

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF VICTORIA

Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy

Scope

This policy sets out the Heritage Council of Victoria's (the Council) policy:

- on minimising external offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality made to, and accepted by, members
- when it can provide gifts, benefits and hospitality

Policy rules

Receiving – dealing with offers of gifts, benefits of hospitality

- 1) You should discourage gifts, benefits and hospitality to you or your close relatives, friends or associates, that result from your role with the Council, and minimise the offers you do accept.
- 2) You must not solicit gifts, benefits or hospitality for yourself or anyone else.
- 3) You are to decline all offers of gifts, benefits or hospitality that:
 - are likely to influence you, or be perceived to influence you, during your duties as a Council member
 - raise an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest such as an offer from a [business associate](#)
 - extend to your relatives or friends
 - have no [legitimate business reason](#) (if the offer is \$50 or more)
 - are money or similar, such as vouchers, or easily converted into money
 - pay for flights, accommodation or any other perks when offered other than by a conference organiser to compensate for you presenting at a conference
 - could bring your integrity, or that of the Council, into disrepute.
- 4) You can accept:
 - [token gift offers](#) which do not amount to a conflict of interest
 - gifts offered as part of culture and practice of communities such as from an overseas delegation
 - thank you gifts such as a small gift to a speaker at a conference and seminar
 - tickets to conferences and seminars approved in advance, where the conference organiser offers to fund travel and accommodation costs for a Council member to present a paper at the conference
 - gifts when there are legitimate business reasons to accept.

Disclosing and reporting of gifts, benefits and hospitality

- 5) You must disclose all [reportable \(non-token\) gifts](#) by completing a [declaration form](#) within 14 days of the offer, even if the offer is declined.
Note: Form can be used to declare either gifts, benefits and hospitality or official business events.
- 6) You do not have to disclose if you have received a business as usual benefit, either sustenance or an invitation to an official business event. Refer to: Official business events policy for more information.

- 7) You are to report any attempted [bribes](#) to the Public Interest Disclosures Coordinator (who reports criminal or corrupt conduct to Victoria Police or Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission).

Offering - managing the provision of gifts, benefits and hospitality

- 8) You should avoid making offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality unless:
- there is a legitimate business reason to further the conduct of official business or other legitimate organisational goals, or promotes and supports government policy objectives and priorities
 - it does not raise an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest
 - any costs are proportionate to the benefits obtained for the State and would be considered reasonable in terms of community expectations.

Note: The source of authority for this policy can be found in the Policy Register.

Forms and Templates

. [Declaration attendance form](#) (for declaring offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality).

Contact

- Chair, Heritage Council of Victoria
- Executive Officer, Heritage Council of Victoria
- DELWP Integrity Unit: **Email:** integrity@delwp.vic.gov.au; **Phone:** [9412 4183](tel:94124183)
- DELWP Public Interest Disclosures Coordinator 1800 903 877.

Terms used in this policy

The key terms that are underlined and used throughout this policy are defined here and in the Online Glossary.

Bribe: an inducement such as an offer of money, made with the intention to corruptly influence a member in the performance of their duties. Bribery of a public official is a criminal offence.

Business associate: external organisation or individual that the Council has established, or is likely to establish, a business relationship with, or who may gain from a business decision of the Council, now or in the future.

Conflict of interest: in the public-sector context, is a situation where a conflict arises between a public duty and private interest. The term refers to circumstances where a public official could be influenced, or could be reasonably perceived to be influenced, by a private interest when performing an official function. A range of private interests are relevant to the term conflict of interest

Gift offer: anything of monetary or other value offered by an external source to a Council member or their close relative, friend or associate because of their role with the Council. It includes free or discounted:

- items or services – such as food hamper, desk calendar, box of chocolates, door prize, gardening services
- benefits – preferential treatment, privileged access, favours or other intangibles such as a discount gym membership or the promise of a new job
- hospitality – the friendly reception and treatment of guests. It includes offers of food, drink, travel, accommodation, events and activities such as sporting, social, industry, arts, entertainment.

Depending on its value, a gift offer is token or reportable.

Where a Council member is offered hospitality that qualifies as sustenance or an official business event it is not a gift offer.

A generic bulk offer, such as via spam email, is not a gift offer unless it is accepted.

Legitimate business reason: a business purpose that furthers the official business or other legitimate goals of the Council, public sector or State.

Official business event: when a Council member is invited to an event that it is in the public interest for them to attend such as events hosted by other government agencies, engagement with community or industry stakeholders or maintaining sector or professional knowledge.

Reportable (non-token) gift offer: gift offer with an estimated value of \$50 or greater, or is of cultural, historic or other significance such as a ceremonial gift.

Sustenance: food and drink that does not exceed common courtesy and is offered while performing official duties at another organisation's or individual's work premises such as coffee and sandwiches at a business meeting. If you are unsure if the event exceeds sustenance, talk to your line manager.

Token gift offer: gift offer that is inconsequential and trivial in value to both the offeror and the Council member. Whilst this is the primary determinant, the offer must be worth less than \$50.