

## Role of the Mayor

### Is it different for the Mayor

While mayors play a critical role in providing leadership for their councils and communities the *Local Government Act* only briefly mentions mayors. The Act requires local governments to elect a mayor (annually) but apart from specifying the timing of that election, the process of how that mayor is chosen and what form the ballot takes is up to each individual council. The Act requires mayors to take precedence at all municipal proceedings in the municipality and to chair all council meetings to which they are present. Further the Act provides different allowances for mayors and councillors and it empowers the mayor to exercise a casting vote if required.

The mayor's leadership role is different from that of a premier or prime minister. There is no formal government or opposition within the council. Accordingly, the mayor is not the formal leader of a majority party within the government. Even though they have been elected by a majority vote, mayors become leaders of all the councillors, whether an individual personally supported them or not.

The mayor takes a role similar to the facilitator of a group and as such, considers what is necessary to make the group run successfully. Concepts such as participation, communication, involvement, consensus, mutual respect and listening are important. The mayor's skills in facilitation plays a key role in ensuring the council operates successfully. The mayor can also support good governance by modeling good behavior and ethics in fulfilling the council and community leadership roles.

The MAV set out *the Essential Elements of the Role of the Mayor* in 2007 which are designed to assist local governments, councillors and mayors determine the approach to leadership most appropriate to themselves.

There are six essential elements to consider:

- Leader of the Council
- Enhancer of Good Governance
- Builder of External and Media Relations
- Promoter of Civic and Institutional Pride
- Supporter and Engager with the Community
- Facilitator of the Process of Governing

Mayors and Shire Presidents are elected by the council for a one-year term, aside from the city of Melbourne where the mayor is directly elected for the term of the council.