

Media Release

The Hon Melissa Horne MP
Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation
Minister for Local Government
Minister for Ports and Freight
Minister for Roads and Road Safety



Tuesday, 5 December 2023

STRATHBOGIE COUNCIL SUSPENDED, ADMINISTRATOR APPOINTED

The Strathbogies Shire Council has been suspended for the remainder of its term and an interim administrator appointed in response to Municipal Monitor Peter Stephenson's final report.

The suspension applies to all members of Strathbogies Shire Council and takes effect from Wednesday, 6 December until the next local council elections in October 2024.

The council and councillors were provided with the opportunity to consider the monitor's report and provide a response to the Minister for Local Government. The Minister made the decision to suspend the council after considering the responses received from the council and individual councillors.

The responses showed the council had failed to fully appreciate and address the problems, which had resulted in the community receiving sub-standard service from its elected representatives.

Mr Stephenson was appointed in May 2023 to examine why the council had been unable to resolve governance issues identified by previous monitor Janet Dore during a 12-month appointment made at the request of the council. Mr Stephenson recommended that further intervention was required to ensure good governance.

Mr Stephenson has been appointed Strathbogies Shire Interim Administrator to provide support and continuity to the shire's operations. A longer-term appointment will be made in due course to support the restoration of good governance to the shire.

The Allan Labor Government is supporting and improving council accountability, governance and culture across the state through reforms to the *Local Government Act 2020*.

New legislation to be introduced early next year will elevate governance and integrity standards in the state's 79 councils, encouraging quality candidates to put themselves forward at elections to be held statewide next October.

Reforms will introduce mandatory training for elected representatives, a uniform councillor code of conduct and strengthened powers for the Minister to address councillor conduct.

The Local Government Culture Project has been a key driver in the reform process, drawing more than 140 submissions from residents, mayors, councillors, council staff and peak bodies.

To see a copy of the monitor's report, visit: localgovernment.vic.gov.au/council-governance/independent-reports.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Local Government Melissa Horne

"Strathbogies residents deserve a council that serves their needs and it is clear from the work of two municipal monitors that a circuit-breaker is needed."

"The Administrator will restore good governance so that local representatives can return in due course and properly fulfil their important roles."

"We want Victorians to have confidence in their local councils and that's why we will introduce legislation to improve the performance and accountability of councillors across the state."

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