

Media Release

Hon Jacinta Allan MP
Premier



Wednesday, 20 March 2024

STRENGTHENING PLANNING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Victorian Government is improving transparency in the planning system and increasing accountability in local government to help build more homes and ensure councillors are serving the best interests of their communities.

In response to the July 2023 Operation Sandon report, 32 of IBAC's recommendations made to Government will be accepted either in full or in-principle, with one accepted in part.

Many of IBAC's recommendations to reduce the risk of corruption in the planning system and make it more transparent and consistent will be implemented as part of a review into the *Planning and Environment Act*.

This review was announced as part of the *Housing Statement*, the biggest shake-up to planning and housing in generations.

On top of this, the Government will update guidelines to streamline and improve decision-making criteria and introduce measures to stamp out corruption.

The Government will also introduce legislation to improve the performance and accountability of councillors across the state, so Victorians can have confidence in their local government representatives.

As part of the reform of the *Local Government Act 2020* announced in November 2023, 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 Government will support council leadership, capability and accountability by developing regular mandatory training for councillors and mayors, including on conflicts of interest.

The Electoral Review Expert Panel – in its review of the Government's 2018 reforms to the Electoral Act 2002 – considered IBAC's recommendation to prohibit donations from high-risk groups such as property developers. The government has now received that report.

The Government will establish an interdepartmental Taskforce to facilitate cooperation across government and support the implementation of IBAC's recommendations. It will report back to the public within 18 months.

Quote attributable to Premier Jacinta Allan

"There's nothing more important than having a place to call home – we are strengthening planning and local government as part of our once-in-a-generation reform to build more homes."

Quote attributable to Minister for Local Government Melissa Horne

"Victorians rightly have high expectations of their local councillors, and these changes will support councillors to serve the interests of their communities."

Quote attributable to Minister for Planning Sonya Kilkenny

"Victorians deserve to have trust in the state's planning system, and we're accepting these recommendations as part of our work to make sure good decisions are made faster – and more transparently."

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