



Ms Debra Just,
General Manager
Willoughby City Council

Dear Ms Just,

Re: Draft Code of Meeting Practice 2019

I am writing on behalf of members of Willoughby Environmental Protection Association (WEPA) Inc.

I respectfully request that Council take our late submission into consideration.

The items in the Draft Code on which we wish to comment are as follows:

Timing of ordinary council meetings

3.1. The proposal to hold only one open council meeting per month is totally inadequate. Most councillors work. It is quite unreasonable to expect them to give proper attention to the business papers in a few days before a meeting, particularly as the papers currently may run to up to 500 or so pages. The risk is that councillors may note items pertaining to their ward but may not have time to give more than a cursory glance to the remaining items.

Councillors are elected to represent not just their ward, but all residents within the City of Willoughby. Residents deserve the full and informed attention of councillors to the business at hand. WEPA members do not believe residents are being properly represented with only one meeting per month and recommend there should be at least two.

It is also unreasonable to expect residents/members of the public, who are also time poor, to be able to wade through such voluminous business papers in the short time provided before a meeting.

Notice to councillors of ordinary meetings

3.6. The Draft Code states that the business papers must be made available at least three days before a meeting. This minimal notice is insufficient given the amount of material councillors must consider.

Giving notice of business to be considered at council meetings. Questions with notice

3.14. The Draft Code does not indicate how a complaint against the General Manager or member of staff, or a question implying wrongdoing of the General Manager or a member of staff may be made.

Councillor briefing sessions

3.31. WEPA members query why briefing sessions are required to be held in the absence of members of the public. This seems inconsistent with the principles of transparency and accountability.

Public forums

WEPA's view is that the strict limitation of speakers addressing council to three minutes, whether on matters on the agenda (4.9) or on matters not on the agenda (4.25) is too inflexible.



Council should bear in mind that many residents find it a nerve-racking experience, and this warrants more consideration by council.

WEPA members have been attending and observing meetings of Willoughby Council over the past forty years. At many meetings of past councils, it has been the practice for councillors to move an extension of time when circumstances warranted. This never seemed to create problems for the conduct of the meeting.

Item 10.26

This statement is incomplete. It does not specify the clause number to which it refers.

In conclusion:

WEPA recommends that there should be at least two open council meetings per month. This will enable councillors and residents/members of the public to be better informed and councillors better able to represent their electors.

Where briefing sessions are required, they should be public in the interests of transparency and accountability.

When residents/members of the public address council, more flexibility and consideration should be shown to speakers by allowing an extension of time where warranted.

Yours sincerely,

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