

6.2 COUNCIL CONTRIBUTIONS TO HUMANITARIAN CAUSES

Submitting Councillor: Councillor Josh Fergeus

MOTION

That Council:

1. *Notes that Local Government Victoria’s Good Governance Guide states that good governance is transparent, and that “people should be able to follow and understand the decision-making process. This means that they will be able to clearly see how and why a decision was made”¹;*
2. *Commits to adopting parameters to guide future decisions of Council with regards to financial contributions to humanitarian causes and disaster relief efforts;*
3. *That any draft of such parameters should clearly detail the criteria by which future proposals to donate Council funds to such causes will be judged;*
4. *That any parameters, once adopted by Council, should be made publicly available;*
5. *Directs Officers to draft such parameters for Council consideration no later than February 2019.*

BACKGROUND

Council has previously considered motions to donate funds to disaster relief efforts and humanitarian causes. The most recent of these saw Council donate \$1,000 to the Greek Red Cross to contribute to recovery from devastating bushfires.

Council currently has no policy providing overarching criteria or other governance arrangements for donations of this kind.

DISCUSSION

Council has obligations regarding good governance and sound financial stewardship of public funds. It is appropriate for Council to have a suite of policies governing allocation and expenditure.

The Local Government Act lists objectives of a Council, including:

- To ensure that resources are used efficiently and effectively and services are provided in accordance with the Best Value Principles to best meet the needs of the local community;
- To ensure transparency and accountability in Council decision making.

In order to adequately meet these objectives, it is necessary for Council to develop some parameters for decision-making with regards to disaster relief efforts and humanitarian causes. These parameters should provide guidance to Council in assessing the relative benefit to the local community of any such financial contribution.

¹ Municipal Association of Victoria, Victorian Local Governance Association, Local Government Victoria, and Local Government Professionals (2012). *Good Governance Guide*.

Issues for consideration may include:

- the relative merits of contributing to local, national and/or international causes;
- the appropriateness of using ratepayer funds in such a manner;
- benchmarking;
- the appropriate scale for any such contributions;
- whether or not the development of a special fund from which to draw such contributions is appropriate.

CONCLUSION

While the merit and appropriateness of Council contributing public money to humanitarian causes or disaster relief efforts may be contested, it is highly likely that proposals of this nature will come to Council for consideration from time to time.

It is therefore appropriate that Council develops some parameters to guide future decision-making, and to provide transparency for residents and ratepayers.