

Statement

The Hon Shaun Leane MLC
Minister for Local Government
Minister for Suburban Development
Minister for Veterans



Wednesday, 19 August 2020

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS TO GO AHEAD IN OCTOBER

On advice from the Victorian Chief Health Officer, Professor Brett Sutton, local government elections will go ahead as scheduled for Saturday, 24 October 2020.

As Minister for Local Government, I sought advice from the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office and Chief Health Officer as to how best to proceed while Victoria is in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

I also engaged with the local government sector to fully understand concerns regarding the impact of current restrictions in Victoria on campaigning, and relayed that I would act on advice from the Chief Health Officer.

The Chief Health Officer has advised that October represents a period when risk is likely to be substantially lower than at present, and there are no compelling public health grounds for the elections to be delayed.

The Chief Health Officer has also worked closely with the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) and is satisfied that appropriate physical distancing, cleaning and hygiene and workforce planning have all been considered and integrated into the VEC's COVIDSafe plans.

The VEC have advised that election preparations are already well underway and that there are no administrative or procedural barriers to the election being held on 24 October 2020.

This decision was not made lightly and is based on the best public health advice available – but I am pleased Victorian communities can have their say on their local government representatives at democratic council general elections as planned.

A set of Safe Campaigning Guidelines have been developed in consultation with the Department of Health and Human Services to help candidates follow the Chief Health Officer's directions and health advice during the campaign.

The guidelines include advice on how to safely conduct permitted campaign activities, safety for campaign teams, hygiene and physical distancing.

The Government has also launched its candidate training course online, which all prospective candidates will need to complete. It covers how councils are run, support available to councillors, the councillor code of conduct, conflict of interest guidelines and election donation rules.

The training course is one of a suite of reforms introduced through the new Local Government Act designed to enhance integrity and build community confidence in councils.

All candidates will also be able to provide voters with a 300 word statement in their ballot packs to be sent to voters. In a first for Victoria, councils will be elected by state-wide postal voting.

I wish prospective candidates all the best for the upcoming campaign period, and encourage all Victorians to make their vote count.