

CEO under fire again

Aaron Langmaid

PORT Phillip Council chief executive David Spokes offered an additional two days annual leave to staff in the wake of the bungled staff review.

Critics say the entitlement could have cost ratepayers up to \$400,000 and comes on top of the \$800,000 billed to the council by Caroline Shahbaz for consultancy.

The State Government has announced an inquiry into the affair.

“(Leave) was offered to staff in the guise of a ‘job well done’, but it was entirely clear that Spokes was trying to win back his audience,” an email from a former council employee said.

In a memo to staff, Mr Spokes conceded mistakes had been made. “(I) accept responsibility for any negative impact on staff morale,” Mr Spokes said in the emailed memo.

“On reflection I think I ended up driving the desire for change too quickly.”

Mr Spokes told the *Leader* the subsequent leave was what staff wanted: “It went to the executive for consideration and the decision was made to support the initiative.”

Victorian Local Governance Association chief executive Rae Perry said the annual leave offer was a legitimate move.

But UnChain St Kilda president Serge Thomann said there was a productivity cost.

“It is misleading to say it is cost neutral,” he said.