

Campaigning for the 2020 council elections in Victoria

Guidelines for safe campaigning during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

12 August 2020

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1. Introduction

1.1 Context

The 2020 council general elections are expected to be Victoria's biggest election ever, with more than 4.5 million voters enrolled and more than 2000 candidates expected to contest 290 separate elections.

The Victorian Government is continuing to work with the Chief Health Officer, as well as local government stakeholders, on the impact of the health crisis on the safe conduct of the council elections.

1.2 Purpose

Candidates for council general elections will be considering how to safely campaign for election during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. These guidelines aim to help candidates to safely campaign by providing an overview of the restrictions applicable to campaign activities and measures they can take to reduce the risk of transmission.

Restrictions are subject to change and depend on levels of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission. Any campaign activities must comply with directions by the Victorian Chief Health Officer, which are in place at the time.

As at 12 August 2020, the two levels of restrictions most relevant to campaigners are: Stage 4 restrictions for greater Melbourne and Stage 3 restrictions (Stay at Home) for the rest of Victoria. These restrictions are subject to change and these guidelines will be updated accordingly.

For the most up to date information on restrictions that apply in your area, see <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorias-restriction-levels-covid-19>

Under Stage 3 restrictions (Stay at Home), people can only leave home for four main reasons: food and essential supplies, care and healthcare, exercise and outdoor recreation, and study or work (if study or work is unable to be done from home). When outside your home, you must wear a face covering.

Under Stage 4 restrictions, people can leave home for the four reasons allowed under Stage 3 (with the exception of outdoor recreation) but there are further restrictions that relate to those four reasons. In greater Melbourne, you must stay within 5km from home for shopping and exercise and a curfew is in place from 8pm to 5am every day.

People are only allowed to leave their house for work if they are a permitted worker who is required to work onsite, and they must carry a valid worker permit when leaving home to attend work. Only one person per household can leave home to get necessary goods and services and only once a day. Where a person leaves the house for exercise, they may only do so for a maximum of one hour.

Campaigning for election is considered work and is therefore a permissible reason to leave home under Stage 3 restrictions but should be done in a way that minimises the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission.

Those campaigning for election are not considered permitted workers under Stage 4 restrictions and therefore it is not permissible to leave home to undertake campaign activities.

Workplaces in Victoria (not just permitted workplaces in greater Melbourne) are now also subject to the Workplace Directions which place specific obligations on employers and employees that are aimed at reducing the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission in workplaces. See <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/202008/Workplace%20Directions%20%28No%20%29%20-%208%20August%202020.pdf>

The Victorian Electoral Commission has produced its Candidate Handbook for the 2020 council general elections: <https://www.vec.vic.gov.au/CandidatesAndParties/CandidateFormsAndHandbooks.html>. Prospective candidates should make use of this Handbook in addition to this guide.

2. Campaigning during the pandemic

2.1 Campaign activities

All campaigning activities must comply with directions from the Victorian Chief Health Officer.

You should check the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) website to ensure you are clear about directions that apply to your municipality or suburb on each day of your campaign.

For the most up-to-date information, visit www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorias-restriction-levels-covid-19.

Important things to remember before leaving home include:

- From 11.59pm on 2 August 2020 face coverings are compulsory for the whole of Victoria when leaving home (unless a lawful exception applies).
- Under Stage 3 and Stage 4 restrictions, there are only four main reasons to leave home: shopping for food or other essential items and services, outdoor exercise (and outdoor recreation in Stage 3 areas only), care and other compassionate reasons and work and education where this is permitted.
- If you are feeling unwell you should stay at home. If you have even mild symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) you should get tested and stay home until you get your results. For information on where to get tested, see www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/where-get-tested-covid-19.

The table below outlines likely campaign activities and gives advice about how coronavirus directions apply as at 12 August 2020.

Note 1: Directions from the Victorian Chief Health Officer may change at any time. You must ensure your campaign activities comply with the current directions for the geographical area.

Note 2: For those who reside in Stage 3 restricted areas, when travelling for the purposes of campaigning you must not enter Stage 4 restricted areas.

Table 1: How Stage 3 and 4 restrictions apply to campaign activities as at 12 August 2020.

Campaign activity	Stage 4 restrictions (Greater Melbourne)		Stage 3 restrictions (Stay at Home) (Rest of Victoria)	
	Permissible activity?	Advice on restrictions	Permissible activity?	Advice on restrictions
Convening / attending meetings – public places	NO	Public gatherings are restricted. You must not arrange to meet or organise a gathering of more than one other person for a common purpose at a public place. This includes indoor and outdoor public places. Note that people who reside in greater Melbourne are only permitted to leave home for four main reasons, which would not extend to attending a campaign-related meeting in a public place.	NO	Public gatherings are restricted. You must not arrange to meet or organise a gathering of more than one other person for a common purpose at a public place. This includes indoor and outdoor public places.
Convening / attending meetings – private residences	NO	Private gatherings are restricted. You must not enter a premises at which you do not ordinarily reside (including the external part of the premises such as the front yard) and must not permit another person to enter the premises at which you ordinarily reside, except in limited circumstances.	NO	Private gatherings are restricted. You must not enter a premises at which you do not ordinarily reside (including the external part of the premises such as the front yard) and must not permit another person to enter the premises at which you ordinarily reside, except in limited circumstances.
Door knocking	NO	Door knocking is not a permitted reason to enter another person's premises. Private gatherings are restricted as per above.	NO	Door knocking is not a permitted reason to enter another person's premises. Private gatherings are restricted as per above.
Meeting the public, attending community events	NO	Public gatherings are restricted as per above – i.e. you must not attend or convene in-person meetings or community events.	NO	Public gatherings are restricted as per above – i.e. you must not convene or attend meetings or community events. There is also a risk that interacting with members of the public in public places such as shopping centres and railway stations would result in a public gathering of more than two people occurring.
Letterbox drops	NO	If you can work from home, you must continue to work from home. Only permitted workers with a worker permit can leave home to attend work under Stage 4 restrictions. Campaign activities that can be managed virtually must be managed virtually. Mailing items and use of courier services are permitted.	YES	This can occur, but you must not enter the person's premises or congregate with others at letterboxes. Hand hygiene must be maintained when handling documents to be given to the public. You must wear a face covering when you leave your house, unless you have a lawful reason for not doing so. You cannot enter someone else's home or invite others into your home to coordinate this activity.
Handing out leaflets	NO	If you can work from home, you must continue to work from home. Only permitted workers with a worker permit can leave home to attend work under Stage 4 restrictions. Campaign activities that can be managed virtually must be managed virtually. Mailing items and use of courier services are permitted.	YES	Public gatherings are restricted as per above. Hand hygiene must be maintained when handling documents to be given to the public. You must wear a face covering when you leave your house, unless you have a lawful reason for not doing so. You cannot enter someone else's home or invite others into your home to coordinate this activity.
Billboards / posters	NO	If you can work from home, you must continue to work from home. Only permitted workers with a worker permit can leave home to attend work under Stage 4 restrictions. Campaign activities that can be managed virtually must be managed virtually.	YES	If you wish to place billboards or posters on private premises, you must observe the restrictions about private gatherings as per above. You must wear a face covering when you leave your house, unless you have a lawful reason for not doing so. You cannot enter someone else's home or invite others into your home to coordinate this activity.
Social media	YES	No restrictions apply, provided this is arranged remotely.	YES	No restrictions apply – but should be arranged remotely unless not reasonably practicable to do from home. You must wear a face covering when you leave your house, unless you have a lawful reason for not doing so.
Newspaper ads	YES	No restrictions apply, provided this is arranged remotely.	YES	No restrictions apply – but should be arranged remotely unless not reasonably practicable to do from home. You must wear a face covering when you leave your house, unless you have a lawful reason for not doing so.
Radio and TV	ONLY IF DONE REMOTELY	Radio and television interviews must be conducted remotely as campaigning for election is not a permitted reason to leave home under Stage 4 restrictions. Filming commercials outside the home is not permitted under Stage 4 restrictions.	YES	Must be conducted from home wherever possible. If conducted in person, you must wear a face covering (unless you have a lawful reason not to), except during interviews that are live broadcast requiring clear enunciation or visibility of the mouth.

2.2 How to campaign safely – Stage 3 restricted areas

Carefully plan any campaigning activities that are permitted under the Stage 3 restrictions to ensure they are undertaken safely.

Those campaigning for election are not considered 'permitted workers' under Stage 4 restrictions and therefore it is not permissible to leave home to undertake campaign activities.

2.2.1 General measures for campaigning

Note that workplaces that are permitted to remain open in Victoria (not just those in greater Melbourne) are subject to the Chief Health Officer's [Workplace Directions](#), which place specific requirements on employers and employees. These include preventative measures that must be taken to reduce the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission, but also steps that must be taken by employers if they are made aware of a suspected or confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) who attended the workplace whilst infectious.

If an employee receives a positive coronavirus COVID-19 result, the employee is now also required to notify their employer of any worksites they attended whilst infectious.

For full details of the obligations of both employers and employees under the directions, see [Workplace Directions](#).

In addition to obligations under the Workplace Directions, campaigners should ensure the following:

- team members work from home wherever possible. For those who cannot work from home, encourage flexible working arrangements, including off-peak travel
- unwell team members must stay home
- avoid work related travel where possible
- plan contingencies for a potential increase of campaign team absences because people are self-isolating, self-quarantining or staying at home because they are unwell
- if using a dedicated workspace, plan what to do if campaign team members arrive unwell at the workspace (e.g. identify an isolation room or separated area). There are also specific requirements regarding this under the Workplace Directions
- display coronavirus (COVID-19) education materials in designated work areas. Download and print them from: www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/preventing-infection-workplace-covid-19#resources
- campaign team member movement between areas and cross-over between shifts are minimised.
- adequate facilities for hand washing are provided
- health and safety representatives are consulted, and campaign team members are kept informed about actions you are taking
- at least 1.5 metres physical distance is kept between individuals wherever possible. Team members should also avoid sharing items
- cleaning requirements of shared spaces or any areas accessible to the public are in accordance with the Workplace Directions.

2.2.2 Face coverings

For further information on specific employer obligations that relate to face coverings, see Workplace Directions at <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorias-restriction-levels-covid-19>.

From 11.59pm on 2 August 2020, new rules for face coverings were introduced in Victoria.

- All Victorians must wear a face covering whenever they leave home unless a lawful exception applies.
- For more information about face coverings, please visit www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/face-coverings-covid-19.
- If you are driving on your own in a vehicle for work, you do not need to wear a face covering. When you leave your vehicle or need to interact with others, you must put on a face covering. If you are travelling with others outside your household, including passengers or other people from your work, you must wear a face covering.

For a list of the lawful exceptions for not wearing a face covering visit www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/face-coverings-covid-19.

2.2.4 Education and training for all members of the campaigning team

Ensure you meet the education and training needs of your campaign team to help slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). This may include:

- emphasis on not attending activities if unwell
- wearing a face covering when leaving the home and instruction on how to safely put on and remove a face covering
- awareness of physical distancing expectations and strategies to achieve them, including any specific campaign practice changes
- practicing good hygiene including washing hands regularly, using hand sanitiser and coughing or sneezing into a tissue or your elbow
- use of new technologies and systems that enable working from home.

2.2.5 Physical distancing

For further information on specific employer obligations that relate to physical distancing, density quotients and signage requirements, see the Workplace Directions at <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorias-restriction-levels-covid-19>

Use the following measures to promote physical distancing:

- plan ways to enable physical distancing of at least 1.5 meters to reduce person-to-person contact
- in an enclosed workspace, employers must ensure there is on average no more than one person per four square meters of floor space
- if possible, designate specific doorways as entry-only and exit-only and aim to keep people walking in the same direction through the workplace
- avoid indoor meetings and encourage online meetings
- provide a clearly visible sign showing how many people are allowed in premises used as workspace. For information on signs and signage templates see Business Victoria www.business.vic.gov.au/disputes-disasters-and-succession-planning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-business-support.

2.2.6 Cleaning and disinfection

For further information on employer obligations that relate to cleaning requirements in workplaces, see the Workplace Directions at <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorias-restriction-levels-covid-19>

Any workspace areas and surfaces used by the campaign team must be cleaned and disinfected. Both steps are essential. The first step is cleaning, which means wiping dirt and germs off a surface. You can use common household detergent products for cleaning, they are stocked at supermarkets. Cleaning alone does not kill germs.

The next step is to disinfect the surface. Disinfection means using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. Again, supermarkets stock common household disinfection products. It is important to use products labelled disinfectant and to follow the instructions on the label.

High-touch surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected at least twice daily. More information can be found at www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/cleaning-and-disinfecting-reduce-covid-19-transmission.

2.2.7 Record Keeping

For further information on employer obligations that relate to record keeping requirements see the Workplace Directions at <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorias-restriction-levels-covid-19>

Employers must keep records of all workers and visitors that attend a work premises for more than 15 minutes, except in very specific circumstances, in order to facilitate contact tracing if required. This information must be stored securely and destroyed after 28 days unless another statutory requirement permits or requires the personal information to be retained. For more information on record keeping visit the DHHS website <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/record-keeping-contact-tracing-covid-19>

2.2.8 Advice for specific campaign activities

The below table must be read in conjunction with Table 1 above, and only applies to activities where they are legally permissible under the current restrictions.

In addition, this table must be read in conjunction with the Workplace Directions which provide specific detail about obligations of employers and employees to help reduce the risk of coronavirus COVID-19 transmission in workplaces.

Table 2: Advice about how to safely undertake campaign activities

Campaign activity	Advice
<p>Convening / attending meetings – outdoors (only where permitted)</p>	<p>Meetings for the purposes of work must be conducted online wherever possible.</p> <p>If you are feeling unwell you should stay at home. If you have even mild symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) you should get tested and stay home until you receive your test result.</p> <p>Face coverings are mandatory for all Victorians when leaving home for one of the four permitted reasons from 11.59pm on 2 August 2020 (unless there is a lawful reason not to).</p> <p>Always maintain at least 1.5 metres of physical distance from other people to reduce person-to-person contact.</p> <p>Practise good hygiene. Wash and sanitise your hands regularly and cough and sneeze into a tissue or your elbow.</p> <p>Avoid sharing items such as pens.</p> <p>Employers must keep records of all workers and visitors that attend a work premises for more than 15 minutes, except in very specific circumstances, in order to facilitate contact tracing if required.</p> <p>Personal details should be kept securely. Information collected should also include the date and time at which the person attended the meeting and, if applicable, the location they visited. These records should be kept for 28 days and then destroyed. For more information on record keeping visit the DHHS website https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/record-keeping-contact-tracing-covid-19</p>
<p>Convening / attending meetings – indoors (only where permitted)</p>	<p>Indoor meetings should be avoided. Encourage online meetings or events.</p> <p>If you are feeling unwell you should stay at home. If you have even mild symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) you should get tested and stay home until you receive your test result.</p> <p>Face coverings are mandatory for all Victorians when leaving home for one of the four permitted reasons from 11.59pm on 2 August 2020 (unless there is a lawful reason not to).</p> <p>If indoor meetings are necessary, always maintain 1.5 metres of physical distance from other people to reduce person-to-person contact.</p> <p>Employers must ensure that on average there is no more than one person per four square metres of floor space.</p> <p>Practise good hygiene. Wash and sanitise your hands regularly and cough and sneeze into a tissue or your elbow.</p> <p>If possible, designate specific doorways as entry-only and exit-only and aim to keep people walking in the same direction through the meeting space. Provide and promote hand sanitisers, including at meeting entrances.</p> <p>Open windows and adjust air conditioning to improve airflow.</p> <p>Avoid sharing items such as pens.</p> <p>Employers must keep records of all workers and visitors that attend a work premises for more than 15 minutes, except in very specific circumstances, in order to facilitate contact tracing if required.</p> <p>Personal details should be kept securely. Information collected should also include the date and time at which the person attended the meeting and, if applicable, the location they visited. These records should be kept for 28 days and then destroyed. For more information on record keeping visit the DHHS website https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/record-keeping-contact-tracing-covid-19</p>
<p>Door knocking</p>	<p>Not currently permitted under Stage 3 or 4 restrictions.</p>

Campaign activity	Advice
Meeting the public, attending community events	Not currently permitted under Stage 3 or 4 restrictions.
Letterbox drops (only where permitted)	<p>You must not enter the person's premises whilst performing letterbox drops or congregate with others at letterboxes.</p> <p>Hand hygiene must be maintained when handling documents to be given to the public.</p> <p>You cannot enter someone else's home or invite others into your home to coordinate this activity.</p>
Handing out leaflets (only where permitted)	<p>If you are feeling unwell you should stay at home. If you have even mild symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) you should get tested and stay home until you receive your test result.</p> <p>Face coverings are mandatory for all Victorians when leaving home for one of the four permitted reasons from 11.59pm on 2 August 2020 (unless there is a lawful reason not to).</p> <p>Always maintain 1.5 metres of physical distance from other people at all times to reduce person-to-person contact.</p> <p>You cannot enter someone else's home or invite others into your home to coordinate this activity.</p> <p>Practise good hygiene. Wash and sanitise your hands regularly and cough and sneeze into a tissue or your elbow.</p> <p>Where possible, avoid touching high touch surfaces such as door handles, railings, lift buttons, etc.</p>
Billboards / posters (only where permitted)	<p>If you are feeling unwell you should stay at home. If you have even mild symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) you should get tested and stay home until you receive your test result.</p> <p>Face coverings are mandatory for all Victorians when leaving home for one of the four permitted reasons from 11.59pm on 2 August 2020 (unless there is a lawful reason not to).</p> <p>Always maintain 1.5 metres of physical distance from other people to reduce person-to-person contact.</p> <p>You cannot enter someone else's home or invite others into your home to coordinate this activity.</p> <p>Practise good hygiene. Wash and sanitise your hands regularly and cough and sneeze into a tissue or your elbow.</p> <p>Where possible, avoid touching high touch surfaces such as door handles, railings, lift buttons, etc.</p>
Social media	No restrictions apply if done remotely from home.
Newspaper ads	No restrictions apply if done remotely from home.
Radio and TV (only where permitted)	<p>Must be conducted from home via phone or online wherever possible. If conducted in person, you must wear a face covering (unless you have a lawful reason not to), except during interviews that are live broadcast requiring clear enunciation or visibility of the mouth.</p> <p>In-person interviews for campaigning purposes are not permitted under Stage 4 restrictions.</p>