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TO ALL LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

CIRCULAR N^o 04-2016

NEW REQUIREMENTS FOR DISCLOSURE OF GIFTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO TRAVEL AND REMOTE ATTENDANCE AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

The *City of Perth Act 2016* received Royal Assent on 3 March 2016 and amends the gift and contributions to travel provisions within the *Local Government Act 1995* (the Act). Associated amendments have also been made to the following:

- The *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996*, and
- The *Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations 2007*.

This circular should be distributed to elected members and designated employees of your local government as the amendments impact on them.

The Department of Local Government and Communities will be releasing a special edition of the Governance Bulletin containing various scenarios to assist with the identification and declaration of gifts.

Summary

As of 4 March 2016, the Act requires **relevant persons** who accept a gift worth more than \$200 to disclose this gift, in writing, to the chief executive officer (CEO) within 10 days of receipt. This replaces the previous process of disclosing these in the annual return. All contributions to travel over \$200 must also be disclosed as do multiple gifts or contributions from the same donor where the total value is over \$200.

The threshold for disclosures remains the same as do the other disclosures required under the Act for the annual return.

A relevant person is defined under section 5.74 of the Act as a person who is a council member or a designated employee which includes:

- mayors
- presidents
- council members
- the CEO
- employees with delegated powers and duties under Part 5, Division 4 of the Act
- employees who are members of committees comprising elected members and employees, and
- other employees nominated by the local government to be designated employees.

Details of the major amendments are outlined below.

Local Government Act 1995 amendments

New disclosure requirements

Section 5.78(1) is amended to remove the need to disclose gifts and contributions to travel under sections 5.82 and 5.83 in the annual return.

Sections 5.82 and 5.83 are amended – From 4 March 2016, these sections require relevant persons to declare gifts and contributions to travel, in writing, to the CEO within 10 days of receipt, rather than on an annual basis. This includes multiple gifts made within a year by the same person, the aggregate value of which reach the prescribed amount of \$200.

The disclosure for a gift must include:

- a description of the gift
- the name and address of the person who made the gift
- the date on which the gift was received
- the estimated value of the gift at the time it was made, and
- the nature of the relationship between the relevant person and the person who made the gift.

For contributions to travel, the disclosure must include:

- a description of the contribution
- the name and address of the person who made the contribution
- the date on which the contribution was received
- the estimated value of the contribution at the time it was made
- the nature of the relationship between the relevant person and the person who made the contribution
- a description of the travel, and
- the date of travel.

Register of gifts and contributions to travel

A new section 5.89A requires the CEO to keep a register of gifts and contributions to travel in the form prescribed (see Form 4 attached).

The CEO is required to make the register available for public inspection and to publish it on the local government's official website.

If the person ceases to be a relevant person, the CEO is to remove from the register all records relating to that person. These records, however, must be retained for at least five years and made available for public inspection.

Offences

New section 5.89B makes it an offence if a person does not comply with sections 5.82 and 5.83 in relation to the disclosure of gifts and contributions to travel.

Section 5.89 is amended making it an offence for the person to give false or misleading information or to provide information which is likely to deceive in relation to the disclosure of gifts and contributions to travel.

The penalty for each offence is a fine of \$10,000 or imprisonment for two years.

Section 9.25(1) is amended to provide that there is no time limit for bringing a prosecution against a person who has not disclosed gifts or contributions to travel.

Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations 2007 amendments

Transitional provisions for council members

Regulations 14 and 15 require council members to disclose gifts and contributions to travel received between 1 July 2015 and 3 March 2016 within 28 days from 4 March 2016 (that is, by 31 March). This disclosure is necessary as these will no longer form part of the annual return. The disclosure needs to be in writing and to the CEO.

Regulations 14(7) and 15(7) require the CEO to maintain the register of gifts and contributions to travel received by council members during the transitional period.

Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996 amendments

Transitional provisions for designated employees

Regulations 34F and 34G require designated employees to disclose gifts and contributions to travel received between 1 July 2015 and 3 March 2016 within 28 days from 4 March 2016. This disclosure is necessary as these will no longer form part of the annual return. The disclosure needs to be in writing and to the CEO.

Regulation 34F(7) and 34G(7) require the CEO to maintain the register of gifts and contributions to travel received by designated employees during the transitional period.

Forms

Form 3 – Parts 4 and 5 have been deleted from Form 3 (annual return) as there is no longer a requirement to disclose gifts and contributions to travel in the annual return.

Form 4 – New Form 4 is the register the CEO is to keep which is established under section 5.89A of the Act. A copy of this form is attached.

Remote attendance at council meetings

Regulation 14A amended to enable a person with a disability to attend a meeting with fewer restrictions. 'Disability' has the same meaning as in section 3 of the *Disability Services Act 1993*.

- 1) The words 'other than a person with a disability' are inserted in regulation 14A(2) which effectively means that this class of persons will no longer be required to be physically present for at least half of the council meetings.
- 2) The existing definition of 'suitable place' is amended, allowing council to approve a place to be suitable in relation to a person with a disability without the restriction that it must be within a townsite and more than 150 kilometres from the place of the meeting.

Closely associated persons

Regulation 20 is amended to correct a drafting error. The effect is that a person that receives legal or financial professional services from an elected member or supplies those services to an elected member is a closely associated person for the purposes of section 5.62 of the Act. The elected member must disclose this if a matter comes before council in which the person has a direct or indirect interest or a proximity interest. This regulation gives effect to a recommendation by the Panel Inquiry into the City of Cockburn.

For queries relating to the legislative changes, contact the Local Government Advisory Hotline on 1300 762 511.



Jennifer Mathews
DIRECTOR GENERAL

3 March 2016

Form 4

Local Government Act 1995

Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996

REGISTER OF GIFTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO TRAVEL

1. Gifts

Section 5.82 of the *Local Government Act 1995*

Name of relevant person making disclosure	Description of gift	Name of person who made gift	Address of person who made gift	Date gift was received	Estimated value of gift at time it was made	Nature of relationship between relevant person and person who made gift

2. Contributions to travel

Section 5.83 of the *Local Government Act 1995*

Name of relevant person making disclosure	Description of contribution	Name of person who made contribution	Address of person who made contribution	Date contribution was received	Estimated value of contribution at time it was made	Nature of relationship between relevant person and person who made contribution	Description of travel	Date of travel

Visit the DLGC website for a Word version of [Form 4](#).