

## New credit card rules for Lord Mayor Robert Doyle

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Melbourne lord mayor Robert Doyle will retain his corporate credit card, but has to publicly disclose if he uses it to pay for any personal expenses.

It has been revealed Cr Doyle used his council card to purchase \$28,000 of personal items over a three-and-a-half year period, prompting the former Victorian Liberal leader to promise to change his PIN in order to not get his two cards confused.

There were calls for the lord mayor to have his work card temporarily suspended and a report to be conducted into the use of credit cards by councillors, in a motion by Labor councillor Richard Foster that was debated on Tuesday night.

"Three years, 70 transactions, \$28,000 ratepayer dollars. No independent review and oversight, all because he's going to change his PIN. It's not good enough," Cr Foster said.

But the move was labelled as political grandstanding and "medi -driven" before being voted down by all but the two Labor-aligned councillors.

Instead, an alternative motion successfully submitted by Cr Stephen Mayne means the lord mayor will have to reveal any private expenditure incorrectly charged to the council-issued credit card in his quarterly public expenses disclosure beginning this year.

Cr Mayne said that every month Cr Doyle had paid back his personal expenses and that in the last 20 months he had only averaged a personal spend on his credit card of \$50 a month – with the \$28,000 figure coming from a previous higher spending period.

"The net loss to council is zero," he said.

Cr Mayne asked the lord mayor if he was prepared to fully comply with council's expenses policy in future, to which he replied "absolutely".

### Too many councillors conflicted on skyscraper proposal

Meanwhile, council was unable to vote on a controversial tower proposal on Tuesday night because too many of the councillors had received an election donation from the site's developer.

Central Equity has applied to build a 223 metre mega-tower at 560 Lonsdale Street, which looms over a nearby heritage building.



There have been calls for the Lord Mayor to have his work card suspended. Photo: Mark Jesser



Council officers said the 887-apartment project would have an "overbearing and adverse" impact on its surroundings, had poorly-designed apartments without adequate natural light and would result in the destruction of a mature street tree.

But all councillors, including those without a conflict, were gagged from discussing and voting on the project due to \$10,000 election donations accepted by the lord mayor and his team of four councillors and \$8000 received by Cr Ken Ong from Central Equity.

Someone in the crowd called out "shame" and "why?" when it was announced the quorum had been lost due to the high proportion of conflicted councillors. Council administration will now instruct the planning department that they object to the tower, based on the recommendation of council staff.

Cr Doyle has said he will continue to take election donations "from anybody that the rules allow you to take a donation from", despite being forced to stand aside from at least a dozen decisions due to his 2012 campaign donations.

The 887-apartment tower proposed by Central Equity for 560 Lonsdale Street.