

Media Release

The Hon Adem Somyurek MLC
Minister for Local Government
Minister for Small Business



Friday, 6 March 2020

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORMS ONE STEP CLOSER

The Andrews Labor Government is one step closer to delivering the most significant reforms to the local government sector in more than 30 years, ensuring councils can best serve the communities they represent.

The Legislative Council has passed the *Local Government Bill 2019* which will implement wide-ranging reforms to improve democracy, accountability and service delivery across Victoria's 79 councils.

This historic Bill is the result of four years' work on the Local Government Act Review including extensive consultation with councils, ratepayers, stakeholders and communities.

The legislation passed by the Legislative Council delivers key reforms including:

- Higher standards for council election candidates and councillors through mandatory training
- A clear statewide code of conduct to guide councillor behaviour and allow for disqualification for councillors guilty of multiple breaches of serious misconduct rules
- Increased collaboration between councils to deliver better services
- More accountable councillors through a preference for single member wards whilst retaining the flexibility for unsubdivided and multi-member wards in some rural shires
- Mandatory transparency rules for handling complaints
- Deliberative engagement with communities to set each council's Community Vision and Council Plan.

The Bill still needs to return to the Legislative Assembly and receive Royal Assent before it becomes law which is expected to occur in the sitting week starting Tuesday 17 March.

Local Government Victoria is continuing to work closely with councils, the MAV, VLGA, LGPro and unions to guide the reform and the implementation of the Act.

The Government remains committed to reform of council donation laws and will continue to work on this matter.

Further information on the *Local Government Bill 2019* is available at www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Local Government Adem Somyurek

"We're modernising the Local Government Act to ensure Councils can deliver better outcomes for residents, ratepayers and the broader community."

"Strong local councils are crucial to building strong communities – this Bill makes councils more accountable and democratic and will help them to deliver the services their communities rely on."