

Case studies: Local government

The following case studies deal with common issues and provide examples of appropriate resolutions.

These case studies are general and hypothetical in nature and do not represent any actual requests for advice the Integrity Commissioner may have received.

Case study 1 – Financial / quantifiable benefit

A councillor's son owns one of only a small number of properties on Jones Road. Council is holding a meeting to decide whether to upgrade the road to bitumen. The upgrade is likely to increase the value of the councillor's son's property.

The councillor is aware that the benefit or loss to his son from Council's decision is not insignificant. The councillor correctly identifies he has a 'material personal interest' in the outcome of the decision and leaves the room when the matter is being discussed or voted on. To avoid influencing the councillors, he also does not talk to them about how they should vote.

Case study 2 – Conflict of interest:

A councillor is President of the local cricket grounds. When Council considers a recommendation to impose water restrictions on outdoor recreation facilities, a fellow councillor tells the meeting that the President of the cricket club should not be involved in the vote as he has a conflict of interest.

Council decides that the councillor has a personal interest in the matter beyond that of a mere membership and that it might reasonably be perceived that this personal interest could lead to a decision that is contrary to the public interest. Council decides that the councillor has a conflict of interest and should leave the room while the matter is being discussed and voted on, and so he does.

Case study 3 – Gifts and donations:

A Mayor receives 10 free passes to the ballet from one of Council's contractors valued at \$550. As the tickets are over \$500, the Mayor registers them as a gift on his Register of

Interests. He also decides to return the tickets to minimise any potential conflicts of interest in future matters which come before Council involving the relevant contractor.

Case study 4 – Hospitality gifts:

A councillor is attending a public event. A Council contractor with an application currently before Council is also in attendance. During the lunch break, the contractor offers to take the councillor to lunch at a restaurant and pay for their meal. So as not to be seen as being influenced by the contractor or receiving a gift, the councillor declines the offer.