

Local Government Bill 2019

Theme 5 – A new relationship

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

A new relationship

Councils are a separate and distinct tier of government. The Bill will deliver a stronger relationship between local government, the state and communities.

Stronger voice for the community

Victorians will be put at the centre of local decisions and councils given autonomy to get on with the job.

Councils will need to have a comprehensive engagement plan and transparent policies and procedures. To support this new relationship:

- Unnecessary Ministerial approvals and arbitrary powers that create red tape will be removed
- Councils will be free to develop their own policies and procedures based on transparency, accountability and sound financial management
- Councils will be able to take a more localised approach to how they deliver for their communities.

Why change?

Victorians will be actively involved in setting the agenda for their council with genuine and meaningful engagement on important decisions.

Communities can be clear about what outcomes the council will deliver and how it will achieve them.

Councils to cooperate

Councils will have more freedom to innovate and work with other councils, government agencies, community organisations and the private sector.

Why change?

The current Act restricts council's ability to solve problems by working with other councils, even though shared solutions are often the most efficient and sustainable option. By removing those restrictions each council will be free to collaborate and deliver new and improved services for their communities.

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Smaller councils will find it less costly to comply with core governance principles and be able to seek more opportunities to reduce costs.

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 align with Victorian Public Sector standards and align with publicly adopted policies

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.

Red tape cleared out

Convuluted rules from the 1989 Local Government Act will be scrapped and replaced with a clearer framework for how councils operate, emphasising accountability, transparency and flexibility.

Why change?

The *Local Government Act 1989* has been amended more than 100 times in 30 years, as a result many sections are complex and difficult to implement.

The reforms will set up clear standards and frameworks for councils to operate within. Councils will be free to work within the framework to develop economies of scale, collaboration and new ways to deliver economic and social benefits

New Victorian State-Local Government Agreement

The Victorian Government has committed to start work on a new Victorian State-Local Government Agreement in 2020.

Why change?

The Agreement, most recently updated in 2014, sets out how the state and local government will work together to build strong, collaborative relationships. With the introduction of the Local Government Bill, it's a good time to assess how the Agreement can be improved to underpin the new relationship the Bill envisages.



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