

# Local Government Bill 2019

## Theme 2 – Stronger local democracy

The Local Government Bill 2019 will improve local government 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

### Stronger local democracy

The Bill will build stronger local democracy through a range of measures to increase accountability and transparency.

#### Single Member Wards

Single Member Wards will be introduced for all councils so that voters know who their local councillor is. Rural councils with large geographical areas and small populations will be able to be either single member wards or unsubdivided.

#### Why change?

Victorians deserve to know who their councillor is and be able to have a dialogue with them about issues in their community.

Changes over the past two decades have seen single member wards replaced with multi-member wards and this has reduced the direct accountability of councillors to their community.

Ward Structure	1998 (%)	2003 (%)	2014 (%)	Now (%)
Unsubdivided	17.3	16.5	27.8	25.3
Uniform multi-member wards	10.7	12.7	20.3	25.3
Non-uniform multi-member wards	2.7	1.3	19.0	19.0
Mixed single and multi-member wards	18.7	15.2	19.0	20.3
Single member wards	50.7	54.4	13.9	10.1

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Smaller wards will mean councillors across Victoria are more accessible to their constituents – supporting grassroots democracy and enabling ongoing engagement with local communities.

They also lower the cost of running for council, making it easier for people to stand in elections and supporting more diversity.

### Greater transparency

Councils will be required to have public transparency policies that describe the ways that council information will be made available. It will also list the types of information that councils must make available to the public including all policies, plans and reports.

Allowances for Mayors, Deputy Mayors and councillors will be set by the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and councils must have a Chief Executive Officer employment policy.

### Why change?

People want to know what their council is doing and how they can help shape its decisions – the Bill makes it clear how councils will enable this.

### Greater accountability

Councils will need to develop a clear and detailed annual report with clear indicators of performance for the services provided by the Council and funded in the budget during the financial year.

Mayors will publicly report on the annual progress against the Council Plan.

The Know Your Council website (<https://knowyourcouncil.vic.gov.au>) provides consistent information on council performance across Victoria.

### Why change?

Victorians should be able to keep track of their council's performance, be clear about what outcomes it wants to deliver and understand how it intends to achieve them.

The Bill also includes reforms to give communities more of a say in decisions. By introducing greater accountability requirements at the same time, it ensures Victorians can both be involved in council decisions and hold councils to account for their performance.



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

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