provides that councillors may elect to receive all, part or none of the allowance that they are entitled to.[136] Allowances can also be withheld from councillors if they fail to complete certain training requirements,[137] and councillors do not receive an allowance while they are stood down from their council.[138]

The allowance entitlement is separate from the reimbursement of bona fide out-of-pocket expenses and from the resources and facilities reasonably necessary for councillors to perform their role, which councils must provide under separate provisions.[139]

The VIRTIPS Act requires the Tribunal to set the value of the allowance payable to councillors, deputy mayors and mayors.[140] The VIRTIPS Act also requires that a determination provides for council allowance categories, which may be specified for a council or group of councils.[141]

[135] LG Act 2020, s. 39.
[136] LG Act 2020, s. 39(5).
[137] LG Act 2020, ss. 27B, 33, 33B.
[138] LG Act 2020, ss. 228–229.
[139] LG Act 2020, ss. 40–42.
[140] VIRTIPS Act, s. 23A(1).
[141] VIRTIPS Act, s. 23A.

5.2 The Tribunal's first determination established the current allowance framework

With effect from 18 December 2021, the Tribunal established an allowance framework for all councillors in Victoria comprising:

- a base allowance that varies by a councillor's role and the applicable council allowance category
- a remote area travel allowance (RATA) that is subject to eligibility requirements.

A description of the allowance framework in place before December 2021 is available in the Tribunal's 2022 Comprehensive Determination.[142]

All councillors receive a base allowance

The base allowance recognises, in part, the responsibilities, effort and time commitment involved in serving as a councillor. The value of the base allowance is inclusive of any superannuation to which a councillor may be entitled in respect of their role, including by virtue of their council being an 'eligible local governing body' (ELGB) under relevant Commonwealth legislation (Box 5.1).

[142] Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2022b), pp. 60–71.

Box 5.1: Superannuation arrangements for councillors

Superannuation legislation

Under section 12(9A) of the *Superannuation Guarantee (Administration) Act 1992* (Cth) (SGA Act), 'a person who holds office as an elected member of a local government council' is not an employee of that council and consequently is generally not entitled to Superannuation Guarantee (SG) contributions. The Australian Taxation Office does, however, allow councillors to re-direct all, or some, of their allowance into a complying superannuation fund, where it is not treated as the councillor's assessable income.

However, where a council has resolved to become an ELGB under the *Taxation Administration Act 1953* (Cth), section 12(10) of the SGA Act provides that a councillor is considered an employee for superannuation purposes. In practice, this means that a council must make SG contributions for councillors based on their allowance payments.

Implications for local council allowances in Victoria

Prior to the 2022 Comprehensive Determination taking effect, councillors received an 'annual allowance' and either:

- received a 'payment in lieu of superannuation', which was equivalent to applying the prevailing SG contribution rate to the annual allowance, or
- if their council was an ELGB, had an SG contribution paid by the council to their nominated fund in accordance with statutory requirements.

The Tribunal noted in 2022 that: 'As there is no requirement for it to be paid into a complying superannuation fund … the payment [in lieu of superannuation] has the effect of increasing the annual allowance paid by the equivalent of the SG contribution.' In this case, councillors had the flexibility to request that some or all of their allowance be paid into a complying superannuation fund (subject to applicable Commonwealth legislation), to make their own superannuation arrangements, or to retain the full allowance for their own use.

In 2022, the Tribunal decided to set a single base allowance for all councillors, which consolidated the annual allowance and payment in lieu of superannuation. This retained the flexibility for most councillors to make their own superannuation arrangements. As such, the base allowance could be said to include a notional superannuation component.

Where a council is an ELGB, councillors are required to have a portion of their base allowance paid into a complying superannuation fund (this amount is currently equivalent to $3/28^{ths}$ of the base allowance, based on an SG rate of 12 per cent).

Of the 62 responses to this part of the Tribunal's data request to councils, 12 advised that they are an ELGB.

Sources: Australian Taxation Office (2007); *Superannuation Guarantee (Administration) Act 1992* (Cth); *Taxation Administration Act 1953* (Cth); Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2022b), pp. 66–68; Tribunal data request to councils.

Allowances vary depending on the role of a councillor

In setting the base allowance, the Tribunal distinguished between the roles of councillor, deputy mayor and mayor.

In the 2022 Comprehensive Determination, the Tribunal examined the decision-making, governance and representation responsibilities of all councillors.[143] It found that the nature, scope and complexity of the role had recently increased, as had community expectations of councillors. It also noted that a councillor's role was commonly undertaken across evenings and weekends, but was substantively part-time in nature.

Mayors had additional leadership, governance and representation responsibilities, which were critical for the effective operation of councils.[144] The Tribunal concluded that the role generally needed to be performed on a full-time basis.

Before 2022, deputy mayors received the same allowance as councillors in all councils, except Melbourne City Council.[145] The Tribunal decided to introduce a new deputy mayoral allowance. This reflected feedback at the time about the additional responsibilities and workloads of deputy mayors, and how the role provided a valuable training and succession pathway to the role of mayor.

Allowance categories reflect differences between councils

Currently, councils are assigned to one of four allowance categories, comprising three categories covering most councils, and a separate 'capital city' category for Melbourne City Council only.[146]

The number of allowance categories was designed to balance the common requirements and duties of councillors with variations in council characteristics that the Tribunal considered relevant in differentiating the base allowance.

The methodology and formula for allocating councils (other than the Melbourne City Council) to specific allowance categories is set out in Box 5.2. The two components of the formula — total recurrent revenue and estimated resident population — are intended to reflect the size and complexity of a councillors' role and their representational workload, respectively.

[143] Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2022b), pp. 36–45, 120–121.
[144] Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2022b), p. 119.
[145] Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2022b), p. 120.
[146] Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2022b), pp. 112–115.

Box 5.2: Formula to calculate category points for each council

$$\text{Category points} = \frac{R + P}{1{,}000}$$

Where:

- ***R*** is a council's total recurrent revenue in ($'000s) for the 2020–21 financial year based on its audited financial statements
- ***P*** is the estimated resident population of a council as at 30 June 2020 based on the latest available data published by the ABS at the time of the 2022 Comprehensive Determination.

Source: Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2022b), p. 114.

The category points derived from the formula for each council were used to allocate councils to allowance categories based on the thresholds in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Current allowance categories and category points

Allowance category	Category points
Category 1	0 – 65
Category 2	66 – 280
Category 3	> 280

Source: Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2022b), p. 114.

This resulted in a broadly even distribution of councils across the three allowance categories:[147]

- Category 1 (22 councils) — predominantly smaller rural and regional councils, such as Ararat Rural City Council and Strathbogie Shire Council
- Category 2 (28 councils) — generally includes larger regional councils, such as Greater Shepparton City Council, and some smaller metropolitan councils, such as Hobsons Bay City Council
- Category 3 (28 councils) — larger regional cities (e.g. Greater Bendigo City Council), most metropolitan councils (e.g. Port Phillip City Council) and most councils on the metropolitan fringe (e.g. Wyndham City Council).

There is a separate allowance category for Melbourne City Council (Category 4), which reflects the economic and social importance of Melbourne as Victoria's capital city.[148]

[147] Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2022b), p. 115.
[148] Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2022b), pp. 112–113.

The value of the base allowance was reset in December 2021

With effect from 18 December 2021, the Tribunal set values for the base allowance payable to councillors, deputy mayors and mayors across four allowance categories.[149]

Compared to the previous equivalent allowance values, the base allowances for councillors and mayors were respectively 10 and 20 per cent higher. The new base allowance for deputy mayors was set at 50 per cent of the mayoral allowance.

Relevant considerations for the Tribunal at that time included:[150]

- the scope, complexity and workload of councillors' roles, particularly for mayors
- the high level of expectation for councillors to represent and engage with their communities
- comparisons with the remuneration arrangements for councillors in other Australian jurisdictions and other relevant roles
- relevant economic indicators, including economy-wide wage movements
- supporting a more diverse and representative councillor cohort.

These increases were phased to moderate their financial impact and provide a staged transition.[151] The increase in councillor allowances was phased over three years to December 2023, while the increase in allowances for mayors and deputy mayors was implemented over five years to December 2025.

The remote area travel allowance is provided to eligible councillors

The Tribunal retained the previous RATA as a targeted allowance that recognises the additional time commitment — principally travel time — for councillors representing geographically large or remote municipalities.

[149] Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2022b), pp. 117–123.
[150] Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2022b), p. 118.
[151] Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2022b), pp. 121–123.

Eligibility for the RATA is limited to councillors who normally reside more than 50 kilometres by the shortest practicable road distance from the location of specified council activities. These comprise:[152]

> *... ordinary, special or committee meetings of the Council, or any municipal or community functions which have been authorised by Council resolution for the Council member to attend ...*

The RATA is payable for each day on which one or more council activities are attended by a councillor.

The Tribunal reset the value of the RATA with effect from 18 December 2021 and increased the value and the annual cap by 10 per cent, which was the same as the increase to the base allowance for councillors.[153]

5.3 Annual adjustments have sought to maintain the value of the allowances

The Tribunal has since made the following annual adjustments to the value of the base allowance (including the phased increases):[154]

- 18 December 2022 — 1.5 per cent
- 1 July 2023 — 2 per cent
- 1 July 2024 — 3.5 per cent
- 1 July 2025 — 3 per cent.

Considerations for the Tribunal in making these adjustments included:

- contemporary economic data, including movements in relevant wage and price indicators
- equivalent adjustments in other Australian jurisdictions
- the adjustments made by the Tribunal for other groups, including MPs.

[152] Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2022b), clause 10.1.
[153] Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2022b), p. 123.
[154] Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2022a), p. 21; Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2023a), p. 18; Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2024), p. 8; Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2025a), p. 3.

The current values of the base allowance for councillors are in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Current base allowance values ($ p.a.)[(a)]

Role	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4
Councillor	28,110	35,049	41,992	62,988
Deputy mayor	45,807	59,152	73,159	146,320
Mayor	91,613	118,303	146,319	292,639

Note: (a) The base allowance for councillors applied from 1 July 2025, while the base allowance for deputy mayors and mayors applied from 18 December 2025.
Source: Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2025a), p. 22.

The RATA has also been adjusted in line with changes to the base allowance. From 1 July 2025, the value of the RATA is $48.90 per day for eligible councillors up to a maximum of $6,112.50 per annum — equivalent to claiming the RATA for up to 125 days each year.[155]

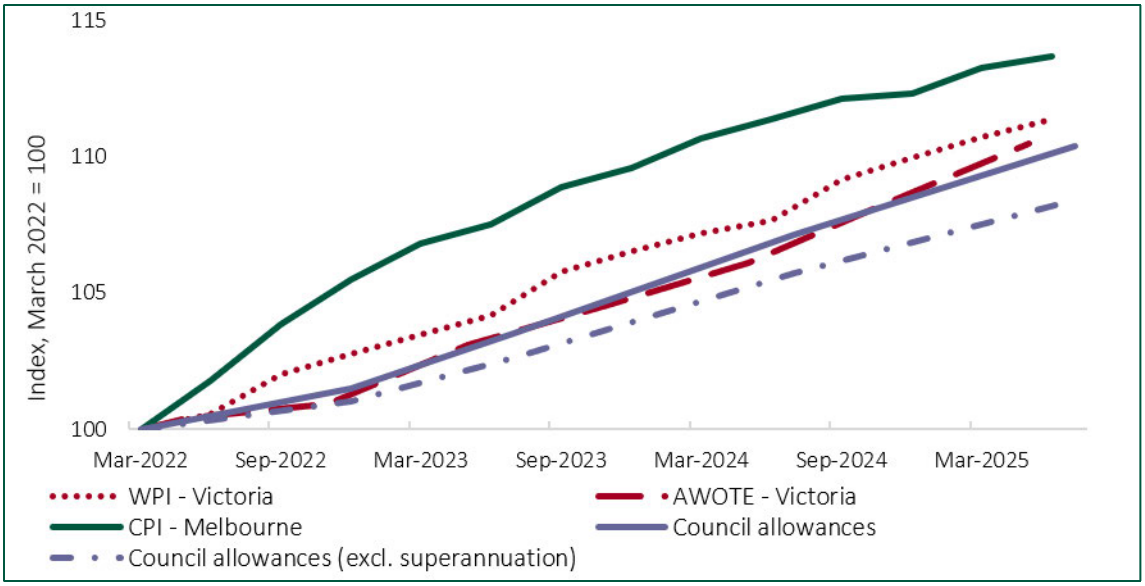
Allowance values have grown in line with wages, but below inflation

Since the 2022 Comprehensive Determination — which was made in March 2022 but backdated to 18 December 2021 — allowances for most councillors have increased broadly in line with movements in wages, but well below prices (Figure 5.1).

Where a councillor receives an employer superannuation contribution — for example, by virtue of their council being an ELGB — the increase in the 'take home' component of the base allowance has been lower due to successive increases in the SG contribution rate.[156]

[155] Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2025a), p. 3.
[156] The SG contribution rate increased from 10 per cent in 2021–22 to 12 per cent from 2025–26. Australian Taxation Office (2026a).

Figure 5.1: Council allowances compared to movements in wages and prices, March 2022 to July 2025



Notes: AWOTE (Average weekly ordinary time earnings); CPI (Consumer Price Index); WPI (Wage Price Index); 'Council allowances' reflect annual adjustments made by the Tribunal; 'Council allowances (excl. superannuation)' reflect annual adjustments made by the Tribunal less an adjustment for a notional superannuation component based on the prevailing SG contribution rate.
Sources: ABS (2026c); ABS (2026d); ABS (2026h); Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2022a), p. 21; Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2023a), p. 18; Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2024), p. 8; Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2025a), p. 3.

5.4 Stakeholders identified several issues with the existing allowance framework

Although there were different views on specific issues, there were some common themes across stakeholders on the structure and value of the base allowance and the RATA.

Most stakeholders considered that the value of the base allowance is too low

Stakeholders generally — but not exclusively — considered that the base allowance was set too low.

This was reflected in responses to the Tribunal's questionnaire which asked current councillors about the level of their current allowance — with 81 per cent (of 182 respondents) stating that they considered the allowance to be 'insufficient'.[157] This is higher than the same result from the Tribunal's 2021 questionnaire (69 per cent of 256 responses).[158]

Several submitters considered that the current allowances were not aligned with the requirements of the role, with Glen Eira City Council noting that recent reforms have:

> *... materially increased the complexity, skill requirements, time commitment and consequences of error associated with the councillor role. However, councillor allowances have not been recalibrated ... [to reflect] accountability, decision-making impact, risk exposure and professional capability.*

South Gippsland Shire Council submitted that:

> *... the existing allowance structure undervalues the work undertaken by Councillors, Mayors and Deputy Mayors. Modern local government is increasingly complex, and elected representatives are required to demonstrate significant governance capability, legislative understanding and time commitment.*

Similarly, one respondent to the councillor questionnaire stated that:

> *The allowance does not adequately reflect the level of responsibility associated with the role, including making decisions across complex areas that require careful review and understanding of detailed material.*

A common theme across many stakeholders was that allowances do not reflect the workload and time commitment associated with the role. VLGA's *2025 Victorian Councillor Census* reported that 77 per cent of respondents 'believe the time demands are not appropriate for the remuneration'.[159]

Stakeholder feedback on councillor workloads is discussed in Chapter 4, but several stakeholders also noted how this issue framed their view of the current allowance values (Box 5.3).

[157] Tribunal analysis of questionnaire responses.
[158] Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2022b), p. 149; Tribunal analysis of questionnaire responses.
[159] VLGA (2026), p. 5.

Box 5.3: Stakeholder views about time commitment and allowance values

Written submission from Cr Connie Boglis

'When considering formal meetings, preparation, external representation, travel, and ongoing constituent engagement, the role of a Councillor represents a continuous workload estimated at approximately 25–30 hours per week.'

'Based on current Victorian allowance settings, this corresponds to an approximate effective hourly rate of $27–$34 per hour. This level of remuneration does not fully reflect the governance responsibilities, statutory obligations, decision-making accountability, and community expectations associated with the role.'

Written submission – de-identified submission 15

'Unlike salaried employment, this allowance does not include superannuation or employment benefits such as leave entitlements. When considered against the realistic weekly workload … the effective hourly value of the role can approach or fall below the equivalent value of the national minimum wage once superannuation is taken into account.'

Responses to the councillor questionnaire

'I tracked my time against my allowance and I am doing the role for $8 an hour. It is just not sustainable nor fair.'

'I got into this position to help the community communicate better with council, money wasn't a driving factor. If I was to weigh time against remuneration the hourly rate would be VERY poor.'

'Working an additional 30 to 40 hours a week, the current allowance level does not reflect the quantity of time or the value of that time against my current employment salary…'

'The current allowance amount, which is also before tax, is incredibly low, particularly factoring in the hourly rate based on the real hours required to perform the role effectively.'

'[The allowance] does not account for the impact on employment and personal commitments, particularly where councillors are effectively working across evenings, weekends and outside standard hours.'

Sources: Submissions to the Tribunal; responses to the Tribunal's councillor questionnaire.

However, some considered that current allowances were more or less appropriate. Council Watch acknowledged in its submission that councillors have important governance and community representation responsibilities, but also emphasised a community service aspect to the role. In its view, councillor allowances should therefore:

> *… recognise reasonable time, responsibility and sacrifice, but … should not be designed as a salary replacement …*

Accordingly, Council Watch considered current allowances to be 'broadly appropriate' following the Tribunal's 2022 changes and later annual adjustments. They also said barriers to participation would be better addressed through targeted support, such as expense reimbursements, rather than a 'blanket' approach such as increasing allowances.

Cr Miki Wilson noted the role of councillor is 'initially voluntary' and that:

> *Remuneration is clearly pointed out throughout [the mandatory training] process. I do not believe that there is any case for elected local government representatives to — after the fact — feel that they are not adequately remunerated.*

Views differed on allowances for each role

Table 5.3 presents the relativities between the current allowances for councillors, deputy mayors and mayors using the councillor allowance as a reference point within each category.

Table 5.3: Current base allowance values — relativities between different roles

Role	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4
Councillor	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Deputy mayor	1.63	1.69	1.74	2.32
Mayor	3.26	3.38	3.48	4.65

Sources: Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2025a), p. 22; Tribunal calculations.

Some submitters commented on the overarching differences in the value of the base allowance for different roles. For example, former councillor Dale Martin observed that:

> *The current disparity between mayoral and councillor allowances creates unnecessary tension within councils.*
>
> *Large gaps in remuneration encourage competition for paid leadership roles, incentivise bloc formation, and risk shifting focus away from community service and good governance.*

The Tribunal was urged by several stakeholders — including MAV and VLGA — to review the deputy mayoral allowance against how the role has evolved since 2022 and the practical arrangements across councils. The most common view put to the Tribunal was that the deputy mayoral allowance should be more closely aligned with that for a councillor. But, reflecting the discussion in Chapter 4, the Tribunal also heard that in some councils the deputy mayor performs additional responsibilities and has a higher workload, and should be remunerated accordingly.

There were few substantive comments on the mayoral allowance. Most stakeholders who expressed a view agreed that the mayor was a significant and often full-time role and should be remunerated as such.

For example, Cr Rosie Annear stated:

> *In my experience, the Mayoral role requires a lot more time, energy, and personal sacrifice than those of Deputy Mayor or Councillor – and deserves to be remunerated at a higher rate.*

While some stakeholders considered that the current mayoral allowances were appropriate, others observed that they were too low. One councillor observed:

> *The mayor's allowance in particular is insufficient enough that it would prevent me from taking on the role even though I think I'd be well-suited and my colleagues have encouraged me to do it.*

Councillors responding to the Tribunal's questionnaire were also asked to compare the current relativities between the allowances for different roles (Table 5.4).

Table 5.4: Councillor questionnaire — responses to 'For your council is the current difference in value between the …' (per cent)

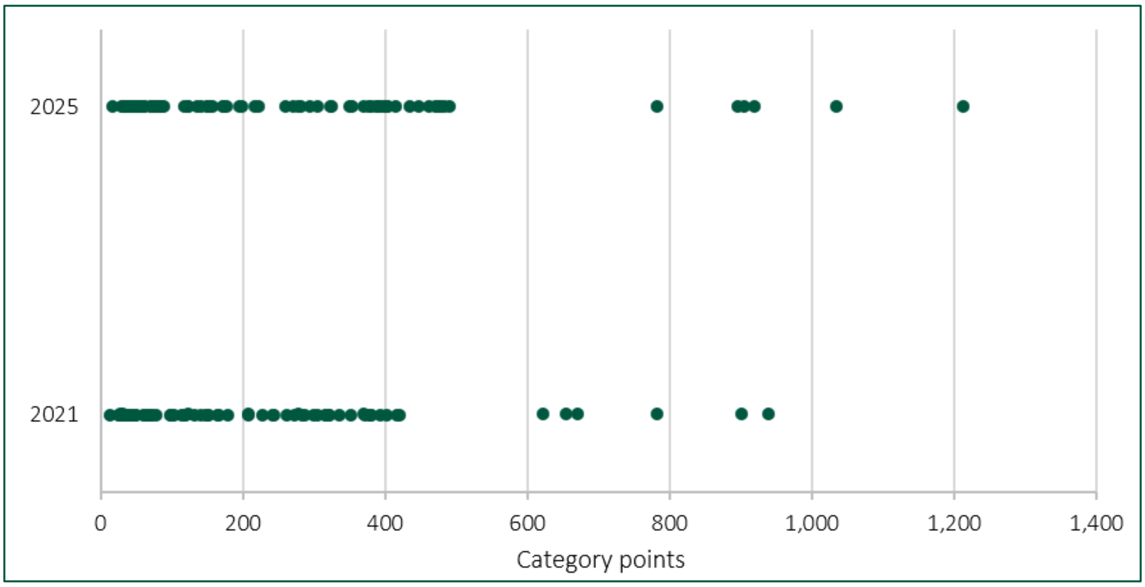
	Too small	About right	Too large	Not sure
… deputy mayoral allowance and councillor allowance	10.9	47.0	36.6	5.5
… mayoral allowance and councillor allowance	6.6	32.2	54.6	6.6

Note: Based on a total of 183 responses.
Source: Tribunal analysis of questionnaire responses.

Views on allowance categories were also mixed

To inform its deliberations, the Tribunal re-calculated the points used to allocate councils to specific allowance categories using the latest available data for recurrent revenue and estimated resident population. Figure 5.2 compares these results with those from the 2022 Comprehensive Determination, with the main difference being greater stratification of the scores for some larger councils.

Figure 5.2: Category points scores for councils, 2021 and 2025



Sources: Tribunal analysis of ABS (2026f) and data provided to the Tribunal by LGV, March 2026.

Several stakeholders suggested changing the number of allowance categories, with concomitant changes to allowance values.

One view was that different allowance categories do not reflect the common elements of a councillor's role across all councils and therefore undervalue councillors in regional areas. South Gippsland Shire Council emphasised this point and proposed combining categories 1 to 3 so that all councillors (other than those in the Melbourne City Council) receive the same allowance.

However, these common aspects of the role can present in different ways — for example, in community engagement. Regional councillors said they are more visible in their communities and are often approached in public. Councillors from larger councils highlighted the size and diversity of the communities they represent.

Several parties advised the Tribunal that councillors in high growth areas face particular challenges, which should be reflected in the creation of a new allowance category. One councillor, for example, proposed that:

> *There should be a category, or at least a clearer weighting, that acknowledges the distinct size and complexity of growth area councils. These councils are often managing significant change, high community expectations and substantial strategic challenges that are not always comparable to councils of a similar population or revenue base but with more stable growth patterns.*

Few stakeholders specifically commented on the separate allowance category for Melbourne City Council, with the general view being that a 'capital city' category was appropriate.

The Tribunal heard that population and revenue were relevant for placing councils in allowance categories. Some stakeholders thought these criteria were sufficient, but many supported adding other factors (Box 5.4).

Box 5.4: Stakeholder views about the criteria for allowance categories

Written submission from Council Watch

'Population and revenue are not complete measures of workload, but they are transparent and administratively workable. They are preferable to subjective claims about difficulty, pressure or profile.'

Written submission from MAV

'The existing framework based on population and revenue provides a clear and transparent methodology for determining council categories. Population size and financial scale are important indicators of organisational complexity and governance responsibility. However, these measures do not capture all aspects of council complexity. Factors such as geographic size, growth pressures and service complexity may also influence governance workload.'

Written submission — de-identified submission 13

'Population and revenue are necessary but insufficient proxies. They do not capture regional scale and dispersion, travel time, emergency management incidence, or staffing depth/policy support—all major drivers of councillor workload and time cost in rural/regional settings.'

Responses to the councillor questionnaire

'While population and total recurrent revenue provide some indication of council scale, they do not adequately reflect the practical demands placed on councillors, particularly in large rural municipalities. Geographic size, travel distances, number of communities serviced, and the complexity of local issues can significantly affect the workload of councillors but are not captured in the current categorisation method ... Despite these demands, such councils are often placed in the lowest category simply because of population size and revenue.'

'Population and total recurrent revenue are important measures, but they do not on their own reflect the intensity of demand that comes with rapid population growth, major infrastructure backlogs, increasing service expectations and the complexity of planning for expanding communities.'

'The current method of categorising councils based primarily on population and total recurrent revenue does not fully capture the complexity of the councillor role or the demands placed on councils. While these are relevant indicators, they do not reflect factors such as community expectations, the level of engagement required, the complexity of issues being dealt with, or the workload associated with governance and decision-making.'

Sources: Submissions to the Tribunal; responses to the Tribunal's councillor questionnaire.

Remote area travel allowance

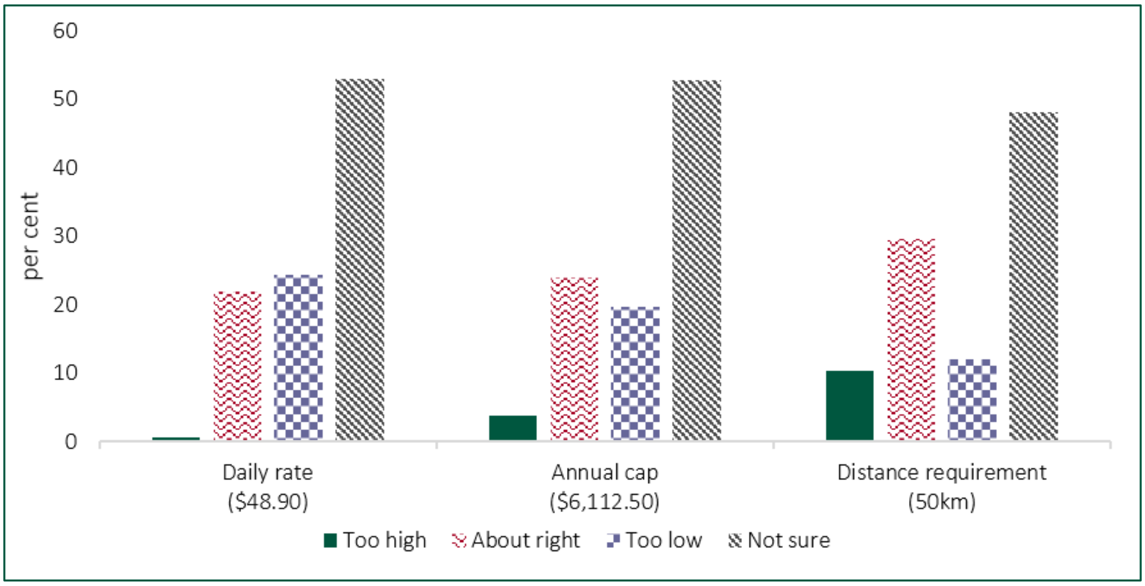
Travel-related issues were also raised with the Tribunal. Feedback on the RATA is discussed below, while the reimbursement of travel-related expenses is discussed in Chapter 10.

It appears that a limited number of councillors currently make use of this allowance. Just 30 of the 180 councillors who responded to the Tribunal's questionnaire on this issue reported that they had claimed the RATA in the 2025 calendar year.

Data provided to the Tribunal by councils also suggests that a relatively small number of councillors claim the RATA, and that the annual cap is not preventing claims.[160] Of the 62 councils that responded to this part of the Tribunal's data request, 15 provided anonymised data on RATA payments to councillors. In 2025, 44 councillors from these councils claimed the RATA. Of these, 27 claimed it on 10 occasions or fewer, while one councillor claimed the RATA on 78 occasions — well below the implied cap of 125. The average number of occasions claimed for was 15.8.

Councillors were asked for their views on the key elements of the RATA (Figure 5.3). Of those expressing a view, there was a broadly even split between those who thought that the daily rate and the annual cap were 'about right' and those who thought they were 'too low'. Most respondents, however, considered that the requirement to live at least 50 kilometres from the location of specified council activities was appropriate.

Figure 5.3: Councillor questionnaire — responses to 'What is your view on the following aspects of the RATA?'



Note: Based on a total of 166 responses.
Source: Tribunal analysis of questionnaire responses.

Specific issues were raised with the Tribunal regarding aspects of the RATA, including that:

- a fixed daily allowance rate does not account for significant variation in the travel time for some councillors

[160] Tribunal data request to councils.

- there is limited guidance on what constitutes an ‘official council function’, which can lead to inconsistent (and inequitable) approaches across councils
- eligibility requirements should be clarified to, for example, enable to the RATA to be claimed where travel is required on more than one day for the same council function.

The latter two issues may depress the number of claims for the RATA. Similarly, the Tribunal also heard that eligible councillors may choose not to claim the RATA for personal reasons or because of adverse community perceptions.

5.5 Summary

The current allowance framework for councillors, deputy mayors and mayors was set by the Tribunal in 2022.

At that time, the Tribunal decided to set a new base allowance (which replaced the previous annual allowance and payment in lieu of superannuation) with a phased uplift to the allowance for each role. The RATA was retained and its value reset. Since then, annual adjustments have sought to maintain allowance values.

Stakeholder consultation has raised various issues for the Tribunal’s consideration, including with the structure, value and eligibility for the base allowance and the RATA.

6 Interjurisdictional comparators

As required under the VIRTIPS Act,[161] the Tribunal considered similar allowances in other states and the Northern Territory.[162] The Australian Capital Territory does not have a separate system of local government.

This chapter compares the approaches to councillor allowances in Australian jurisdictions based on common themes. Some stakeholders have suggested the Tribunal consider specific aspects from other jurisdictions, particularly the allowance values paid to councillors in Queensland, and the criteria used to categorise councils in both Tasmania and New South Wales.

This chapter includes information about the current allowances in Victoria — prior to making this Determination — for ease of comparison.

However, the Tribunal is mindful that comparing the values of allowances and category structures across jurisdictions must be done cautiously, as the functions of councils and officeholders, and characteristics of municipal districts (or LGAs), can vary substantially.[163]

This chapter reflects that no jurisdiction is a clear comparator across all thematic areas as there are varying approaches to, for example, allowance structures, council category structures, and capital cities.

Table 6.1 provides a summary overview for all jurisdictions related to the thematic areas drawn on in this chapter.

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[161] VIRTIPS Act, s. 23A(7)(a).

[162] The term 'allowance' is not used consistently across jurisdictions. In this chapter, the Tribunal uses the term 'allowance' in its broadest sense to cover remuneration arrangements for all jurisdictions, except where a jurisdiction provides 'meeting fees' rather than annual remuneration.

[163] In this chapter, the term 'LGA' is used to describe the area administered by a council, as this is the convention in other Australian jurisdictions. In Victoria, the area administered by a council is referred to as a municipal district in the LG Act 2020.

Table 6.1: Overview of local government arrangements across jurisdictions[(a)]

Jurisdiction	Number of councils	Officeholder roles that receive allowances	Number of categories	Additional allowance types
Vic	79	Mayor Deputy mayor Councillor	4[(b)]	Y
NSW[(c)]	128	Mayor Deputy mayor/councillor	13[(d)]	N
NT	17	Principal members Deputy principal members Ordinary council members	3	Y
Qld	76	Mayor Deputy mayor Councillor	13	N
SA	67	Principal member Deputy mayor/deputy chairperson/presiding member of a prescribed committee Presiding member of a committee Councillor	6	Y
Tas	29	Mayor Deputy mayor Councillor	7	N
WA	137	Mayor Deputy Mayor Councillor	4	Y

Notes: (a) Information in this table is inclusive of capital cities, except for Queensland and South Australia due to specific arrangements which are discussed in section 6.4. (b) Category 4 is exclusive to Melbourne City Council. (c) This excludes the eight 'Water' and 'Other' councils. (d) Principal CBD is exclusive to the City of Sydney.

6.1 Similarities and differences in councillor roles

There are common underlying statutory functions of councillors but practical differences in the scale and scope of council activity.[164]

[164] *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW), ss. 226, 231–232; LG Act 2020, ss. 18, 20A, 21, 28; *Local Government Act 2009* (Qld), ss. 12, 175; *Local Government Act 1999* (SA), ss. 58–59; *Local Government Act 1995* (WA), ss. 2.8–2.10; *Local Government Act 1993* (Tas), ss. 27–28; *Local Government Act 2019* (NT), ss. 44, 59.

Council functions and services

While the statutory roles and responsibilities do not differ considerably, councils across jurisdictions tend in practice to have varying functions and services. Councils generally obtain their authority from state and territory legislation, which define the extent of their powers and assign responsibilities considered to be best managed efficiently and effectively at the local level. Councils' responsibilities have grown beyond roads and waste collection across Australia, and can include:[165]

- health, aged care, childcare, and mental health services
- planning and development, including for housing and other land uses
- delivery of complex infrastructure and asset management
- environmental and other regulatory activities
- climate adaptation
- emergency management.

In some jurisdictions, councils provide services that, in Victoria, are the responsibility of the state government. For example, Brisbane City Council operates various public transport services, such as buses and ferries, and is also responsible for the development, expansion and delivery of the Brisbane Metro.[166] By contrast, public transport in the City of Melbourne is administered by the Victorian Department of Transport and Planning.

In another example, certain councils in New South Wales and Queensland are responsible for water and sewerage functions.[167] The provision of potable water, sewerage and trade water services is generally undertaken by state-owned water corporations in Victoria, but councils can be responsible for specific activities, such as local stormwater management.

Roles and responsibilities of councillors

The statutory roles and responsibilities of councillors, deputy mayors and mayors (or equivalents) are broadly similar across jurisdictions.

[165] Parliament of Australia (2025), p. iii.
[166] Productivity Commission (2017), p. 5.
[167] Productivity Commission (2017), p. 5.

In general, councillors represent and act in the interests of the community, contributing to the strategic direction of the council. They are part of the governing body and participate in decision-making and strategic planning for their council. In doing so, they are responsible for engaging with their community and representing the council's policies and decisions.

In Queensland, for example, section 4 of the *Local Government Act 2009* (Qld) states that councillors are required to perform their role in accordance with the local government principles. These include 'democratic representation, social inclusion and meaningful community engagement' and 'good governance of, and by, local government'.[168]

Victorian councillors represent a 'municipal community', which is broadly defined as people who live in the municipal district, ratepayers of the council, traditional owners of land in the municipal district, and people and bodies who conduct activities in the municipal district.[169] Others do not specify the groups in the definition of representation, such as New South Wales where councillors are required to 'represent the collective interests of residents, ratepayers and the local community'.[170]

Characteristics of Local Government Areas

There is significant diversity in LGAs across jurisdictions — such as differences in roads and infrastructure, and physical, social and cultural environments — which can pose varying and unique challenges for the role of councils and councillors.[171]

In particular, there is significant variation in the geographic size and population of LGAs across jurisdictions, presented in Table 6.2.

[168] *Local Government Act 2009* (Qld), s. 4.
[169] LG Act 2020, s. 3(1).
[170] *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW), s. 232(d).
[171] Parliament of Australia (2025), p. 1.

Table 6.2: Estimated regional population and geographical area, Australian LGAs

Jurisdiction	Population range (est)	LGAs' average population	Area range (km^2)	LGAs' average area (km^2)
Vic	3,317–414,929	89,531	9–22,082	2,844
NSW	1,396–449,385	67,121	6–53,492	5,528
NT	167–90,035	13,492	1–322,710	67,407
Qld[(a)]	265–1,375,301	73,577	12–105,718	22,470
SA[(b)]	884–184,827	27,896	4–8,833	2,304
Tas	924–71,341	19,871	78–9,584	2,345
WA	111–254,821	21,920	1–372,296	18,309

Notes: (a) Excludes the Weipa Town Authority which administers the town of Weipa on behalf of Rio Tinto. (b) Excludes Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara and Maralinga Tjarutja. These are not listed as councils.
Sources: ABS (2026b); ABS (2026g); South Australian Government (n.d.).

6.2 Officeholders and allowances

The structure of allowances for specific officeholders also differs across jurisdictions.

Allowances are determined for certain officeholders

Most jurisdictions recognise three types of officeholder roles for the purpose of setting allowances — councillor, deputy mayor and mayor (or equivalents).

South Australia sets allowances for a larger number of roles, including members of committees.[172] New South Wales only has two allowance types for the three officeholder roles — one for councillors/deputy mayors and one for mayors.[173]

In setting the allowances for officeholder roles, Queensland and Victoria are the only jurisdictions that individually and separately determine an allowance for each.[174]

New South Wales, Tasmania and Northern Territory each set a base allowance for a councillor, and an additional allowance for mayors and/or deputy mayors.[175]

South Australia determines the allowances for other roles based on the allowance for a councillor. The deputy mayor receives 1.25 times the councillor allowance, and the mayor receives four times the councillor allowance.[176]

172 Remuneration Tribunal (SA) (2014), pp. 4–5; Remuneration Tribunal (SA) (2022b), p. 2.
173 *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW), s. 241.
174 Local Government Regulation 2012 (Qld), s. 247.
175 *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW), s. 249; *Local Government Act 1993* (Tas), s. 340A; Northern Territory of Australia Remuneration Tribunal (2025), pp. 4–5.
176 Remuneration Tribunal (SA) (2022b), p. 2.

Allowances are determined as fixed or a range

In most jurisdictions — including Victoria — a tribunal or similar central authority determines fixed allowance values for officeholder roles.[177] New South Wales and Western Australia differ in that councils determine allowances within a defined range.[178] While the Northern Territory determines fixed values for the council categories, it can also choose to set bespoke allowance values for individual councils.[179]

All jurisdictions, except Western Australia, determine annual allowances. Western Australia, rather than applying an annual allowance, provides elected councillors with fees for attending council and committee meetings.[180] The fees received by different officeholders vary based on the type of meetings they attend. However, councils may resolve to provide an annual allowance in lieu of meeting fees.[181] Councils may also resolve to provide the deputy mayor and/or mayor with an additional fee on top of those provided for attending meetings.[182]

Some jurisdictions provide other types of allowances

Councillors in some jurisdictions may receive other allowances in addition to the allowance received for their officeholder role. There is significant variation in the availability, eligibility and value of such allowances between jurisdictions.

South Australia provides a travel time allowance to all councillors representing non-metropolitan councils except mayors, which is similar to the RATA in Victoria. The value of allowances depend on the distance between councillors' usual places of residence and councils' principal office by the most direct road route. This allowance is in addition to any travel reimbursements payable to a councillor.[183]

Some jurisdicitions provide allowances for matters that in Victoria are covered by council expense policies, or are provided to councillors in-kind. Box 6.1 summarises applicable allowances in the Northern Territory as an example.

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[177] VIRTIPS Act, s. 23A(1); *Assembly Members and Statutory Officers (Remuneration and Other Entitlements) Act 2006* (NT), s. 7B; Local Government Regulation 2012 (Qld), s. 244; *Local Government Act 1993* (Tas), s. 340A; Local Government (General) Regulations 2025 (Tas), Sch. 4; *Local Government Act 1999* (SA), s. 76(1).

[178] *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW), s. 241; *Salaries and Allowances Act 1975* (WA), s. 7B; *Local Government Act 1995* (WA), s. 5.98(1)(b).

[179] *Assembly Members and Statutory Officers (Remuneration and Other Entitlements) Act 2006* (NT), s. 7B.

[180] *Salaries and Allowances Act 1975* (WA), s. 7B.

[181] *Local Government Act 1995* (WA), s. 5.99.

[182] *Local Government Act 1995* (WA), s. 5.98(A).

[183] Remuneration Tribunal (SA) (2022c), p. 12.

Box 6.1: Northern Territory allowance types

Additional allowances are determined in the Northern Territory, which vary by fixed or maximum values and by eligibility. Relevant other allowances are:

- extra meeting/activity allowance (maximum of $10,000 per year for all)
- professional development allowance ($5,000 per year for all)
- vehicle allowance (maximum of $10,000 per year, with additional criteria)
- provision of a motor vehicle or a motor vehicle allowance (differing values for principal members (mayors) of municipal and regional councils)
- travel allowance (for all, values vary).

Source: Northern Territory of Australia Remuneration Tribunal (2025).

6.3 Structure and characteristics of allowance categories

Each jurisdiction allocates councils into categories (or equivalent) for the purpose of setting allowances for officeholders. This approach is intended to balance the common roles and responsibilities of councillors while recognising differences in the scale, scope and complexity of council activities.

Criteria for determining council categories vary across jurisdictions

Most jurisdictions have criteria listed in legislation for categorising councils. Victoria and Western Australia differ in that the criteria are defined by respective tribunals.

Victoria and Tasmania, each with two criteria, have the fewest to consider, while New South Wales and South Australia have the most with eight and six respectively (including 'other considerations').[184]

Table 6.3 lists common criteria across jurisdictions.[185] Victoria and Tasmania currently use a formula to categorise councils, while other jurisdictions use a mix of quantitative and qualitative metrics for making decisions.

[184] Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2022b), pp. 113–114; Tasmanian Industrial Commission (2018), pp. 6–7; *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW), s. 240; *Local Government Act 1999* (SA), s. 76(3).

[185] Northern Territory is excluded from Table 6.3 as there are no listed criteria for how council categories are determined. *Local Government Act 2019* (NT), s. 14; *Assembly Members and Statutory Officers (Remuneration and Other Entitlements) Act 2006* (NT), s. 7B.

Table 6.3: Common criteria considered when categorising councils

Criteria	Vic	NSW[(a)]	Qld	Tas[(b)]	SA[(c)]	WA
Population	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Revenue	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Size of LGA		✓	✓		✓	
Physical terrain of LGA		✓	✓			
Ratio of members to ratepayers		✓			✓	
Other matters		✓	✓		✓	

Notes: (a) Total operating revenue and ratio of members to ratepayers are not included in the criteria listed in the relevant legislation for New South Wales. However, they were listed as considerations under specific categories in the New South Wales 2026 Annual Determination. (b) Tasmania completed a review of councillor allowances in March 2026. At the time of making this Determination, legislation to implement proposed changes to allowances, including a new methodology and criteria for setting allowance categories, is before the Tasmanian Parliament. It is expected that the new framework will be in place for the upcoming October 2026 elections. See Box 6.3 for further details.
(c) Legislation defines criteria the Remuneration Tribunal (SA) must consider when making a determination but does not specifically reference criteria for categorising councils.
Sources: Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2022b), pp. 113–114; *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW), s. 240; Local Government Remuneration Tribunal (NSW) (2026); Local Government Regulation 2012 (Qld), s. 242; Tasmanian Industrial Commission (2018), pp. 6–7; *Local Government Act 1999* (SA), s. 76(3); Salaries and Allowances Tribunal (WA) (2012), para. 33.

Population and revenue are common criteria across most jurisdictions. Most jurisdictions use total revenue or operating revenue, barring Western Australia which considers total expenditure.[186] The specific aspects of population considered differ across jurisdictions as well. For example:

- New South Wales considers the total population of areas and its distribution
- Queensland considers demographics, population density, and the extent of services the council provides
- Tasmania currently uses a formula which includes the voting population (see section 6.4 for more information about the latest review).

[186] Salaries and Allowances Tribunal (WA) (2012), para. 33.

‘Other matters’ is a criterion used in some jurisdictions and provides flexibility for decision-makers to consider other factors they see as relevant in determinations, such as to support efficient, effective, or sustainable local government (New South Wales and Queensland). South Australia refers to ‘any relevant economic, social, demographic and regional factors in the council area’.[187]

Other less common criteria across jurisdictions, not included in Table 6.3 above, include the:[188]

- nature and extent of development and growth of areas (New South Wales and Western Australia)
- diversity of communities served (New South Wales)
- business dealt with by council, such as the nature and volume of business and the diveristy of services delivered (New South Wales and Western Australia)
- role of councillors, including as members of the governing body and as respresentatives to the community (South Australia).

Jurisdictions have different approaches to the number of categories

The criteria discussed in the previous section are used by jurisdictions to allocate councils to the various categories. The category to which a council is assigned determines the allowances councillors may receive. The number of council categories to which councils may be assigned varies across jurisdictions.[189]

However, the relevant body in a jurisdiction may have the power to change the number of categories. Box 6.2 outlines an example of new categories being created in New South Wales.

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[187] *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW), s. 240; Local Government Regulation 2012 (Qld), s. 242; *Local Government Act 1999* (SA), s. 76(3).

[188] *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW), s. 240; Salaries and Allowances Tribunal (WA) (2012), para. 33; *Local Government Act 1999* (SA), s. 76(3).

[189] The term ‘category’ is used to cover similar terminology used by different jurisdictions. The Tribunal notes that the term is not consistently used across all jurisdictions. For example, the term ‘groups’ is used in South Australia.

Box 6.2: Creating new categories — New South Wales

The Local Government Remuneration Tribunal of New South Wales must determine the categories for councillor and mayoral fees at least once every 3 years. The 2023 review created two new categories – **'Rural Large'** and **'Metropolitan Major'**, which brought the number of categories to thirteen.

The review discussed how the previous 'Rural' category did not differentiate enough between rural councils in terms of population, size and terrain. A particular issue was that councillors in a number of larger 'Rural' councils were required to travel and service significant distances compared to others in the same category. The new **'Rural Large'** category was created for rural councils with a population greater than 10,000, and a councillor to resident ratio of 1 to 1,200.

In comparing population and operating revenue data for 'Metropolitan Large' councils and the one 'Major CBD' council, the Local Government Remuneration Tribunal identified a large difference in the data for these two categories. The creation of **'Metropolitan Major'** was intended to bridge this gap, with a different population threshold of 400,000 (including non-residents).

Source: Local Government Remuneration Tribunal (NSW) (2023), pp. 10–11.

With only four current categories (including one exclusive to Melbourne City Council), Victoria has a comparatively small number of categories. With thirteen each, New South Wales and Queensland (plus Brisbane City Council) have considerably more categories than other jurisdictions. South Australia, with five (plus Adelaide City Council), sits in the middle of the jurisdictions.[190]

6.4 Current councillor allowances

Table 6.4 summarises the values of allowances in councils across jurisdictions, and Table 6.5 summarises the values for the capital cities.

[190] Local Government Remuneration Tribunal (NSW) (2025), pp. 29–32; Northern Territory of Australia Remuneration Tribunal (2025), pp. 4–5; *Assembly Members and Statutory Officers (Remuneration and Other Entitlements) Act 2006* (NT), s. 7B; Local Government Remuneration Commission (Qld) (2025), p. 4; Local Government (General) Regulations 2025 (Tas), Sch. 4; Remuneration Tribunal (SA) (2022b), p. 4; Remuneration Tribunal (SA) (2022c), pp. 7–8; Salaries and Allowances Tribunal (WA) (2012), para. 39; Salaries and Allowances Tribunal (WA) (2026), Sch. 1.

Table 6.4: Interjurisdictional comparison of councillor allowances, non-capital city councils, July 2026

Jurisdiction (excl. capital cities)	Category	Values of allowances ($ p.a.) Councillors	Deputy mayor	Mayor
Vic[(a)]	Lowest	28,110	45,807	91,613
	Highest	41,992	73,159	146,319
NSW[(b)]	Lowest	10,920–21,900	N/A	22,540–68,400
	Highest	14,450–40,550	N/A	45,960–171,540
NT[(c)]	Lowest	Up to 19,686	Up to 19,686	Up to 32,686
	Highest	Up to 38,352	Up to 55,552	124,032
Qld	Lowest	64,253	74,139	128,509
	Highest	176,371	208,148	295,542
SA[(d)(e)]	Lowest	8,049	10,061	21,196
	Highest	28,916	36,145	115,664
Tas[(f)(g)]	Lowest	11,893	24,384	41,625
	Highest	46,347	76,279	162,216
WA[(h)(i)]	Lowest	4,161–28,525	4,310–43,379	4,757–87,939
	Highest	11,023–36,722	16,837–62,730	45,903–159,110

Notes: (a) Values inclusive of any superannuation contributions to which a councillor may be entitled. (b) Mayors receive the councillor allowance plus an additional allowance as mayor. The values in the relevant column are the sum of the councillor and additional allowance. (c) Values include a base allowance, additional allowance for deputy mayors and mayors, and the maximum extra meeting allowance. (d) Figures are councillor allowances only. Members in non-metropolitan councils are also provided with a travel time allowance, and a sitting fee is provided to a councillor (other than the deputy mayor, deputy lord mayor or a presiding member of a prescribed committee) who is the presiding member of a committee, that is not a prescribed committee. (e) These values were provided by the South Australian Remuneration Tribunal. (f) Deputy mayors and mayors receive the councillor allowance plus an additional fee. The values in the respective columns are the sum of the councillor allowance and additional fee. (g) Hobart City Council (capital city) does not have a separate category. (h) Councils may elect to pay councillors a fee in respect of every meeting they attend, or provide an annual allowance in lieu of meeting fees. Values are calculated based on a council opting for an annual allowance. (i) Deputy mayors and mayors are also entitled to an additional allowance on top of their attendance fee (whether paid annually or per meeting). The values in the respective columns are the sums of the annual allowance and additional allowance. The additional allowance for deputy mayors is calculated as 25 per cent of that for the mayor.

Sources: Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2025a), p. 15; Local Government Remuneration Tribunal (NSW) (2026), pp. 73–75; Northern Territory of Australia Remuneration Tribunal (2025), pp. 4–5; Local Government Remuneration Commission (Qld) (2025), pp. 12–14; Local Government (General) Regulations 2025 (Tas), Sch. 4; Salaries and Allowances Tribunal (WA) (2026), pp. 27, 29.

Allowances for councillors in Queensland are substantially higher than those paid in other jurisdictions. Councillors in Queensland may have a broader role in setting strategic direction and policies of local government, and are responsible for managing significant infrastructure and community services, such as (some) public transport, stormwater, sewerage, and, for some, water supply systems.

In its inaugural report in 2007, the Queensland Local Government Remuneration Tribunal noted that the role of a councillor in Queensland is broader than the statutory definition. The Tribunal considered that while the role is not defined in legislation as part-time or full-time, and that legislative duties alone may not make the role full-time, the associated preparation, research, and governance responsibilities mean that a councillor's role is close to full-time. Mayors also have additional statutory responsibilities to those of councillors. The Tribunal set allowances to reflect its view about the time commitment and expectations for councillors and mayors, and differences across councils, as well as other factors including attracting councillors with relevant skills and financial impacts on councils.[191]

The view on the role and time required has not been as explicit in other jurisdictions compared to Queensland, including in Victoria.

Some jurisdictions approach capital cities separate to other councils

Some jurisdictions have reserved an allowance category specifically for the capital city council, while others share a category with other LGAs.

Queensland and South Australia adopt a different approach to setting allowances for capital cities. Allowances for Brisbane City Council are set by a separate body, and under a different legislative scheme, to that which applies to other Queensland councils. The *City of Brisbane Act 2010* (Qld) states that '[c]ompared to other local governments in Queensland, [Brisbane City Council] is unique in its nature and the extent of its responsibilities and powers'.[192] In South Australia, a separate determination is made for Adelaide City Council 'to recognise, promote and enhance the special social, commercial, cultural and civic role' of the capital city.[193]

[191] Local Government Remuneration Tribunal (Qld) (2007), pp. 9, 32.
[192] *City of Brisbane Act 2010* (Qld), s. 3.
[193] *City of Adelaide Act 1998* (SA), s. 3; Remuneration Tribunal (SA) (2022a), p. 1.

Table 6.5: Interjurisdictional comparison of councillor allowances, capital cities, July 2026

Jurisdiction capital city council	Values of allowances ($ p.a.) Councillors	Deputy mayor	Mayor
Vic[(a)]	62,988	146,320	292,639
NSW[(b)]	32,810–48,140	N/A	233,630–312,380
NT[(c)]	Up to 46,037	Up to 69,837	Up to 168,325
Qld	181,989	236,586	300,282
SA[(d)]	32,110	48,165	219,180
Tas[(e)(f)]	46,347	76,279	162,216
WA[(g)(h)(i)]	28,525–36,722	45,914–75,527	98,079–210,298

Notes: (a) Values inclusive of any superannuation contributions to which a councillor may be entitled. (b) Mayors receive the councillor allowance plus an additional allowance as mayor. The values in the relevant column are the sum of the councillor and additional allowances. (c) Values include a base allowance, additional allowance for deputy mayors and mayors, and the maximum extra meeting allowance. (d) These values were provided by the South Australian Remuneration Tribunal. (e) Deputy mayors and mayors receive the councillor allowance plus an additional fee. The values in the respective columns are the sum of the councillor allowance and additional fee. (f) Hobart City Council (capital city) does not have a separate category. (g) Councils may elect to pay councillors a fee in respect of every meeting they attend, or provide an annual allowance in lieu of meeting fees. Values are calculated based on a council opting for an annual allowance. (h) Deputy mayors and mayors are also entitled to an additional allowance on top of their attendance fee (whether paid annually or per meeting). The values in the respective columns are the sums of the annual allowance and additional allowance. The additional allowance for deputy mayors is calculated as 25 per cent of that for the mayor. (i) Perth City Council (capital city) does not have a separate category, but the mayor receives a different entitlement range for the additional allowance.
Sources: Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2025a), p. 15; Local Government Remuneration Tribunal (NSW) (2026), p. 73; Northern Territory of Australia Remuneration Tribunal (2025), pp. 4–5; Brisbane City Council (2025), p. 53; Independent Councillor Remuneration Tribunal (Qld) (2022), p. 22; Local Government (General) Regulations 2025 (Tas), Sch. 4; Salaries and Allowances Tribunal (WA) (2026), p. 27.

Allowances in Brisbane and Adelaide diverge from the rest of their jurisdiction by the allowances that are provided and how they are determined. There are more officeholder roles that receive distinct allowances in both Brisbane City Council and Adelaide City Council relative to other councils in the jurisdiction. For example, there are six officeholder roles for Brisbane City Council compared with three for the rest of Queensland — the leader of the opposition, chair of council and civic cabinet chairs are additional offices. Further, the allowances for most of the officeholder roles are set as a percentage of the councillor allowances.

Victoria and New South Wales have a reserved category for their capital cities within the general category structure. While there are no set relativities between the categories or officeholder roles, both jurisdictions' capital cities have considerably higher allowances compared to the next closest category.

For example, a councillor in Sydney City Council ('Principal CBD') can receive between $32,810–$48,140, while a councillor in the next category ('Major CBD') can receive between $21,900–$40,550.

Councillor allowances are reviewed periodically

Jursidictions have different processes and requirements for adjusting councillor allowances and determining categorisation of councils. Most have periodic comprehensive reviews that take a broad approach to considering appropriateness and changes to, for example, category structures and criteria. In years when there is not a comprehensive review, most jurisdictions have some form of annual adjustment process that adjust allowances.

Some jurisdictions have set annual allowance adjustments in legislation, while others may consider a range of factors in a review process. For example, South Australia indexes the value of its allowances annually, in between comprehensive reviews, based on changes in the CPI (all group index for Adelaide),[194] and Tasmania indexes the value of its allowances annually in line with the Wage Price Index (WPI) (rounded).[195]

Current comprehensive reviews

New South Wales has completed a review adjusting the minimum and maximum of the ranges applicable to each category by 3.7 per cent. A review of the structure and criteria of allowance categories will be completed in 2027.[196]

South Australia is undertaking a full review of the councillor allowances and category structures, to be completed in August 2026.

Tasmania has recently completed a review of the councillor allowance categories and values. The final report with recommendations was published in March 2026 and is pending approval by the Tasmanian Parliament. Box 6.3 summarises the approach and proposals of the review.

[194] *Local Government Act 1999* (SA), s. 76(9).
[195] Local Government (General) Regulations 2025 (Tas), s. 49(1).
[196] Local Government Remuneration Tribunal (NSW) (2026), pp. 6, 9–10.

Box 6.3: Tasmania review of councillor allowance categories, criteria and values

The Tasmanian Department of Premier and Cabinet reviewed the approach to councillor allowance categories and values in 2025, with a final report published in March 2026.

In Tasmania, councils are allocated to a category using a formula that considers the number of voters and the revenue base in each LGA.[(a)]

The review noted that this approach had a number of weaknesses, including:

- the number of voters does not reflect that councillors represent and make decisions affecting all residents of their LGA
- operating revenue is affected by financial assistance and other capital grants paid to councils and is subject to year-on-year fluctuations.

Following consideration of the review, the Tasmanian Government published a discussion paper proposing reforms to the local councillor numbers and framework. Proposed changes include:

- all councils should have either seven or nine elected councillors, unless a council requests that it have five councillors
- the adoption of six allowance categories (previously seven categories)
- adding two additional criteria to the formula for setting allowance categories — the total number of rateable properties and total length of council roads (including unsealed roads) — to better reflect representational needs and demands on councillors
- increasing councillor allowances by 14.25 per cent on average, funded by savings from fewer councillors
- considering whether future changes to superannuation provisions may be appropriate, including whether councils should be required to pay the 12 per cent superannuation equivalent allowance into councillors' super funds.

The proposed reforms are intended to be cost neutral overall, with increases in allowance values offset by a reduction in the number of councillors (from 263 to 213). Changes to the *Local Government Act 1993* (Tas) and Local Government (General) Regulations 2025 (Tas) are required to implement reforms. Pending approval by the Tasmanian Parliament, the changes will take effect in time for the October 2026 local government elections, and new allowances (indexed) will apply from 1 November 2026.

Note: (a) The formula is (number of voters)*(operating revenue)/1,000,000.
Sources: Department of Premier and Cabinet (Tas) (n.d.); Department of Premier and Cabinet (Tas) (2026).

Approaches to superannuation entitlements are mostly consistent

As explained in Chapter 5, councillors are ordinarily not considered to be employees, which means they are not entitled to compulsory superannuation under Commonwealth law, unless councils have resolved to become an ELGB.

In recent years, some jurisdictions have amended their local government legislation to clarify superannuation arrangements for councillors. However, councils can still resolve to become an ELGB, which enables councillors to be treated as employees for superannuation and other purposes.

In Western Australia, councillors in Class 1 and 2 councils receive superannuation payments, while Class 3 and 4 councils may resolve to pay councillors superannuation by absolute majority.[197]

Similarly, councils in New South Wales may resolve to make superannuation contributions to councillors under amendments to the *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW).[198]

6.5 Summary

This chapter explored comparisons of councillor allowances across Australian jurisdictions.

Every jurisdiction approaches the structure and value of allowances for councillors differently. For example, some jurisdictions provide allowances for all officeholders, which may be set as a range or fixed value, while others determine additional allowances for deputy mayors and mayors on top of what they receive as councillors. All jurisdictions have some form of categorisation for councils, but the number of categories and the criteria used to determine the groupings differ. Values of allowances differ, which may be due to differing expectations and responsibilities of the role, such as in Queensland, where councillors' allowances are set at a higher rate, but councils deal with more extensive services.

The Tribunal now moves to discussing other comparators in Chapter 7.

[197] *Local Government Amendment Act 2024* (WA), s. 63; Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (WA) (2026).

[198] Office of Local Government (NSW) (2022).

7 Other comparators

In addition to allowances for councillors in other jurisdictions, the Tribunal is required to consider allowances for 'persons elected to other voluntary part-time community bodies', and to provide for any other matter that it considers relevant. Accordingly, the Tribunal's notice of intention asked stakeholders which organisations or comparator roles, if any, it should give particular weight to in setting the value of allowances.

Each council operates as a body corporate,[199] and the responsibilities of councillors include (among others) governance activities not dissimilar to those performed by a corporate board. However, as explained in Chapter 3, local government is recognised in Victoria's Constitution as a distinct and essential tier of government. This makes councils and councillors unique from most other organisations and roles, limiting the utility of comparing their remuneration.

Drawing on the Tribunal's own research and suggestions from stakeholders, this chapter sets out the Tribunal's analysis of the comparators it considers the most relevant (noting the limitations explained above), including:

- public entity (PE) board members[200]
- Victorian MPs[201]
- members of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria (FPAV)
- the boards of MAV and VLGA
- municipal monitors and council administrators.

A number of other potential comparators were evaluated, such as not-for-profit board members. However, the Tribunal judged that these roles are too different from the role of councillor. Reasons for excluding these other roles included that they operate on a smaller scale, are responsible for a more limited range of services, were not remunerated, or a combination of these factors.

In this chapter, the Tribunal also examines how councillor allowances compare to the National Minimum Wage (NMW), which was suggested as a benchmark by some stakeholders.

[199] LG Act 2020, s. 14.
[200] Submissions from ALGWA Victoria, Cr Jeff Marriott, de-identified submission 13, Glen Eira City Council, MAV, South Gippsland Shire Council.
[201] Submission from ALGWA Victoria.

7.1 The role of PE board members shares some similarities with that of councillors

A PE is a body established outside of the Victorian Public Service that exercises a public function on behalf of the state or is wholly owned by the state.[202] Most PEs are governed by a board of directors appointed by the relevant minister, who oversee the entity and are accountable to the minister for its performance.[203] This differs to councillors who are held accountable by the community through the electoral process (although, as noted in Chapter 4, the minister can intervene to dismiss a council in certain circumstances).

The role performed by PE board members has similarities with the role performed by councillors, as both are responsible for setting the strategic direction of their respective organisations, approving their annual budgets and, in most cases, appointing a CEO.[204]

However, councillors have a broader range of responsibilities than PE board members. Indeed, whereas PEs are generally established for specific purposes (e.g. to deliver a particular service),[205] councils have a broad remit and are responsible for delivering many services. Councillors also have a community representation function, while public interaction with PE board members may be more limited.

PE board members are remunerated in accordance with government policies

The remuneration of PE board members is generally set in accordance with the *Appointment and Remuneration Guidelines* published by the Department of Premier and Cabinet.[206]

Under the guidelines, PEs are classified into one of four groups according to their functions and responsibilities. These groups are then divided into bands based on further criteria.

Group A entities, which include statutory authorities and government business enterprises, are the most relevant to councils as they operate on a similar financial scale and employ large numbers of people. These entities are grouped into bands

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[202] *Public Administration Act 2004* (Vic), s. 5.
[203] Victorian Government (2025e).
[204] Victorian Government (2024a).
[205] Victorian Government (2025e).
[206] Department of Premier and Cabinet (2025).

based primarily on assets, turnover and operating surplus or profit, although different thresholds apply to statutory authorities and the government business enterprises.[207] The Tribunal considers that statutory authorities are the most appropriate comparator for councils due to the commercial focus of government business enterprises.

Table 7.1 illustrates how group A statutory authorities are allocated into bands, relevant examples of organisations with remuneration aligned to these bands, and the applicable remuneration band values. It should be noted that there are no separate allowances or fees for deputy chairs.[208]

Table 7.1: Remuneration bands for group A statutory authorities as at 1 July 2025

Band	Classification criteria	Example organisations	Chair ($ p.a.)	Member ($ p.a.)
A1	Inclusion determined by the Premier and Cabinet	• Melbourne Water Corporation • Monash University	85,204 – 159,831	42,604 – 70,025
A2	Turnover of over $1 billion, assets over $1 billion, operating surplus over $100 million, or a combination of these	• Bayside Health • RMIT University • Ports Victoria	63,903 – 119,882	28,402 – 59,951
A3	Turnover of between $500 million and $1 billion, assets between $500 million and $1 billion, operating surplus between $50 million and $100 million, or a combination of these	• Chisholm Institute of TAFE • Country Fire Authority • Parks Victoria	42,604 – 89,908	22,720 – 42,017
A4	Turnover of between $50 million and $500 million, assets between $50 million and $500 million, operating surplus between $5 million and $50 million, or a combination of these	• Alpine Resorts Victoria • Gippsland Institute of TAFE • Bendigo Health	21,302 – 59,951	12,781 – 24,004
A5	Turnover of below $50 million, assets below $50 million, profit below $5 million, or a combination of these	• Echuca Regional Health • Ballarat General Cemeteries Trust	14,200 – 30,075	8,520 – 16,065

Notes: Remuneration values exclude superannuation. Upon ministerial approval, up to $6,543 p.a. may be paid to directors who receive annual fees for additional committee work undertaken in recognition of the extra commitment required.
Sources: Victorian Government (n.d.); Department of Premier and Cabinet (2025), pp. 43–44.

[207] Department of Premier and Cabinet (2025), pp. 43–44.
[208] Department of Premier and Cabinet (2025), p. 28.

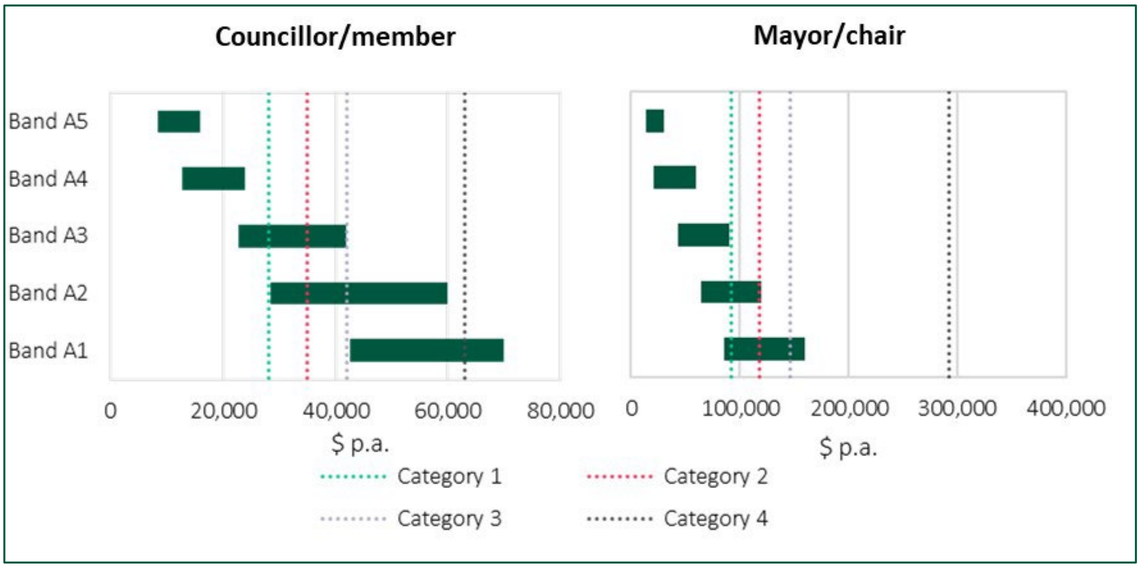
Based on total assets as at 30 June 2025, 44 councils (56 per cent) met the classification criteria for band A2, while 20 councils (25 per cent) and 15 councils (19 per cent) satisfied the assets criterion for bands A3 and A4, respectively.[209]

While Victoria's public universities are technically not classified as PEs under Victorian legislation,[210] the *Appointment and Remuneration Guidelines* are also used to set the remuneration for those sitting on their councils.[211] The composition of each public university's governing council is set in its establishing legislation.[212] Each university is required to have at least one elected student and one elected staff member.[213] The elected, advocative and representative nature of these roles make them a relevant comparator for the role of councillor. However, full-time staff members cannot receive remuneration for serving on the council.[214]

Figure 7.1 shows how the fee ranges for members and chairs of PE boards compared to councillor and mayoral allowances before the making of this Determination. Allowances for councillors in categories 1–3 were comparable to fees for board members of entities in bands A2 and A3, while mayoral allowances were comparable to fees for chairs of entities in bands A1 and A2.

[209] Based on data provided to the Tribunal by LGV, March 2026.
[210] *Public Administration Act 2004* (Vic), ss. 4–5.
[211] The Guidelines state that they apply to all appointments to 'non-departmental entities', which includes universities as they are established by legislation, the right to appoint at least half of the board is vested in the State and they exercise a public function or are wholly owned by the State. Department of Premier and Cabinet (2025), p. 8.
[212] Victorian Government (2025c).
[213] *Deakin University Act 2009* (Vic), s. 11(4A); *Federation University Australia Act 2010* (Vic), s. 11(4A); *La Trobe University Act 2009* (Vic), s. 11(4A); *Monash University Act 2009* (Vic), s. 11(4A); *Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology Act 2010* (Vic), s. 11(4A); *Swinburne University of Technology Act 2010* (Vic), s. 11(4A); *University of Melbourne Act 2009* (Vic), s. 11(4A); *Victoria University Act 2010* (Vic), s. 11(4A).
[214] Refer to section 16 of the Acts listed above.

Figure 7.1: Comparison of councillor and mayoral allowances with fee ranges for members and chairs of PE boards, July 2026



Sources: Department of Premier and Cabinet (2025), pp. 43–44; Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2025a), p. 22.

7.2 Several Victorian representative bodies have elected members

State elected bodies are representative bodies elected by cohorts in the State of Victoria. The two primary roles in this group considered by the Tribunal are state MPs and the elected members of the FPAV.

While both MPs and councillors are elected by their constituents, there are key differences between the roles

MPs are elected to the Parliament of Victoria by members of their electorate, much like how councillors are elected to council by members of their ward or municipal district. Both roles are expected to contribute to decision making and attend meetings of their relevant rule-making body.[215] However, there are key differences to the scope of the roles performed by both groups. These differences, as explained in previous reviews into councillor remuneration, include that:[216]

- MPs have a 'significantly broader range of responsibilities' than councillors, and 'their decisions literally affect the life and liberty of all members of the State'

[215] Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2023b), pp. 33–34; LG Act 2020, s. 28.
[216] Local Government (Councillor Remuneration Review) Panel (2008), p. 14; Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2022b), pp. 101–102.

- the role of an MP is typically described as being more than a full-time commitment, while the role of councillor has traditionally been viewed as a part-time commitment
- MPs represent relatively large and uniform electorates (as at June 2026, the number of electors per district ranged from around 47,000–68,000, and per region from around 560,000–606,000), while council wards are highly variable (as at June 2026, the number of electors per ward ranged from around 1,100–24,000, with the largest unsubdivided municipality (City of Melbourne) comprising 72,515 electors)[217]
- MPs are responsible for managing an electorate office and the electoral officers employed in said office.

Remuneration for MPs

As of 1 July 2026, the basic salary payable to an MP is $219,391 p.a. Any MP who is a specified parliamentary office holder is entitled to an additional salary, which ranges from $8,776–$244,803 p.a.[218] MPs are also paid superannuation at a rate of 18 per cent of their total salary,[219] and receive a range of other work-related parliamentary allowances and other entitlements.

The FPAV includes members chosen through elections

The FPAV consists of both members selected by Traditional Owner groups and members elected by Victorian First Peoples. To be eligible to stand for election a candidate must be a Victorian Traditional Owner. These requirements ensure that assembly members can effectively perform their specialised cultural, legal and ethical responsibilities.[220]

The key roles of members elected to the FPAV in 2023 included negotiating a Statewide Treaty, engaging with their communities, participating in committee and chamber meetings, and undertaking cultural governance.[221] Elected members were expected to have a time commitment of one to two days per week.[222]

[217] Victorian Electoral Commission (2026a); Victorian Electoral Commission (2026b); Victorian Electoral Commission (2026c).
[218] Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2026), p. 3.
[219] MPs elected since 2004 receive superannuation contributions based on their total salary and the SG rate (currently 12 per cent) plus an additional six per cent. *Parliamentary Salaries, Allowances and Superannuation Act 1968* (Vic), s. 31.
[220] FPAV (2026), pp. 4–5, 8–11.
[221] FPAV (n.d.), p. 2.
[222] FPAV (n.d.), p. 2.

The *Statewide Treaty Act 2025* (Vic) transitioned the FPAV into a permanent and legislated body forming part of the newly established Gellung Warl.[223]

The key roles of members elected to the FPAV in 2026 may include matters such as working to implement reforms agreed to by the State in the first Statewide Treaty, engaging with First Peoples to make representations to the Parliament of Victoria, Victorian Government, and other entities, and other operational matters related to the FPAV.[224] Guidance issued prior to the 2026 election stated that while the new FPAV members will decide together on their specific time commitment, the then-serving members recommended serving in a full-time capacity.[225]

Remuneration for elected members of the FPAV

Members of the FPAV elected in 2023 were entitled to a base stipend of $96,946 p.a. However, specific roles with additional duties, such as chairs and directors, were entitled to a higher stipend. The stipends for those elected in 2023 were exclusive of superannuation.[226]

The FPAV was required to publish the remuneration proposed to be paid to members following the 2026 election.[227] FPAV proposed a base stipend of $197,683 p.a., while roles with higher duties would attract a stipend of $227,534 p.a. and co-chairs a stipend of $348,000 p.a. — all values inclusive of superannuation.[228]

The *Interim Gellung Warl Membership Rules* approved on 6 May 2026 state that:[229]

- FPAV members will initially be remunerated consistently with the recommended values summarised above
- members will be reimbursed or have expenses paid for reasonable travel and other expenses, in the manner determined and published by the FPAV
- an independent remuneration mechanism will be established by the FPAV, following which remuneration and entitlements will be paid at the amounts

[223] *Statewide Treaty Act 2025* (Vic), s. 10(1).
[224] FPAV (2026), pp. 5–6.
[225] FPAV (2026), p. 10.
[226] FPAV (n.d.), pp. 2–3.
[227] *Statewide Treaty Act 2025* (Vic), s. 194.
[228] FPAV (2026), p. 11.
[229] Gellung Warl (2026), p. 21.

and on the terms fixed by that mechanism, and will be reviewed at least every four years.

7.3 Several roles connected to the work of councils were considered

The Tribunal considered the remuneration for several ‘council-adjacent’ roles. The Tribunal considered additional roles to which a councillor may be elected in their capacity as councillor, before it examined roles that work alongside, or in place of, councillors — namely, municipal monitors and council administrators.

Councillors may be elected to bodies representing the local government sector

Councillors may be elected to a variety of other roles with external organisations. The boards of MAV and VLGA are the most relevant of these roles. The allowances available to councillors who serve on the boards of these bodies, which are payable in addition to their councillor allowance, are set out in Box 7.1.

Box 7.1: Overview of remuneration provided to board members of MAV and VLGA

MAV

As at 1 July 2025, the following allowances (inclusive of superannuation) were payable:

- Board members – $12,271 p.a.
- Deputy presidents – $18,021 p.a.
- President – $87,416 p.a.

VLGA

In the 2025 financial year, the following fees (exclusive of superannuation) were payable:

- Board members / sub-committee members – $461 per meeting, equivalent to $4,149 p.a. and $2,766 p.a., respectively (assuming attendance at each meeting)
- President / committee chairs – $604 per meeting, equivalent to $5,436 p.a. and $3,624 p.a., respectively (assuming attendance at each meeting)

Annual figures are based on the number of meetings held during the 2025 financial year.

Sources: MAV (2025a), p. 15; VLGA (2025a), p. 17.

Municipal monitors provide oversight and advice to councils

The Minister for Local Government may appoint an independent municipal monitor to oversee and advise a council that is experiencing governance issues. The role of a monitor is to:[230]

[230] Department of Government Services (n.d.b).

- observe governance processes and report back on issues
- provide advice to councils that are experiencing governance issues
- make recommendations to the Minister for further action
- prepare a final report for the Minister at the end of their appointment.

While there are no formal eligibility requirements to be a monitor, individuals appointed to this role typically have expertise in governance, conflict resolution and change management, as well as experience working in local government and/or public administration at senior levels.

Monitors interact with many of the same internal council processes that councillors do, although decision-making power remains with the elected council. As the monitors appointed to Casey City Council detailed in their report to the Minister:[231]

> *During the period of appointment, we attended each ordinary meeting of council and each special meeting of council. We also have been represented at each meeting of the CEO Employment and Remuneration Committee and the Audit and Risk Committee. Further, we attended strategic briefings, strategic discussions and mandatory and follow up induction sessions for new councillors following their election in late 2024. We met regularly with the mayor — sometimes accompanied by the deputy mayor — and provided advice and feedback as required. Similarly, we regularly met with the CEO and executive leadership team (ELT); and separately with the Council's governance team. Further, we conducted sessions with the mayor and councillors to provide feedback on their performance and to clarify aspects of their roles. On request, we also met with individual councillors and responded to telephone and email requests for advice from councillors.*

Remuneration for municipal monitors

Municipal monitors generally work two-to-three days per week.[232] The remuneration paid to monitors is determined by the Minister for Local Government at the commencement of their appointment.[233]

[231] Stephenson P and Boardman C (2025), p. 3.
[232] Parliament of Victoria (2024c), p. 1.
[233] LG Act 2020, s. 179.

The Tribunal understands that monitors are paid a fixed daily rate, which is updated in line with the annual adjustment guideline rate set by the Premier. Prior to the application of the guideline rate from 1 July 2026, the rate for the 2025–26 financial year was $1,375 per day, exclusive of superannuation — for a monitor working 2.5 days per week on average, this was equivalent to around $179,000 for a 12-month appointment. This value does not vary by council size, revenue or population, and is not affected by the terms of reference given to monitors at the commencement of their appointment.[234]

Administrators may be appointed to take over the duties of councillors

Where a council is found to have serious governance issues, the Governor in Council may (on the Minister's recommendation) suspend the council and appoint one or more administrators to exercise its powers and functions for a period of time.[235] Administrators must also be appointed if at least half of a council's councillor positions are vacant.[236]

In this sense, administrators effectively replace elected councillors. However, while administrators are generally appointed in panels of two or three members, they may be replacing up to twelve councillors.

As with municipal monitors, there are no formal eligibility requirements to be an administrator. However, individuals appointed to this role typically have extensive experience in public administration and corporate governance at an executive and/or board level.

Remuneration for council administrators

Chairs or single administrators generally work three-to-four days per week, while panel members generally work one-to-three days per week.[237] Administrators are prohibited from engaging in paid employment outside the duties of the office without the Minister's consent.[238] The remuneration paid to council administrators is determined by the Minister for Local Government at the commencement of their appointment.[239]

[234] Information provided by LGV.
[235] LG Act 2020, ss. 230–231. In addition, administrators may be appointed by an Act of Parliament — see, for example, the *Local Government (Moira Shire Council) Act 2023* (Vic).
[236] LG Act 2020, s. 232.
[237] Information provided by LGV.
[238] LG Act 2020, s. 231(1)(d).
[239] LG Act 2020, s. 231(1)(c).

The Tribunal understands that administrators are paid an annual rate, which is updated in line with the annual adjustment guideline rate set by the Premier. Indicative lower and upper limits for administrator remuneration are based on multiples of the allowances payable to mayors and councillors at the council under administration. However, the Minister considers a range of factors in setting the remuneration for an individual administrator, including the most recent remuneration provided to other administrators, the expected workload and expertise required, and the availability of suitably qualified candidates.[240]

Prior to the application of the guideline rate from 1 July 2026, the indicative remuneration ranges for the 2025–26 financial year are in Table 7.2 and are presented exclusive of superannuation.

Table 7.2: Remuneration for council administrators for 2025–26 financial year

Role	Remuneration basis	Multiple	Indicative remuneration range ($ p.a.)
Chairperson, Category 1	Mayoral base allowance	2x–2.5x	183,226 – 229,033
Chairperson, Category 2	Mayoral base allowance	2x–2.5x	236,606 – 295,758
Chairperson, Category 3	Mayoral base allowance	2x–2.5x	292,638 – 365,798
Panel Member, Category 1	Councillor base allowance	2x–4x	56,220 – 112,440
Panel Member, Category 2	Councillor base allowance	2x–4x	70,098 – 140,196
Panel Member, Category 3	Councillor base allowance	2x–4x	83,984 – 167,968

Source: Information provided by LGV.

7.4 The National Minimum Wage was raised as a matter the Tribunal should consider

A number of stakeholders submitted that councillor allowances should be based on, or be set at an amount not less than, the NMW. The NMW is the minimum amount that an employee not covered by an award or registered agreement may be paid for their work. It is determined annually by the Fair Work Commission (FWC).[241]

[240] Information provided by LGV.
[241] Fair Work Ombudsman (n.d.).

From 1 July 2026, the NMW is $26.44 per hour for persons aged 21 or older. Casual employees receive a 25 per cent loading to compensate for the lack of paid leave, resulting in an hourly rate of $33.05.[242] Superannuation is payable in addition to the NMW for all persons aged 18 or older, regardless of how many hours they work.[243]

For comparative purposes, the casual NMW is arguably the more relevant of the two NMW rates. This is because, like casual employees, councillors:

- do not accrue leave entitlements
- may be required to work irregular hours
- are not guaranteed an ongoing position past the end of the council term.

One way of comparing councillor allowances with the casual NMW is by converting the former into *implied hourly rates* based on an assumed weekly time commitment. For example, prior to the making of this Determination, the implied hourly rate for a councillor in a Category 2 council who works 20 hours per week was $33.70, which is equal to $35,049 (the annual allowance) divided by 52 (the number of weeks in a year), all divided by 20 (the councillors' assumed weekly time commitment).

The implied hourly rate for a councillor in a:

- Category 1 council is greater than or equal to the casual NMW for time commitments up to 16 hours, and less than the casual NMW thereafter
- Category 2 council is greater than or equal to the casual NMW for time commitments up to 20 hours, and less than the casual NMW thereafter
- Category 3 council is greater than or equal to the casual NMW for time commitments up to 24 hours, and less than the casual NMW thereafter
- Category 4 council is greater than or equal to the casual NMW for time commitments up to 36 hours, and less than the casual NMW thereafter.

If superannuation is included in the casual NMW, the time commitment thresholds above decrease to 14, 18, 21 and 32 hours, respectively.

[242] Fair Work Ombudsman (n.d.).
[243] Australian Taxation Office (2026b).

This comparison should not be construed as implying that councillors perform work of an equivalent value or effort to an employee on the NMW. On the contrary, the latter would be expected to have fewer responsibilities, and far less accountability, than councillors.

7.5 Summary

This chapter analysed several roles with similarities to the role of councillor, and the remuneration provided to them, including:

- PE board members
- Victorian MPs
- members of the FPAV
- municipal monitors and council administrators.

While each role shares some key characteristics with the role of councillor, there are also key differences which limit their usefulness as comparators or benchmarks for remuneration purposes.

The Tribunal also considered how councillor allowances compare to the NMW, which partly depends on the amount of time a councillor dedicates to their role.

8 Economic and financial considerations

The Tribunal is required to consider the following factors when making this Determination:[244]

- current and projected economic conditions and trends
- the financial position and fiscal strategy of the State of Victoria
- any statement or policy issued by the Government of Victoria which is in force with respect to its wages policy (or equivalent)
- submissions received by the Tribunal.

The following discussion of economic conditions and Victoria's financial position is informed by the latest information and data available from a range of sources up to 31 July 2026.

A high-level overview of the economic conditions in Australia and Victoria at the time of making this Determination is provided in Figure 8.1 and described in further detail below.

Figure 8.1: Overview of Australian and Victorian economic conditions, July 2026

Economic activity

- Economic activity in Australia and Victoria has continued to slow, reflecting higher than expected inflation and subdued household and government consumption.
- Victoria's economic growth is forecast to be stronger than the national average.

Labour market conditions

- Conditions in the Australian labour market have continued to ease.
- Unemployment in Victoria has grown and is the highest among the states.
- The participation rate in Victoria has improved and is the second highest in Australia.

Inflation

- National headline inflation remains above the RBA's target band on the back of 'sticky' services inflation.
- Headline inflation in Victoria is the lowest of all jurisdictions in Australia.

Wages

- Nominal wage growth has remained steady, however higher-than-expected inflation has led to real wages declining since December 2025.
- Nominal wages are expected to continue growing steadily, however real wage growth is not expected until June 2027.

Risks to economic outlook

The Australian economic outlook is facing a period where economic growth is expected to cool with inflationary pressures remaining stubbornly elevated. Ongoing conflict in the Middle East has disrupted energy production and is feeding into higher inflation.

Risks to the Victorian economic outlook are similar to the national outlook. Victoria has high levels of state debt and the conflict in the Middle East has contributed to higher inflation, and decreased household consumption.

[244] VIRTIPS Act, s. 24(2).

8.1 Current economic conditions

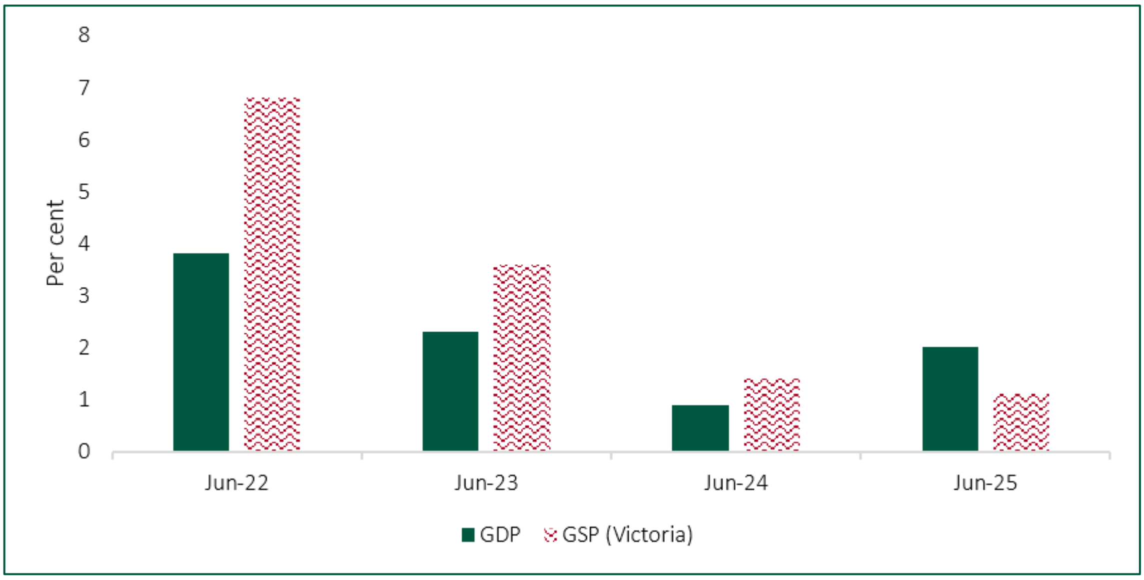
The Tribunal's analysis of current economic conditions at the time of making this Determination was drawn from the latest available data on key economic indicators published by the ABS, along with statements from the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) and the 2026–27 State Budget.

Economic activity has continued to slow

Since the post-pandemic peak, economic activity in Australia had slowed for several years before recovering somewhat in 2025 (Figure 8.2).

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) rose 2.5 per cent through the year to March 2026, but only 0.3 per cent over the March quarter 2026. The RBA noted that GDP growth picked up strongly in the December quarter 2025, with stronger than anticipated private investment offsetting lower than expected household consumption growth.[245] However, modest quarterly growth in March 2026 reflected subdued household and government consumption, and adverse weather impacts that hampered mining production and exports.[246]

Figure 8.2: Annual growth in real GDP and real Victorian Gross State Product (GSP), June quarter 2022 to June quarter 2025



Sources: ABS (2025a); ABS (2026a).

[245] RBA (2026b), pp. 1, 3.
[246] ABS (2026a).

Although there has been a slowing of economic activity, GDP per capita has shown some signs of positivity. Through the year to the March quarter 2026, GDP per capita increased by 1.0 per cent — although the most recent quarterly data saw a slight fall.[247] Meanwhile, population growth has slowed from its post COVID-19 peak to reach 1.5 per cent through the year to December 2025.[248]

Productivity growth, which is a key driver of long-term economic growth and higher living standards, has been mixed. The ABS notes that long-term labour productivity growth (based on 20-year average annual growth rates) has continued to slow from 1.7 per cent in 2015–16 to 0.8 per cent in 2023–24.[249] The ABS data also show that labour productivity — measured by GDP per hour worked — grew by 0.3 per cent through the year to March 2026.[250]

Real GSP growth in Victoria has been slowing, with real GSP growing by 1.1 per cent in 2024–25.[251] Victoria's economy showed some signs of strength in 2025, due to higher incomes and lower interest rates. However, the beginning of the conflict in the Middle East in early 2026 has driven up global energy prices and disrupted supply chains, which is expected to negatively affect growth.[252]

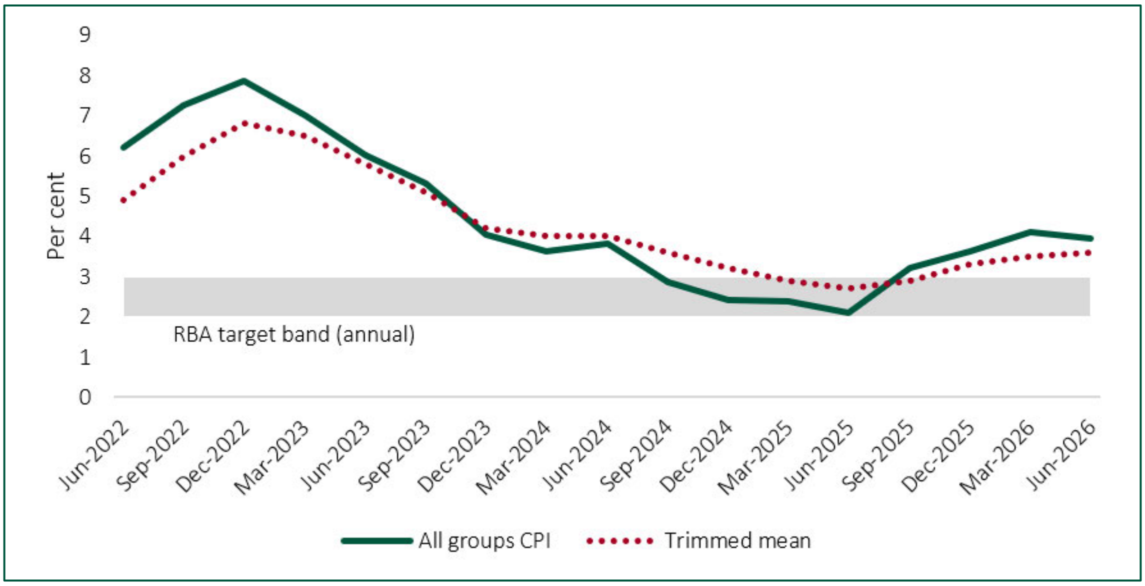
In the year to June 2025, GSP per capita in Victoria declined 0.8 per cent after falling 1.2 per cent over the year to June 2024.[253] The last time Victoria recorded two consecutive years of falling GSP per capita was the 12 months to June 2009 and 2010 respectively.[254]

Inflation remains above the RBA's target band

After peaking in December 2022, headline inflation returned to within the RBA's target band in September 2024. In late 2025, headline inflation began to rise again before spiking in early 2026 in response to underlying inflationary pressures, exacerbated by supply shocks caused by the conflict in the Middle East. The change in the Australian CPI was 3.8 per cent through the year to June 2026, while trimmed mean inflation was 3.6 per cent across the same period (Figure 8.3).[255]

[247] ABS (2026a).
[248] ABS (2026f).
[249] ABS (2025c).
[250] ABS (2026a).
[251] ABS (2025a).
[252] DTF (2026a), p. 16.
[253] ABS (2025a).
[254] ABS (2025a).
[255] ABS (2026d).

Figure 8.3: Annual movement in the All groups CPI and Trimmed mean, Australia, June quarter 2022 to June quarter 2026



Source: ABS (2026d); RBA (2026a), p. 4.

The annual growth in Melbourne's CPI followed a similar pattern. Annual growth fell to 1.7 per cent in the year to June 2025 before rising to 4.6 per cent in March 2026 and then moderating to 3.2 per cent in the year to June 2026.[256]

In its May 2026 Statement on Monetary Policy, the RBA observed that, prior to the outbreak of the conflict in the Middle East, headline inflation was driven by ongoing services inflation and rising goods inflation. After falling below 1.0 per cent annually in April 2025, goods inflation climbed to 3.5 per cent by February 2026.[257] Meanwhile, services inflation — which has proven more persistent nationally — declined only slightly, from 4.1 per cent in the year to December 2025 to 3.9 per cent in February 2026.[258]

Following the beginning of the conflict in the Middle East, a sharp spike in energy prices directly drove goods inflation up to 5.5 per cent in the year to March 2026, before it stabilised at 3.5 per cent by June 2026.[259] While the conflict in the Middle East appears to have had little direct impact on services inflation to date, this may reflect a delay in the pass-through of higher input costs as service providers initially absorb some or all of these costs before passing them on to consumers.

[256] ABS (2026d).
[257] ABS (2026d).
[258] ABS (2026d).
[259] ABS (2026d).

Conditions in the labour market are mixed

Labour market conditions had stabilised following the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the year to June 2026, seasonally adjusted employment at the national level rose 1.7 per cent, while the participation rate rose slightly to 67.0 per cent.[260] However, since October 2022, the unemployment rate has increased from 3.4 per cent to 4.4 per cent in June 2026.[261]

According to the 2026–27 Budget, Victoria's labour market remains healthy with the participation rate and the share of Victorians in employment at historically high levels.[262] Employment increased by 2.5 per cent in 2024–25 following strong growth in previous years.[263] However, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate rose to 5.1 per cent in June 2026.[264]

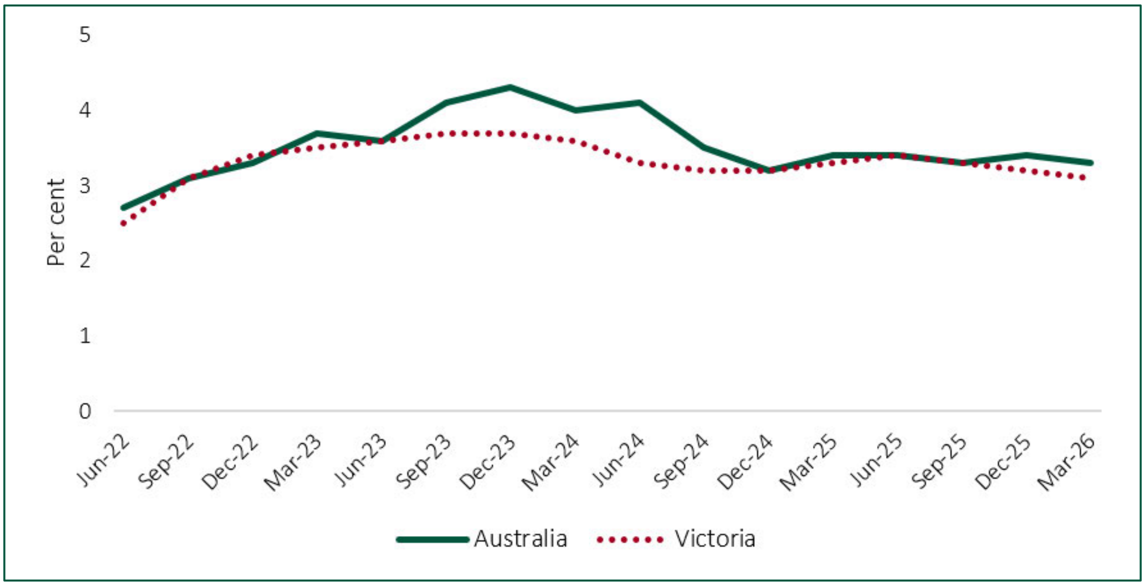
Nominal wages growth has remained steady

Following a period of slower growth from mid-2023 to mid-2024, wages in Victoria have since grown broadly in line with wages across Australia (Figure 8.4).[265]

The seasonally adjusted Australian WPI rose 3.3 per cent through the year and 0.8 per cent in the March quarter 2026.[266] In Victoria, the WPI rose 3.1 per cent through the year and 0.6 per cent in the March quarter 2026.[267]

[260] ABS (2026e).
[261] ABS (2026e).
[262] DTF (2026a), p. 26.
[263] DTF (2026a), p. 26.
[264] ABS (2026e).
[265] ABS (2026h).
[266] ABS (2026h).
[267] ABS (2026h). In original terms. Seasonally adjusted WPI is not available for state level comparisons.

Figure 8.4: Annual WPI growth (all sectors), Victoria and Australia, September quarter 2022 to March quarter 2026



Source: ABS (2026h).

In its 2026 submission to the FWC's Annual Wage Review, the Victorian Government noted that WPI is substantially influenced by enterprise agreement outcomes and individual employment agreements, with changes to modern awards having a smaller impact. It also noted that research suggests that services inflation leads to award wage increases, as wage-bargaining outcomes are influenced by employees seeking to maintain real purchasing power.[268]

The annual WPI growth rate has tended to be higher for the private sector than for the public sector in Victoria. The Victorian Government has previously noted that private sector wages tend to respond faster to labour market conditions, as the prevalence of individual agreements can allow for rapid adjustments.[269]

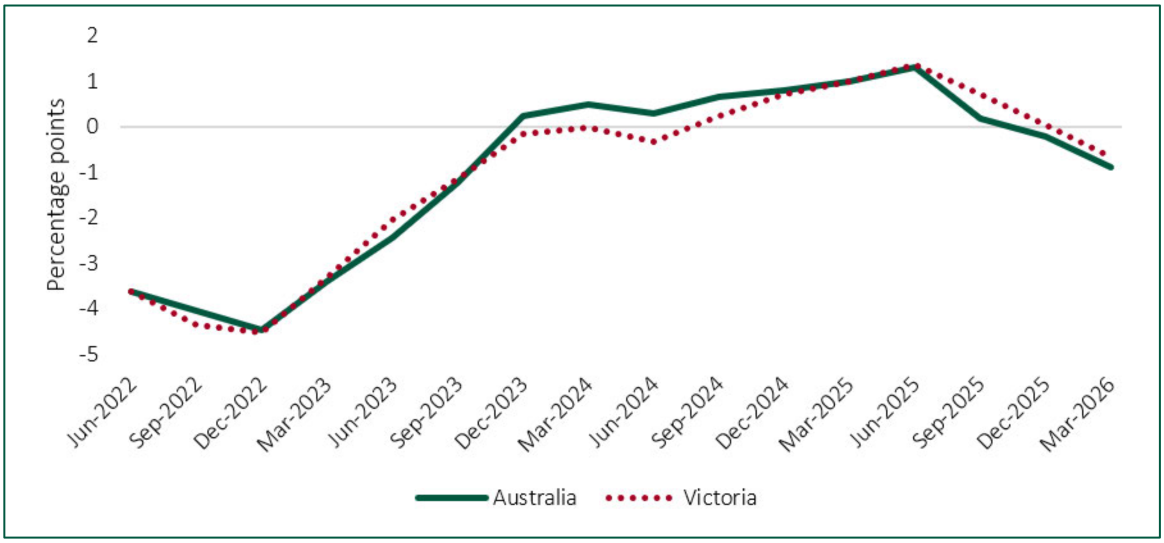
In the year to March 2024, the difference between private sector wage growth (3.9 per cent) and public sector wage growth (2.5 per cent) reached its largest gap since the COVID-19 pandemic (1.4 percentage points). In the year to the March quarter 2026 this gap narrowed to 0.2 percentage points, with private and public sector wages increasing by 3.2 per cent and 3.0 per cent respectively.[270]

[268] Victorian Government (2026b), p. 12.
[269] Victorian Government (2024b), p. 8.
[270] ABS (2026h).

Real wages have recently declined

With nominal wages growth largely flat since the September quarter 2024, and inflation increasing, real wages have begun to decline (Figure 8.5).[271] Real wages in Australia grew consistently from December 2023 to September 2025 but have begun to decline in response to a higher inflationary environment. Real wages in Victoria have followed a similar pattern, although the recent decline has been slightly less pronounced due to slightly lower inflation in the state.

Figure 8.5: Difference between annual CPI and WPI growth rates, Australia and Victoria, June quarter 2022 to March quarter 2026



Sources: ABS (2026d); ABS (2026h).

8.2 Economic outlook

The following discussion of the outlook for the Australian and Victorian economies has been informed by the latest forecasts and analysis from the RBA and the 2026–27 Budget. Key forecasts are reproduced in Tables 8.1 and 8.2, followed by more detailed analysis.

[271] Real wages growth is defined as the percentage point difference between annual WPI growth and annual CPI growth.

Table 8.1: Selected RBA forecasts for the Australian economy, May 2026

Indicator[a]	Jun 2026	Dec 2026	Jun 2027	Dec 2027	Jun 2028
Real GDP	1.9	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.4
Population	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
CPI	4.8	4.0	2.4	2.4	2.5
Trimmed mean inflation	3.8	3.5	3.1	2.6	2.5
Employment[b]	1.3	1.4	1.0	1.0	0.9
Unemployment rate	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.6	4.7
WPI	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.0
Labour productivity	0.0	0.2	0.6	0.7	0.7

Notes: (a) All figures are percentage change through the four quarters to quarter shown, unless otherwise specified. (b) Quarterly, per cent.
Source: RBA (2026b), p. 64.

Table 8.2: 2026–27 Budget forecasts for the Victorian economy

Indicator[a]	2026–27	2027–28	2028–29	2029–30
Real GSP	1.50	2.00	2.50	2.50
Population[b]	1.70	1.70	1.70	1.70
Melbourne CPI	3.50	2.75	2.50	2.50
Employment	1.25	1.50	1.75	1.75
Unemployment rate[c]	4.75	4.75	4.75	4.75
Victorian WPI	3.25	3.25	3.00	3.00

Notes: (a) Percentage change in year-average terms compared with the previous year, unless otherwise specified. (b) Percentage change over the year to 30 June. (c) Year average.
Source: DTF (2026a), p. 17.

Economic growth is forecast to moderate

The RBA has forecast that annual growth in real GDP will peak at 1.9 per cent in June 2026 before stabilising across the forecast period.[272] The RBA noted that while public demand is expected to support economic growth, this is expected to be outweighed by higher interest rates, putting downward pressure on household consumption, dwelling investment and non-mining business investment.[273]

The RBA expects population growth nationally will moderate. Across the RBA's forecast period, annual population growth is forecast to stabilise at 1.2 per cent per annum from December 2026.[274] Slower population growth will put downward pressure on GDP growth through slower growth in consumer demand and slower expansion of the labour market.

[272] RBA (2026b), p. 64.
[273] RBA (2026b), p. 56.
[274] RBA (2026b), p. 64.

National economic growth will be weighed down by weak productivity over the near-term as firms respond to higher fuel costs and slowing demand.[275] The RBA is expecting no labour productivity growth through the year to June 2026 before reaching 0.7 per cent through the year to December 2027.[276]

In Victoria, modest growth in real GSP is expected through to 2029–30. The main driver of GSP growth in 2026–27 is expected to be household consumption, supported by modest growth in real household income.[277] Across the forecast period, growth is expected to be supported by public demand through government consumption spending alongside increased private investment in renewable energy and data centres.[278]

Inflation is forecast to peak in mid-2026 before returning to the RBA's target band

The RBA currently expects headline inflation to peak in mid-2026 before returning to within the RBA's target band by June 2027.[279] The forecast for underlying inflation (as measured by trimmed mean inflation) has been revised in the near-term, due to upward pressure on broader consumer prices from higher energy prices. Thereafter, the RBA expects that inflationary pressures will ease as fuel-related costs decline and the labour market eases.[280]

In Victoria, headline inflation is forecast to be 3.50 per cent in 2026–27, before stabilising at 2.50 per cent from 2028–29.[281] Although inflation remains well below the post-pandemic peak of 7.9 per cent in December 2022, higher inflation is adding to near-term cost-of-living pressures for Victorian households. The conflict in the Middle East and surge in global oil prices is expected to maintain these inflationary pressures across 2026.[282]

275 RBA (2026b), p. 59.
276 RBA (2026b), p. 64.
277 DTF (2026a), p. 16.
278 DTF (2026a), p. 16.
279 RBA (2026b), p. 64.
280 RBA (2026b), p. 60.
281 DTF (2026a), p. 3.
282 DTF (2026a), p. 28.

The forecast for headline inflation in Victoria assumes energy prices will remain elevated in the short-term, before easing over the forecast period. Since these forecasts were released, oil prices have moderated somewhat but still remain elevated.[283] If prices reduce further, headline inflation may continue to moderate across the forecast period.

The labour market is forecast to continue to ease

The RBA expects labour market conditions to ease across the forecast period. In the near-term, labour demand is expected to slow due to the impact of the conflict in the Middle East and recent interest rate increases. From 2027 onwards, the unemployment rate is expected to increase, given the weaker outlook for domestic activity.[284]

In Victoria, employment growth is forecast to ease to 1.25 per cent in 2026–27, before rising to 1.75 per cent in 2028–29 and 2029–30.[285] However, the unemployment rate is forecast to remain stable at 4.75 per cent, below the pre-pandemic 20-year average of 5.5 per cent, across the forecast period.[286]

Nominal wages are expected to grow steadily, with growth in real wages not expected until 2027

The RBA observed that near-term nominal wages growth is expected to be influenced by higher inflation, partly driven by energy prices, remaining a consideration in wage negotiations.[287] However, wages growth is then expected to moderate as labour market conditions ease.

Real wages are expected to continue falling through 2026 as inflation remains elevated, before growing again from June 2027 as WPI outpaces CPI across the remainder of the RBA's forecast period. [288]

Similarly, the Victorian Government expects nominal wages growth in Victoria to moderate slowly across the forecast period with real wages growing again from 2027–28.[289]

[283] Australian Institute of Petroleum (2026).
[284] RBA (2026b), p. 47.
[285] DTF (2026a), p. 17.
[286] DTF (2026a), p. 26.
[287] RBA (2026b), p. 58.
[288] RBA (2026b), p. 64.
[289] DTF (2026a), p. 17.

Both the Victorian Government and the RBA have identified risks to the economic outlook

In its Statement on Monetary Policy, the RBA noted, that as of May 2026, there is significant uncertainty in its baseline inflation outlook.

The RBA presented two 'adverse scenarios' that could affect its current forecasts. These scenarios both assume a prolonged conflict in the Middle East, including an extended closure of the Strait of Hormuz, significant damage to infrastructure and disruption to energy production. This would then lead to significantly higher energy prices which either drive higher and more persistent inflationary pressures and weaker economic activity, or see greater uncertainty translate into a more material decline in economic activity.[290]

At its August 2026 meeting, the RBA noted that its outlook remained relatively consistent with its forecasts in May 2026. Australia's GDP growth is expected to slow over 2026 before gradually recovering. The RBA forecasts that, with GDP growth subdued, the labour market will continue to ease.[291]

Although the Middle East conflict has had a smaller effect on inflation than initially expected, inflation remains above the RBA's target band, with underlying price pressures persisting.[292] Higher oil and commodity prices continue to add to business costs, with some firms passing these costs on through higher prices. Short-term inflation expectations have eased but remain elevated.[293]

The 2026–27 Budget detailed similar risks to the economic outlook in Victoria, namely that the conflict in the Middle East could continue to contribute to inflationary pressures through higher energy costs. This in turn would lead to an increased chance of interest rate increases and weigh more on household consumption and dwelling investment, reducing economic growth. The 2026–27 Budget also noted that there is some uncertainty around the relationship between inflation and unemployment, which is often a difficult measure to observe, and in turn, forecast.[294]

[290] RBA (2026b), pp. 61–62.
[291] RBA (2026a), pp. 51–52.
[292] RBA (2026a), p. 38.
[293] RBA (2026a), p. 41.
[294] DTF (2026a), p. 35.

8.3 Financial position and fiscal strategy of the State of Victoria

The following discussion of the financial position and fiscal strategy of the State of Victoria at the time of making this Determination has been informed by the 2026–27 Budget and the latest analysis of the Annual Financial Report of the State of Victoria by VAGO.

The 2026–27 Budget provided an update on the Victorian Government's fiscal strategy, which comprises:

- Step 1: creating jobs, reducing unemployment and restoring economic growth
- Step 2: returning to an operating cash surplus
- Step 3: returning to operating surpluses
- Step 4: stabilising net debt levels as a proportion of GSP
- Step 5: reducing net debt as a proportion of GSP.

There has been an operating cash surplus in each year since 2024–25 (Step 2). The net result from transactions for the general government sector (GGS) is forecast to be in surplus by $0.7 billion in 2025–26, with an average surplus of $1.9 billion across the three years of the forward estimates (Step 3).[295]

The 2026–27 Budget forecasts net debt as a proportion of GSP reaching 24.9 per cent at June 2027 before declining to 24.4 per cent of GSP by June 2030 (Steps 4 and 5).[296] However, nominal net debt is forecast to increase each year to reach $199.3 billion by 30 June 2030.[297]

To support its fiscal strategy, the Victorian Government is implementing several measures, including the implementation of savings measures and scaling back infrastructure investment.

In February 2025, the Victorian Government commissioned an independent review of the Victorian Public Service to identify inefficiencies and lower priority programs, and ways to return the public service towards its pre-pandemic share of employment. In December 2025 the Victorian Government accepted most of

[295] DTF (2026a), p. 5.
[296] DTF (2026a), p. 46.
[297] DTF (2026d), p. 10.

the review's recommendations, and as a result is aiming to deliver over $4 billion in savings.[298]

The Victorian Government is scaling back Government Infrastructure Investment (GII). GII peaked at $24.2 billion in 2023–24 and remains projected to progressively moderate across the forward estimates from $21.4 billion in 2025–26 to $15.3 billion in 2029–30, consistent with a return to pre-COVID levels of investment. GII averages $16.5 billion a year over the budget and forward estimates period.[299]

The Victorian Auditor-General has identified risks to Victoria's fiscal outlook

Each year, VAGO issues a report on the state of Victoria's finances. The November 2025 report examined Victoria's 2024–25 Annual Financial Report and was released prior to the 2026–27 Budget.

VAGO's report identified a range of emerging risks that may affect Victoria's ability to meet short-term financial targets and a sustainable fiscal position, including (among others) the:[300]

- increasing debt, and the higher interest costs of new and refinanced debt
- increasing employee costs and growth in other operating expenses
- limited capacity to meet new revenue and income streams — noting that the commercialisation or leasing of several assets and functions will reduce access to some future cash inflows
- increases in the cost of major infrastructure projects
- rising costs of government redress schemes.

VAGO also publishes a dashboard providing key insights from its review of the 2026–27 Budget and its independent perspectives on financial sustainability measures, key balances and transactions. VAGO updated the dashboard following the release of the 2026–27 Budget.[301] The dashboard provides five key measures that VAGO uses to assess the State's fiscal sustainability, which include the:

- GGS net operating result
- fiscal cash deficit

[298] Victorian Government (2025a).
[299] DTF (2026c), p. 1.
[300] VAGO (2025a), pp. 34–47.
[301] VAGO (2026b).

- GGS gross debt as a percentage of GSP
- GGS gross debt as a proportion of operating revenue
- GGS interest expense as a percentage of revenue.

Box 8.1 provides a summary of one of these measures, GGS gross debt as a proportion of operating revenue.

Box 8.1: VAGO's assessment of GGS gross debt as a proportion of operating revenue

This measure shows government debt relative to revenue, which is the primary source of cash inflows used to pay interest and repay principal debt. VAGO noted that it provides a clear indication of the government's capacity to meet its debt obligations.

Gross debt is forecast to continue to reach 195 per cent of operating revenue by 2029–30.

VAGO noted that in this scenario, debt servicing and funding for essential services can become problematic because interest payments account for a higher proportion of operating revenue.

Source: VAGO (2026b).

8.4 Victorian Public Sector Wages Policy

The Wages Policy and the Enterprise Bargaining Framework (Wages Policy) sets out the parameters within which Victorian public sector employers, including public service bodies, are required to bargain and make enterprise agreements. The key features of the current Wages Policy, which was introduced by the Victorian Government in April 2023 are:

- increases in wages and conditions will be funded at a rate of growth of 3 per cent per annum over the life of an agreement
- in addition to annual wage increases, a separate lump sum cash payment will be available, equivalent to 0.5 per cent of overall agreement costs.[302]

The VIRTIPS Act requires that the Tribunal considers any statement or policy issued by the Government of Victoria which is in force with respect to its Wages Policy.

[302] Industrial Relations Victoria (2024), pp. 3–4.

8.5 Summary

In making its Determination the Tribunal is required to consider:

- current and projected economic conditions and trends
- the financial position and fiscal strategy of the State of Victoria
- any statement or policy issued by the Government of Victoria which is in force with respect to its Wages Policy (or equivalent).

The Tribunal noted that:

- economic activity in Australia and Victoria has been slowing
- persistent inflationary pressures have been exacerbated by the conflict in the Middle East in early 2026
- there are mixed conditions in the labour market at the national and state levels with unemployment rising
- with higher-than-expected inflation and slow nominal wages growth, real wages are declining.

Taking these factors and the details from previous chapters into account, the Tribunal will now outline its decisions regarding the allowances payable to councillors, deputy mayors and mayors.

9 Tribunal's decision

This chapter turns to a determination of the value of the allowances for councillors and the structure of allowance categories to which each council is assigned, including the basis on which that assignment is made.

As discussed earlier, a comprehensive determination provides an opportunity for an in-depth analysis of the role of local government and of councillors, deputy mayors and mayors and, in particular, whether current arrangements adequately reflect contemporary circumstances.

As with all of its determinations, the Tribunal has sought to strike an appropriate balance between restraint — respecting the views of the community and economic circumstances — and an allowance structure designed to support the fulfilment of the objectives set out in Victoria's Constitution and the LG Act 2020. The Tribunal has considered carefully the many submissions and views expressed by stakeholders as well as arrangements in other jurisdictions and comparisons with similar bodies in Victoria. At the same time, the Tribunal remained mindful of its obligations under the VIRTIPS Act.

The Tribunal also considered the financial impact on councils from the new allowances and notes that the total cost to the sector is modest and affordable.

9.1 A new structure

As discussed earlier in this Statement of Reasons, the 2022 Comprehensive Determination increased the existing allowances for councillors by 10 per cent and mayors by 20 per cent. It also introduced a new allowance for deputy mayors equal to 50 per cent of the mayoral allowance.

In part, the increases sought to compensate for the significant passage of time since the previous comprehensive review of allowances in 2007–08. The 2022 Comprehensive Determination did not, however, make further changes to the allowance system. In this sense it was incremental in nature, perpetuating a system based on historical precedence.

With the benefit of the passage of time, it is also clear that the Tribunal at that time:

- gave insufficient weight to the constitutional status of local government as a distinct and essential tier of government
- did not fully take into account the impact of the LG Act 2020, including the trend towards professionalism embodied in the provisions of that Act
- did not adequately consider that all councillors have common responsibilities and therefore set the allowance for small councils too low
- did not consider the level of complexity in councils of different categories and, in particular, of 'growth' councils and therefore also set those allowances too low.

As the changes implemented by the LG Act 2020 have become embedded across the sector, they have been complemented by additional reforms. These include additional mandatory training and professional development for councillors (from the LG Amendment Act 2024) and the implementation of single-member wards for many councils.

The contemporary role of a councillor

As the Tribunal observed in Chapter 4, the contemporary role of a councillor is multifaceted, encompassing significant governance and representational aspects and has become increasingly professionalised. In particular, as MAV noted in its submission, the 'modern councillor must have a sound understanding of scores of legislative documents, strategic plans, long term financial documents and strategies'. At the same time, community expectations of councillors are very high and appear to have intensified in recent times.

In light of these developments, stakeholders told the Tribunal that the traditional characterisation of the role as 'voluntary' is outdated, as it does not reflect the significant demands and expectations placed on councillors. However, it notes that the role does — and ought to — retain an important element of community service, with most councillors citing a desire to serve their community as their primary motivation for seeking election to council.

The Tribunal therefore considered that the allowances for councillors, deputy mayors and mayors should reflect both the community service nature and the practical requirements of these roles.

The Tribunal was also asked to consider 'any recent events that may be relevant to the Tribunal's view of the purpose of council allowances, including the State of Disaster declared from 10 January 2026'. It sought and noted the views of stakeholders on the role of councils and councillors in emergencies, including in response and recovery activities.

Diversity

In setting the new structure, the Tribunal was also mindful of the then-Minister's request that the Tribunal examine the relationship between allowances and the government's diversity objectives.

The Tribunal heard that the current composition of councils does not reflect the diversity of Victorian communities. For example, based on responses to the Tribunal's councillor questionnaire, 48 per cent of councillors were aged 55 years or older (compared to approximately 28 per cent of the Victorian population at the same time), while 72 per cent had a university degree or higher (compared to 37 per cent of Victorians aged 15 to 74 years at the same time).[303]

Financial factors can influence who is willing or able to stand or re-stand for election and serve effectively as a councillor. In turn, this can mean that different perspectives may not be effectively incorporated into council decision-making.

The Tribunal heard from many stakeholders that current allowances may affect participation by a range of people, including those who need to balance council service with other responsibilities (such as caring or other employment) and those with less financial security. These factors may be a particular challenge for women, First Nations peoples, younger people and people with disability.

Although there is no definitive evidence to suggest that allowance levels mean that prospective councillors from under-represented groups are less likely to stand at council elections or renominate, it is reasonable to assume that this could be the case.

However, the Tribunal also heard that the nature and work requirements of a councillor's role and a range of psychosocial risks can significantly influence decisions to stand — or re-stand — for election, or to participate in council activities. In these circumstances, allowances are unlikely to address the

[303] ABS (2025b); ABS (2026f); Tribunal analysis of questionnaire responses.

underlying issues, and further measures may be needed, such as changes to working practices and other support for councillors.

The new allowance structure

Thus, having considered all of the views put to the Tribunal from its many stakeholders summarised in Chapter 2 and on the basis of its own analysis and considerations, the Tribunal has decided to create a new allowance framework designed to recognise the contemporary role of local government and of councillors, deputy mayors and mayors.

The framework has the following features:

- a minimum value for the base allowance recognising the common functions performed by all councillors across the sector
- a 'complexity factor' adjusting the minimum base allowance for gradations in the work requirements for councillors across various councils
- a 'responsibility loading' for mayors in recognition of the additional functions that a mayor is required to perform and the largely full-time nature of the role
- introducing a new allowance category to accommodate the additional work requirements and complexity of 'growth' councils
- assigning most councils to one of four categories according to population and revenue
- maintaining a separate category for Melbourne City Council.

A minimum base allowance for councillors, deputy mayors and mayors

In calculating the minimum base allowance for any councillor, the Tribunal had regard to evidence derived from responses to its questionnaire and other external surveys, including VLGA's most recent councillor census, that a large majority of councillors work at least two days per week. It then considered a number of wage benchmarks — including measures of average wages, such as average weekly ordinary time earnings and median earnings, and the NMW — to determine a base allowance of $35,000 as the equivalent of average remuneration for two days' work across the broader economy.

Mayors have significant additional responsibilities and functions that they are required to perform compared to the role of councillors. In particular, mayors chair meetings of the council, serve as its public face and are responsible for managing the relationship between the council and its CEO. Therefore, the Tribunal has set the base allowance for mayors to account for the specific responsibilities, and the largely full-time nature, of the role.

The Tribunal received submissions (verbal and written) from a range of stakeholders arguing that the allowance for deputy mayors is too high and does not reflect the limited additional responsibilities of the role. In particular, the role of deputy mayor should be viewed as adding some additional functions to the role of a councillor rather than being tied to the allowance of a mayor. Accordingly, the allowance for deputy mayors has been set with reference to the base allowance for councillors, which results in a significant reduction in the value of the allowance in the relevant allowance categories. In accordance with its standard practice, the Tribunal has determined that the current allowance for deputy mayors will be retained until the expiry of their current terms.

Allowance categories

As part of its comprehensive review, the Tribunal is required under the VIRTIPS Act to review allowance categories. Under current arrangements, there are four categories — three relating to most councils, with Melbourne City Council constituting the fourth.

The number of allowance categories was designed to balance the common requirements and duties of councillors with variations in council characteristics that the Tribunal at the time considered relevant in differentiating the base allowance. Broadly, Category 1 included predominantly smaller rural and regional councils, while Category 2 comprised of larger regional councils, and Category 3 comprised of larger regional cities and most metropolitan councils.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the Tribunal received submissions arguing that special recognition should be given to councils experiencing high growth, which are principally located in outer Melbourne. High growth has implications for the role and work requirements of councillors arising from, amongst other things, oversight of significant investment in infrastructure and service delivery as well as decisions on complex and contentious planning issues.

The Tribunal heard that councillors in these areas are also representing large, rapidly growing and increasingly diverse populations. This can also affect the time commitment of councillors, particularly where there are challenges relating to social cohesion and limited local connections.

The Tribunal considers that there is merit in this view and has determined to introduce a new category — Category D — for 'growth' councils. This new category comprises the largest councils in Victoria (based on population and revenue) — five in outer Melbourne plus Greater Geelong City Council.

The Tribunal determined to make no further changes to the existing allowance categories or to the allocation of councils to these categories, other than to rename them. Thus, the new Categories A–C and Category E correspond to the existing Categories 1–3 and Category 4, respectively.

To reflect the progressive growth in work requirements for councillors across the Category A–D structure, the Tribunal decided to add a complexity factor to the minimum base allowance — which is Category A in the new structure. The Tribunal has set the complexity factor at 10 per cent for Category B, 30 per cent for Category C and 40 per cent for Category D.

A responsibility loading for mayors was also added to recognise the additional functions of that position. The responsibility loading has been set at 10 per cent for mayors in Category A and 20 per cent for those in Categories B–D.

Melbourne City Council (the sole council in the renamed Category E) continues to stand apart from the other councils and is discussed separately below.

Basis for assigning councils to categories

The Tribunal received a number of submissions arguing that the methodology for determining council categories should incorporate additional factors beyond revenue and population — for example, the size of the council area and the diversity of its population. At the time of making this Determination, the number of factors considered in other jurisdictions varies from two in Tasmania to eight in New South Wales.

On balance, the Tribunal considers that the benefits of retaining the current approach — based on population and revenue — outweigh any improvements that a more nuanced approach might offer. In particular, the current approach has the advantage of simplicity and is readily understood by councillors and other interested parties. The addition of other factors would inevitably lead to greater complexity and would require a degree of judgment as to what weighting should be given to each factor.

Melbourne City Council

As discussed earlier, Melbourne City Council currently sits as a separate allowance category in recognition of its geographical alignment with the State's capital city (City of Melbourne), which generates $127 billion in gross local product and accounts for 22 per cent of the Victorian economy.

The Tribunal considered whether it should extend the structural arrangements set out above to determining the value of allowances for Melbourne City Council. After careful analysis, it concluded that it should be retained as a separate category given its importance to the Victorian economy and its different role and operating procedures. It also noted that most other jurisdictions have bespoke allowances for their capital city council.

The Tribunal also considered whether further adjustments are needed to the current allowance values for the Melbourne City Council. It concluded that the gap between it and the new Category D councils is already significant — perhaps more than warranted by the circumstances. The Tribunal therefore determined to adjust the value of the allowances for each of the councillors, Deputy Lord Mayor and Lord Mayor by 3.5 per cent, consistent with recent annual adjustments for MPs and Victorian public sector executives.

Allowance values

The new allowances are set out in Table 9.1. The allowances are inclusive of any SG contributions that may be payable under Commonwealth law, including due to a council being an 'eligible local governing body'.

Table 9.1: Allowances for councillors, deputy mayors and mayors, from 1 July 2026

Council allowance category	Councillor ($ p.a.)	Deputy mayor ($ p.a.)	Mayor ($ p.a.)
Category A	35,000	45,807	103,400
Category B	38,500	50,388	124,080
Category C	45,500	59,549	146,640
Category D	49,000	64,130	157,920
Category E — Melbourne City Council	65,193	151,441	302,881

Table 9.2 shows the allocation of councils to each of Categories A–D, plus Category E for Melbourne City Council.

Table 9.2: Council allowance categories, from 1 July 2026

Category A	
Alpine Shire Council	Loddon Shire Council
Ararat Rural City Council	Mansfield Shire Council
Benalla Rural City Council	Mount Alexander Shire Council
Borough of Queenscliffe Council	Murrindindi Shire Council
Buloke Shire Council	Northern Grampians Shire Council
Central Goldfields Shire Council	Pyrenees Shire Council
Corangamite Shire Council	Southern Grampians Shire Council
Gannawarra Shire Council	Strathbogie Shire Council
Hepburn Shire Council	Towong Shire Council
Hindmarsh Shire Council	West Wimmera Shire Council
Indigo Shire Council	Yarriambiack Shire Council
Category B	
Bass Coast Shire Council	Maroondah City Council
Baw Baw Shire Council	Mildura Rural City Council
Bayside City Council	Mitchell Shire Council
Campaspe Shire Council	Moira Shire Council
Colac Otway Shire Council	Moorabool Shire Council
East Gippsland Shire Council	Moyne Shire Council
Glenelg Shire Council	Nillumbik Shire Council
Golden Plains Shire Council	South Gippsland Shire Council
Greater Shepparton City Council	Surf Coast Shire Council
Hobsons Bay City Council	Swan Hill Rural City Council
Horsham Rural City Council	Wangaratta Rural City Council
Latrobe City Council	Warrnambool City Council
Macedon Ranges Shire Council	Wellington Shire Council
Maribyrnong City Council	Wodonga City Council
Category C	
Ballarat City Council	Knox City Council
Banyule City Council	Manningham City Council
Boroondara City Council	Merri-bek City Council
Brimbank City Council	Monash City Council
Cardinia Shire Council	Moonee Valley City Council
Darebin City Council	Mornington Peninsula Shire Council
Frankston City Council	Port Phillip City Council
Glen Eira City Council	Stonnington City Council
Greater Bendigo City Council	Whitehorse City Council
Greater Dandenong City Council	Yarra City Council
Kingston City Council	Yarra Ranges Shire Council
Category D	
Casey City Council	Melton Shire Council
Greater Geelong City Council	Whittlesea City Council
Hume City Council	Wyndham City Council
Category E — Melbourne City Council	
Melbourne City Council	

Remote area travel allowance

The RATA recognises the additional time commitment for councillors representing large or remote municipalities. Current eligibility criteria include that councillors must normally reside more than 50 kilometres by the shortest practicable route from the location of council activities. The current value of the RATA is $48.90 for each day on which one or more council activities are attended by a councillor and a cap of $6112.50 per annum.

The Tribunal received a number of submissions from remote and large municipalities arguing that the current allowance does not adequately compensate councillors in these municipalities for the time spent in travel compared to metropolitan councils. The Tribunal found these arguments to be compelling and has determined:

- a base daily rate of $50.60 with a distance requirement of 50 to 100 kilometres (‘tier one’)
- a daily rate of $101.20 with a distance requirement of more than 100 kilometres (‘tier two’)
- an annual cap of $6,325 based on multiplying the base daily rate (‘tier one’) by 125 days
- that where a councillor is required to travel on more than one day to attend an event at an ‘eligible location’, the RATA may be claimed for each day that travel is undertaken.

10 Other matters

This chapter discusses the Tribunal's consideration of two specific issues that the then-Minister for Local Government invited it to consider in making the 2026 Comprehensive Determination:

> *any guidance the Tribunal may provide to support consistent council arrangements for the expenses, resources and facilities reasonably necessary for council members to perform their roles*
>
> *whether access to a councillor assist program should be included in the available allowances to councillors*

10.1 Councillors receive additional support to perform their role

Separate to the allowances set by the Tribunal, councillors can access certain supports to ensure that they are able to perform their role effectively and without incurring unreasonable personal costs.

The LG Act 2020 sets the framework for the expenses, resources and facilities available to councillors

The LG Act 2020 requires that councils must reimburse councillors for out-of-pocket expenses that are bona fide expenses, reasonably incurred in performing their role and reasonably necessary to perform that role.[304] Details of all reimbursements must be provided to the council's audit and risk committee.

Each council must also have an expenses policy that defines the procedures for claiming and reimbursing expenses. The policy must provide for the reimbursement of childcare costs where the provision of childcare is reasonably required, and have regard to expenses incurred by a councillor with caring responsibilities.[305]

[304] LG Act 2020, s. 40.
[305] LG Act 2020, s. 41.

The Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020 require councils to disclose details of the expenses for each councillor in their annual report, using three reporting categories — 'travel', 'professional development' and 'expenses to support the performance of the role'.[306]

Councils must also make available the 'resources and facilities' reasonably necessary for a councillor to perform their role, with particular consideration given to support for councillors with disability and councillors with caring responsibilities.[307]

There are no formal policies or guidance for councils regarding the expenses, resources and facilities provided to councillors. However, reports by the LGI and VAGO can provide insights and recommendations for councils to draw on in designing policies and supporting processes. For example, in a 2020 report, the LGI noted issues related to the design of council policies, the robustness of approval processes and public reporting of councillor expenses.[308]

Councils have different approaches to expenses, resources and facilities

Within this statutory framework, each council has significant flexibility to design, adopt and administer its expenses policy and related support arrangements.

The Tribunal undertook a high-level review of several council policies and noted that broadly similar types of expenses, resources and facilities were available to councillors.

Councillors are generally reimbursed for certain out-of-pocket expenses

The principal reimbursable expenses for councillors are:

- professional development
- transport and accommodation
- childcare
- information and communication technology.

[306] Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020, s. 10(g).
[307] LG Act 2020, s. 42.
[308] LGI (2020).

However, there are variations in the design and application of specific arrangements across councils. Examples that the Tribunal observed include:

- the definition of 'council business' for the purposes of claiming expenses is not always clearly defined, which can create uncertainty for claimants making, and for councils in processing, claims
- approval processes, which can be retained by council, delegated to council staff or a combination of both
- different approaches to setting reimbursement rates, such as for vehicle expenses where a mix of external benchmarks and bespoke rates were used by councils
- public disclosure, where the categorisation of expense claims can vary significantly and make it difficult to compare arrangements across councils.

The current arrangements for childcare expenses illustrate several of these issues (Box 10.1).

Certain supports are directly provided by councils

Councillors are also provided with direct or in-kind support to assist them in performing their role. Examples include the provision of office accommodation, administrative support (e.g. to assist with diary management and responding to queries from constituents) and websites for councillors.

However, the Tribunal heard that such facilities and resources are not provided by all councils. Campaspe Shire Council noted in its submission that:

> *Many councillors lack:*
>
> - *secure private meeting spaces*
> - *suitable environments for digital governance obligations*
> - *reliable telecommunications, especially in rural areas.*

Similarly, another submitter noted that:[309]

> *Unlike state or federal representatives, councillors operate with no personal staff support and therefore manage most community engagement directly.*

[309] De-identified submission 15.

Box 10.1: Childcare expenses for councillors

The LG Act 2020 expressly requires reimbursement of childcare costs where such care is reasonably required for a councillor to perform their role.

The Tribunal's review of a sample of council expenses policies identified several differences in the design of childcare reimbursement arrangements, including:

- eligible childcare arrangements, where several policies permit claims for care by registered childcare providers but there were few that expressly permitted claims for informal care arrangements (e.g. child minding)
- fixed reimbursement rates for childcare and in some cases monthly or annual caps on the total value of claims.

Some of these arrangements may reflect judgements and trade-offs made by councils — for example, consideration of value for money and integrity issues regarding the use of public funds. However, a restrictive policy setting — for example, one confined to a narrow category of 'council business' or subject to an unduly narrow definition of eligible care — may disproportionately affect councillors with young children.

Several stakeholders commented specifically on support for councillors with caring responsibilities, including to note that:

- reimbursement of caring expenses is not a discretionary benefit, but a necessary support to address barriers to participation
- there are challenges for councillors in balancing key elements of their role (e.g. out-of-hours meetings and other events) with caring responsibilities
- current arrangements may not fully cover the childcare costs incurred by councillors in performing their role, and hence that councillors would bear some of these costs.

The Tribunal also heard that claims for the reimbursement of childcare (and other) expenses have been 'weaponised', with the VLGA noting that:

'We have seen the claiming of childcare expenses politicised in a number of councils in recent years, with young women in particular singled out in council meetings for claiming these legitimate and legal expenses by their male counterparts.... We have also seen members of the public take the lead from some of the same councillors and denounce individual councillors for claiming travel, childcare or professional development expenses.'

The Tribunal requested data from councils on expense claims made by councillors, which indicated that a small proportion of councillors are claiming for costs associated with childcare or other caring responsibilities. For example, across the 54 councils responding to the data request, just 18 (of 452) councillors were reported to have claimed reimbursement of costs for child or other caring responsibilities, while 41 councils reported no claims.[a]

The Tribunal heard that access to childcare can materially affect the capacity of some people to nominate for election or participate fully in council activities. This suggests that childcare reimbursement is therefore relevant not only to fairness in individual cases, but also to broader objectives of diversity, participation and equitable access to elected office.

Note: (a) Some councils do not separately report expenses for councillors with child or other caring responsibilities and instead report these expenses in another category, such as 'expenses to support the performance of the role'.
Sources: De-identified submission 6; submission from VLGA.

Some councils provide certain support directly to councillors as an alternative to — or instead of — reimbursing expenses. Examples include making council-provided vehicles, mobile phones and computers available for councillors to use for council business or directly booking travel and accommodation for councillors rather than reimbursing private costs.

Tribunal's observations

The Tribunal carefully considered issues relating to the provision of guidance on expenses, resources and facilities for councillors. However, the Tribunal's view is that it is not empowered to make determinations or provide formal guidance on these matters. This is because the LG Act 2020 clearly provides for councils to determine their own arrangements for expenses, resources and facilities, while the Tribunal's remit under the VIRTIPS Act is limited to setting allowances.

Nonetheless, the Tribunal makes several high-level observations about the current arrangements.

Providing expenses, resources and facilities for councillors serves a valid purpose

The purpose of reimbursing councillors for out-of-pocket expenses incurred in performing their role is to ensure that they can perform that role effectively, and without bearing unreasonable personal costs. Simply put, reimbursing expenses returns councillors to the position they would have been in prior to incurring those costs.

These arrangements complement the provision of allowances but serve a different function. Allowances recognise the responsibilities, effort and commitment associated with the role of a councillor. Expenses, resources and facilities address the practical costs and tools required to carry out the role — they are not a private benefit.

A more consistent approach across councils appears to have several benefits

Several stakeholders advocated for greater consistency across councils in relation to the expenses, resources and facilities available to councillors.

Potential benefits of such an approach cited by stakeholders include:

- a more robust model that supports the contemporary role of a councillor and builds credibility with the community
- more equitable support for councillors who are performing similar roles

- reducing specific barriers to participation in council activities for certain groups, including people with disability, caring responsibilities and limited financial means
- more proportionate oversight processes that balance probity and integrity with administrative simplicity.

The Tribunal also heard that it was important to retain flexibility to address relevant differences across councils. However, while local circumstances can vary, these did not appear sufficient to justify some of the differences in policies observed by the Tribunal.

Transparency is an important element of any framework

The Tribunal noted mixed views amongst stakeholders on the nature and extent of public disclosure of councillor expense claims.

The Tribunal is mindful that detailed disclosure of reimbursement claims may increase the risk that these are 'weaponised', which can deter legitimate expense claims and subject councillors to inappropriate scrutiny. However, public disclosure is important to mitigating integrity risks, and it is reasonable to expect elected representatives to justify their use of public resources.

The Tribunal observed that there is substantial variation in how councils report expenses data in their annual reports and on their websites, including the expenses categories used for reporting purposes. As explained above, the Victorian Government has prescribed categories for councils to use when reporting expenses data in their annual reports. Greater uniformity in reporting would allow for more robust analysis of expenses data across councils, so that trends and potential improvements can be identified.

There are relevant insights from the arrangements for MPs expenses

The Tribunal sets the value of work-related allowances and the Electorate Office and Communications Budget for MPs, several of which are claimed on a reimbursement basis (i.e. are akin to expenses). The Tribunal also makes guidelines that set the eligibility criteria for, and permitted uses of, certain allowances.[310]

[310] Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (2025b).

Drawing on its experience in setting allowances for MPs, the Tribunal has identified several insights relevant to the expenses, resources and facilities available for councillors.

The Tribunal's guidelines for MPs are framed around statutory 'principles' and 'overarching obligations', which MPs must be aware of and comply with when using their allowances (Box 10.2). The use of high-level principles in this way frames how MPs approach claiming expenses, including how to interpret specific guidelines and to approach issues that may not be expressly provided for.

Box 10.2: Principles and overarching obligations for MP allowances

The *Parliamentary Salaries, Allowances and Superannuation Act 1968* (Vic) (PSAS Act) includes a 'Statement of Principles' that applies to MPs in using public resources, including allowances claimed on a reimbursement basis:

- 'fair and reasonable recompense for public duties', including that public resources are provided to support MPs in performing their public duties
- 'good faith and integrity', including that MPs must act ethically, reasonably and in good faith when using public resources
- 'personal responsibility and accountability', including that MPs must be prepared for claims to be made publicly available and be able to publicly justify their use of public resources.

The PSAS Act also imposes 'overarching obligations' that MPs must be aware of and comply with in their use of allowances to undertake their public duties:

- 'value for money' by ensuring that costs incurred are reasonable and proportionate
- claims must only be made for the 'dominant purpose of performing public duties' and for 'responsible and legitimate purposes'
- MPs must be aware of and comply with relevant guidance and not make a claim that would breach such guidance.

Source: PSAS Act, ss. 4A–4C, 9A–9C.

Second, the Tribunal has endeavoured to provide comprehensive guidance on both permitted and prohibited activities that can be claimed by MPs in performing their public duties. This provides clarity on specific requirements that capture most circumstances, while also recognising that the statutory principles and overarching obligations apply to issues that may not be expressly provided for in the guidelines.

Comprehensive guidance should be provided on the expenses, resources and facilities available to councillors

Overall, the Tribunal considers that clear guidance should be developed for councils on expenses, resources and facilities to ensure that these fully address barriers to participation for councillors and provide suitable support for them to perform their role.

Such guidance should cover:

- high-level principles to support the development and application of specific guidance — similar to those applying to MPs
- sector-wide guidelines or model policies that provide for a consistent approach to common issues, while retaining an appropriate level of local flexibility
- a 'baseline standard' of the expenses and support that should be available to all councillors, including for professional development and to recognise caring responsibilities
- the use of standard definitions (e.g. for council business) and consistent reimbursement rates (e.g. vehicle mileage)
- a consistent approach to oversight and public reporting, including the expense categories to be disclosed and the format and frequency of disclosure.

10.2 A 'councillor assist' program was proposed to address psychosocial risks for councillors

The Tribunal heard from multiple stakeholders that councillors are exposed to a range of psychosocial risks, and that there are limitations with the existing supports available to mitigate these. Several stakeholders proposed a 'councillor assist' program as a new model for supporting councillors.

Several aspects of a councillor's role expose them to psychosocial risks

The Tribunal heard of different sources of psychosocial risk that, at an individual level, can cause councillors to experience emotional fatigue and anxiety, and to feel unsafe.

Several stakeholders pointed to inherent aspects of the role that can affect the well-being of councillors — several of which were discussed in Chapter 4.

Additionally, Glen Eira City Council noted:

> *The increasing complexity and intensity of the councillor role has amplified exposure to psychosocial risk, harassment, conflict and burnout. Councillors routinely engage with emotionally charged community issues, manage online and in-person abuse, and make high-stakes decisions with limited formal support.*

Others noted that, while engagement with the community in person or via social media is a core element of a councillor's role, it can also be a source of stress and anxiety. One councillor observed that:

> *As a consumer of social media, I was aware of the kinds of communication I would be subjected to … but nevertheless it can be hurtful to myself, but more so my family who support me in my council role. In regional areas, this impact of negative social media is amplified because of the close nature of our relationships with each other … I therefore need to be particularly cognisant of if and how I respond, and this cognitive load is unique to councillors in regional and rural areas.*

The behaviour of — and interaction between — councillors is also a challenge for councillors. While some tensions between councillors may reflect different perspectives on significant, sensitive or complex issues, the Tribunal heard that there can be hostility and conflict within the council chamber.

VLGA's *2025 Victorian Councillor Census* reported that a large proportion of councillors — particularly women, but also men — had experienced inappropriate behaviour from members of the public and their colleagues (Table 10.1).

Table 10.1: 2025 Victorian Councillor Census responses to questions on inappropriate behaviour (per cent)

	Men	Women
Regularly or often receive threatening behaviour from a member of the public	45	44
Regularly or often receive threatening behaviour from another councillor	23	39
Regularly or often receive bullying or harassment from a member of the public	15	34
Regularly or often receive bullying or harassment from another councillor	17	44

Source: VLGA (2026), p. 10.

The cumulative effect of different factors can take a significant toll on councillors, that in turn can impact their performance as a councillor and other facets of their life — and their willingness to remain in the role.

VLGA noted:

> *the emotional toll of this behaviour; stress, anxiety, resignation, and reduced engagement. For some, the role still inspires them to push for systemic*

change, while for others, the ongoing hostility dampens their commitment and makes the job feel less safe and collaborative.

The Tribunal was told that there are mechanisms in place that are intended to reduce or mitigate these risks, but that they may not be effective in doing so.

There were, for example, mixed views on the effectiveness of employee assistance or other programs available to councillors. VLGA noted that some councillors may not be aware of such programs or, citing confidentiality issues, choose not to make use of them.

MAV also observed that, while there were benefits from the development of a Model Code of Conduct for all councils, there may also have been unintended consequences. In particular, MAV posited that the Model Code of Conduct may have supplanted the ability of councils to:

establish a shared understanding about culture and conduct and to adopt their own Councillor Code of Conduct with which they will hold each other to account. The Code is now imposed, with interpretational disputes less easily resolved in house.

A 'councillor assist' program was proposed in response to these issues

In their submissions to this Determination, MAV, VLGA and ALGWA Victoria presented broadly similar models for a 'councillor assist' program.

These programs would provide independent, sector-wide support services to address the specific pressures associated with elected local government office. Although there were slight differences in the proposed service mix, common elements include confidential counselling, conflict support, critical incident response, tailored mental health and wellbeing services and legal support.

The Tribunal heard — and agrees with — the view that an allowance-based approach to a 'councillor assist' program was likely to be ineffective. This is because such an approach is based on an assumption that councillors will identify and access support themselves, despite concerns about confidentiality, service quality and uneven access to support services.

However, this does not detract from the fundamental issue. Preventing or, where that is not possible, mitigating the impact of psychosocial risks is important. Doing so will improve both the well-being of councillors (by increasing their capacity and resilience in dealing with challenging situations) and governance outcomes within councils (through improved councillor behaviour and relationships, and fewer conduct issues).

Notwithstanding the issues discussed above, councils are best placed to resolve these issues in the first instance. Councils are closest to the realities of the councillor role and the specific governance environments in which these risks arise. They also have a strong interest in preventing harm before it escalates into conduct issues, poor working relationships or reduced council effectiveness.

While a 'councillor assist' program could form part of the response to these issues, councils — both councillors and the council administration — can and should do more to improve councillor behaviour and put in place proactive, accessible and trusted supports for councillors.

Appendix A – Letter from Tribunal Chair to the Minister for Local Government

Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal

Suite 1, Ground Floor
1 Treasury Place
Melbourne, Victoria 3002 Australia
enquiries@remunerationtribunal.vic.gov.au

The Hon Nick Staikos
Minister for Local Government
2 Treasury Place
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

By email: minister.staikos@dgs.vic.gov.au

Dear Minister

PROPOSED COMPREHENSIVE DETERMINATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ALLOWANCES

The Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal made its first local government comprehensive determination in 2022, which implemented a new allowance structure for elected local government representatives and re-set the values of those allowances.

The Tribunal considered that an increase to allowance values was justified at that time for several reasons, including the changes to the scope and complexity of councillor roles, the high level of community expectation on councillors and that allowance values had not kept pace with broader wages and prices.

The Tribunal has made annual adjustment determinations in each subsequent year, which have sought to broadly maintain the value of allowances. However, annual adjustment determinations do not provide a vehicle to consider broader issues, including a thorough review of the structure or value of allowances.

Feedback to the Tribunal through consultation on successive annual adjustments and other stakeholder engagement has raised the following substantive issues with the current allowance framework:

- further changes to the nature, complexity and workload of councillor roles since 2022
- updated data on the time commitment for councillors to perform their role, which appears to have increased (based on the recent census undertaken by the Victorian Local Governance Association)
- suggested changes to the structure of allowances and the allocation of councils to different allowance categories (which are based on the population and revenue of a council)
- challenges in attracting and retaining councillors with the skills and capabilities to perform their role and represent the diversity of our communities.

While there are diverse views on some of these issues, the Tribunal considers that it would be timely to undertake a new comprehensive determination to review the roles of councillors and implications for the structure and value of allowances.

However, under the *Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and Improving Parliamentary Standards Act 2019* (VIRTIPS Act), the next comprehensive determination is not due until 2029 — which is over seven years since the Tribunal's first comprehensive determination. The Tribunal considers that this timeframe is too long to address the substantive issues raised by stakeholders, support a capable and representative councillor cohort and ensure councillors are treated fairly.

The Tribunal therefore proposes that the next local government comprehensive determination be undertaken in 2026.

There are several advantages to undertaking a comprehensive determination in 2026, including that:

- substantive issues raised by stakeholders — which are likely to be raised again via an annual adjustment determination — would be carefully considered through a transparent and independent process
- the implications of recent state government reforms (including to improve governance and accountability arrangements for local government) would also be considered
- any changes to the structure or value of local government allowances would be implemented well ahead of the 2028 local government elections
- it would broadly align with the four-year period between comprehensive determinations for other groups covered by the Tribunal (including Members of Parliament).

This timeframe would complement the Tribunal's existing work program and the determination can be undertaken within existing resources. The Tribunal notes that the proposed comprehensive determination in 2026 would effectively replace the annual adjustment determination that would otherwise be required by the VIRTIPS Act.

Under the VIRTIPS Act, the Minister for Local Government can, in consultation with the Minister for Finance, request that the Tribunal make a new comprehensive determination, which would need to be completed within six months of a request from the Minister.

The Tribunal proposes that it makes a comprehensive determination in mid-2026 to align with the usual timing for an annual adjustment determination. In this scenario, the Tribunal would appreciate an early indication of your views on this proposal, which would enable early planning for a determination in its forward work program; a formal request could then be provided in December 2025 for the Tribunal to make the determination in June 2026. The Tribunal would be happy to accommodate an alternative timeline — noting that a comprehensive determination would in practice need to be made no later than 31 December 2026.

The Tribunal has had preliminary discussions with Local Government Victoria on this proposal and would be pleased to discuss it with you directly.

I have copied this letter to the Minister for Finance.

Yours sincerely

Warren McCann
Chair
Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal
5 June 2025

Appendix B – Letter from Minister for Local Government to the Tribunal

The Hon Nick Staikos MP

Minister for Consumer Affairs
Minister for Local Government

Level 1, 2 Treasury Place
East Melbourne, Victoria 3002

Mr Warren McCann
Chair
Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal
By email: enquiries@remunerationtribunal.vic.gov.au

BMIN-251200076

Dear Mr McCann,

Thank you for your letter of 5 June 2025 seeking my agreement to bring forward the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal's (the Tribunal) next comprehensive determination of mayoral, deputy mayoral and councillor allowances (council allowances).

Following consultation with the Minister for Finance, the Hon Danny Pearson MP, I am writing to formally request that the Tribunal make a new determination of council allowances under section 23A(6) of the *Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and Improving Parliamentary Standards Act 2019*.

In addition to the matters raised in your letter of 5 June 2025, the Tribunal may wish to consider the following matters:

- any relationship between council allowances and the diversity and representation of council members (in particular, the representation of women)
- the alignment of allowances for mayors, deputy mayors and acting mayors to the roles, responsibilities and capabilities under the *Local Government Act 2020* (LGA 2020)
- any guidance the Tribunal may provide to support consistent council arrangements for the expenses, resources and facilities reasonably necessary for council members to perform their roles
- whether access to a councillor assist program should be included in the available allowances to councillors
- any recent events that may be relevant to the Tribunal's view of the purpose of council allowances, including the State of Disaster declared from 10 January 2026 and changes to the electoral representation framework under the LGA 2020.

Tribunal secretariat officers may contact Dan Harper, Acting Executive Director, Local Government Victoria on 0400 944 737 or at dan.harper@dgs.vic.gov.au for further information.

Thank you for undertaking this important task for the Victorian local government sector. I look forward to the Tribunal's next determination of council allowances.

Sincerely,

The Hon Nick Staikos MP
Minister for Consumer Affairs
Minister for Local Government

18 / 2 / 2026

Appendix C – Summary of councillor questionnaire responses

The Tribunal invited each of the 647 currently serving councillors (plus an administrator) across all Victorian councils to complete an anonymous online questionnaire. The Tribunal sought information through this questionnaire to understand councillor views and experiences on the role of a councillor, current councillor allowances, and relativities between roles.

The questionnaire contained 50 questions, grouped into five sections:

- background information
- roles and responsibilities
- values of allowances and allowance categories
- remote area travel allowance
- demographic questions.

Respondents were required to answer six questions; all other questions were optional. Thirteen questions allowed free-text responses. No single person could have answered all 50 questions as some questions contained branching logic.[311]

The Tribunal received 206 responses to the questionnaire, representing approximately 32 per cent of all councillors in Victoria. The margin of error for the questionnaire, based on a population size of 648 and a 99 per cent confidence level, is 7 per cent.[312] The profile of respondents to the questionnaire is broadly proportionate to the total councillor cohort based on specific role (councillor, deputy mayor and mayor), council group (small shire, large shire, regional city, interface and metropolitan) and gender identification.[313]

[311] Branching logic is the term used when respondents are directed through different paths in the questionnaire based on their answers.

[312] The margin of error indicates how much the questionnaire results can be expected to reflect the views of the whole cohort of Victorian councillors. The margin of error is a range of values above and below the actual results from the survey. For example, a 60 per cent 'yes' response with a margin of error of 7 per cent and a confidence level of 99 per cent means that there is a 99 per cent probability that between 53 and 67 per cent of the whole cohort would answer 'yes'. SurveyMonkey (n.d.).

[313] The Tribunal does not have other demographic data, such as age, diversity, and completed education, and therefore cannot determine proportionality against all data received in the questionnaire.

C.1 Questionnaire responses

Information on the questions asked, and responses received, is provided below. All feedback has been considered, and additional information and commentary has been summarised in the chapters of this Statement of Reasons where relevant, particularly from the free-text questions.

Questions with an asterisk were mandatory.

Background information

The distribution of roles (Table C.1) by respondents was broadly proportionate to the actual councillor cohort. 196 respondents stated that their council has both a mayor and deputy mayor.

Respondents were asked whether they have served or acted as deputy mayor and/or mayor in the past (Tables C.2 – C.4) to identify any material differences in their views on different roles.

Table C.1: What is your current role on council?*

Answer choices	Branching logic	Responses Number	%
Mayor	Go to Table C.2	29	14
Deputy Mayor	Go to Table C.3	32	16
Councillor	Go to Table C.4	145	70
Total		206	

Note: The percentages in this table may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Table C.2: Have you served as a deputy mayor in the past?

Answer choices	Responses Number	%
Yes	16	55
No	13	45
Total	29	

Note: This question was posed only to those respondents who had answered 'Mayor' in Question 1. The percentages in this table may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Table C.3: Have you served or acted as mayor in the past?

Answer choices	Responses Number	%
Yes	10	31
No	22	69
Total	32	

Note: This question was posed only to those respondents who had answered 'Deputy Mayor' in Question 1. The percentages in this table may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Table C.4: Have you served as mayor (including in an acting capacity) or deputy mayor in the past?

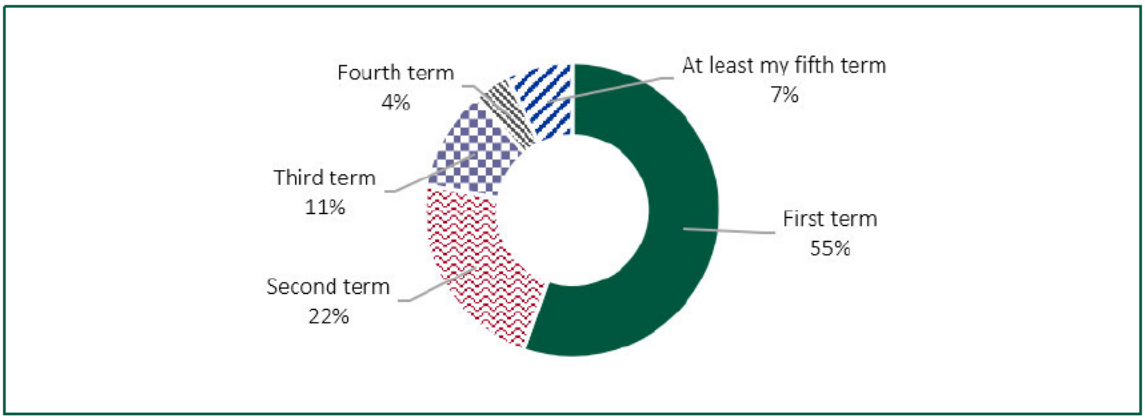
Answer choices	Responses Number	%
Yes, I have previously served as mayor	23	16
Yes, I have previously served as deputy mayor	14	10
Yes, I have previously served as both mayor and deputy mayor	19	13
No	89	61
Total	145	

Note: This question was posed only to those respondents who had answered 'Councillor' in Question 1. The percentages in this table may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Councils can have a number of committees, including an Audit and Risk Committee and other established 'delegated committees' (see Chapter 4 for further information). 81 per cent of respondents stated they are a member of a standing or ongoing committee.

The majority of respondents are in their first term (Figure C.1), which is consistent with responses to the 2022 Comprehensive Determination questionnaire.

Figure C.1: How many terms have you served on council (including prior service on other councils)?*



Note: This question received 206 responses. The percentages in this table may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Roles and responsibilities of councillors

In addition to the questions below, respondents were asked to provide 'free text' comments on the differences between councillor, deputy mayor and mayor roles; how the roles have changed over time; the impacts of council service on their employment or family life; the benefits to them of serving as a councillor; and future trends affecting the roles. Chapter 4 includes a discussion on the role of councillors.

Workload and skills required for the role

The majority of respondents stated that councillor work consumes between 16 and 31 hours per week, excluding travel time, with 16 to 23 hours per week being the most common response (Table C.5).

Respondents were then asked how much time they think is required to perform their role effectively (Table C.6). Nearly 63 per cent of respondents stated that at least 24 hours or more are required per week to perform their council role effectively.

Table C.5: During a typical week, how many hours (not including travel time) do you personally dedicate to your role?

Answer choices	Responses Number	%
Less than 4 hours	1	0.5
4 to 7 hours	4	2
8 to 15 hours	28	14
16 to 23 hours	58	30
24 to 31 hours	50	26
32 to 39 hours	29	15
40 to 47 hours	12	6
48 hours or more	14	7
Total	196	

Note: The percentages in this table may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Table C.6: During a typical week, how many hours (not including travel time) do you think are required to perform your role effectively?

Answer choices	Responses Number	%
Less than 4 hours	0	0
4 to 7 hours	4	2
8 to 15 hours	23	12
16 to 23 hours	47	24
24 to 31 hours	56	28
32 to 39 hours	33	17
40 to 47 hours	22	11
48 hours or more	12	6
Total	197	

Note: The percentages in this table may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Travel is an additional time commitment for some councillors. Over 75 per cent stated they spend less than 5 hours per week travelling for their role (Table C.7), but this is skewed by council types.

Table C.7: During a typical week, how many hours do you spend travelling to fulfil your council duties and responsibilities?

Answer choices	Responses Number	%
Less than 3 hours	78	40
3 to 5 hours	73	37
6 to 8 hours	30	15
9 to 11 hours	11	6
12 hours or more	5	3
Total	197	

Note: The percentages in this table may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Of the time spent by councillors on their role each week, on average, most time was spent preparing for and attending council-related meetings and the least amount of time was spent on professional development (Table C.8).

Table C.8: Please indicate the percentage of time you spend on the following activities during a typical week. Please enter whole numbers only. Your responses to all five activities must equal 100.

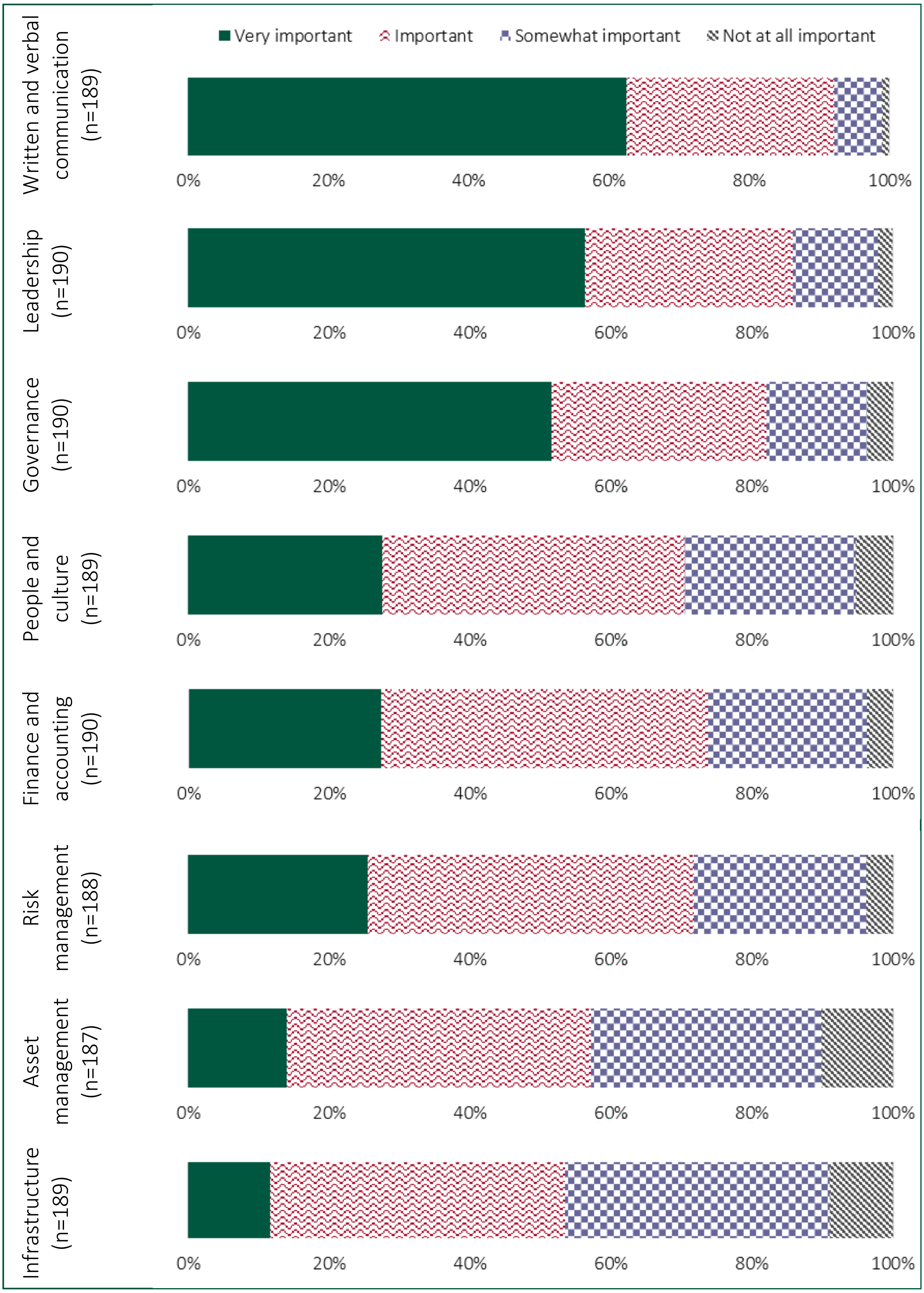
Answer choices	Responses Average %
Preparing for and attending council and committee meetings and briefings	43
Engaging with the community (including attending community events), council staff and other levels of government	30
Developing and reviewing the council's strategic documents (e.g. annual report, budget)	16
Engaging in professional development activities	7
Other	9

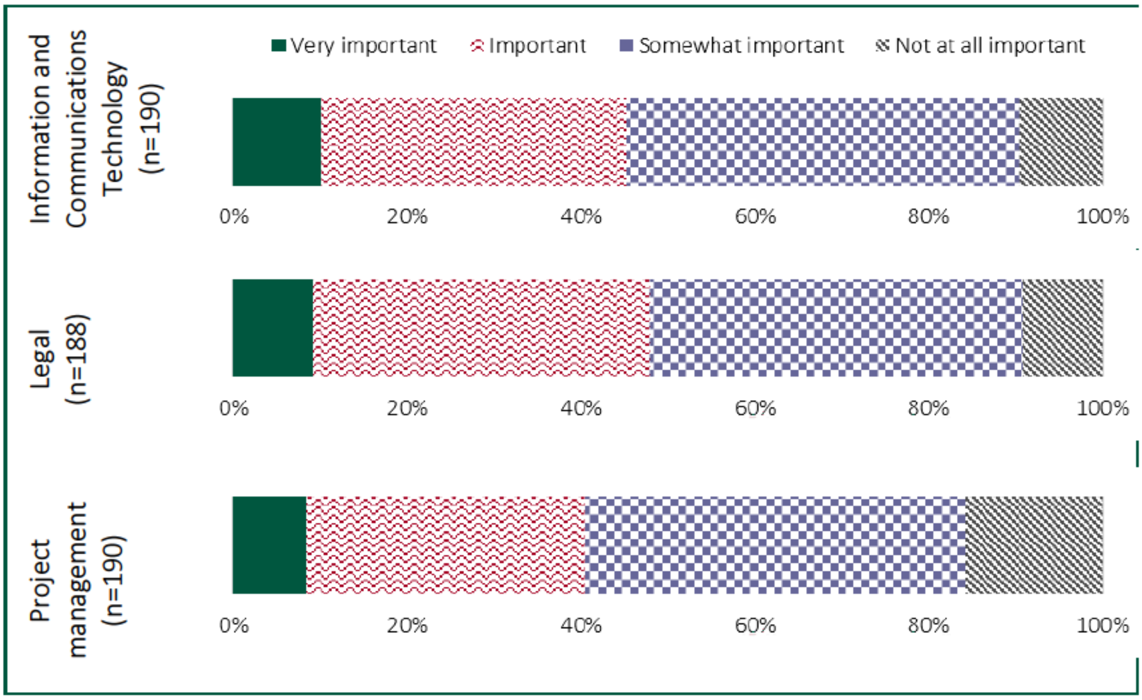
Note: The percentages in this table exceed 100 per cent as it is the average percentage provided for each option from all responses.

Respondents were asked to select a level of importance for councillors to have expertise in different skill areas from 'very important' to 'not at all important' — Table C.9 presents the proportions that selected each skill as 'very important' or 'important'.

Written and verbal communication, leadership, and governance, were the highest ranked each with a combined response above 80 per cent for 'very important' or 'important'. Finance and accounting, people and culture, and risk management were also ranked highly, with a combined response above 70 per cent. Project management was the only skill to have a response rate above 10 per cent for 'not at all important'.

Table C.9: How important is it for councillors to have expertise in the following areas (for example, from prior study or work)?





Adjustments made to perform the role of councillor

Reducing hours worked in paid employment was the most common adjustment respondents have made to fulfill their councillor role, closely followed by utilising flexible working arrangements. A reasonably high proportion also indicated that they have taken leave from or stopped paid employment. Other adjustments provided by respondents included employing extra staff in a business, purchasing leave and changing roles (Table C.10).

The 87 respondents who reported that they reduced their hours in paid employment were then asked to estimate the number of hours per week by which they had reduced their paid employment. The responses ranged from 4 hours to 40 hours per week, with a median of 15 hours per week.

Table C.10: What adjustments, if any, have you made to your paid employment in order to fulfill your council role? Please select all that apply. (n=196)

Answer choices	Responses Number	%
Reduced hours in paid employment	87	44
Utilised flexible working arrangements	79	40
Stopped paid employment	56	29
Taken leave	52	27
Not applicable	21	11
Other (please specify)	30	15

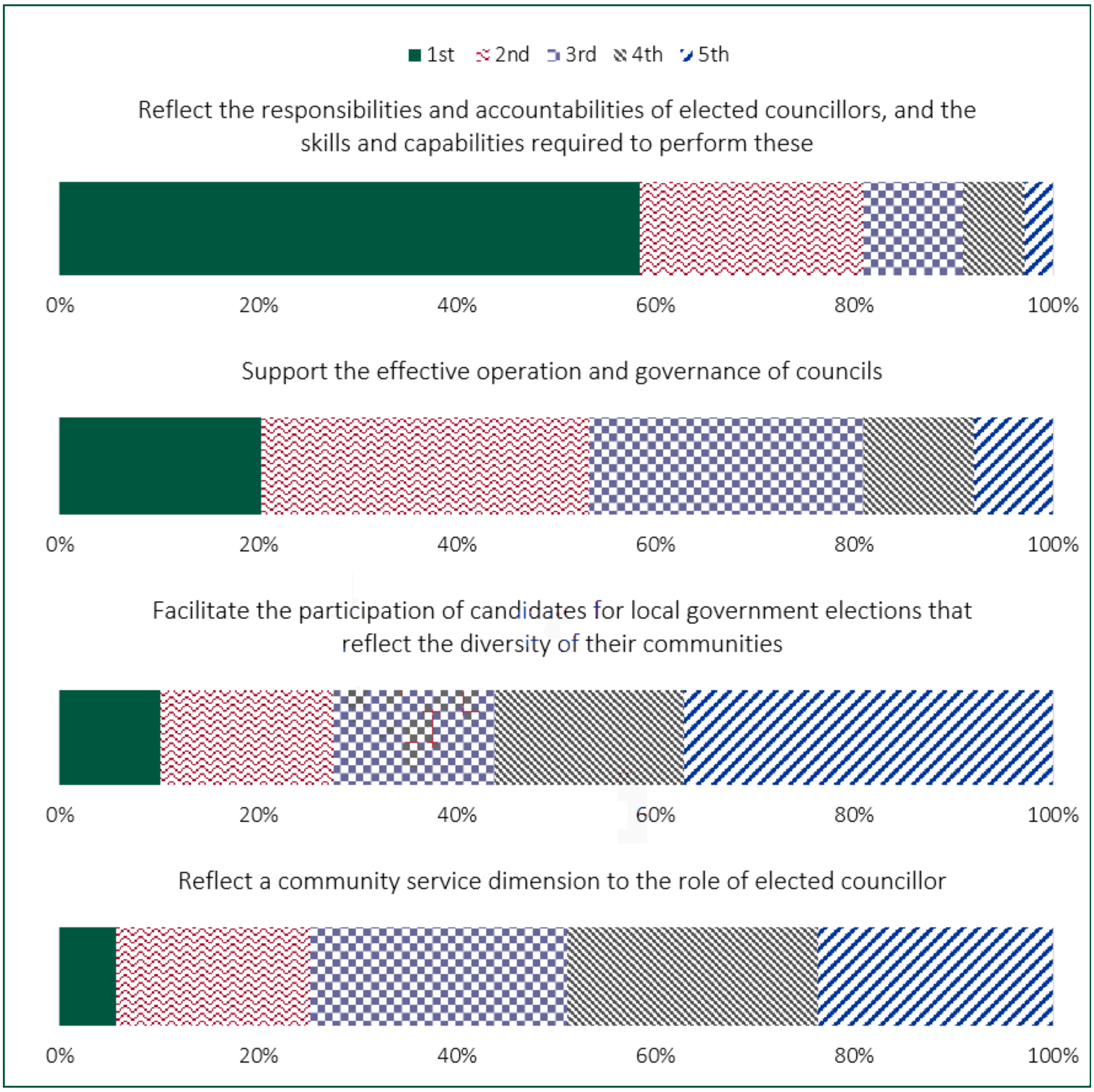
Note: The sum of the percentages in this table exceeds 100 as respondents were able to select more than one option.

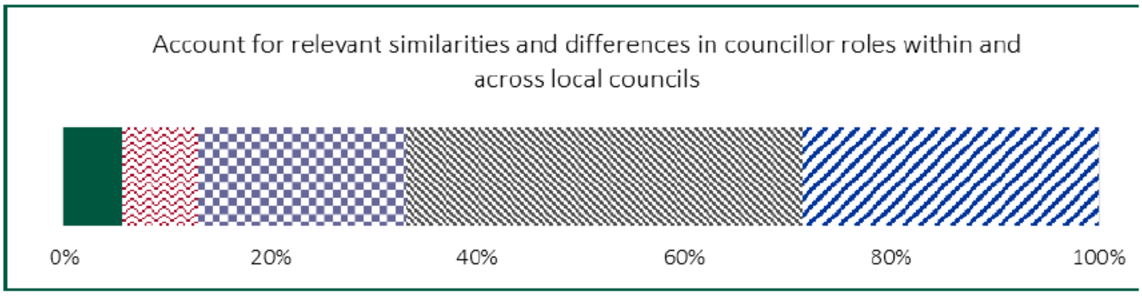
Values of allowances and allowance categories

Views on the value of allowances

Respondents were asked to rank five considerations for setting the value of allowances (Table C.11). The most important consideration for respondents, with over 80 per cent ranking it either first or second, was to 'reflect the responsibilities and accountabilities of elected councillors, and the skills and capabilities required to perform these'. The lowest ranked consideration was to 'account for relevant similarities and differences in councillor roles within and across local councils', with approximately 67 per cent of respondents ranking it fourth or lower.

Table C.11: Please rank the following considerations according to how much weight they should be given in setting the values of allowances, from most to least. (n=178)





Section 39(5) of the LG Act 2020 provides that councillors can opt to decline payment of some or all of the allowance that they are entitled to. Nearly 90 per cent of respondents stated that they have never declined any of their allowance (Table C.12). A small number of respondents provided their reasons for declining their allowance, which included the financial position of their council, community expectations, and views about relativities between roles.

Table C.12: Have you ever declined some or all of your allowance?

Answer choices	Branching logic	Responses Number	%
Yes – all of my allowance	Additional free-text question	2	1
Yes – some of my allowance	Additional free-text question	15	8
No	Go to Figure C.2	161	88
Prefer not to say	Go to Figure C.2	6	3
Total		184	

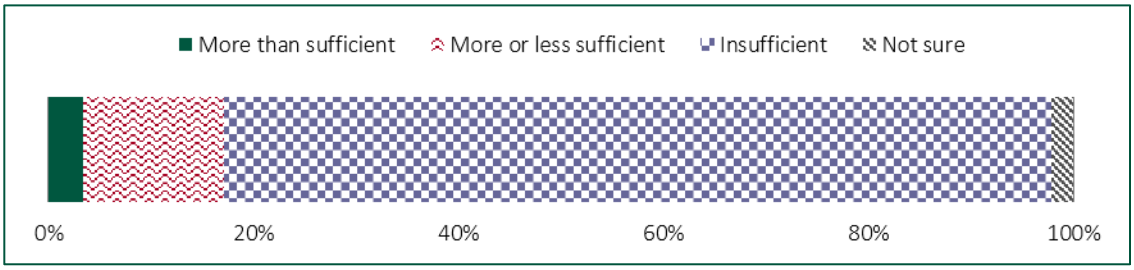
Note: The percentages in this table may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

The current allowance framework, including the allowances payable to councillors, deputy mayors and mayors and allowance categories, is presented in Chapter 5. Over 80 per cent of respondents thought that their allowance is insufficient, with only 3 per cent saying it is more than sufficient (Figure C.2).

Respondents were asked to describe in 'free text' what other factors, besides the allowance, will influence their decision to stand at the next election. The most common themes were related to (see Chapter 4 for further discussion):

- balancing council service with family, work and personal wellbeing
- financial sustainability, employment and business impacts
- council culture and public behaviour
- the ability to make meaningful impacts in the community.

Figure C.2: Is your current allowance … (n=182)



Over half of the respondents thought that the difference between the current value of the allowance for a councillor and that for the mayor at their council is 'too large' (Figure C.3). When comparing the value of the allowance for a councillor and deputy mayor at their council, the most common response was that the difference was 'about right' (Figure C.4).

Figure C.3: For your council, is the current difference in value between the mayoral allowance and councillor allowance … (n=183)

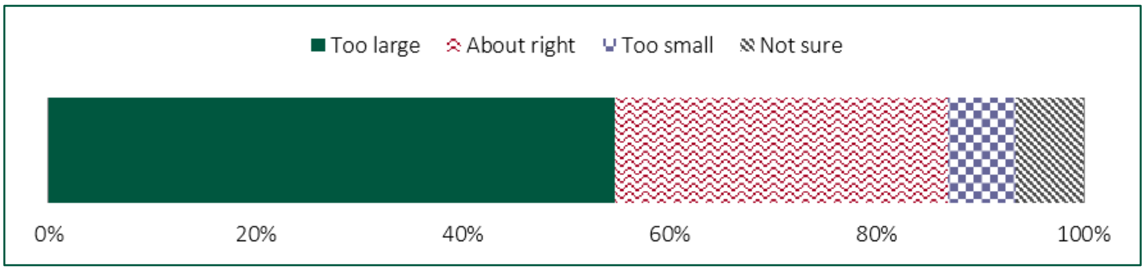
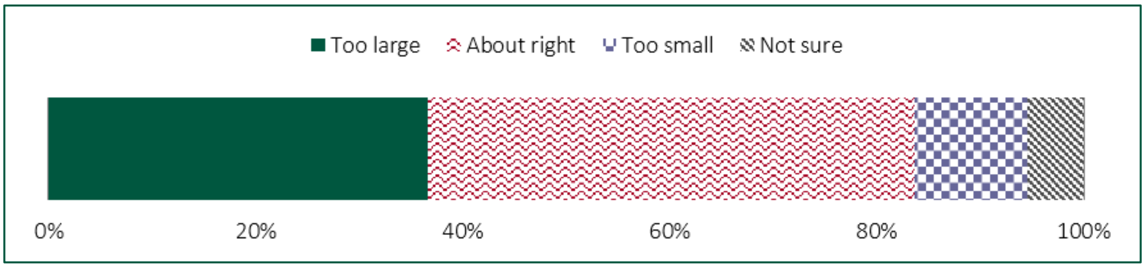


Figure C.4: If applicable for your council, is the current difference in value between the deputy mayoral allowance and councillor allowance … (n=183)



Views on the allowance categories

When asked about the current method for categorising councils by population and total recurrent revenue, around 46 per cent of respondents thought that it is 'not appropriate' while just over 30 per cent thought it appropriate (Figure C.5). Respondents were asked to select the factors they think should be considered — population size, geographical area and location were the most common responses, followed by value of assets and infrastructure, and revenue (Table C.13).

Figure C.5: Do you consider the existing method for categorising councils – according to population and total recurrent revenue – to be appropriate? (n=182)

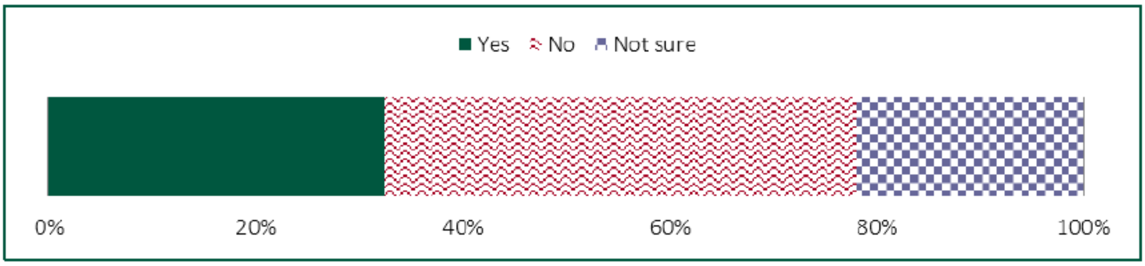


Table C.13: Which factors, if any, do you consider should be taken into account in assigning councils to categories? Please select up to three. (n=177)

Answer choices	Responses Number	%
Population size	83	47
Geographical area	65	37
Location (e.g. metropolitan, rural)	62	35
Value of assets and infrastructure under council management	54	31
Council revenue	54	31
Council expenditure	42	24
Ward structure (e.g. unsubdivided, multi-member wards)	35	20
Population demographics	32	18
Geographical characteristics (e.g. terrain, coastline)	28	16
Other, please specify below	19	11

Note: The sum of the percentages in this table exceeds 100 as respondents were able to select up to three options.

Impact of allowances

Respondents were asked how important the value of the allowance is for their decision to stand again in the next election. Views were mixed, with 'somewhat important' and 'very important' being the most common responses (Table C.14).

Table C.14: How important will the value of the allowance be in your decision to stand (or not stand) for council at the next election?

Answer choices	Responses Number	%
Most important	28	15
Very important	47	26
Important	30	17
Somewhat important	51	28
Not at all important	25	14
Total	181	

Note: The percentages in this table may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Most respondents thought that the existing allowances do not facilitate participation by candidates that reflect the diversity of their communities (Table C.15).

In their 'free text' responses, councillors noted that, while the allowance may not be the primary consideration, financial barriers can limit participation in council roles, making them more accessible to people who are financially secure or retired. Respondents identified women — particularly working mothers — younger people, carers, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and people with disability as groups that may face greater barriers. They also noted that the significant time commitment required can be difficult to balance with employment and caring responsibilities.

Table C.15: Do you think the existing allowances facilitate the participation of candidates that reflect the diversity of their communities?

Answer choices	Responses Number	%
Yes	22	12
No	132	74
Not sure	24	13
Total	178	

Note: The percentages in this table may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Remote area travel allowance

Nearly 17 per cent of respondents stated that they claimed the RATA in calendar year 2025, nearly all of whom were from regional or rural councils (Table C.16).

Of the respondents that expressed a view on specific elements of the RATA, there were mixed views about the daily rate, annual cap, and distance requirements (Table C.17). Most respondents answered that they were 'not sure' about these elements of the RATA, which reflects that they were generally from councils where the RATA is less likely to be claimed, principally metropolitan and interface councils.

Table C.16: Did you claim the RATA in 2025?

Answer choices	Responses Number	%
Yes	30	17
No	150	83
Total	180	

Note: The percentages in this table may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Table C.17: What is your view on the following aspects of the RATA?

Answer choices	Too high (%)	About right (%)	Too low (%)	Not sure (%)
Daily rate of $48.90 (n=164)	1	22	24	53
Annual cap of $6,112.50 (n=163)	4	24	20	53
Distance requirement of at least 50km (n=166)	10	30	12	48

Note: The percentages in this table by row may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Demographic questions

Respondents were asked to identify which of the allowance categories set by the Tribunal applied to their council. The proportion of respondents in each allowance category is broadly aligned with the actual distribution of councillors in each allowance category — although there was a slightly higher response rate from councillors in allowance categories 2 and 3 (Table C.18).

Table C.18: Which 'allowance category' applies to your council?

Answer choices	Responses Number	%
Category 1	51	28
Category 2	50	28
Category 3	77	43
Category 4	3	2
Total	181	

Note: The percentages in this table may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

LGV divides Victoria's 79 councils into five groups based on their location, size, demographics and funding (see Chapter 3 for further discussion about councils). The profile of respondents broadly reflected the actual distribution of councillors across these groups, however, regional city councils were over-represented with 23 per cent (the actual is 13 per cent) and large shires were under-represented with 13 per cent (the actual is 24 per cent) (Table C.19).

Table C.19: Which of the following council groups applies to your council? You can check this on the VAGO local government data dashboard.

Answer choices	Responses Number	%
Metropolitan	67	33
Interface	26	13
Regional	48	23
Large shire	26	13
Small shire	38	19
Total	205	

Note: The percentages in this table may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

The gender of respondents (Table C.20) is consistent with that of the actual councillor cohort — which is 56 per cent male and 42 per cent female.[314]

Table C.20: What gender do you identify as?

Answer choices	Responses Number	%
Woman or female	74	41
Man or male	101	56
Non-binary	1	0
Prefer not to say	5	3
Use a different term (please specify if you wish)	0	0
Total	181	

Note: The percentages in this table may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

All but one respondent were aged 25 years or older, and nearly 67 per cent were aged between 35 and 64 years old (Table C.21).

Table C.21: What is your age?

Answer choices Years	Responses Number	%
Under 25	1	1
25-34	15	8
35-44	37	20
45-54	41	23
55-64	44	24
65 or over	38	21
Prefer not to say	5	3
Total	181	

Note: The percentages in this table may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Around 19 per cent of respondents come from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background (Table C.22), and 2 per cent are of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin (Table C.23).

Table C.22: Do you come from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background?

Answer choices	Responses Number	%
Yes	34	19
No	141	78
Prefer not to say	6	3
Total	181	

Note: The percentages in this table may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

[314] Based on data provided to the Tribunal by LGV, February 2026.

Table C.23: Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?

Answer choices	Responses Number	%
Yes	4	2
No	167	92
Prefer not to say	10	6
Total	181	

Note: The percentages in this table may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Approximately 9 per cent of respondents identify as a person with disability (Table C.24).

Table C.24: Do you identify as a person with disability?

Answer choices	Responses Number	%
Yes	17	9
No	150	83
Prefer not to say	13	7
Total	180	

Note: The percentages in this table may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Over 80 per cent of respondents reported that they had some form of higher education — either a technical or a university qualification (Table C.25).

Table C.25: What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Answer choices	Responses Number	%
Postgraduate degree (e.g. Master's degree, PhD)	72	40
Undergraduate degree (e.g. Bachelor's degree)	58	32
TAFE qualification/apprenticeship	24	13
High school	21	12
Did not complete high school	3	2
Prefer not to say	3	2
Total	181	

Note: The percentages in this table may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

The most common primary occupations reported by respondents were 'professional' (39 per cent) and 'manager' (23 per cent) (Table C.26). The 'other' occupations listed by respondents included farmer, business owners, and public servant.

Table C.26: Which of these best describes your current (or former) primary occupation (besides councillor, deputy mayor or mayor)?

Answer choices	Responses Number	%
Professional (e.g. accountant, lawyer, doctor, teacher)	69	39
Manager (e.g. CEO, farm manager, retail manager)	41	23
Community or personal service worker (e.g. carer, police officer)	12	7
Sales worker	9	5
Clerical or administration	7	4
Technician or trade worker	3	2
Labourer or machinery operator (e.g. driver)	2	1
Prefer not to say	2	1
Other (please specify)	33	19
Total	178	

Note: The percentages in this table may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding. List adapted from ABS (2024).

Respondents were asked to select their employment status, outside their role as a councillor. Most reported that they were in some form of employment, but 'caring for children and/or other dependants' and 'volunteering or other unpaid work' were also common (Table C.27).

Table C.27: Outside of your role as mayor, deputy mayor or councillor, which of these describe your current employment status? Please select all that apply. (n=180)

Answer choices	Branching logic	Responses Number	%
Engaged in paid employment	Go to Table C.28	66	37
Self-employed	Go to Table C.28	63	35
Volunteering or other unpaid work	Go to Table C.28	38	21
Caring for children and/or other dependants	Go to Table C.28	37	21
Studying	Go to Table C.28	11	6
Retired	Go to Table C.29	22	12
Taking leave from paid employment (e.g. sabbatical)	Go to Table C.29	15	8
Unemployed and looking for paid employment	Go to Table C.29	8	4
Unemployed and not looking for paid employment	Go to Table C.29	5	3
Prefer not to say	Go to Table C.29	5	3
Other (please specify)	Go to Table C.29	9	5

Note: The percentages in this table exceed 100 per cent as respondents were asked to select all that apply.

Respondents that selected at least one of the relevant answers in the above table (Table C.27) were then asked how many hours they spend per week on paid employment, caring, studying or volunteering, in addition to their work as a councillor (Table C.28). The most common response (26 per cent) was that they spend between 20 and 29 hours per week on those other activities.

Table C.28: On average, how many hours do you spend per week on paid employment, caring, studying or volunteering activities (excluding your council duties)?

Answer choices	Responses	
Hours	Number	%
Less than 10	8	6
10 to 19	22	16
20 to 29	36	26
30 to 39	32	23
40 to 47	17	12
48 or more	22	16
Prefer not to say	1	1
Total	138	

Note: The percentages in this table may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Excluding the councillor allowance, 37 per cent of respondents reported that they received less than $45,000 per year from all other income types (Table C.29). Of those who answered, only 12 per cent reported an annual income of more than $135,000.

Table C.29: What is your gross annual income from all sources (excluding your councillor allowance)?

Answer choices	Responses	
$ per annum	Number	%
45,000 or less	66	37
45,001 to 80,000	34	19
80,001 to 135,000	35	20
135,001 to 190,000	14	8
190,001 or more	7	4
Prefer not to say	22	12
Total	178	

Note: The percentages in this table may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding. Range options were developed to broadly reflect the applicable tax brackets at the time, determined by the Australian Taxation Office.

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