



City of **HOBART**

**MEMORANDUM: LORD MAYOR
DEPUTY LORD MAYOR
ELECTED MEMBERS**

LORD MAYOR'S OFFICE - COMMUNICATIONS

Meeting: Finance and Governance Committee

**Meeting date: 14 September
2021**

Raised by: Alderman Briscoe

Question:

The Lord Mayor's office is funded generously to facilitate the organisation of the ceremonial and statutory functions of the Lord Mayor. In the last years it my belief with considerable evidence that it has been used increasingly as an electoral office of the current Lord Mayor.

Accordingly in the last three years of the current Lord Mayor's tenure

1. What letters have been sent to school, colleges, parents' organisations, school associations or other institutions or organisations that have gone out under the signature of the Lord Mayor (excluding official communication)? Please provide copies of these letters. These should include those that offer for Lord Mayor to attend and speak at school assemblies and offers to do other activities such as personal tours of the town hall.
2. What is the cost (or estimate) in terms of officer time, postage or otherwise to facilitate these communications?
3. What policies of the HCC that enables the Lord Mayor to generate such personal political communications and what contributions has the Lord Mayor made to the cost of these communications and is the same service available to other elected members?
- 4 What communications has been made to government department when in the Lord Mayor letters reference is made to state government initiatives but not acknowledged in such letters?
5. In light that the Lord Mayor has only one vote (out of 12) what office resources are used to facilitate "mayor in the chair" events which are clearly political events?

6. What cost has been incurred to produce and circulate the Lord Mayor's report that was posted out to various political figures and organisations? This is not referring to the HCC's annual report that contains statements from the Lord Mayor?

Response Question 1:

The following letters to "*school, colleges, parents' organisations, school associations or other institutions or organisations*" have been distributed under the signature of the Lord Mayor during her term:

1. School tours

At the beginning of each school year, the Lord Mayor's Office distributes a form letter to schools in the Hobart Municipal area. This letter details an offer of a Town Hall tour by the Lord Mayor to form part of the school's civics and citizenship curriculum studies.

The intent of the offer is to provide students with an understanding of the history of our city and the role of Local Government in Australian democracy.

The take up is high with more than 20 school groups requesting a tour annually.

2. Meeting room offer to charities

At the beginning of each calendar year, the Lord Mayor's Office distributes a form letter to charities within Hobart telling them of the opportunity for their organisation to make use of a meeting room within the Lord Mayor's suite of rooms at the Hobart Town Hall. This is intended to be for a special occasion or for a meeting where such a venue may enhance the value of their meeting or gathering.

The take up has been minimal with usually 1 or 2 organisations requesting use of a room within the Lord Mayor's suite of rooms per annum.

3. In December 2020, the Lord Mayor wrote to the Royal Society of Tasmania seeking its interest in utilising some space within the glass display cabinets in the Town Hall foyer for a collection of art works.

4. In May 2021, the Lord Mayor wrote to primary schools in the Hobart municipal area seeking their interest in plants available for distribution to Hobart schools as part of National Tree Day celebrations.

5. In August 2021, the Lord Mayor wrote to 9 secondary schools/colleges in the Hobart municipal area and to 9 of the City's large employers – The Federal Group; Hobart Private and Royal Hobart hospitals; TasPorts; MyState; CSIRO; Aurora Energy; Hydro Tasmania and the University of Tasmania – encouraging staff/students/employees living on the Eastern Shore to consider travelling on the Derwent River ferry service as an alternative to car travel.

No communication with schools has made an offer for the Lord Mayor to speak at school assemblies. All of these letters are considered official communication under Section 27 (1) (a) and (b) functions of mayors.

Response Question 2:

Whilst personnel time is not costed to individual tasks, it is estimated that the time taken to produce and distribute each communication as referred to in question 1, would take in the order of 1 – 2 hours of officer time.

Response to Question 3:

Section 27 (1) (a) and (b) of the *Local Government Act 1993* gives legislative recognition to the fact that the Lord Mayor is regarded as, and accorded the status of, the most senior elected member of a Council by other levels of government, by business leaders and by the community in ceremonial or business dealings.

The Act states that the functions of a mayor are:

27. Functions of mayors and deputy mayors

(1) *The functions of a mayor are—*

(a) to act as a leader of the community of the municipal area; and

(b) to carry out the civic and ceremonial functions of the mayoral office; and

(c) to promote good governance by, and within, the council; and

(d) to act as chairperson of the council and to chair meetings of the council in a manner that supports decision-making processes; and

(e) to act as the spokesperson of the council; and

(f) to represent the council on regional organisations and at intergovernmental forums at regional, state and federal levels; and

(g) to lead and participate in the appointment, and the monitoring of the performance, of the general manager; and

(h) to liaise with the general manager on –

(i) the activities of the council and the performance and exercise of its functions and powers; and

(ii) the activities of the general manager and the performance and exercise of his or her functions and powers in supporting the council; and

(i) any function imposed by an order under [section 27A](#) ; and

(j) any other function imposed by this or any other Act.

None of the communications referred to in the response to question 1 are considered personal political communications. They are all considered within the remit of the role of the Lord Mayor of the day.

Response Question 4:

This response is provided on the basis that the question is referencing that the Derwent River ferry service trial is an initiative of the Tasmanian Government but this was not explicitly named up in the letter to the 9 Hobart secondary schools or the City's 9 largest employers.

The trial of a Derwent River ferry service is an action within the Hobart City Deal – Greater Hobart Transport Vision. The City of Hobart is a partner in the Hobart City Deal, along with the Clarence, Glenorchy and Kingborough Councils and the Tasmanian and Australian Governments.

In meetings about the ferry trial, all cities were encouraged to consider how they could help promote and new service. The purpose of the letter was for the City of Hobart to encourage the uptake of the service.

Feedback from the State Government and the ferry operator has been that the City of Hobart's promotional support has been positive for the success of the service.

As the principal elected member of a partner Council, writing to a targeted audience promoting the service is considered an appropriate activity for the Lord Mayor to undertake.

Response to Question 5:

The purpose of the 'Mayor in the Chair' sessions is to provide an opportunity for people to raise issues or ask questions of the Lord Mayor without having to make an appointment.

The office receives a high-volume of requests from community members seeking to meet with the Lord Mayor on a range of issues and an efficient way of dealing with these requests is to quarantine a regular timeslot in the Lord Mayor's schedule.

Mayor in the Chair sessions are held on alternate Friday lunch times in the Henry Hunter Room at the Hobart Town Hall and a total of between 9 and 12 sessions per year are held in suburban cafes around Hobart.

The support provided for this activity by the Lord Mayor's Office staff, is:

- diarising the sessions
- making a booking for any external session (between 9 – 12 per annum)
- updating the Lord Mayoral web page with scheduled dates
- directing any community member seeking an appointment with the Lord Mayor to consider attending a Mayor in the Chair session

- on one occasion, over-printing approximately 200 postcards (supplied by the Lord Mayor and delivered by her) promoting an external session
- following up any Council issue or request and responding with information to the community member

Response to Question 6:

The Lord Mayor's Annual Report was produced as part of Lord Mayor's role as set out under the *Local Government Act 1993*. At the Council Meeting of the 17 December 2020, the Lord Mayor spoke to the report at the Communications from the Chair (item 3.3) and noted that the report was produced in her capacity as the Lord Mayor.

The Lord Mayor has specific duties that differentiate her role from the broader elected member body and the sole purpose of the report is to demonstrate how the Lord Mayor is meeting her obligations under the legislation. It is considered an appropriate exercise in accountability and one of good governance.

The content for the report was gathered from the Lord Mayoral activity statistics produced each month that align with the legislated and statutory role of the Lord Mayor. These statistics were introduced in 2014 during a former Lord Mayor's term in office.

The Lord Mayor authored her own covering message. The images used were supplied by the Lord Mayor from the images taken by or for her for use on the Facebook page maintained and managed by her.

The cost to produce this basic publication was \$570 comprising graphic design of a PDF document and postage to mail 10 hard copies to the 6 MPs representing the electorate of Clark; the Minister and Shadow Minister for Local Government; the Director of Local Government; and the Governor of Tasmania.

As signatory to this report, I certify that, pursuant to Section 55(1) of the Local Government Act 1993, I hold no interest, as referred to in Section 49 of the Local Government Act 1993, in matters contained in this report.



Kelly Grigsby
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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