

A NEW LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT FOR VICTORIA

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After four years gestation, the Local Government Bill 2019 has been introduced into Parliament (November 2019). There are five key themes:



Theme 1 - Improved service delivery

Notable in this theme is the emphasis that will be placed on community consultation., Councils will be expected to fully engage with the community in developing their Plan and Budget, rather than this being an option. Councils will need to develop a comprehensive engagement plan and work with the community to develop a -

- Long-term vision
- Four year Council Plan
- Four year Budget
- 10 year Financial plan
- 10 year Asset plan

Theme 2 - Stronger local democracy

Single member wards will be introduced for all councils. Rural councils will have the choice to be either single member wards or unsubdivided.

Theme 3 - Improved conduct

A state-wide uniform code of conduct will set out expected behaviour for all councillors. Misconduct will be addressed and swift action taken. The definition of serious misconduct has been expanded.

Theme 4 - Community Confidence

This will involve Electoral Roll reform, compulsory training for candidates; mandatory councillor induction training; and transparent allowances and salaries.

Theme 5 - A New Relationship

To enable Councils to better “get on with the job”:

- 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.
- More freedom to innovate and work with other councils, government agencies, community organisations and the private sector will also be enabled.
- A new Victorian State-Local Government Agreement will be developed.

The broad range of reforms in the Local Government Bill will apply to the City of Melbourne (MCC) and a tailored approach will be taken on election and ward reform. For example, there is a very high number of non-resident voters in the city. The requirement for non-resident property owners to register to vote will not be applied to the MCC.