



VICTORIAN LOCAL GOVERNANCE ASSOCIATION
SUITE GO6, 60 LEICESTER ST, CARLTON 3053
TELEPHONE: 03 9349-7999 FAX: 03 9347-9933
EMAIL: vlga@vlga.org.au WEB: www.vlga.org.au

MEDIA RELEASE

Monday 31st August, 2009

Ban On Councillors Working For MPs – fair and reasonable compromise a must

“While local governments must adhere to the Victorian Human Rights Charter, the State Government is proposing legislation that bans Councillors on the basis of their employment arguably in contravention of the Charter,” said Cr Rose Iser, VLGA President.

The Local Government Amendment (Conflicting Duties) Bill has been passed by the Lower House and is expected to be passed by the Upper House later this week, despite heavy criticism from Opposition parties and the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee (SARC).

The legislation bans, from being elected as Councillors in Victoria, people who are employed as a Ministerial officer, a Parliamentary adviser or an electorate officer or who are elected in another municipality or as a member of Parliament of any other level of government.

Councillors who were elected last November have seven days to resign from these positions or face expulsion as a Councillor.

“SARC has identified numerous problems with the legislation and have requested responses from Minister Wynne, the Minister for Local

Government. SARC has asked whether banning certain employees from being Councillors discriminates against them on the basis of political activity,” said Cr Iser.

“In addition, SARC considers that the legislation may be incompatible with the Charter right of voters at the 2008 Local Government elections to a guarantee of the free expression of their will.”

“Changing the rules about who can be a Councillor less than 12 months after an election demonstrates poor planning and undermines the democratic choices Victorian voters have already made.”

“Imagine if MPs were told they could no longer be MPs if their partners worked for a State Government agency or if they lived outside their electorate. They would cry foul at a change to the rules so early in their new term.”

“Councillors affected have been told that they can choose to find another job. Those affected include older, younger, men, women and single parents who will be compelled to make a tough financial decision. The prospects of finding alternative employment that can accommodate Council duties are very uncertain for many of the affected individuals.”

“The VLGA calls on all parties in the Legislative Council to support an amendment that will remove the retrospectivity of the ban and allow current councillors to continue to serve out their term and retain their livelihood. This would certainly go a long way to delivering a fair and reasonable compromise,” concluded Cr Iser.

For More information, contact VLGA President, Cr Rose Iser on 0414 959 427.