

Victorian Marine and Coastal Council

Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality – Responding to Gift Offers

POLICY STATUS	Current
VERSION	1
DATE	06/09/21
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1. Scope

This policy sets out the Victorian Marine and Coastal Council's standards and procedures for responding to gift offers. It applies to all council members and employees (i.e. senior executives and other staff, including 'in house' contractors and consultants).

2. Aim

The aim of this policy is to minimise gift offers made to, and accepted by, council members and employees. This helps to protect and promote public confidence in the integrity of the council.

Gift offers are discouraged and must never be accepted unless there is clear justification, consistent with the prohibitions in this policy, to do so.

3. Key principles and accountabilities

The key principles are:

- **Obligations:** Council members and employees act in accordance with their respective obligations and with good public sector governance practice (see item 16).
- **Public interest:** Council members and employees act in the public interest, in compliance with this policy.
- **Culture of integrity:** The council fosters a culture of integrity. Council members and employees are supported to raise any unresolved gifts issues.
- **Risk-based:** The council's risks in relation to gift offers are assessed, managed, and monitored.
- **Processes:** The council's procedures are transparent and accountable. Processes are in place to ensure that council members and employees are aware of the requirements of this policy and how to comply with it.

Consistent with DEECA model policy

The council's policy is consistent with the [DEECA model policy](#) on *Gifts, benefits and hospitality – responding to gift offers*, which is published by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action ('DEECA').¹

Accountabilities

Council members and employees are responsible for ensuring that their own conduct meets the required standards of integrity. They place the public interest above their own interests when carrying out their official duties. This includes declaring all gift offers in accordance with this policy and refusing prohibited gifts (item 5).

The chair, council members and employees with direct reports are responsible for being aware of, and monitoring, the risks inherent in their team's work and functions. They model good practice and promote awareness of this policy and related processes.

4. Definitions

4.1 Gift offer

A gift offer is anything of monetary or other value that is offered by an external source (organisation or individual) to a council member or employee as a result of their role with the council. It includes free/discounted:

- **items or services**, for example, items such as a Christmas hamper, desk calendar, box of chocolates, bottle of wine, commemorative object, or 'door prize' at a function; services such as tree-logging or house painting.
- **benefits** such as preferential treatment, privileged access, favours or other advantages or intangibles, for example, access to a discount or loyalty program, or the promise of a new job.
- **hospitality that exceeds common courtesy.** 'Hospitality' is the friendly reception and treatment of guests. It includes offers of food, drink, travel, accommodation, events or activities (e.g. sporting, social, industry, arts, entertainment, or other events/activities). 'Common courtesy' is polite, basic and modest. It does not raise a conflict of interest. Whether an offer exceeds common courtesy depends on the circumstances (i.e. what is offered, by whom, to whom, when and why).

Example – does not exceed common courtesy

The following offers do not exceed common courtesy. They are **not a gift offer** and do not need to be disclosed under this policy:

¹ The DEECA model policy is designed specifically for DEECA portfolio agencies. It should be used rather than the generic model policy issued by Victorian Public Sector Commission ('VPSC'). The DEECA model policy incorporates:

- the binding *Minimum accountabilities for managing gifts, benefits and hospitality* ('Minimum accountabilities'), which are located in the *Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Framework* ('the Framework') issued by the VPSC;
- other obligations in the *Public Administration Act 2004* ('PAA'), the *Code of Conduct for Directors of Victorian Public Entities* ('Directors' Code of Conduct') and the *Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees*; and
- good public sector governance practice.

- a cup of coffee at another organisation's premises;
- a modest working lunch, such as sandwiches and pastries, at another organisation's premises;
- a cup of coffee at a café (unless there is a conflict of interest).²

Example – gift offer

The following offers exceed common courtesy. They are a **gift offer** and must be disclosed under this policy:

- a 'fine dining and wines' working lunch at another organisation's premises;
- an offer to pay for a working lunch at a café;
- an offer of a free spot at an industry golf day.³

Direct or indirect

A gift offer may be direct or indirect. It may be made directly to a council member or employee or indirectly via an offer to their relative or close associate, including:

- a member of their immediate family (e.g. spouse, partner, child, grandchild, parent, sibling);
- a regular member of their household (whether or not they are related); or
- another close associate (e.g. friend, business associate, other relative).

Is the gift offer 'token' or 'reportable'?

A gift offer that is made by an external source is either 'token' or 'reportable':

- **Token** – the gift offer is trivial and inconsequential. The **combined total** of offers to the Council member or employee from that source in the last 12 months **does not exceed \$50**.
- **Reportable** – the gift offer exceeds the token value OR is of cultural, historic or other significance.

Example – exceeds token value

If a council member or employee is offered a \$20 bottle of wine three times by the same source in 12 months, the 3rd offer makes a cumulative total of \$60. This exceeds the \$50 threshold. The 3rd offer is therefore reportable, *even if none of the offers are accepted*. What counts is the total offered in the last 12 months.

Example – other significance

A gift offered by a visiting delegation, such as a delegation from another country, is reportable, regardless of its monetary value. Even if it is not of cultural or historic significance, it is of 'other' significance.

² For example, there is a conflict of interest if it is offered by a stakeholder with an interest in a policy decision that the person is likely to make or can influence. Note that all conflicts of interest must be refused - see item 5, 'Prohibited gifts'.

³ Note that in these examples the gift offered is inconsistent with community expectations and must be refused - see item 5, 'Prohibited gifts'.

4.2 Conflict of interest

A 'conflict of interest' is a conflict between a council member's or employee's public duty to act in the best interests of the council and their private interests (financial or non-financial). A conflict exists whether it is:

- **real** – it currently exists;
- **potential** – it may arise, given the circumstances; or
- **perceived** – members of the public could reasonably form the view that a conflict exists, or could arise, that may improperly influence the person's performance of their duty to the council, now or in the future.

4.3 Bribe

A 'bribe' is an offer of money or other inducement made with the intention to corruptly influence a council member or employee in the performance of their duties. Bribery or attempted bribery of a public official is a criminal offence.

4.4 Legitimate business reason (benefit)

A 'legitimate business reason' is a business purpose that furthers the official business or other legitimate goals of the council, public sector, or State.

4.5 Responsible person

The 'responsible person' is the person whom the council member or employee notifies of any gift offers they receive; notifies of suspected bribery attempts; and seeks advice from about this policy and how to comply.

	Responsible Person
Employee	Line manager
Council member or EO	Chair
Chair	Deputy chair Where appropriate, the chair should also seek advice from the Minister and/or DEECA.

5. Prohibited gifts

A council member or employee must refuse any gift offer that:⁴

- is **money** or is similar to money (e.g. gift vouchers) or easily converted into money (e.g. shares);
- is a **conflict of interest** (real, potential or perceived) – e.g. is offered by an external source with an interest in a decision that the council member or employee is likely to make or can influence, including in relation to:
 - procurement of goods or services;
 - tender processes;
 - awarding of a grant or sponsorship;
 - setting of policy;
 - enforcement, licensing or regulation; or
 - contracts;
- could in any other way create a **reasonable perception** that it is offered to influence, or could influence, the judgement of the council member or employee (i.e. how he/she acts, or fails to act, now or in the future);
- is inconsistent with **community expectations**; or
- could in any other way bring their **integrity**, or that of the council, into disrepute.⁵

If it is a reportable gift offer (item 9), it must also be refused unless there is a '**legitimate business reason**' to accept it.⁶

5.1 Gift offers of hospitality

To ensure compliance with the above requirements, council members and employees must be particularly cautious about accepting gift offers of hospitality (i.e. food, drink, travel, accommodation, events or activities). Gift offers of hospitality are often inconsistent with community expectations. There is also a high risk of conflict of interest. In such cases, the gift offer must be refused *even if there is a legitimate business reason to accept*.⁷

In particular, note that:

⁴ Consistent with Minimum accountability 2.

⁵ For example, if accepting the gift offer could be perceived as endorsement of a product or service.

⁶ Note that the following are not a 'legitimate business reason':

- 'It would have been impolite to refuse';
- 'Refusal would offend' (except in compelling circumstances that are in the public interest. These almost never exist for gift offers of hospitality and rarely exist for other gift offers.);
- 'Networking'
- 'Maintaining stakeholder relationships'.

⁷ Consistent with para 6.2.2 of the Framework.

- **High risk events and activities**

Invitations to attend or participate in a sporting, social, 'industry', arts, entertainment, or other event or activity are high risk. Examples of gift offers that must be refused include:

- attend as a guest in a corporate box at the football or at a car or horse racing event;
- attend a concert or theatre event;
- attend an industry golf day or play golf at a reduced fee;
- be 'shouted' a meal at a restaurant; or
- accept complimentary or discounted tickets for a family member to attend the tennis.

- **Conferences and familiarisation tours**

Gift offers in relation to conferences or familiarisation tours (e.g. sponsored attendance, participation, travel, or accommodation) must be declined unless there is:

- **clear justification**, such as where the invitation is issued by a government department, or the event is funded by DEECA, or, depending on the circumstances, the offeror is a peak body; and
- **prior written approval** that sets out clear reasons is specifically granted by the responsible person (for the chair, council members, and Executive Officer). The signed and dated approval must be attached to the gift offer declaration form (item 10) and noted in the gifts register (item 11).⁸

5.2 Recording prohibited gift offers

To assist the council to monitor the frequency and nature of prohibited gift offers, it is essential that all such offers are disclosed in accordance with the requirements for token (item 8) or reportable (item 9) gift offers.

5.3 Misuse of position

Accepting a prohibited gift offer may constitute misuse of a council member's or employee's position, a breach of this policy and/or a breach of the relevant code of conduct, and may result in disciplinary action. In addition, if the gift was offered with the expectation of something in return, such as preferential treatment, accepting it may constitute a bribe (item 6) or other form of corruption and lead to criminal prosecution.

6. Attempts to bribe

A council member or employee who receives a gift offer that he/she believes is an attempted bribe must refuse the offer. He or she must:

- immediately notify the responsible person and lodge a gift offer declaration form (item 10), so that their refusal can be properly recorded; or

⁸ The agency is the owner of the sponsored travel and accommodation, etc. (item 9). Approval is given for the council member or employee to utilise the gift at the agency's behest – see 'Public interest approval' in item 9.2

- report the matter to the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC) as a protected disclosure.⁹

A council member or employee who believes that another council member or employee may have solicited or been offered a bribe which the other person has not reported must either notify the responsible person or report the matter to IBAC as a protected disclosure.

The Executive Officer must have processes in place to ensure that he or she is notified when a responsible person becomes aware of a bribery issue. The Executive Officer must notify IBAC of any matter which he/she believes on reasonable grounds may be corrupt conduct or, if appropriate, notify the police of a suspected offence.¹⁰

7. Ban on soliciting gifts

Council members and employees must not solicit gifts for themselves or anyone else, in any form. To do so may constitute misuse of their position, a breach of this policy and/or a breach of the relevant code of conduct and may result in disciplinary action. It may also constitute corruption and lead to criminal prosecution.¹¹

⁹ Note that if a matter is referred to IBAC or the police there may be legal implications which necessitate variation to the usual record-keeping processes in items 8 to 11.

¹⁰ Consistent with Minimum accountability 4.

¹¹ Consistent with Minimum accountability 1.

8. Token gift offers

A council member or employee who is offered a gift of **token value** (as defined in item 4.1) that is not a prohibited gift (item 5) may:

- refuse the gift offer; or
- accept the gift offer and retain the gift as their own.

Disclosing token gift offers

Regardless of whether a token gift offer is accepted, it must be disclosed as soon as practicable to the responsible person. The council member or employee who receives the offer must send an email to the responsible person that sets out:

- the date of the offer;
- the source (organisation or individual) of the offer;
- what was offered and why;
- that it was a token offer, including an estimate of:
 - the value of the gift offered; and
 - the combined value of all gifts offered to them from that source in the last 12 months;
- whether it was a prohibited gift (item 5) and, if so, why; and
- whether the offer was accepted or refused.

A gifts declaration form (item 10) does not need to be completed. Nor does the gifts register (item 11).

Example – acceptance of token gift

'On 16 July 2017, I received a gift offer from Berringer and Co. of a bottle of wine. It was offered to me as a thank you for presenting at their annual education forum, which I did as part of my official duties. I estimate the value of the bottle of wine to be \$30. I estimate the combined total of gift offers I have received from this source in the last 12 months to be \$45. I consider this to be a token gift offer. It was not a prohibited gift offer. I accepted the offer.'

Example – refusal of token gift

'On 13 December 2017, I received a gift offer from Murks and Co. of a desk calendar. It was offered as 'a Christmas good will gift'. I estimate the value of the desk calendar to be \$20. I estimate the combined total of gift offers I have received from this source in the last 12 months to be \$45. It was a prohibited gift as it is a conflict of interest - Murks is a prospective tenderer about whom I am likely to make or can influence a decision. I refused the offer and explained why to the rep.'

Keeping track of token gift offers

The council member or employee disclosing the token gift offer and the responsible person must each retain a copy of the email. An email record:

- assists the council member/employee to fulfil their responsibility to keep track of whether offers made to them by that source exceed a combined value of \$50 in the last 12 months (i.e. the reportable threshold); and
- assists the responsible person to monitor the risks inherent in their team's work and functions.¹²

9. Reportable gift offers

A council member or employee who is offered a **reportable** gift (as defined in item 4.1) must, *regardless of whether the gift is accepted*:

- verbally disclose the offer to the responsible person as soon as practicable; and
- within five working days of the offer, sign and lodge a properly completed gift offer declaration form (item 10).

A gift offer must not be accepted if it is a prohibited gift (item 5).

9.1 Ownership of reportable gifts

A council member or employee who accepts a reportable gift does so **on behalf of the agency**. The agency is the owner of the gift.

9.2 Dealing with accepted gifts

The Executive Officer must have processes in place for the receipt and use or disposal of reportable gifts by the council. As part of these processes:

Gifts of cultural, historic or other significance

Consideration should be given to donating gifts of cultural, historic or other significance to an appropriate public institution, such as the Melbourne Museum, State Library, or National Gallery of Victoria.

Donating other reportable gifts

Consideration should be given to donating other reportable gifts, or the proceeds of their sale, to a non-profit organisation or public institution.¹³

'Public interest' approval for use of gift by Council member or employee

Occasionally, it will be in the **public interest** for approval to be given for a council member or employee to use a reportable gift 'as their own' at the behest of the agency.

Applications for 'public interest approval' will be determined by the council (for council members and the Executive Officer) or the Executive Officer (for employees) in accordance with the following criteria:

- approval is required to avoid the person being in breach of this policy through no fault of their own;

¹² A responsible person may decide to maintain a spreadsheet with an overview of token gift offers disclosed to them by email. This will assist in monitoring risks and compliance with this policy (item 13).

¹³ Consistent with Minimum accountability 3.

- prior written approval has been granted, in accordance with item 5.1 of this policy, for sponsored hospitality to be accepted in relation to a conference or familiarisation tour; or

The reason(s) for any public interest approval that is granted must be well documented, attached to the gift offer declaration form, and recorded in the gifts register.

10. Gift offer declaration form

The gift offer declaration form is set out in **Appendix 1** of this policy. These will be lodged with the council secretariat for filing and inclusion in the Gifts Register.¹⁴

¹⁴ Note that completed declaration forms must be retained in accordance with the *Public Records Act 1973*.

11. Gifts Register

A *Register of responses to reportable gift offers* ('gifts register') must be maintained that includes a record of:

- all **reportable** gift offers and responses (based on completed gift offer declaration forms); and
- if the gift offer was accepted, how the gift will be used or disposed of by the agency.

The gifts register template is set out in **Appendix 2**.

The council secretariat will establish processes for ensuring that the register is up-to-date; is protected from unauthorised changes; and is published on the council's external website (see item 11.1).¹⁵ This includes designating employee position(s) whose occupant(s) manage these functions.

In addition:

Employees

The Executive Officer must ensure that employees are provided with regular reminders of the need to lodge gift offer declaration forms (see item 14.2).

Council members

At the start of each council meeting, the chair must ask all council members present to state whether their entries in the gifts register are complete and correct. If there are no changes, the minutes will note that:

'All council members present confirmed that their entries in the Register of responses to reportable gift offers are complete and correct'.

If changes are declared, these will be noted in the minutes, together with the council member's undertaking to lodge a gift offer declaration form (item 10) within five working days.

11.1 Publishing of gifts register on external website

A copy of the gifts register that complies with privacy obligations (see next item) must be published on the council's external website. It should be updated at least every six months. Entries should remain on the website for at least the current and previous financial year.¹⁶

12. Privacy protection

The council must have processes in place to ensure that the council complies with the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* when collecting, using, and disclosing personal information in relation to gift offers (token and reportable). This includes ensuring that:

- identifying information is deleted from the copy of the gifts register that is published on the council's external website, as set out in **Appendix 2**; and

¹⁵ Consistent with Minimum accountability 9.

¹⁶ To assist readers, the 'de-identified' copy of the gifts register should be located with the privacy collection statement (item 12) and copy of this policy and guidance for external stakeholders (item 14.5) on the website.

- a *Privacy collection statement - gift offers* is published on the website that is consistent with the [template statement](#) issued by DEECA.¹⁷

13. Monitoring compliance

The administration and quality control of the council's policy and processes, including the gifts register and gift offer declaration forms, must be subject to regular scrutiny.¹⁸

14. Promoting and improving compliance

To promote and improve compliance with this policy:

14.1 Business rules

The council and employees must have suitable business rules, processes, and record-keeping requirements in place for the practical implementation of this policy.¹⁹

14.2 Induction and refresher training – council members and employees

The chair (for council members and the Executive Officer) and the Executive Officer (for employees) must ensure that all council members and employees receive **induction training** and annual **refresher training**, including:

- information about the aim, principles, accountabilities, and requirements of this policy;
- practical guidance on how to comply with it (e.g. where to obtain gift offer declaration forms, how to refuse a gift without giving offence, etc.); and
- advice that a breach of this policy may constitute a breach of a binding code of conduct and may result in disciplinary action and, in the case of corrupt conduct, criminal prosecution.²⁰

A copy of the council's policy and related practical guidance must be provided to each council member and employee when they commence their term of appointment/employment. Updates to the policy and related guidance must be provided as soon as practicable after they occur.²¹

Summary flow chart

To assist employees and council members, a flowchart of how to respond to gift offers is set out in **Appendix 3**.

¹⁷ DEECA's template *Privacy collection statement - gift offers* is available from www.DEECA.vic.gov.au/oncouncil.

¹⁸ Consistent with Minimum accountability 12.

¹⁹ Consistent with Minimum accountability 8.

²⁰ Consistent with Minimum accountability 10.

²¹ Consistent with paras 5.2.1 and 5.2.3 of the Framework.

14.3 Gifts hub – council members and employees

The council must designate an employee position whose occupant manages (or acts as) a ‘Gifts hub’ to provide responsible persons and other council members and employees with a central point from which to obtain expert advice and guidance materials.

14.4 Contracts for ‘in house’ contractors and consultants

All contracts for ‘in house’ contractors and consultants (including those engaged through an employment agency) must explicitly state that the contractor or consultant is bound by this policy and by the [Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees](#).²²

14.5 External stakeholders (tenderers, suppliers, external contractors, etc.)

All contracts for suppliers and external contractors must ensure that the contract can be revoked (or renegotiated) by the agency if the supplier or external contractor offers a prohibited gift to a council member or employee.²³

The council must have processes in place to ensure that external stakeholders have ready access to information that explains the prohibitions and restrictions in this policy. This includes ensuring that:

- an up-to-date copy of this policy is published on the council’s external website;²⁴ and
- suitable guidance material is:
 - included in information packages for prospective tenderers and suppliers;
 - provided directly to all suppliers and external contractors, with regular reminders thereafter; and
 - published on the council’s website.^{25 26}

[If no website exists, substitute ‘provided to the public upon request, free of charge’.]

14.6 Remedial action

The council must have processes in place to ensure that patterns of frequent or prohibited gift offers are identified and, where appropriate, **remedial action** is taken - e.g. a letter is sent to the source of the offers explaining why such offers must not be made.

²² This includes the contracts for all contractors or consultants who:

- supervise employees of this agency;
- undertake work similar in nature to the work undertaken by employees of this agency at a premises or location generally regarded as a workplace of this agency; and/or
- use or have access to the agency’s resources or information not normally accessible or available to the public.

²³ Consistent with para 5.1.4 of the Framework.

²⁴ Consistent with Minimum accountability 13.

²⁵ Information to external stakeholders should, where appropriate, also make reference to any applicable whole of Victorian government supplier codes of conduct.

²⁶ Consistent with Minimum accountability 11.

15. Culture of integrity

It is essential that council members, employees, and external stakeholders are supported to raise queries and issues about gift offers, including queries and issues relating to their own conduct or that of others.

Assistance with making decisions

A council member or employee who is uncertain how to comply with this policy should seek advice from their responsible person. They can also seek advice from the Gifts hub (item 14.3). This does not abrogate their responsibility to make the right decision.

Possible breach of this policy

A council member or employee who may have breached this policy must immediately notify the responsible person and remedy any breach.

Speaking up

A council member or employee who believes that another council member/employee may have breached this policy must:

- approach the other person, to give them the opportunity to notify the responsible person and remedy any breach; or
- notify the responsible person directly.

If the matter involves corruption or serious misconduct, the council member or employee can choose to instead report the matter to IBAC as a protected disclosure.²⁷

Decisive action, including possible disciplinary action, will be taken against any council member or employee who discriminates against or victimises a person who speaks up in good faith about a possible breach of this policy.

16. Obligations and good practice

Council members and employees must act in accordance with their respective obligations and with good public sector governance practice, including:

- the establishing Act, being the *Marine and Coastal Act 2018*;
- the *Public Administration Act 2004* ('PAA');²⁸

²⁷ Making a 'complaint' to IBAC under the *Protected Disclosures Act 2012* gives legal protection to the person making it that their identity will remain confidential and they will be protected from reprisals.

²⁸ In particular:

- s 7: public sector values (i.e. integrity, impartiality, accountability, respect, responsiveness, human rights, leadership);
- s 79: 'duties of directors' (council members);
- s 13A: requirement to provide information to the Secretary of DEECA;
- s 81(1)(b): duty to inform the minister and the Secretary of DEECA of major risks to agency;
- s 81(1)(g): requirement to have an adequate gifts policy in place for Council members.

- binding codes and accountabilities issued by the Victorian Public Sector Commission, in particular:
 - [Code of Conduct for Directors of Victorian Public Entities](#) ('Directors Code of Conduct');
 - [Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees](#); and
 - [Minimum accountabilities for managing gifts, benefits and hospitality](#) (numbers 1 to 4 and 8 to 13),²⁹
- government policy;
- any directions, guidelines and/or statements of obligation or expectation issued by the Minister; and
- all other laws and obligations that bind the council.

17. Regular review of this policy

The council will review this policy on an annual basis or more frequently, if required, to keep up-to-date with changes to laws, government policy, etc. This policy should be consistent with the most recent version of the DEECA model policy.³⁰ This policy was **last reviewed on 6 September 2021**.

18. Related policies

- DEECA Gifts, benefits and hospitality - providing gifts
- Council policies on:
 - Conflict of interest
 - Meetings and decisions
 - Code of conduct.

19. Further information

For further information see the [Gifts, benefits and hospitality](#) support module in the [Governance guides and resources](#) section of DEECA's governance website, **On Council** (www.DEECA.vic.gov.au/oncouncil). It includes the DEECA model policies and DEECA guidance notes, plus direct links to this topic on the VPSC website.

²⁹ The minimum accountabilities are incorporated into DEECA's model policy, which this agency's policy is consistent with.

³⁰ See item 3 of this policy, including footnote 1.

Appendix 1 – Gift offer declaration form

Declaration by a council member or employee who receives a reportable gift offer

How to fill out this form

- The information that you provide in this form will be entered into the *Register of responses to reportable gift offers* ('gifts register'). A de-identified copy of the register is published on the council's external website [www.marineandcoastal.council.vic.gov.au].
- For assistance in filling out this form contact your 'responsible person' – i.e. line manager (for employees), chair (for council members and the Executive Officer), or deputy chair (for the chair).
- For the definition of a 'reportable gift offer' and to decide whether a gift is 'prohibited' see item 4.1 and item 5 of the council's policy on *Gifts, benefits and hospitality – responding to gift offers* ('the policy'). For a quick overview, see the 'summary flowchart' in Appendix 3 of the policy.

A copy of the policy and related guidance is available from the Executive Officer and council secretariat, your responsible person or the Gifts Hub (Scott Watson – **M:** 0431 707 806 | **E:** scott.watson@deeca.vic.gov.au). The policy is also published on the council's website [www.marineandcoastal.council.vic.gov.au].

How to lodge this form

- This form, when completed, can be submitted by email to vmacc@deeca.vic.gov.au or hardcopy to the council secretariat.

• Date of offer (insert)

• Source of offer

Organisation (or individual stakeholder):

- Name and title of person making offer:
- Type of organisation:
(e.g. supplier, prospective tenderer, industry stakeholder with commercial interest, not-for-profit stakeholder, etc.)

• Description of gift offered (insert)

• Value

Do you believe that the gift offered may be of cultural, historic or other significance? Yes No

Estimated value of gift offered: \$

Have you received any other gift offers from this source in the last 12 months? Yes No

If yes, estimate the total value of gift offers you have received from this source in the last 12 months: \$

• Prohibited?

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No **Yes** - Conflict of interest OR other reasonable perception that judgement may be influenced
Inconsistent with community expectations May bring integrity into disrepute Money or similar

If yes, briefly describe why:

Example: "Conflict of interest - offered by tenderer about whom I am likely to make or can influence a decision."

• **Accepted or declined?**

The gift offer was: declined OR accepted **on behalf of the agency**

If the gift offer was accepted, what is the 'legitimate business reason' for doing so (i.e. business purpose that furthers the official business or other legitimate goals of the council, public sector or State)?

See item 5 of the policy for examples of reasons that are insufficient (e.g. 'It would have been impolite to refuse').

• **Public interest approval (only complete if relevant)**

Occasionally, it will be in the public interest (see item 9.2 of the policy) for a council member or employee to be granted approval to use a reportable gift as their own. If you are applying for this to occur, on what basis?

- To avoid being in breach of the policy through no fault of my own (see ATTACHED explanation);
- Prior written approval has been granted under item 5.1 of the policy for sponsored attendance at a conference or familiarisation tour (see ATTACHED approval);
- [Insert any other criteria listed in item 9.2 of the policy]*

• **Comments (if any)**

• **Signed and dated declaration**

I confirm that the information I have provided is true and correct.

Name:

Title/position no. *[if relevant, also specify other, e.g. 'division']*:

Signature:

Date:

Acknowledgement by 'responsible person'

Noted I have noted the contents of the above declaration.

Comments (if any)

Example: "XYZ appears to be a frequent offeror of gifts. Remedial action is recommended."

Example: "In my view, the application for 'public interest approval' is justified. My reasons are attached."

Name:

Title/position no. *[if relevant, also specify other, e.g. 'division']*:

Signature:

Date:

Office use only:

[Insert a section to record the following information, or attach a separate document that includes this information:]

- A. Gifts register:** confirmation that the register has been updated.
- B. Remedial action:** any remedial action to be taken (e.g. letter to frequent offeror about policy requirements).
- C. Accepted gifts:** if the gift was accepted:
 - (i) how the council will use or dispose of the gift in accordance with the policy;
 - (ii) if the gift (or its proceeds) are being donated, details of the organisation receiving the donation; and
 - (iii) signature (dated) of the person(s) authorising these decisions, including their name and title/position no.
- D. Assets register:** confirmation that, if applicable, the assets register has been updated.

Appendix 2 – Register of responses to reportable gift offers

The template for the *Register of responses to reportable gift offers* is as follows. When publishing the register on the council’s website delete all identifying information.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
Entry no.	Date gift offered	Offeror	Offeror number	Prohibited gift? If so, why?	Council member or employee to whom the gift was offered	Description of gift offered	Cultural, historic or other significance?	Est. value of this offer	Est. combined value	Was the gift accepted or declined? If accepted, record the legitimate business reason (benefit).	If the gift was accepted: (1) How is it to be used/disposed of? (2) Who authorised this decision?	Any relevant: (1) Comments (2) Remedial action.
#/year		Include: (i) Name of offeror (organisation offering gift). (ii) Name and title of person making offer on behalf of offeror. (iii) Type (e.g. supplier; prospective tenderer; industry stakeholder with commercial interest; 'not for profit')	The 'offeror number': <ul style="list-style-type: none">is assigned to an organisation the first time that an offer it makes is recorded in the registerremains the same for every reportable offer made by that organisationenables gift patterns to be	Reasons include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Money or similarConflict of interest ('COI'). Note reason why.Could otherwise reasonably be perceived as influencing judgement.Inconsistent with community expectationsCould bring integrity into disreputeNo legitimate	Include: (i) name (ii) title/position no. (iii) type – i.e. Council member, executive, or employee <i>[Other data can also be required e.g. 'division']</i> When publishing on website delete all information in this column	When publishing on website delete any identifying information.	Note that: <ul style="list-style-type: none">All gifts of cultural, historic, or other significance are reportable, regardless of their monetary value.Any gift from a visiting delegation or any other official gift is of 'significance'	Est. \$ value of this gift offer.	Est. total \$ value of all gift offers from this source to the Council member or employee in last 12 months.	When publishing on website delete any identifying information.	(1) For example: 'entered into Assets Register'; 'donated to Melbourne Museum'. (2) Note name and title/position no. of person who authorised how the gift is to be used or disposed of by the council. When publishing on website delete all information in	(1) Note any relevant comments, including by whom made. (2) Note any remedial action that has been or will be taken additional to that noted in comments. When publishing on website delete any identifying information, for example, substitute: <ul style="list-style-type: none">offeror number for offeror's name'Council member'

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
Entry no.	Date gift offered	Offeror	Offeror number	Prohibited gift? If so, why?	Council member or employee to whom the gift was offered	Description of gift offered	Cultural, historic or other significance?	Est. value of this offer	Est. combined value	Was the gift accepted or declined? If accepted, record the legitimate business reason (benefit).	If the gift was accepted: (1) How is it to be used/disposed of? (2) Who authorised this decision?	Any relevant: (1) Comments (2) Remedial action.
		stakeholder; etc.). When publishing on website delete all information in this column EXCEPT do not delete (iii) 'type of organisation'.	identified when the register is published on the internet.	business reason When publishing on website delete any identifying information.	EXCEPT do not delete (iii) Council member, executive, or employee.		When publishing on website delete any identifying information.				(2).	for name and details of chair or Council member • 'executive' for name and details of Executive Officer or other executive • 'employee' for name and details of employee.
01/17	9.12.16	Takem Pty Ltd John Smith, Marketing officer (Supplier)	55	Prohibited gift: Conflict of interest. Offered by supplier about whom employee is likely to make or can influence a decision.	Anita Green Senior Purchasing Officer (Employee)	Christmas hamper	No	\$70	\$85	Declined	Not applicable	'Explained was prohibited gift as I am a purchasing officer. Directed supplier to info on website.' (Anita Green)

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
Entry no.	Date gift offered	Offeror	Offeror number	Prohibited gift? If so, why?	Council member or employee to whom the gift was offered	Description of gift offered	Cultural, historic or other significance?	Est. value of this offer	Est. combined value	Was the gift accepted or declined? If accepted, record the legitimate business reason (benefit).	If the gift was accepted: (1) How is it to be used/disposed of? (2) Who authorised this decision?	Any relevant: (1) Comments (2) Remedial action.
02/17	20.4.17	Water Steady Pty. Ltd Alex Hutton, Director (Industry stakeholder)	63	Prohibited gift: COI. Offered by industry stakeholder with interest in policy decision Council is to make (outcome of green paper).	Charles Pink Council member (Council member)	Lunch at a cafe	No	\$45	\$70	Declined	Not applicable	'AH wanted to discuss green paper "over lunch at Mimi's, my shout". (Charles Pink)
03/17	10.5.17	South Pacific Nations Sustainability Alliance Lyn Tan, Head of delegation (Visiting international delegation)	64	No.	Francine Gold Chair (Council member)	Wall clock made of sustainably harvested timbers sourced from South Pacific.	Yes.	\$500	\$500	Accepted. Reason: hosting delegation improves international relations for State.	(1) Donated to XYZ institution. (2) Andrea Fennel, CFAO	'Gift received as thank you for escorting visiting international delegation' (Francine Gold)

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
Entry no.	Date gift offered	Offeror	Offeror number	Prohibited gift? If so, why?	Council member or employee to whom the gift was offered	Description of gift offered	Cultural, historic or other significance?	Est. value of this offer	Est. combined value	Was the gift accepted or declined? If accepted, record the legitimate business reason (benefit).	If the gift was accepted: (1) How is it to be used/disposed of? (2) Who authorised this decision?	Any relevant: (1) Comments (2) Remedial action.
04/17	9.7.17	Takem Pty Ltd Andrea Honey, Marketing officer (Supplier)	55	Prohibited gift: Conflict of interest. Offered by supplier about whom employee is likely to make or can influence a decision.	James Fry Manager, Purchasing (Employee)	Free ticket to 'Office of the Future' trade exhibition (where offeror has a stand).	No	\$65	\$65	Declined	Not applicable	'Explained prohibited gift. (James Fry) 'Supplier has pattern of prohibited offers. Suggest remedial action' (Bob Ng – responsible person) Remedial action: letter sent to Executive Officer on 28.5.16
05/17	12.9.17	Birchup Ltd Sandra Sutton, Managing Director (Industry stakeholder, commercial)	32	Prohibited gift: Reason 1 – COI. Stakeholder with interest in decisions executive can influence.	John Black Executive Officer (Executive)	Attendance for two at AFL Grand Final in corporate box.	No	\$450	\$450	Declined	Not applicable	'Explained prohibited gift. Sent guidance materials by email dated 14.9.16' (John Black)

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
Entry no.	Date gift offered	Offeror	Offeror number	Prohibited gift? If so, why?	Council member or employee to whom the gift was offered	Description of gift offered	Cultural, historic or other significance?	Est. value of this offer	Est. combined value	Was the gift accepted or declined? If accepted, record the legitimate business reason (benefit).	If the gift was accepted: (1) How is it to be used/disposed of? (2) Who authorised this decision?	Any relevant: (1) Comments (2) Remedial action.
		interests)		Reason 2 – Inconsistent with community expectations Reason 3 – No legitimate business purpose.								
06/17	10.9.17	Green Growth Forums Sally Bower, Director, Education (Not for profit. Regional collective of environment agencies)	44	Prohibited gift: No legitimate business reason to accept.	Jan Baker Executive Director, Sustainable Growth Division (Employee)	Box of chocolates	No	\$25	\$55	Declined	Not applicable.	'Gift offered for presenting at 2 nd forum this year. Accepted token gift (\$30 bottle of wine) for 1 st presentation. Explained could not accept this offer as exceeds \$50 reportable threshold without 'legitimate business benefit'. (Jan Baker)

Appendix 3 - Flowchart

Have you received a gift offer as a result of your role with the council?

'GIFT' includes:

- **items or services** (e.g. chocolates, bottle of wine, commemorative object, calendar, door prize)
- **benefits** (e.g. promise of a new job)
- **hospitality that exceeds common courtesies.** ('Hospitality' includes food, drink, travel, accommodation, events or activities – e.g. sporting, social, industry, arts or entertainment. 'Common courtesies' is polite, basic and modest. It does not raise a conflict of interest. Whether an offer exceeds common courtesy depends on what is offered, by whom, to whom, when, why.)

Yes

No (hospitality does not exceed common courtesies)

Policy does not apply

Policy applies

Is it a prohibited gift?

- Is it **money** or is similar to money (e.g. gift vouchers) or easily converted into money (e.g. shares)?
- Is it a **conflict of interest** (real, potential or perceived)? – e.g. offered by an external source with an interest in a decision that you are likely to make or can influence (e.g. tender process; procurement of goods/services; awarding of a grant or sponsorship; setting of policy; enforcement, licensing or regulation; contracts).
- Could it in any other way create a **reasonable perception** that it is offered to influence, or could influence, your judgement (i.e. how you act, or fail to act, now or in the future)?
- Is it inconsistent with **community expectations**?
- Could it in any other way bring your integrity, or that of the agency, into **disrepute**?

Yes

No

It is prohibited

- Refuse the gift.
- Disclose offer to your 'responsible person' (line manager for employees; chair for Council members and the EO) as follows:
 - Token offers by email
 - Reportable offers verbally and by lodging a gift offer declaration form.

Yes – it is 'reportable'

- Is there a 'legitimate business reason' to accept the offer?

No

Yes

'Reportable' obligations

- You can either refuse or accept the gift.
- Regardless, you must inform your 'responsible person' and disclose the offer by lodging a gift offer declaration form.
- If you accept the offer, the agency is the owner of the gift, not you.

Token or reportable?

- Does the combined total of offers to you from this source in the last 12 months exceed \$50? OR
- Regardless of value, is the gift offered of cultural, historical or other significance?

No – it is 'token'

'Token' obligations

- You can either refuse or accept the gift.
- Regardless, you must disclose the offer by email to your 'responsible person' and keep a copy of it.
- If you accept the gift, you can keep it as your own.

Note that information about reportable gift offers is published (de-identified) on the agency's website.