

Gender Equality and Local Government

The Local Government Bill 2019 and the Gender Equality Bill 2019 work together to address the causes and impacts of gender inequality.

Local Government Bill 2019

A range of provisions in the Local Government Bill support the Victorian Government's Gender Equality Strategy, *Safe and Strong*, and complement the Gender Equality Bill 2019.

Workforce planning

The Local Government Bill requires councils to prepare a workforce plan that includes measures relating to gender equality, diversity and inclusiveness.

The Gender Equality Bill 2019 details what councils must do to satisfy this requirement, including the development of a Gender Equality Action Plan.

This ensures that gender equality is taken into account when councils are developing and maintaining their workforce plans.

Councillor parental leave

Councillors that become parents or adopt a child, and that have the responsibility for the care of that child during that period will be automatically entitled to leave with allowance for a period of six months.

The introduction of paid parental leave for councillors supports the objectives of the Victorian Gender Equality Strategy by addressing the gender gap among Victoria's councillors.

Councillor expenses and resources

The Local Government Bill requires councils to adopt a policy in relation to the reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses for councillors. The Policy must include expenses incurred by a councillor who is a carer in a "care relationship".

The Bill also requires councils to provide resources and facilities to any councillor that is a carer to help them to perform their role.

Councillor misconduct

The definition of serious misconduct has been expanded and an independent Councillor Conduct Panel will investigate and hear cases of serious misconduct, including sexual harassment.

Councillors will be disqualified from holding office for four years if two or more findings of serious misconduct are made against them in an eight-year period.

Gross misconduct is also clearly defined to include behaviour that is sexual harassment of an egregious nature.



The Gender Equality Bill 2019

The Gender Equality Bill is a once in a generation opportunity to improve gender equality in Victorian workplaces and the wider community, and position Victoria as a leader on gender equality. If passed, the Gender Equality Act will commence on 31 March 2021.

The Gender Equality Bill aims to improve workplace gender equality across the Victorian public sector, universities, and councils, and to get better results for the Victorian community through improved policies, programs and services.

Councils will be required to develop and implement Gender Equality Action Plans (GEAPs) every four years and report on progress every two years. Councils will also be required to consider and promote gender equality across policies, programs and service delivery.

For more information on the Gender Equality Bill, please visit www.vic.gov.au/gender-equality-bill.

Victorian Government's Gender Equality Strategy

The Victorian Government's Gender Equality Strategy includes a commitment to achieve 50 per cent female councillors and mayors by 2025.

Currently, 37.9 per cent of councillors and 41.6 per cent of mayors are women. This target is being supported through a range of programs and initiatives being delivered by local government peak bodies.

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