

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



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STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE AND INTEGRITY IN COUNCILS

The Allan Labor Government has today introduced new legislation to improve council governance and integrity standards, so Victorians can have confidence in the local governments that serve them.

The reform of the *Local Government Act 2020* introduced into Parliament today will elevate governance and integrity standards in Victoria's 79 councils, to be in place for the new council term following the local government elections this October.

Since the last council elections in 2020, 56 councillors have resigned and 11 councils have had municipal monitors appointed, with one council suspended and one dismissed as a result of governance issues.

Following extensive consultation with the sector, councils will have a uniform councillor code of conduct to create consistent standards of behaviour and increase accountability. A program of mandatory training will also be introduced for councillors and mayors, including annual professional development.

The Bill will introduce stronger sanctions for councillor misconduct and improved processes to resolve conduct matters earlier. The Minister for Local Government will also have strengthened powers to deal with councillors who are putting health and safety at risk or are preventing their council from performing its functions.

Good governance is critical to ensure councils make sound decisions and deliver the services their communities need, and the expanded powers to address councillor misconduct will discourage poor behaviour.

The reforms have been developed in response to reports and recommendations of IBAC, the Chief Municipal Inspector and other interventions which highlighted the need for stronger processes and powers to resolve conduct issues, and better training so councillors can perform their roles effectively.

The Labor Government has consulted with councils and local government peak bodies about the proposed reforms, most of which will take effect following the October 2024 local government elections.

Further information about the reforms is available at localgovernment.vic.gov.au/council-governance.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Local Government Melissa Horne

"Victorians deserve councils that represent them and meet their needs – our reforms will enhance governance and accountability across all our councils."

"Our reforms will create a uniform code of conduct across all councillors and introduce mandatory training, supporting councils to best represent the communities they serve."