

Local Government Bill 2019

Theme 4 – Community Confidence

The Local Government Bill 2019 will improve democracy, accountability and service delivery for all Victorians.



Better local government for all Victorians

The Local Government Bill 2019 is the most ambitious reform of local government in Victoria in 30 years.

It will deliver on the Victorian Government's commitment to modernise how local government works in our state through reforms in **five key areas**:

- Allow councils to **improve the services** they deliver for communities through better financial management and engagement with the community;
- Provide **stronger local democracy** with direct accountability to the community;
- Improve **councillor conduct** with clear standards of behaviour and stronger mechanisms to address poor conduct;
- Give the **community confidence** by making reforms to election processes and candidate requirements; and
- Provide a **new relationship** between State and local government and the community

Building community confidence

The Bill will strengthen community confidence through an improved electoral system which will see better prepared candidates running for council and clearer processes for voting in council elections.

Electoral roll reform

Only residents of the council area will be enrolled to vote automatically from 2024.¹ Those who don't live in a council area but own property in that area will still be enrolled for the 2020 elections but must opt in to vote in all future council elections.

Why change?

The current electoral roll system is complex. With a mix of state-enrolled and property-based voters, it's difficult for councils to administer. Simplifying how this works will free up councils to focus on improving and representing their local communities.

Voter turnout from non-resident property owners is historically low - only around 50 per cent participated in the last council elections.

A single voting method

The Bill will empower the Minister to select a single voting method for all council elections – postal, attendance or electronic – based on advice from the VEC.

Why change?

Different voting systems across councils make elections confusing for voters and inconsistent. This reform will allow VEC to recommend the system most likely to increase turnout, promoting involvement in local democracy and ensuring consistency across Victoria.

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Compulsory training for candidates

All candidates for council elections will be required to complete mandatory candidate training prior to running for council.

Why change?

Victorians should have confidence their councillors are ready to do the job they're elected to do.

Training will mean candidates know what the role involves and are ready to perform it to the best of their ability.

People interested in standing for council will be aware of what the role involves and the standards they need to uphold.

Better equipped councillors

All elected councillors will need to complete mandatory councillor induction training within six months of being elected.

Why change?

Elected councillors take on important responsibilities and communities should be able to have confidence they're able to do the job.

While candidate training helps, there's a lot more councillors need to get across when they're in the role.

Transparent allowances and salaries

Just like Members of Parliament, allowances for Mayors, Deputy Mayors and councillors will be set by the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal.

Chief Executive Officer employment arrangements will have to align with Victorian Public Sector standards and accord with public council policy.

Why change?

Victorians expect fair pay for their elected representatives and for council CEO employment arrangements to be determined in a fair, consistent and

transparent manner.



1. See *Local Government Bill 2019 – City of Melbourne* fact sheet

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