

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



Friday, 21 June 2024

IMPROVING GOVERNANCE AND INTEGRITY IN LOCAL COUNCILS

The Allan Labor Government has passed 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*, passed through Parliament this week, will elevate governance and integrity standards in Victoria's 79 councils – and will 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 12 councils have had municipal monitors appointed, with one council suspended and one dismissed as a result of governance issues.

Following the local government elections in October this year, 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 reforms 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 that are found to have created a serious risk to health and safety 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.

These reforms will improve council accountability, governance and standards of behaviour across Victoria as new councils take office following the October elections.

For further information about the Model Councillor Code of Conduct and to contribute to the code design consultation visit engage.vic.gov.au.

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

Quotes attributable to Minister for Local Government Melissa Horne

"By improving governance and integrity standards in councils across the state, we are ensuring all Victorians can be confident in their local representatives."

"These reforms have been developed through extensive consultation with the local government sector, and will help councillors perform their roles effectively."