

Local Government Victoria Bulletin

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MINISTERIAL GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES AND RESOURCES (VIRTUAL MEETINGS)

The *Regulatory Legislation Amendment (Reform) Act 2022* (the Amendment Act), received Royal Assent on 29 March 2022 and includes reforms relating to virtual council meetings. From 2 September 2022, councils and regional libraries will be able to conduct virtual meetings in accordance with their relevant Governance Rules (or Local Laws in the case of regional libraries) on a permanent basis.

These reforms will be incorporated into Division 2, Part 3 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (LG Act), which relates to the procedures for Council decision making, including the holding of meetings (being council meetings, joint meetings of councils, delegated committee, and joint delegated committee meetings).

LGV has worked with the sector to develop a Ministerial Good Practice Guideline and draft model Governance Rules that may assist councils to develop Governance Rules to comply with the new virtual meeting provisions.

The Minister for Local Government has approved the Good Practice Guideline (MGPG-3). The guidelines and the draft model rules are available at <https://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/council-governance/how-we-regulate-councils>.

The Guideline takes effect from 2 September 2022 to align with the commencement of the new provisions in the LG Act. It is being released now to assist councils to amend their Governance Rules in consultation with their communities, in order to comply with the new provisions. In developing or amending their Governance Rules, councils must ensure that a process of community engagement is followed in accordance with section 60(4) of the LG Act.

From 2 September 2022, these amendments will supersede Part 12 of the LG Act, which currently enables councils to conduct meetings virtually in response to COVID-19.

A copy of the *Regulatory Legislation Amendment (Reform) Act 2022* can be found at: <https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/as-made/acts/regulatory-legislation-amendment-reform-act-2022>.

Matters relating to regional libraries

The Amendment Act does not alter the ability for regional libraries to meet virtually, in accordance with their local laws.

It should be noted that the previous requirement for the local law to specify how many members must attend the meeting in person (under section 197E(2)(a) of the *Local Government Act 1989*) has now been repealed.