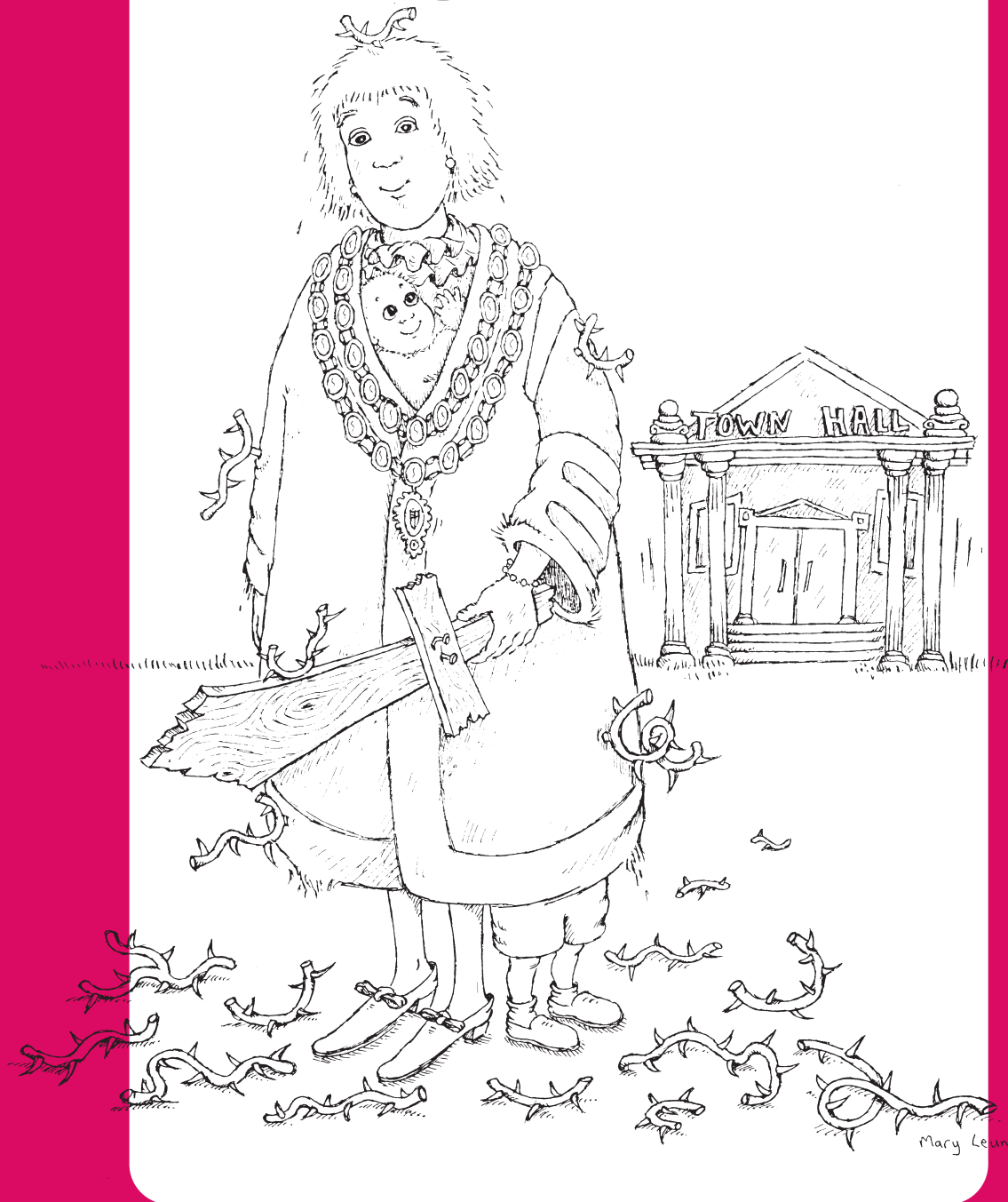


A gender agenda



A kit for women who want to stand for local government and for those who want to assist others to stand.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT COALITION

third edition

INSERT JULY 2008

The information in this publication gives helpful advice for candidates and campaign teams.

The web pages of Women's Participation in Local Government WPILG Coalition, Municipal Association of Victoria MAV and Victorian Local Governance Association VLGA are also useful.

Also, look out for local information sessions and workshops for candidates.

Please note, however, that as we publish, legislation affecting the 2008 Local Government elections has not been finalised.

Candidates themselves are responsible for the proper and effective conduct of their campaigns and for understanding the legislative requirements.

The VEC (Victorian Electoral Commission) will advise you. Please contact the VEC for up-to-date requirements. Local Government Victoria has a useful overview on the website.

Victorian Electoral Commission VEC

T: 131 832

W: <http://www.vec.vic.gov.au/>

Local Government Victoria

W: <http://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au>

WPILG Coalition www.women.vlga.org.au

MAV www.mav.asn.au

VLGA www.vlga.org.au

Please see over the page for the 2008 candidate timelines.

TIMELINES

Elections November 2008 for all Victorian Local Governments

This timeline indicates the timing around formal electoral processes between September and November for the Victorian Local Government elections in November 2008.

Not to be confused with when to start campaigning - the sooner the better for starting your campaign!

Postal elections		Attendance elections	
Exhibition period starts	Friday 26 September	Exhibition period starts	Friday 26 September
Close of rolls	4.00pm Friday 3 October	Close of rolls	4.00pm Friday 3 October
Nominations open	Thursday 23 October	Nominations open	Friday 24 October
Nominations close	4.00pm Tuesday 28 October	Nominations close	4.00pm Wednesday 29 October
Mail out of ballot packs	Tuesday 11 November	Early and postal voting opens	Thursday 30 October
Voting closes	6.00pm Friday 28 November	Early and postal voting closes	6.00pm Friday 28 November
		Election day	8.00am -6.00pm Saturday 29 November

Source: LGV 2008



WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION
IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT
COALITION
STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES
THROUGH WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION



MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA



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A Gender Agenda: A kit for women who want to stand for local government and for those who want to assist others to stand.

Written and researched by Leonie Morgan & Sara Charlesworth, (1998)
Second edition (2002) and third edition (2005) revisions by Linda
Bennett and Alice Aird.

The Kit draws extensively on material generously provided by
experienced women Councillors and candidates.

Notes on the third edition

The first edition of *A Gender Agenda* was funded by the Stegley
Foundation. The Stegley Foundation was a private philanthropic trust
established in 1973 by Brian and Shelagh Stegley, the founders of
Stegbar Windows. The Foundation ceased operation in August 2001.

A Gender Agenda was part of the Community Development Series.
This was one way by which the Stegley Trustees believed the
Foundation could continue to support progressive social change,
beyond the life of the Foundation itself.

The third edition is funded by the Department of Victorian
Communities as part of the *Women Get Elected 2005* Project.

The case studies included are correct at the time of publication in
2005. Updated titles for the women depicted are provided where
possible. Thanks to the following former Councillors for their input in
previous editions: Lesley McGurgan, City of Kingston; Julie Hansen,
Surf Coast Shire; Kathy Magee, City of Monash; Linelle Gibson, City of
Hobsons Bay; Jan Palmer, Indigo Shire and Judy Verlin, City of Ballarat.

A Gender Agenda has a companion volume, *Now You're a Councillor*.
Published by the Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition
(WPILGC), *Now You're A Councillor* is for newly elected women
Councillors in local government. To obtain a copy of the latest edition
please contact the Coalition directly.

Enquiries

The Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition (WPILGC)
includes representatives of Australian Local Government Women's
Association (ALGWA), Local Government Professionals (LGPro),
Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), Victorian Immigrant and
Refugee Women's Coalition (VIRWC), Victorian Local Governance
Association (VLGA), Victorian Women's Trust (VWT), Women's Electoral
Lobby Victoria (WEL), Women's Planning Network (WPN) and YWCA
Victoria, as well as individual women Councillors and citizens.

Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition

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Suite G06, 60 Leicester St Carlton Victoria 3053

T: (03) 9347 2233

F: (03) 9347 9933

E: vlga@vlga.org.au

W: www.vlga.org.au/issues/women_gov.html

Women's Planning Network

c/- Planning Institute of Australia
PO Box 675

Carlton South Vic 3053

T: (03) 9347 1900

W: <www.wpn.org.au>

A network for women involved in and interested in planning and related issues. Also offers mentoring and undertakes research.

Victorian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Coalition

Level 3, 489 Elizabeth St

Melbourne Vic 3000

T: (03) 9328 5611

W: <www.virwc.org.au>

The VIRWC advocates for and supports immigrant and refugee women and their community organisations.

Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition

(WPILGC)

c/- VLGA

G06, 60 Leicester St

Carlton Vic 3054

T: (03) 347 2233

W: <www.vlga.org.au/issues/women_gov.html>

A broad coalition of local government, community and women's organisations and individuals seeking to achieve equal and diverse representation of women in local governments.

YWCA

489 Elizabeth St

Melbourne Vic 3000

T: (03) 8327 2760

W: <www.ywca.net.au>

An organisation managed and owned by women, that develops and delivers community programs and services to create better lives for women, families and young people.

Victorian Women's Trust

1st floor, 388 Bourke St

Melbourne Vic 3000

T: (03) 9642 0422

W: <www.vwt.org.au>

The Victorian Women's Trust is an independent, non-profit body dedicated to improving the status of all Victorian women.

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Foreword

If democratic Councils are to adequately reflect the interests and needs of the entire community, they must be as inclusive as possible of their constituents. This inclusion must be reflected through the elected representatives, the governance process, the employees and the consultative structures. Women are under-represented at all levels of government. The numbers of women in Federal, State and Local governments do not reflect the fact that they comprise half the population. There has been some improvement since the initial publication of *A Gender Agenda* in 1998. The percentage of women in local governments has increased from 22% to over 29% in 2005. However, clearly there is still some way to go before we approach equal participation.

Opening up local governments

The lack of women's participation in the decision making structures of local governments relates to a range of institutional, social, cultural and economic constraints. It was the recognition of the real need to challenge these constraints and open up local governments to greater involvement by women that led a variety of organisations, groups and individuals to work towards the development of both the *Victorian Local Government Women's Charter* and this Participation Kit.

Practical advice for women

This Participation Kit is designed to provide practical advice and information for women who may be considering standing for election. It is one of several related initiatives. These include a website, support for networks of women interested in local community leadership, the *Women Get Elected* program of workshops for potential women candidates and their supporters and the companion Kit *Now You're a Councillor*.

The Municipal Association of Victoria and the Victorian Local Governance Association are both delighted to be involved with the third edition of this Kit. This edition is funded by the Department of Victorian Communities (Office of Local Government, Office of Women's Policy and Community Support Fund). We would also like to thank The Stegley Foundation for the support and financial assistance to make possible the initial edition of the Kit.

We believe that *A Gender Agenda* and the other initiatives being developed and implemented by the Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition support local governments to better reflect the ethnic, gender and cultural diversity of their citizens, as well as the richness of experience and background, contained within their communities.

Councillor Geoff Lake
President, Municipal
Association of Victoria

Councillor Warren Maloney
President, Victorian Local
Governance Association

Councillor Angela Altair
Chair, Women's Participation
in Local Government
Coalition

Introduction

Project history

The mid 1990s was a period of major change in Victorian local governments. In 1993/94, 2125 elected Victorian Councillors were dismissed and Commissioners were appointed to replace them. The number of Councils was reduced from 211 to 78 in a process of amalgamation. Elections were held for three Councils in 1995, 20 Councils in 1996 and 55 in 1997. Prior to amalgamation, 453 elected Councillors were women. Following the 1996 and 1997 elections, only 129 women were elected as Councillors. Whereas in 1993, 20,000 Victorians lived in municipalities without women Councillors, this figure increased to 700,000 in 1997. In 2005, there are 405,000 Victorians living in municipalities with no women Councillors. The goal of the Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition is to see this figure reduced to zero.

In 1997, while the proportion of female to male Councillors remained the same at 22%, the decline in actual numbers of women in local governments had major implications for female participation and representation at the local government level. In 1998, 14 Councils had no women Councillors, with four of these being large metropolitan municipalities of more than 120,000 residents each. By 2005, this figure has been halved, but 13 Councils still have only one elected woman.

Not only are women generally under-represented in local governments, but the socio-economic and demographic profile of elected women is limited. In general, as with male Councillors, women of Anglo-Celtic background, who are employed and tertiary educated are over-represented among women Councillors. Indigenous women, women from non-English speaking backgrounds and other diverse groups are under-represented in proportion to their numbers in the community.

The Victorian Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition grew out of a concern for the level of women's representation in local governments. The Coalition seeks to increase women's interest in standing for local governments by providing practical assistance and advice.

How to use the Women's Participation Kit

This kit is intended to encourage women to consider standing for Victorian local governments. It provides practical hints for campaigning as well as how to be an effective Councillor. It is supplemented by web resources. Exploring the WPILGC webpage will provide you with a wide range of resources and ideas which expand on those offered here:

www.vlga.org.au/issues/women_gov.html

Before you begin reading this kit, remember that:

- Every campaign and every candidate is different
- There are many ways of campaigning and many ways of being an effective local representative
- The suggestions contained in this kit are just that – suggestions
- What has worked for others may or may not work for you.

Our message is be true to yourself and work out ways to be the candidate and Councillor you want to be, not the one others want you to be.

The Coalition's goal is to see that a wide range of women from differing age groups and socio-economic status, cultural, ethnic and indigenous backgrounds are represented on Councils in metropolitan Melbourne, and regional and rural Victoria.

The development of the first women's participation kit, *A Gender Agenda*, (1988) involved extensive consultation, research, interviews and focus groups. This process generated a large amount of interest and enthusiasm, not only from women who saw themselves as potential candidates in future local government elections and those who were already Councillors, but also from women who wanted skills and ideas to use in actively supporting other women to be elected. This level of enthusiasm and commitment continues into 2005.



The first women's participation Kit (1997-1998) was overseen by a working group chaired by Councillor Robyn Williams (City of Yarra) with representation from the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV); the Women's Planning Network (WPN); the University of Melbourne and The Stegley Foundation, which provided funding for the project. It was managed by MAV staff Jenny Wills and Clare Hargreaves.

The project was undertaken as a three-staged process. The first stage involved over 40 structured interviews with a selection of women who were experienced as local government campaigners. This provided an overview of the factors considered important in getting elected and some understanding of the strategies that could be used to encourage other women to stand.

The second stage involved five focus groups held at the MAV, Dandenong, Richmond and Ballarat. A total of 55 women attended the five focus groups. Participants were asked to provide feedback on the draft outline of the women's participation kit and to discuss the feasibility of and interest in participating in a mentoring program.

The third stage involved the development of case study material for inclusion in the kit. The case studies were selected to demonstrate how actual candidates and Councillors, former and current, dealt with particular aspects of seeking to represent their local community. They provide practical, real life examples for other women who might wish to stand at the next local government elections and contact points for further information. In addition to the case studies, quotes from candidates and Councillors are used throughout the kit. The quotes are drawn from interviews and focus group discussions.

In the second edition (2002), additional information was prepared about preferencing and a guide to writing 150 word statements was added. In the third edition (2005), feature stories of women Councillors were reviewed and updated where necessary. Significant changes to the *Local Government Act* (1989) made by subsequent amendments including the *Local Government (Democratic Reform) Act* 2003 have been included.

Since the first printing of this Kit, significant progress has been made. In particular, there has been an increase of elected women from 22% in 1997 to over 29% in 2005. The Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition was also successful in gaining funding from the Victorian Government's Community Support Fund for a three year project – Strengthening Communities through Women's Participation. The objectives of the Project (2001–2004) were:

- to encourage increased numbers of women from diverse backgrounds to public leadership positions in local communities especially in relation to local governments
- to support women who are considering nominating as candidates in local government elections
- to contribute to changes in public attitudes to the leadership of women
- to foster and support local and regional networks which sustain women in community leadership positions
- to build on the momentum of the Centenary of Federation Women's Petition 2001.

The third edition of *A Gender Agenda* incorporates some of the learning from the Coalition's work since 2001. In particular it reflects the three principles of the Victorian Local Government Women's Charter: gender equity; encouraging diversity in representation; and supporting the active citizenship of women.

Putting your toe in the water

What is local government and what does it do?

‘Why take an interest in local government? My simple answer is because local government creates and maintains the immediate environment in which we live.’

There are three spheres of government in Australia:

- federal government
- state and territory governments and
- local governments.

Local governments determine the immediate environment in which we live our daily lives. It is the first level of government and the one at which citizens gain their most direct experience of representative democracy and participation. The community expresses its identity and objectives through local governments. Local governments provide essential community networks and services and act as advocates for the diverse needs of the community through physical, social, cultural and economic planning.

There are 79 Councils in Victoria. Most have between five and 12 Councillors who are elected by the people who live in the local area or own local property or businesses. The services provided by each Council depend on their financial resources and the needs of their community. Most Councils receive the majority of their income from rates and untied Commonwealth funds, however, they also receive some targeted State and Commonwealth financial grants.

Councils ideally:

- know and reflect the community they serve
- represent the diversity of their communities, so that issues such as ethnicity, culture and gender can be taken into account in local government decision-making processes

- advocate strongly for all their community’s issues and interests with other spheres of government, non-government and private sector bodies
- outreach to, engage with and include local minority groups
- involve citizens and other stakeholders in the wide range of decision-making processes.
- provide a large number of services to meet complex community needs.

What does a Councillor do?

‘I love local government. It’s a very privileged thing to do. You could spend 20 hours a day on it and it wouldn’t be enough.’

Many people do not fully understand the number and diversity of tasks a Councillor performs. They see the role of a Councillor as attending a weekly Council meeting and opening the odd fete or two. This is very far from the truth.

Most Councillors spend between 20-35 hours a week on Council matters. The role of the Councillor is like a part-time job, a job which is not fully paid, although Councillors do receive a taxable allowance determined by the Council, within parameters set by

the State. The part-time role of a Councillor can take up a substantial amount of time and is often undertaken while juggling a family as well as paid work.

A Council has a governing role on behalf of its citizens.



This requires responsibilities such as:

- strategic planning for the whole municipality and for a sustainable future
- representation on behalf of all citizens
- advocacy on a broad range of issues
- coordination with other spheres of government, private sector and non-government and community sectors
- management of a competitive organisation and of the community's assets
- facilitation of community participation.

So what do Councillors really do?

Because Councillors are elected to represent their communities at the local level, they undertake a broad range of duties and tasks which include the following:

Decision-making and resource allocation for the municipality

Council plays a leadership role in developing and implementing a broad vision for the municipality. In practical terms, Council meetings are usually held fortnightly or monthly and

typically involve reading papers and preparation before the meeting. They may also involve meeting with residents prior to a Council meeting and reporting back after the meeting. At the Council meeting all the Councillors come together to develop policy, approve programs and allocate and monitor budgets. Councillors may also be elected to related committees which meet separately and report back to the Council meeting.

Direct involvement with the local community

Councillors generally maintain frequent contact with the people they represent, answering questions and dealing with issues of concern. This may be on an individual basis or in forums such as residents' meetings.

Community activities

Many Councillors spend time on community activities not directly related to Council meetings. This enables them to keep in touch with local issues and concerns. These activities might include visiting local childcare centres or attending business forums, speaking at schools and participating in the local emergency services.

Councillors may also be asked to represent their local community at broader political, social, cultural or economic forums.

Advocacy with State and Federal government departments

Councillors can spend time developing strategies or directly negotiating with State and Federal politicians as well as with government departments with responsibility for the municipality and its residents, such as the Department of Sustainability and the Environment, the Department of Human Services and Local Government Victoria.

Policy development

To ensure the voice of a local governments is heard by State and Federal governments, many Councillors may take on an advocacy role for their local community, as well as associated policy development. They may do this through the peak bodies for local governments at the state and national levels, such as the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) or the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA).

What is required of a Councillor?

Councillors are required to attend full meetings of Council and vote on all issues and items on the Council Notice Paper. Therefore, part of the role is preparing yourself so you know which way you will vote.

Aside from these minimum

requirements, there are many ways to be an effective Councillor within the range of legislated requirements. The Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition encourages women to be the Councillors they want to be, not the Councillor someone else wants them to be. Remember that

your presence alone can offer an important perspective to the Council decision making even if you don't have as much time as other Councillors. Further information about this approach is available on the website: www.vlga.org.au/issues/women_gov.html.

A day in the life #1

On average, I spend about three days a week on Council work. Unlike many Councillors I don't have a "day job" so I can be more flexible in organising my time.

A typical week might run something like this:

Monday:

This could include a monthly meeting of a community advisory committee. One example is the Mount Alexander Access Group which I chair. This group is composed of volunteers from the community and representatives of organisations with an interest in disability and access.

Once I have finished with the day's meeting I go on with preparation for Council meetings the next day.

Tuesday:

Most of the Council briefing sessions and formal meetings are held on Tuesdays in Mount Alexander Shire. I usually spend the morning in final preparations. The round of meetings can start as early as 4pm and last until after 10pm, so it's a long day.



Thursday:

There is almost always a regular meeting scheduled, often in the evening, for example monthly meetings of advisory committees on heritage or the environment. There are also non-regular meetings, mostly during the day. Often there are mediation

meetings between planning permit applicants and objectors.

The rest of Thursday is spent following up matters raised at Council meetings, or by members of the community. Planning matters usually take the most time, although dealing with correspondence is also time consuming.

I try to keep Council business to these three days, however there is always work to be fitted in at other times, especially phone calls, correspondence and meetings with residents; often the only time available for people who are working full-time is the weekend.

*Councillor Elizabeth Eager,
Mount Alexander Shire (2003–)*

A day in the life #2

When the Hon. Glenyys Romanes MP was a Councillor and then Mayor with the City of Moreland (1996–1999) she took a different approach which fitted her working and home life.

"I was in paid full time work when I was elected. I arranged to reduce my time at paid work to

four days a week. I spent each Tuesday at Council catching up on issues and meeting with Council officers and community groups. I started at 8am and arrived home late but also fitted in seeing my parents and catching up with my husband and sons for a cuppa."

Of course there were other meetings and commitments she was involved in outside of this, but the arrangement helped her get on top of the work.

Glenyys is now an Upper House Member of Parliament in the Victorian Government (1999–)



You could do it!

‘Many women do not realise that they already have the necessary skills from the community: the Neighbourhood Watch, the community health centre, the local residents’ action group – they are all important.’

So, you have been a member of the child care committee, you run your own business and now you are actively involved in the local environment group and on your children’s School Council. You know most of the neighbours and have attended a couple of Council meetings relating to issues dear to your heart. The Council elections are coming up. A couple of your friends have said you would make a good Councillor and have suggested you stand.

And you think: ‘Not me... I couldn’t do it, and why would I want to do it anyway?’

Women Councillors say that the major reason they stood was to make a difference in their community. They say their greatest satisfaction comes from assisting people in their communities with their individual problems or concerns.

So, would you like:

- the opportunity to affect issues that you believe in?
- the opportunity to contribute to policy and programs that impact on the local community?
- the stimulation of knowing what’s going on in the local community?
- the opportunity to meet people

from other places and from all walks of life?

- an interesting and diverse workload?
- to develop a range of policy, negotiation and procedural skills and
- gain access to the local community?

Then you should consider running for Council.

And remember, if you know a woman who you think would make a good Councillor, ask her to stand. Many women Councillors speak of the importance of someone “extending the hand of invitation”.

Why I stood for Council

I am not, or ever have been, terribly politically minded, but our local Councillor resigned due to family issues and there didn’t seem to be anyone within the area willing to take on this challenging role.

What is a ‘girl’ to do when faced with this dilemma? I went for it! No one contested, and before I knew it I was Councillor Jenny Jones.

Over the past 14 years I have taken an active and vocal role within my community. Prior to the 2004 elections I spent time talking to local people, getting a feel for issues and taking on ideas that local people shared with me. I soon came to realise that I was no longer just a ‘Rokewood township woman’; I had to change my thinking to a ‘Break O’ Day Riding woman’. My responsibilities now go beyond the Rokewood township boundaries to towns I had little involvement with before the election.

I think the most daunting time for me still is the Council meetings. But I am very proud of the small achievements that have happened over the past six months because I speak for, and listen to, my community.

If you have something to say about issues in your town, get in there and say it from the position of Councillor.



Councillor Jenny Jones, Golden Plains Shire (2004–)

What do you need to know? A step-by-step process

'I realise now when I look back that I learned as I went. I jumped in and gained more confidence along the way. Now I have some great skills but it was a step-by-step journey. I started off learning how to be a candidate, and now I'm learning how to be a Councillor.'

Now that you have decided that you might want to put your toe in the water, you need to make an assessment of the skills you already have and the ones that you might need to develop in order to get elected. Remember that you don't have to be perfectly prepared. There is training available, once you are elected. Learning about being a candidate and then a Councillor is a step-by-step process.

What skills might you need both as a candidate and as a Councillor?

Public speaking

In your campaigning and when you are on Council you will need to feel confident in getting up in public and succinctly expressing just what you want to say.

Confidence, or how to appear to have it

You need to appear confident in expressing yourself in a straight-forward and clear fashion and be able to handle it when someone questions your point of view.

Lobbying

Knowing who has the power to make changes, talking with them and influencing their point of view will be important.

Listening and talking

Talking to people on a one-to-one basis and, most importantly of all, knowing when to stop and listen, will be important in your dealings

with your community, other Councillors and the many other people you will meet as a candidate and a Councillor.

Writing

Knowing how to write letters, prepare press releases and other publicity material is a useful skill.

Meeting procedure

You may know a little of this from observing the Council meetings or from your own involvement in community groups. You will need to know the basics, and as a Councillor you will need to learn a lot more.

Time management

Being able to manage your time, your priorities and ensuring that the important things get done will be invaluable.

Managing the media

Getting to know your local newspaper and its reporters and understanding how they put stories together will be useful in both your campaign and as a Councillor.

Team work

You are the candidate but there are many other people who will play a pivotal role in your campaign and in your election. Being able to work well in a team and to recognise the contributions of others is a real asset.

Check through the skill areas listed here. Assess whether you already have them. Note the areas you need to improve. Women typically underestimate their skills, so ask your friends and family what they think. Then make your plan for further action.

There are many ways to build on your existing skills. All Councils have a budget for Councillor development and training. You can also build skills by listening, asking questions of friends, mentors and others and reading.

Clubs and organisations

Clubs and organisations in the community are great grounding for future political life. You will be increasing your community contacts while doing a valuable job for your community too. Being a member of your local Neighbourhood Watch or School Council will help you to learn about meeting procedure, public speaking and public policy issues and will add to your confidence and self-esteem.

Seminars and other training programs

The MAV offer seminars and conferences for Councillors. The VLGA offers opportunities for both Councillors and community members with an interest in local governments. Seek advice from them about other opportunities. Seminars and other training programs run by clubs, formal



training bodies and other organisations will help you build specific skills in a time-efficient manner.

Mentoring

Mentoring can be very valuable. You may want to approach someone you think is more experienced than you for help or support. The Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA) is open to any person with an interest in supporting women in local governments. ALGWA offers mentoring opportunities for both candidates and Councillors. Contact details are in the *Useful Resources and Contacts* section. There is information about mentoring and finding your own mentors on the WPILGC website: www.vlga.org.au/issues/women_gov.html.

Political parties

Becoming active in a political party can enable you to practise many of the skills you may need as a candidate and as a Councillor. Joining a political party might also assist you in being in the right place at the right time when nominations for Council are being considered. However, also consider the impact your disclosure of membership might have on potential voters.

The internet

The internet is a very valuable source of information. You may have access to it yourself or you could access it through your local library or community house.

Books

Books can also sometimes have a lot to tell you in the privacy of

your own home about the sort of skills you might need and how you might acquire them. Join your local library or frequent your local bookstore.

Candidate training

Specific training workshops for local government candidates may be available in your local area. For example, Candidate Information Sessions offered through the MAV and WPILGC's *Women Get Elected* workshops. The websites of both the MAV and the VLGA also provide a range of relevant material. See *Useful Resources and Contacts*.

Remember that even with the formal skills you can acquire, the importance of your knowledge of and experience in your local community cannot be underestimated in the campaign.

What do you need to know? Thoughts from women Councillors

Councillor Fay Ure on looking back over her time with the **Mitchell Shire Council** since 1997 says,

"I was the first woman Mayor in the Shire in 1999 and was elected as Mayor again in 2003. While this experience certainly broadened the horizons, the points that have helped me maintain direction over the past years are:

- understand that you don't have to know everything
- build alliances
- don't make assumptions
- be clear in yourself about your intentions and remain resolute about them
- make the best use of the media
- be clear about your values."

Councillor Fay Ure, Mitchell Shire (1997-)



Sara Coward was Mayor of the **City of Maribyrnong** in 1998. Sara said,

"My interests included neighbourhood houses, ethnic youth groups and youth housing groups, regional groups, the health centre, migrant groups and adult and community education.

An understanding of the work undertaken in these areas and the networks I developed were very useful as a Councillor and for my credibility in the community – that is, I had a track record. I was not seen as a single issue candidate nor did I have to rely on my party affiliations."

Sara Coward, Councillor, Maribyrnong Council (1997-2003)



Why is it important to have women Councillors?

'The time has never been better for women to put themselves forward as candidates in local government elections. Increasing voter cynicism about politicians can be interpreted as a call for someone different in image to that of the standard politician with whom we have become all too familiar. Women candidates have the potential to fulfil this call for more open, fairer and more representative government. Women live the lives of more than half the community's population. This local knowledge is the key to success in any representative.'

Dr Rhonda Cumberland, Councillor,
City of Melbourne (1988–1993)

The majority of the women who were consulted in the development of this Kit emphasised the importance of evening up the numbers of women and men on Councils. The major reasons given were:

- women are just over half of the population and should be represented accordingly
 - women are aware of their own needs and issues and some of these may be different to those of men
 - women have different talents and abilities and add value to local governments.
- Research with women, particularly their views on politicians, generally indicates they feel very strongly that things would be much better if there were many more women at all levels of government.
- They feel this because:
- women are seen as less likely to be in it for themselves, less ego-based and less likely to engage in political point-scoring
 - women often seem to have a common-sense approach and are more likely to sit down and work out a solution cooperatively
 - women have experienced the problems more directly. They generally know more about the issues associated with children, the elderly and the general community.

Women bring diversity

Trusting your instincts is important when campaigning, especially if this is the first time you have put yourself 'out there' publicly. I think women know when they feel comfortable and are able to convey that when talking with a broad range of people.

I found the campaigning process quite daunting, particularly the loss of privacy and the need to move outside the normal comfort zone of friends and supporters. However, I really enjoyed meeting people and listening to their issues.

The support that I have gained from women friends both during the campaign process and after election cannot be understated.

Councillor Libby Mears, Surf Coast Shire (2004–)





The local government election system*

From time to time, the Minister for Local Government may announce that new Regulations for the conduct of local government elections are being considered. Contact Local Government Victoria or the Victorian Electoral Commission for most recent details about how elections are to be conducted.

As the candidate, or a candidate supporter, it is up to you to be familiar with all aspects of how elections work in your local area.

Who is eligible to stand for local governments?

Any Australian citizen enrolled for state and federal elections in the municipality or on the Council voters roll on entitlement day (the day the voters' roll closes) is eligible to stand for Council. If the municipality is divided into wards, a Councillor does not have to be enrolled or live in the ward she represents. *The Local Government Act 1989* disqualifies a person from standing under certain circumstances, such as where they are an undischarged bankrupt. Seek advice from the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) about this if you have any questions.

Who is eligible to vote?

The Council's roll is made up of two groups:

- those people 18 years and over who reside in the municipality and are enrolled for State and Federal elections
- owners and occupiers of property within the municipality who are not residents.

Voting is compulsory for all residents, with the exception of those over 70 years. While non-Australian citizens who are on the roll are not eligible to stand for Council, they are entitled to vote. Following the *Local Government (Democratic Reform) Act 2003*, a person is allowed to vote only once in the entire municipality.

How do I nominate as a candidate?

Candidates must complete a notice of candidature. This is available from the Council office or the electoral office. They must also pay a deposit. In 2005, this amount is \$250. Nominations are invited and close one month (31 days) before election day. Dates for lodging nominations are advertised in the local press. The deposit will be refunded provided the candidate polls at least 4 % of the primary votes.

How many candidates will be elected?

Internal boundaries (wards) and the number of Councillors are determined within parameters established in the *Local Government Act*. Councils consist of not fewer than five and not more than 12 Councillors. Municipalities can be subdivided into wards or remain un-subdivided. If subdivided, all Councillors are considered to represent the whole area of the municipality, not just their ward.

Some Councils have subdivided the municipal district into single-Councillor wards. Others are

subdivided into multi-Councillor wards with the same number of Councillors in each ward or varying numbers of Councillors in some wards.

How long is a Councillor's term of office?

All Councils which face an election in November 2005 will be elected until November 2008, when all Councils will go to elections simultaneously. From 2008 onwards, all Councillors will be elected for four year terms.

Which voting system will be used?

It is very important to understand the following information. You will need to think about how it applies to your local situation. Understanding the voting system and using this understanding in your campaign increases your chances of getting elected.

The Local Government Act currently allows for preferential voting only. With preferential voting, voters have to mark their order of preference for each and every candidate on the ballot paper. If their first preference is not elected, their vote is not wasted as they have a chance to say who they prefer next.

There are two types of preferential voting systems that you could face in local government elections.

The first system is used where a Council is divided into **wards with one Councillor** each. This is called **simple preferential** and is the same as for a State or Federal election.

Alternatively, where **more than one Councillor represents a specific electorate** the system used is called **proportional representation (PR)**, the same system as in the Senate. For example, if your Council includes some wards with two or more Councillors in each, or if your Council is not divided into wards at all but is a single Council with all Councillors representing the entire municipality, **proportional representation** is used.

To win, a candidate must receive a quota. The quota varies according to what election system is used. If the quota figure is not reached in the first round of counting, preferences are distributed according to a proportional system until the required number of candidates is elected.

A detailed explanation of how votes are counted, including quotas, is contained in the *VEC Candidates Handbook*, issued before elections. It is very important for you or your campaign manager to understand how this works. Understanding the voting system and how it affects preferencing decisions increases your chances of getting elected.

Further details on using the preference system effectively according to how your Council is structured are set out on pages 33-35 and in *Appendix 1* on page 47. It is essential that you understand the voting system which will apply to you.

How will voting take place?

In the past most voting has been **attendance voting**, where voters attend on polling day at the ballot box. However, there is a growing trend towards **postal voting**, where the voters receive candidate information by mail and return their votes in a sealed envelope prior to the close of voting. The type of voting system to be used in your election will determine the strategies you use in your campaign, so it will be wise to follow this up early.

For further details on maximising chances through postal voting, see page 36.

**Some of the material in this section draws on From Citizen to Councillor, MAV 1996*

Becoming a candidate

Deciding to stand

How you make your decision about standing for Council affects your campaign. It is important to look at the impact of campaigning, and potentially becoming a Councillor, on your life. Thoughtful and holistic decision making at an early point will help you deal with the challenges of campaigning and potentially being a Councillor. An exercise to help you do this, called *Deciding Whether to Stand* can be found on the webpage: www.vlga.org.au/issues/women_gov.html.

Planning your campaign

Once you have decided that you want to run for Council, you need to start planning your campaign strategy. Work out what needs doing, who's going to do it and when it is going to be done. It is time to develop a time frame for action.

Most of the Councillors interviewed during the development of this kit estimated that they had spent from four weeks to three months on the campaign. Typically, those in rural areas spent a little less time on the campaign trail than did those in metropolitan areas. With the benefit of hindsight, many former candidates advised to start planning up to 12 months before the election, even if you do not announce your candidacy until much later.

Planning for preferences

There is no doubt that preference distribution influences who sits around the Council table and who is excluded. We all hear stories about great candidates who were 'done' on preference deals. This means that your preferences are a powerful tool, which must be well understood if you are to get elected.

As in most things, good expert advice is critical. Seek out someone who knows how it works, perhaps a former Councillor or a current Councillor in another municipality. Use their advice to make objective and disciplined decisions on who to exchange preferences with and how to do it to maximise your opportunities. There are two quite different systems depending on whether you are running in a single Councillor ward or a multi-Councillor ward. If you are standing in a multi-Councillor ward you will also need to understand the quota system which is the counting method used in elections with the proportional representation or PR system.

Exchange of preferences can do two quite different things: it can help you get elected and it can influence who you share the Council table with. Remember that your preferences will be important to other candidates who are also trying to maximise their opportunities, so don't promise preference exchanges too early or lightly. This must be a disciplined decision as part of your overall campaign strategy. Do as much homework as possible so that you have a thorough working knowledge of the system you are running under, and so you know the policies of other candidates to help inform your preference exchange decisions.

Councillor Beth Davidson, Surf Coast Shire (1998-), Mayor (2001-2004)



The table on pages 16–18 highlights the tasks and responsibilities, and a time frame for action in a typical campaign.

However remember that this timeframe is not always realistic. The tips in the next few pages will help you use the time you have as effectively as possible.

Your campaign team

‘The first time I stood on my own I didn’t have any organisational support. By the third campaign I knew what I was doing and I had a really strong campaign team.’

Learn from the experience of others. Aim to set up your campaign team as soon as possible. This is the first step in a successful campaign. You will make up your campaign committee from your supporters. If you are running as a party-endorsed or supported candidate, your campaign committee may include members of your local party branch.

Establishing an effective campaign team is very important, as although you might be tempted, you won’t be able to run the campaign entirely by yourself. A good campaign is more work than one person can handle. You need to be out there meeting the voters, not stamping envelopes. You will need people around you for moral support as the campaign progresses.

The choice of campaign team members will be important to your election. As well as being people who are loyal to you and committed to your success, they will need to be people who can quickly pick up particular skills, such as publicity and fundraising. If you have people with some experience of previous campaigns, so much the better.

‘The campaign team is really important. It’s particularly important to have a balanced team.’

The campaign manager or team leader

Your campaign manager or campaign team leader will be the most important member of the campaign team, as this person will have overall responsibility for the entire campaign. You will be out there getting known in the community, promoting yourself and the particular issues you are running on. It will be your campaign manager who attends to the day-to-day running of the campaign.

You need to work well with your campaign manager. Choose someone you can trust to get things done so you don’t have to check all the time; someone who can give you constructive advice and criticism, if you need it; and someone to help keep you motivated when you are feeling tired and stressed. It would also help if your campaign manager had some previous experience of running a campaign. However, this role can be learned “on-the-job”. It is better to have someone in this role than no one, as it is important for you to have a supportive campaign partner.

What sorts of tasks will your campaign manager undertake?

Your campaign manager with the team will be the one who:

- makes sure that your nomination form is filled out and lodged on time
- plans the campaign, including fund raising
- arranges for the design, authorisation and printing of your publicity material
- ensures that any publicity material such as posters or garden signs are placed to give maximum exposure
- recruits and trains supportive volunteers to letterbox, doorknock, answer phones
- organises press coverage
- prepares material to attract postal votes
- ensures that the preferencing strategy is worked for success on the how-to-vote cards
- if voting is at booths, checks the number and location of booths in order to work out how many workers you will need on election day
- draws up the rosters for election day
- appoints scrutineers and makes sure they know what they are supposed to do on the day
- ensures that material such as how-to-vote cards is distributed as widely as possible.



Campaign tasks and timelines

TASK	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
Once you have decided to stand, define what you will see as a successful campaign. Take into account what you have control over and what you do not. Plan how you will celebrate this success, regardless of the election outcome.	You	At the beginning
Identify and contact key people, such as past or present Councillors who have run effective campaigns. Look for a mentor.	You	As early as possible
Tell people that you are going to run – your friends, any group or club you're a member of as well as other organisations you think will be important for you.	You	As early as possible
Find a campaign partner or manager – someone you trust to run things for you.	You	Between 6 and 2 months before the election
Form the campaign team – people prepared to help.	You/Campaign Manager	Between 6 and 2 months before the election
Identify relevant community groups and organisations to target using the municipal directory.	You	Between 6 and 2 months before the election
Go to Council information session before the elections. Attend training session run by the MAV, VLGA and WPILGC. If you are interested in representing a political party, contact them to organise assistance and training.	You	Check your local dates
Set meeting dates for campaign team.	You/ Campaign Manager	Between 6 and 2 months before the election
Plan your campaign strategy – what will your message be? Why should people elect you?	You/Campaign Manager	As early as possible before the election
Work out your campaign budget – how much will it cost and where will the money come from?	You/Campaign Manager /Treasurer	As early as possible before the election
Prepare your strategy for different preferencing options and negotiations, preferably with the help of an experienced person or mentor.	You/ Campaign Manager	As early as possible before the election
Set up your campaign team meeting place or office – where will it be and what will you need?	You/Campaign Manager / Campaign Team	As early as possible before the election



Campaign tasks and timelines

TASK	RESPONSIBILITY	TIME FRAME
Check all the relevant dates – remember you need to nominate formally before election day.	Campaign Manager/ You	At least 3-2 months before the election
Be aware of the deadlines for postal votes. Think about a strategy for attracting postal votes.	Campaign Manager/ You	At least 3-2 months before the election
Arrange photographs for leaflets and publicity material.	You/Campaign Manager	Between 6 and 3 months before the election
Check deadlines for local papers, submit media releases, advise journalists you are available for interviews. Do not forget letters to the Editor.	You/Campaign Manager	As early as possible before the election
Identify and contact other candidates, decide on a preference strategy and allocate preferences. Ensure that you include preferences on how-to-vote cards and other materials.	You/Campaign Manager	Between 8-5 weeks before the election, or earlier if known
Plan and produce campaign materials and advertising. These could include leaflets, billboards and garden signs.	You/Campaign Manager / Campaign Team	2 months before the election
Meet the people, be seen in public places, ask to address local groups.	You	Ongoing until election day
Doorknock and letterbox.	You/Campaign Manager	Ongoing until election day
Prepare for election time. POSTAL ELECTIONS: remember that many people vote as soon as they receive the voting material in the post. Plan your campaign timelines accordingly. ATTENDANCE ELECTIONS: Draw up rosters for booths, ensure that there's a phone to take calls from voters for information, assistance and transport.	Campaign Manager/ Campaign Team	According to your local conditions
Appoint scrutineers for vote counting. The VEC provide information for scrutineers. Keep in regular touch with scrutineers as counting goes on.	You/Campaign Manager	From 4 weeks before the election.
Prepare speech for Declaration of the Poll.	You	Two days before the election
The night before election day, get a good sleep.	You	The night before the election

continued over page



Campaign tasks and timelines

TASK	RESPONSIBILITY	TIME FRAME
On the day, if voting at booths, move around the booths to meet the voters or stick to the booths with the biggest enrolments. Ensure that there's a worker at every booth on the day.	You/ Campaign Manager	On the day of election
After the poll, celebrate your success. Publicly and privately thank all your friends and supporters whether you get elected or not.	You/Everyone	On the night of election
Evaluate the election result. What worked? How could it be done better next time? Refer back to the first step of your campaign – defining your own success.	You/ Campaign Manager/ Campaign Team	A week after the poll

One view of the role of a campaign manager

Councillors rely on friends and supporters for help in running their campaigns. Anne Ramage took the lead role in coordinating letterbox drops and other on-the-ground work for Councillor Angela Altair at the last election in 2004.

Angela believes that she “could not have done it without Anne’s input. As an independent I didn’t have the back up of a party machine. Anne’s job was to get a team of helpers together, map out the area to be letterboxed, then allocate areas for delivery.”

Anne enjoyed her experience and felt euphoric when Angela won. She also learnt a lot about local politics: “When people stand for Council you really don’t know what it entails and all the behind-the-scenes work unless you are involved.”

Anne herself has found that since the campaign she is looked on as someone to go to with an issue.

“It’s a bit like volunteering; it is very rewarding and what you put in you get back both as a sense of personal fulfilment and as satisfaction that you have put something into the community.”



Councillor Angela Altair, (left) City of Hobsons Bay (1999–), Mayor (2004) and Anne Ramage, citizen of Hobsons Bay

A note about campaign supporters

Campaign supporters will be crucial to your campaign as you try to maximise your campaign effectiveness and to minimise your campaign expenses.

It is important to remember two things about your supporters. Firstly, they are not paid staff,

so if they do not like a particular task they may leave and not come back. Second, volunteers can burn out.

Your campaign manager will need to work to keep the volunteers busy and happy. They will need to be told how their task fits into the overall campaign plan and why their work is important.

The worst thing you can do is accept an offer of help and then not use it.

The most important thing you can do is to recognise the work of the volunteers and thank them personally and often.

The WPILGC webpage <www.vlga.org.au/issues/women_gov.html> offers further advice to help develop and work with a campaign team. See *Guide for candidates and campaign teams*.

Mentors and other supporters

‘Often you need other women to encourage you to stand and then to keep encouraging you as you take the next step. It’s important to have people to talk with to help you to focus and be clear.’

All of the women approached when putting together this kit emphasised the importance of their friends and supporters in encouraging them to run for Council, and in providing support to them through the campaign and when they became Councillors.

You will draw your campaign supporters from your family and friends and, if you are a member of a political party or a community group, from that party or group. You could meet other supporters along the way. They will be the people who encourage you to run, assist you with your campaigning, hang in with you when it is raining and you still have 100 doors to knock, and celebrate with you at the Declaration of the Poll. They will be the ones to commiserate

with and support you when you are feeling low. They will help you to take appropriate action when other candidates seem to be using ‘dirty tricks’.

Along with personal support, campaign partners and teams, mentors often provide important support. There are many ways of getting mentored. See the webpage for some ideas, including having multiple mentors: www.vlga.org.au/issues/women_gov.html.

Many women emphasised the great value they had derived from mentoring arrangements. Others said they wished they had had a mentor. Approaching someone to be your mentor can be a more structured way of obtaining

support. Your mentor could be someone who’s currently a Councillor, been a Councillor in the past, or run a successful campaign, or it could be someone who is a past or present member of State or Federal parliament.

The relationships you have with your mentors may be formal, with set meetings, agreed short and long-term goals and a set time-frame for the relationship. Or it could just be someone you occasionally ring or have coffee with when you have a question or feel you need support.

Unless you are lucky enough to participate in a formal mentoring program, in which you will be matched with a mentor and have training provided, you will usually be the one to identify who your mentors might be and to initiate the relationships.

‘It’s good to have someone’s shoulder to cry on as you’re getting there.’

Councillor Jenny Dale’s Mentor Checklist

Choose as your mentor someone who:

- is a good role model
- you feel comfortable with and respect
- is familiar with the workings of Council, and the constrictions and realities of public life and elections
- will listen, encourage, support and provide constructive feedback
- is prepared to respect the confidentiality of any discussions
- ideally, is outside your campaign, may be outside your local government area, or a may be former female Councillor.



Councillor Jenny Dale, Shire of Indigo (1997–). A Mayor three times over, Jenny has found mentoring invaluable.



The key thing here is to identify what you need from the mentoring relationship and then approach someone who can meet these needs. You need not feel nervous as you will find that the person you approach to be your mentor will usually be flattered that someone thinks they can learn something from them. Remember, it's a two-way process: the mentor will gain from the relationship too.

ALGWA (Australian Local Government Women's Association) offers an informal mentoring program which could work for you. Details of ALGWA are in *Useful Resources and Contacts*.

Some successful women candidates talk of having multiple mentors. "Do -it-yourself" mentoring can also work well. See the WPILGC webpage for details about these options: <www.vlga.org.au/issues/women_gov.html>.

'It was really great to have someone at the other end of the phone who had been involved and had lots of local knowledge.'

The value of a mentor

When you are campaigning you really need someone outside the campaign to act as a sounding board and to provide a word of encouragement when you need it. I found it really valuable to talk to several women who had been through the election process in local government.

Each was approachable and motivating, and had empathy for my goals. During the campaign their collective advice, based on their individual experiences gave me reassurance and confidence.

The value of a mentor does not diminish when you are elected. It is invaluable when you become a Councillor. I was fortunate to retain the support of my mentors through my term of office as a Councillor and found their advice, knowledge and guidance of great assistance.

Combined with the wisdom born of past experiences and their knowledge of current issues, my mentor's advice and counsel was of great benefit to me, particularly in the first year on Council.



Kaele Way, JP, National President, Australian Local Government Women's Association Inc (2004-)

Developing your campaign material

'My biggest campaign expense was photos. We had them professionally done and they cost about \$800. This really paid off in the vote. We thought it was important for presentation and for some people this was the only way they recognised me.'

Make sure you are familiar with all current requirements. Changes to the Electoral Regulations prior to elections can affect how you need to think about campaigning.

Your campaign material will introduce you, your message and your policies to the community. It should be as good as you can manage within your budget.

It is really important that you and what you stand for come across clearly and simply in your campaign material. It doesn't have to be slick, but it has to be you.

After deciding on the message you want to convey to the community, you will need a photo. A good quality professional photo will be important in conveying you and your message. Get feedback from others before you decide on the final photos. It is best to use the same photograph in all your

material so that people will identify and get to know you.

You may also think of a central message or slogan to go with your photo. This should be clear, concise and something that is associated with you. If you are standing as part of a team you might all wish to present with the same slogan.

It is important to check the conditions that apply to campaign materials. You may need to include an authorisation, as well as the name of the printer. This information should be checked with the local Returning Officer, the Victorian Electoral Commission or Council to ensure that it is consistent with the requirements of the Electoral Regulations.

The Returning Officer is the person charged with the responsibility for conducting the election, according to the *Local*

Government Act 1989, the Local Government (Democratic Reform) Act 2003 and the Regulations which accompany the Act. The Returning Officer can be appointed by the Council or by either the Victorian or Australian Electoral Commissions. The Electoral Commission may also check material for you.

Remember that if you are standing in a postal election, you will need to lodge your personal statement of not more than 150 words and other material with the Returning Officer by a certain date following close of nominations. This material will be sent out to voters with the ballot papers. Do not underestimate the importance of this information to your electoral success. It may be all that the voters know of you prior to deciding how to vote.

There is value in preparing a 150 word statement early, regardless of whether you are in a postal or attendance election. It will help you craft your message. See examples in Appendix 2.

Make sure you check your local dates and requirements early.

'I had some draft information checked out by the Returning Officer, but it was not till I had run off my pamphlet and started dropping it off that I was told I shouldn't have the Council logo on it. I just wasn't aware of this. So I sat up late one night with the pinking shears and cut all the logos off.'



The extent of your campaign material will be determined by your budget and how you plan to use the material. At the very least, you probably will need the following:

- A summary of your biographical details, including your community background and important aspects of your message. This can be circulated when necessary as well as being included with any press releases.
- A campaign brochure which should include your photograph, information on your position on a few key issues and your contact details. This brochure is usually printed on A4 paper folded in half or thirds. You will need to print quite a few copies of your brochure as it will probably be the most widely distributed of your campaign materials. You will use it when doorknocking, letterboxing, and in your general 'meet-the-community' initiatives. The contents should also be checked with the Returning Officer.
- Depending on your budget, posters could also be printed. These should feature your photograph and your key message. They can be displayed in key public places and your supporters could also display them on stakes in their gardens.
- Business cards can also be useful to leave with people you meet.
- Clear and concise how-to-vote cards will maximise your chances of getting elected. In postal voting, they will be distributed with voting materials. In attendance voting,

Making good use of campaign material

Through producing flyers and leaflets for many community campaigns I have become obsessively fussy about the design of material. The sitting ward Councillor advised me that the first task was to work out what I wanted to say and develop consistent messages that could be used through any and all of the material I issued.

Another piece of useful advice was to get a good photograph since that may be the single thing people remember about you. I wanted to use a visual style and words that I was comfortable with; a graphic designer assisted me to get the look I wanted. I used leaflets that were quick to read from the outside, but opened up to reveal more information if people were interested. I was very keen to use recycled paper as people get very annoyed with the

waste of paper associated with election campaigns.

Of all the election material I produced, I found a business card the most helpful. As well as my contact details it included relevant election information. Perhaps a photograph on the business card would have made it even more useful. It was easy to exchange and cheap to produce.

The most challenging task was working to the lead times for the production of brochures – both with graphic designers and printers.

It is important to have the whole campaign conceptualised from beginning to end at the very start, because there is very little time once the campaign is underway.

Councillor Janet Bolitho (front row, second from left), City of Port Phillip (2004–)



you and your supporters will distribute them at the booths on polling day. Remember that how-to-vote cards should be checked with the Returning Officer.

Your other campaign materials might include banners, signs for your car and bumper stickers.

The WPILGC webpage, <www.vlga.org.au/issues/women_gov.html>, has some examples of campaign materials.

Communicating what you stand for

'It's a strength to know what you want to achieve. Everyone needs to know what you stand for.'

Why do you need a position on local issues?

Policies or position statements are usually written statements about the things you stand for, the things you want to change and the things you want to improve.

Having a defined policy platform or a clear position can be very important. If you do not know the things you want to change when you are elected, then why would you stand and why would people vote for you?

You do not need to have a position or a well-developed policy on every local issue. Several successful

candidates told us they preferred to listen to the issues and concerns raised by the local residents and businesses while campaigning, promising to raise them if they were elected, rather than responding with some fixed policy position.

If you are standing as a member of a political party there may already be a defined process for policy development, and possibly a defined policy which will be available to you from the party, to be interpreted at the local community level.

You may be standing as part of a community group which may want

to change something specific through your election to Council. You will then probably have a defined position on the particular local issue with which your group is concerned, for example, stopping the tip, keeping the community centre open or changing the local planning regulations. It is also most important, particularly when elected, to have an overview and some ideas on other areas of Council action and related policies.

Never be afraid to say: "I don't know but I'll find out and get back to you."

How I communicated what I stood for

You need to know and be known by your community in any positive way you can. For example, as a volunteer in community groups such as schools and pre-schools. Use your judgment about the profitability of doorknocking. At many homes there is no one about during the week, and some people refuse to open the door. So, the number you can reach may be small. However, many people do appreciate doorknocking and you can learn a great deal about the local issues.

Try not to be seen as a single issue candidate. You will need to make decisions about many complex issues if elected.

Organise ways to make yourself available to meet the community where you can interact with people quickly, such as outside shops or schools (ask permission from the school authorities first).

If possible attend Council meetings for a few months before the elections to see and hear what is happening. More is happening then before the caretaker period required by the Local Government Act in the two months leading up to election.

During this period Council's deliberations are more limited.

Printed flyers are very important. Include photographs which show you participating in local events with members of the community, and stress your involvement in the local area.

Establish and maintain a good working relationship and lines of communication with your CEO and other Council officers. This will help you to be more effective as well as enjoying your time as a Councillor much more. But this doesn't mean you have to be a rubber stamp!



*Councillor Di Moore,
Yarra Ranges Shire
(1997-)*



How do you develop an understanding of key local issues?



Find out what your Council is doing

One important way to get a view about the important issues in your community and to define policy is to begin to attend local Council meetings.

You can find out when and where the Council sits by contacting your local Council office. An agenda for the meeting will be useful. You will be able to pick this up before the meeting. You can arrange to have an agenda reserved for you by telephoning the Council service staff. Collect the agenda even if you are unable to attend the meeting, as it will set out the issues under discussion. It is also useful to attend other Council related meetings such as a ward meeting, or a general meeting on a specific issue run by your Council or your current Councillor.

It is very useful to make yourself known as a potential candidate to the Chief Executive Officer of the municipality and/or the Governance Officer (or equivalent officer who organises elections and candidate information). You have every right to set up a meeting as a serious candidate. Most officers will be very willing to meet with you and will be respectful and helpful. It is their job to answer resident's questions. Remember if you win the election you will be making decisions about policy direction for their employing organisation.

You may also choose to simply ask for information as a resident or voter without declaring yourself to be a candidate. It is also worthwhile to meet with officers from key departments such as planning, environment, human services, infrastructure, culture and so on. These officers are a rich source of information about the key issues in their area of work and what the community is most concerned about. Ask for the information you want and take notes. The public and Councillors ask questions constantly and you will not be expected to know everything already.

Ask for key Council policy documents and other background information about the municipality. It is important to read the Council and Community Plans and the Annual Report. Also ask what other strategy documents are available for residents and voters. There will also be current documents on exhibition, for consultation with the community before they are finalised and adopted by Council.

Remember to study your Council's website. Your Council may have a wide range of information and documents available online.

Read your local newspaper

Your local newspaper will usually include a report on Council meetings and will also report most of the issues that are considered important in your local community. These issues will be the ones on which you may want to develop some response or position. Remember a newspaper story may give an incomplete picture. Find out more about an issue on which you feel strongly before declaring your position.

Keep your eyes and ears open in your local community

Look around your community and listen to what's being said by residents and businesses. Together with what is being talked about in the Council chambers and the local newspaper, this will give you an idea of the things people see as important.

Focus on a particular area of interest

You do not have to be an expert on everything. Focus on the thing you feel passionate about and run with it. Find out all you can about it. Develop a list of issues, concerns and actions.

Test your ideas out with your network of supporters

Your family, friends and other supporters will give you feedback on your responses to local concerns and issues as well as the effectiveness of your presentation.

Some questions to ask yourself

Answering the following questions may help you in the initial stages of developing a response to and a position on the issues most important to you:

- Why is it important for women to be Councillors?
- Why do you think people might dislike Councillors and other politicians?
- How are you different from the stereotype?
- Why did you decide to run for Council?
- Who do you admire among current or past political leaders, and why?
- If you had the chance to change policy in only one area what would it be?
- Why is the community important?
- How would you see your role as a representative of the community?

Communicating your message and working with the media

‘To be a Councillor you have to be a good listener, talk to people, be part of the community and be someone that others can identify with. You need a high profile. You need to have your name around. You need to be seen as a community leader.’

When you have formulated your position on the most important local issues, the next step is to find a way to get your ideas out there into the community. People need to know you and what you stand for, so that on polling day you will get their vote.

Your networking and the community groups you are involved in, will ensure your name is heard around your area. When you meet people for the first time, at least they will recognise your name even if they don't know your face.

Getting your name known can also be achieved through your local media. Media coverage can be paid or unpaid. Advertising is paid media coverage. If you are going to invest some of your hard-earned campaign funds on advertising, it is advisable to get expert advice. If you have been endorsed by your political party, see what the party is planning. It will be cost-effective to combine the party's experience with the message you want to convey. Experienced candidates say that billboard advertising is more cost-effective in a local campaign than mass media advertising.

Unpaid media coverage includes news stories in the local paper, general stories, feature articles or letters to the Editor. You can communicate with the media either in person – by being interviewed by a reporter – or indirectly, by a press release.

The first step is to become familiar with your local newspaper by following how it covers the issues that concern you. If you know a reporter is interested in the issue, contact them directly. You can then send them a press release or press kit.

Press releases

Press releases should be addressed to a reporter by name. Provide specific information about yourself and the issues you see as important.

A press release is prepared and presented in a standard format, is preferably one page long and never more than two pages. Its purpose is to announce an issue of importance for which you want media attention.

A good press release answers five questions in the first paragraph:

Who? Who is the subject of the story? They should be identified and described.

What? What is happening that the media and the local community should know about? The goal is to get the media's attention so that your release will be read and the issue reported.

Why? Why is this important? The reason for your press release should be clear, compelling and specific.

Where? If it is an event or a press conference, where is it going to take place? Be specific about the address. Include a map with directions.

When? When will it take place? The date, day of the week, and hour should be included.

Use direct quotes in your release and keep sentences and paragraphs short. Make sure you include a contact name and contact details at the conclusion of the release.

Feature Stories












This is an opportunity to be more personal in approach and explain how an issue you are concerned about affects a particular individual or group. You could write the story yourself and submit it for publication. Include good photographs with your copy.



Speeches and presentations



Another way to convey your message to prospective voters will be through speeches and presentations. The following ten steps can be used for preparing a speech or presentation. Use your campaign team or mentors to help with these steps. They will help you practise and give feedback.

-  Define the purpose of your speech or presentation. Do you want to persuade the audience to do something? Do you want them to take specific action? Do you want to inspire them or convince them about something?
-  Know your audience. What local groups do they come from? Will you need interpreters or translated materials? Do they know you and your subject? Are they interested in you or your subject?
-  Know the location and how the meeting space will be set up.
-  Become familiar and comfortable with the subject or issues about which you will be speaking.
-  Determine what you want your audience to know, to remember, to learn. In approximately 25 words or less, write out the objective of your speech.
-  List the three main points you want to make in your speech. Illustrate each point with at least one example (a story or anecdote) that will create a picture in the minds of your listeners.
-  Outline the substance of your presentation using quotes, statistics, examples and other interesting information.
-  Write the opening and attention-getting statement of your speech.
-  Write the closing part of your speech. Aim for a strong finish.
-  Know the program for the event at which you will speak. Are you the only speaker? What is the order of appearance? Will you be first or last if there are several speakers?
-  Be aware of the time allowed afterwards for questions and answers.

Letters to the Editor

The Letters to the Editor page is one of the most widely read sections of the local newspaper. It represents a wonderful, free opportunity for you to express yourself about an issue of concern to you. Most important, even if your letter is not printed, it gives you great practice at composing your thoughts in a clear and concise manner. You will have the best chance of getting your letter printed if you comment directly on an article.

Letters to the Editor need to be written immediately after the article or event on which you are commenting appears. Don't wait. Write immediately, but carefully and thoughtfully. You don't want a rash comment to come back and haunt you and your campaign. Be as brief as possible. Refer to the article by title, date of publication and reporter. Sign your letter with your complete name and include your address and phone number. If you do not want these published you can request that they be withheld from publication. Ideally, a letter to the Editor is about 200 words long.

Working with the media

Rules to remember when working with the media:

- Stay on top of the local news. What are the issues? Listen, watch and learn.
- Focus on the local news outlets – the local newspaper, radio or TV.
- Determine what local media dominates in your community. Direct most of your energy in that direction.

Some rules to remember when talking to the media:

- Always return phone calls promptly.
- Have a clear purpose for talking to a reporter. Prepare this before the meeting.
- Try to anticipate the 'angles' the reporter may take.
- Know what the newspaper's deadlines are.
- Assume that there is no such thing as 'not for publication' or 'off the record'.
- Be careful of joking with the reporter – a joke in print is not always as funny as it seemed when you said it.
- Be clear about the major points you wish to make; stick to these and do not get distracted.
- Be concise.
- Do not lie or bend the truth.
- Do not make factual errors.
- Do not be ashamed to say 'I don't know'.
- Do not promise what you cannot deliver.
- Do not assume the reporter is your best friend.
- Do not pass on rumours about your opponent or others to reporters.
- Do not be afraid to disagree with a reporter. Explain why you do not agree.
- Do not feel obliged to fill silences in a conversation with a reporter.



Community campaigning

Getting your message to the local community

Prior to being a Councillor I wrote letters fairly regularly to the local papers, and this media exposure helped develop my profile outside my small community.

During the campaign I handed out pamphlets outside local schools. Through my networks I was invited to speak to a range of different groups. Being linked in with Councillors who were not standing for re-election was also valuable.

I had around twenty colour posters in different shop windows across the Shire. I followed this with one or two advertisements in the local papers and also arranged for A5 flyers to be put in post boxes in communities where there is no mail delivery service. I customised these flyers for the different towns across the Shire.

Another important strategy was to work with two other women. We supported each other in getting our message out. We attended a few local community markets as well as a supermarket, and it was much easier and more enjoyable doing this as a threesome!

I found the campaign trail very busy and at times quite challenging, but with strong support from family and friends it can be an opportunity for personal growth and development.



Councillor Libby Mears, Surf Coast Shire (2004–)

'I doorknocked two thirds of the electorate, about 6000 houses. It was massive, but it was the most powerful thing to do. It was the most old-fashioned way but people really appreciated it. People could relate to me on the day because they'd already met me.'

'I didn't doorknock because I thought it was a bit intrusive. However, I did wear a placard in the main street and people knew who I was. If they wanted they could come up and talk to me.'

There are many ways of campaigning. You need to campaign in a way that will work best in your community and with which you feel comfortable. Below are some short descriptions of different approaches.

All your community campaign timing and style needs to be planned for local conditions. What kind of election will it be – postal or attendance? Can you rely on your local profile or will you need to get help to cover the whole municipality? If it's a postal ballot, when are the ballot papers going to be sent out? (It is believed that over one third of postal voters complete the papers as soon as they get them.) The answers to these kind of questions will determine the crucial timing and style for your campaign efforts.

'I didn't have any confidence. I still don't. It's a personal thing. I decided not to doorknock because that is just not me. I didn't have the answers. Now I am on Council I can tell people what they want to know.'

Your campaign strategy

'You have to be available and confident to talk to the wide range of local groups in your community. In my last campaign I only had five weeks to do this. I let people know that I was available to talk to them through my local networking. I had already tapped into local ethnic groups through community work I did with many of them in the past. I found many of them had heard I was running for Council by word of mouth.'

Matti Biliias, Councillor, City of Darebin (1996–1997)

Building your profile and networks in the community

Being known in the community is vital to being elected.

The first thing to do is to work out a plan to become better known by decision-makers, opinion leaders, and potential voters in your community. Your campaign team and campaign manager will be able to assist with this.

If you are running as an endorsed candidate for a political party, being known in the party is almost as important as being known in the

community. Your profile and networks in a political party will be at least as important as those in the community and you will need to divide your time accordingly.

You and your campaign team will already have some existing networks, such as the various community, business, service and school groups that you are involved with. Members of these groups will already know you and will therefore be more likely to support you when you begin actively campaigning.

There are two broad types of community campaigning: high-intensity and low-intensity. Low-intensity activities are not targeted and do not have a high impact on voter choice, but they can still let the voters know who you are and what you stand for.

High-intensity campaigns are more individualised and more persuasive; they are also more resource intensive.

Common forms of community campaigning



<i>Activity</i>	<i>Impact</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Resources required</i>
leafleting/letterboxing	low	low – cost of leaflets	people, time
garden signs	low	moderate	people, time, money
doorknocking	high	low	people, time
morning teas	high	low	time, money
shopping centres	moderate	low	people, time
existing events	low	low	people, time
created events	high	high	people, time, money
telephone	high	moderate	people, time, money
direct mail	high	high	time, money



Marj Munro's helpful hints for doorknocking

I do feel that a regular pattern of doorknocking is better than flogging yourself for hours. I kidded myself that I was not going to do very much at first, that I was not going to go any further than the local shops. Then I got my courage into gear and kidded myself I would do one more, then to the end of the street or the block of units. These are the things I've learnt:

Dress for the weather

Make sure you are comfortable. Candidates should know their area well enough to know if posh or very casual is okay. If it's hot, and it was for me, dress accordingly.

Candidates are not there to talk but to listen

Listening is the best form of selling.

Take a note book to write down any points people make

Make a point of writing them down and make sure they know you are taking note of their points.

Where possible, comment on gardens, children, dogs and cats

People will remember you for your positive comments.

Women can doorknock alone or with others, but I think men should never go alone

I did all of it on my own.

Stand well back from the door so people are able to see you

Standing close looks like you intend to jump in – quite aggressive really.

Have a good photo

Smile and then be prepared to drop it like a hot brick if someone looks sad

Carry some campaign material with you

Have something in your hand with your name and phone number on it. If there's no one home leave these at the door.

Get an answering machine and save your sanity



Marj Munro, Councillor, City of Maroondah (1997-2003)

'Letter drops are sometimes better than doorknocking. You meet people in their garden and you don't intrude.'

Low – impact community campaigning

Distribution of campaign information through letter boxing is the most basic form of community campaigning. The information is placed in letter boxes or other secure areas. Your supporters and other volunteers can help you with this. They will need leaflets, written instructions,

a map with directions telling them where the information is to be distributed and a telephone number to call if there is a problem.

Your supporters might also place large posters on a stake in their garden during the final weeks of the campaign. Although the posters might cost more than leafleting, if they are placed in

strategic areas they will assist in raising your profile in the community.

Leafleting is similar to letter boxing except that you and your supporters distribute your information at public places such as shopping centres. Although you will require a number of volunteers to leaflet, it will not take a lot of time or money.

High impact community campaigning

Doorknocking is one of the most common community campaigning activities. You or your supporters knock on the door of a potential voter and talk to them. You will probably leave some campaign literature. If there is no one home, you may wish to leave some contact information. Make sure you include a phone, fax or email on your campaign material.

In addition to helping potential voters identify you, doorknocking may also help you to identify your supporters and even recruit enthusiastic volunteers. You and your supporters might benefit from some training prior to going doorknocking. This could include some role-play to practise what you will be saying, as well as some instructions on appearance and behaviour. You should also be wary of possible dangers such as dogs and overly enthusiastic supporters.

However, many successful campaigns are run without any doorknocking at all. Get advice about your ward. Are residents likely to be home? Are certain areas better to doorknock than others?

Morning teas, barbecues and other social functions to meet the potential Councillor are also good ways of building a profile. Your networks may be useful in organising functions for you to attend. Make sure you are there on time and are warm, supportive and aware of all the local issues.

Telephone calls to residents may be useful. However they can be expensive and you will need to be aware of not being intrusive.

'I doorknocked everywhere. There was a lot of backlash over the former Councillors. I wrote on the pamphlet if people were not at home and I got good feedback as lots of people contacted me.'

Finances and fundraising

'The campaign has to be run professionally—it might cost several thousand. However, you can get by spending only a little....'

As you begin your campaign you will need to establish a campaign budget. This will probably be done with your campaign manager and your campaign team. It will usually be undertaken at the same time as you're finalising your campaign plan and will take into account what you need to spend and your anticipated income from donations and any other sources of income. The difference between how much you need to spend and how much you can expect will be your fundraising target.

Many successful candidates have told us that they did not have any other source of funding apart from their own pocket or that of their

family. One of the major roles of your campaign committee will be to help you raise funds.

Even where your funds are limited you still need to be realistic about how to make them work effectively for you.

Your campaign budget will vary in each campaign. It could depend on where you are standing. It may also depend on how many candidates are running. Standing as the sole candidate in the election will most certainly mean you need to spend less on the campaign.

No matter how much or how little you think the campaign will cost, you will still need a budget.

Remember that it is necessary to declare individual donations over \$200, according to the *Local Government Act*.

Why you need to develop a campaign budget, even with limited funds

It will help you 'spend smart'. All campaigns have limited resources and there's no money to waste. A campaign budget will ensure you do not spend on impulse.

Your budget will help you stay with your original campaign plan. When your supporters tell you that the key to winning the election is a hundred personalised fridge magnets, the budget will provide you with the answer.



Sample campaign budget

<i>Materials</i>	\$	<i>Item</i>	\$
Campaign Costs		Campaign Income	
Films, process/print photos	100	Donations	585
Posters and how to vote cards	370	Candidate's own funds	485
Calling cards	150	Shortfall & fundraising target	790
Photography	120		
Colour leaflets	230		
Garden stakes	30		
Envelopes	donation		
Paper	donation		
Labels	donation		
Administration Costs			
Computer	on loan		
Photocopying	donation		
Postage	300		
Phone and Fax	210		
Additional Costs			
Child care	100		
Home help	80		
Contingency costs (10%) of total cost	170		
Total Costs	1860.00	Total Income	1860.00

Remember that campaign costs may be tax deductible — so be thorough in your record keeping.

Individual donations over \$200 must be declared.

If your budget will not allow for it, it cannot be done.

It will help you establish credibility. Your potential donors and other supporters and others will know that you are serious when they can see a summary of your budget.

What might be included in the budget

Above is an example of the campaign budget outline used by an elected Councillor in her

campaign. Remember this represents just one campaign. Other candidates told us they have managed on much less, while some said they had spent more. It is the budgeting which is important not just the amount of funds available.

As set out in the sample budget above, you may also need to obtain additional paid support for childcare or help in the home. This should be included in your budget. Additional support might also be provided by your family or friends.

Projected budget shortfalls could be met by fundraising, seeking more in-kind contributions or through donations.

Some simple fund raising ideas might include:

- a breakfast or lunch – invite your friends and supporters to come and ensure what they pay enables you to cover costs and to make a little extra for the campaign.
- holding a raffle.

Remember the costs of fundraising, such as raffle prizes,

advertising, food and beverages or hiring venues, need to be taken into account in your budget.

‘My mother came down the last week of the campaign and that made it so much easier.’

Maximise your chances by understanding preferences

‘You need to understand how preferences work. Then it’s a matter of striking a balance between maximising your vote and being true to your vision and values. There are times when losing a contest is better than compromising a principle. Equally, if you believe in what you stand for, don’t run away from maximising your chances of getting elected.’

The preferential voting system used in Victorian local governments means that voters must mark their order of preference for all candidates in the election. If their first choice is not elected, they then get a chance to say who they would prefer next. It is **the most ‘preferred candidate’ who is elected**, not the candidate with the highest primary vote. Therefore the way you arrange your preferences can be critical to your election chances.

While some candidates shy away from preferencing, we recommend that you at least understand both the system and the local election scene. You need to be in a position to make an informed decision in consultation with your campaign manager.

Preferences are hard to explain in a simple way, so the next section may require some concentrated study. If there are two or more candidates standing against you, studying this section is well worth the effort.

What is preference swapping?

Your how-to-vote card will be handed out at election time or will be sent to voters prior to the

election if running in a postal ballot system. The general community understanding of your how-to-vote card will be that it simply lists the candidates in order of your preference for their policies and values, starting with a number ‘1’ in the box next to your name. The expectation therefore will be that the number 2 candidate on your how-to-vote card, is the candidate who you consider ‘next best to you’ and so on. In preference swapping other candidates may also recommend to their supporters to put a ‘2’ or a ‘3’ next to your name. In simple terms, the higher the number you get on the how-to-vote cards of your rivals the more chance of you getting elected. By preference swapping, you are attempting to get the highest number you can on the how-to-vote cards of other candidates.

How do I decide who to swap preferences with?

As soon as you know or have some ideas about who the candidates are, it is time to start working on your preferencing decisions. You must provide the how-to-vote card to the Electoral Office by a specific date. The dates vary according to the kind of election you are running in. You will need to

arrange swaps before that date.

The longer you wait the greater the chance that someone else will have done the swap before you. You may be able to register more than one how-to-vote card in order to leave your options open.

Note that in postal elections there are only three days between announcement of official candidates and when your how-to-vote card is due in. That’s why it’s best to start your homework early.

First find out enough about your rival candidates to be able to answer the question: *In what order would I list the candidates as a voter if I was not standing?* One good way to find out how you would rate the candidates is to talk to them! Preparing some key questions beforehand will help you find out what you really want to know. You can then casually slip your questions into the conversation, or you may even call up some candidates to openly canvas their opinions and values.

Make your preference swaps when you are ready

It’s usually better not to make any preferencing agreements before you have assessed the whole field. Be wary of making any firm



agreement at your first meeting with a candidate. At the end of any meeting with a candidate, make clear whatever agreements you have or have not made so that no misunderstandings can occur. If you have discussed possibilities, make it clear that that is all you have discussed. Occasionally you'll come across some person who will agree to a preference swap with everybody (meaning they are lying to all but one!) If you do make an agreement you should honour it, so don't be pushed into any swaps before you are ready.

How to allocate your preferences

You also need to assess the ability of the candidates to attract votes. Find out as much as you can about the 'political landscape'. Are political parties involved? How well are the candidates supported? Weigh up the opinions you hear and come to your own conclusions.

List the candidates in order of who you think will get the highest primary vote down to the lowest. Also try to realistically assess your own position in this list. Consider more than one possible scenario. Your analysis may indicate a very clear benefit in swapping with a particular candidate. Then you must consider whether your ethics would allow you to swap with this person or not.

The more candidates there are, the more complex the situation. If there is only one person running against you, preferences are of course not an issue.

If there are three candidates, you will be trying to guess who will be eliminated first, as they will be the only one whose preferences will be

distributed. Naturally you will assume that you will not be eliminated first!

But remember if you are eliminated, *your* preferences may determine the result. If there's not much to choose between the other two candidates, in your view, then it makes sense to swap with the candidate least likely to win votes, if you can. At the other extreme, if your two rivals are poles apart in values and vision, then you may decide to put principles first and swap preferences with your favoured candidate without even considering the effect on your vote. If you wouldn't vote for someone and would hate to see them elected, would you swap preferences with them? Be true to your values and ask yourself: "How much do I want to get elected?" You must be able to live with yourself after you give your preferences. You must also consider your long term credibility in the community. Clearly preference swaps with people of similar values and vision are preferable. Both you and the community will feel more comfortable and there will be less 'leakage'. Leakage means voters not following the preference order on the how-to-vote card.

When you get to four and more candidates the same sort of considerations apply but with more complexity. Where more than one Councillor represents an electorate, you may find it useful to think about forming or joining a "ticket" where a group of candidates work together to exchange preferences. This is especially useful in Councils with no wards as it expands your ability to cover the entire municipality. If you decide to do this, it is

important to target a specific geographic/ demographic area and to work this out with your 'ticket' so that you do not waste energy doorknocking the same area.

As you can see preference swapping is a bit of an art, with the goal of achieving a balance between maximising your vote and being true to your vision and values. It is most helpful to talk through your preferencing issues with someone with experience, perhaps a former Councillor.

What to do about preferencing

DO ensure you understand the voting system that applies in your municipality.

DO 'survey the political landscape'. Find out: who is running? How strongly supported are they? How involved are political parties?

DO talk to other candidates.

DO be aware that anyone who speaks to you about the election could be a potential candidate.

DO make sure you are clear about what has been agreed, at the end of any discussion about preferences.

DO swap preferences when you have thoroughly thought it through.

DON'T leave it too long either as all the other candidates are likely to be doing preference swaps too.

An example of how the preferences system works in a single Councillor ward, with 4 candidates

To win in this scenario (i.e. simple preferential, not proportional representation), a candidate must receive an absolute majority, that is, half of all votes in the ward plus one. If one candidate receives the absolute majority outright that candidate is elected. But if no candidate receives an absolute majority the preferences are distributed.

This example is only an illustration of how to approach preferencing "sums". See page 47 for more information about other common ward arrangements, e.g. wards with more than one Councillor and Councils which are not subdivided into wards.

Understanding how preferences are actually counted helps to clarify their effect on your final vote and the value of preference swapping. It's worth studying this case carefully if you have three or more rival candidates in a single Councillor ward. It helps to imagine the actual ballot papers being moved from pile to pile, as you follow the preference allocation process through. The example assumes zero informal (invalid) votes for simplicity.

You, Angela, Serge and Jim stand for election and receive the following first preference votes:

Total First Preference Votes	
Angela	3000
Jim	6000
Serge	2000
You	5000
TOTAL	16,000

There is a total of 16,000 votes and to be elected you need 8001 (50% plus 1)

This is what the how-to-vote cards looked like:

How-to-vote cards of Angela, Jim, Serge and You

Angela's HTV		Jim's HTV	
Angela	1	Angela	3
Jim	4	Jim	1
Serge	2	Serge	2
You	3	You	4

Serge's HTV		Your HTV	
Angela	2	Angela	3
Jim	4	Jim	4
Serge	1	Serge	2
You	3	You	1

As none of the candidates has received enough first preference votes, the candidate with the fewest votes, Serge, is eliminated and his votes are transferred to the other candidate's totals according to where his voters have marked their second preferences.

Serge's 2000 votes have second preferences marked as follows:

Angela	1500
Jim	400
You	100

Once Serge's second preference votes have been transferred, the votes for each remaining candidate are totalled.

Totals after Serge's second preference votes transferred	
Angela	3000 + 1500 = 4500
Jim	6000 + 400 = 6400
You	5000 + 100 = 5100

As Serge swapped preferences with Angela, the distribution of his second preferences has not helped you at all. Some 'leakage' of preferences has gone towards Jim and you are further behind. None of the candidates has yet reached 8001 votes, so the candidate who now has the fewest votes, Angela, is eliminated and her

votes transferred between you and Jim. Angela's 4500 votes consist of 3000 primary votes and 1500 second preferences (from Serge). Angela's primary votes have second preferences marked as follows:

Jim	140
Serge	2400
You	460

As Serge has already been eliminated, he cannot receive these 2400 votes and they are distributed between you and Jim, according to the third preferences indicated by these voters. Fortunately you gave Serge number '2' on your how-to-vote card in exchange for number '3' position on his. (See how-to-vote cards). The 2400 votes are distributed as follows:

Jim	1000
You	1400

You also swapped your third position for Angela's third. This resulted in Angela's secondary votes (from Serge) having *third* preferences marked as follows:

Jim	450
You	1050

The totals for Jim and you now look like this:

Totals after Angela's preferences transferred	
Jim	6400 + (140+1000+450) = 7990
You	5100 + (460+1400+1050) = 8090

Your swapping agreements with Serge and Angela for third preference on their how-to-vote cards have got you 'over the line' (although many voters have not followed the card).

You have now more than half the votes cast – an absolute majority – and you are elected!



How to maximise your vote through postal votes

‘Doorknocking may be seen by some as an old-fashioned way to campaign but with postal ballots it is really important because this may be all the voters get to see of you before they vote. After all, you and your supporters won’t be meeting them at the ballot box. You have to go to them.’

One of the most important things to understand is how postal voting affects the timing and style of your campaign strategy. At the time of writing, local government was the only level of government to use this system extensively, and there are pros and cons. Candidates accustomed to voting in state and national elections will find this system has an impact on campaigning which is quite different from other government elections.

In the 2005 elections, candidates in postal ballots provide the Returning Officer with:

- a personal statement of not more than 150 words
- two recent passport-size photographs
- an indication of preferences (how-to-vote card).

You need to check yourself what current requirements there are

This information must be provided within a strict timeline. Again, check the circumstances yourself, and check again. It will be posted to all voters on the electoral roll at least 15 days before the last day of voting. The prepaid envelope containing the ballot paper must be returned by the voter to reach the Returning Officer no later than 6pm on the last day of voting. However, there is a view among observers that at least one third of voters complete and post their voting papers as soon as they receive them.

How to make postal voting work for you

There were several groups of people I particularly targeted in my postal voting strategy. I was also thorough in checking dates for when voting papers were to be posted.

Older people

I reached this group by doorknocking and explaining to them the process for postal voting. They were particularly pleased to see me and have the process explained to them. I also visited community centres.

Newly arrived migrants

They found the voting material particularly confusing as not only did they receive information about candidates, but they also received material about how to vote. I arranged for material explaining the system to be translated into Spanish, Vietnamese and Arabic and distributed this information.

You might also decide that flat and apartment dwellers are worth a concerted communication effort.

I think that voting by yourself can be a disconnected way of voting and that it certainly calls for particular strategies to reach the voter.



Lorna Hannan, Councillor
City of Melbourne (1991–1993)

Assessing your campaign

Make sure you are on top of both preferencing issues and how postal voting versus attendance voting affects your chances. One of the most important things to understand is how postal voting affects the timing of your campaign strategy.

For example, it is wise to doorknock **before** voting papers arrive in the post. Get help from your campaign team.

Now that you are fully involved in the campaign and hopefully running to win, it will be useful for

you to continually monitor how you are going. This will assist you to revise your strategy if any gaps are identified.

The following is a broad check list which will enable you to assess how your own campaign is going.

Campaign assessment checklist

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Have you researched the local area, talked to voters and found out what the issues are? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Have you worked out your campaign time lines? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Have you accessed the local media? |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Have you collected all the relevant information or materials from your local Council? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Have you prepared a campaign budget? Is the campaign working within budget? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> What is your opposition saying about you? |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Have you established a campaign team? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Have you developed a community campaigning strategy? How many people are you contacting? How many doors are you knocking on each week? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Have you developed an effective preferencing strategy? |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Are they working well? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> What other ways are you making contact with the community? | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> What is your overall campaign plan? | | |

Managing your time

'Local government is now so big, it is difficult to survive as a candidate without a lot of support from your family and friends, and time out for yourself.'

Being involved in a campaign can be very exciting, but you won't get elected if you do not put your all into it. Campaigning, particularly when you are the candidate, does require a high-level commitment of time, energy, effort and emotion.

The road to election will sometimes be rough and you will need to remain focused and thick-skinned.

Your opponents and antagonists will seek to maximise their chances and at times seem to play the woman and not the ball.

'I got a message during the campaign from a number of people who felt I shouldn't be running because my first duty should be to my children.'



Your full-scale commitment to being elected will also impact on any long term plans you may have. Although being a Councillor is not a full-time paid position, it will take substantial amounts of your time and will probably impact on your availability for paid work, your leisure time and your time with your family and friends.

While you are the one who will make the ultimate decision about whether you will run for Council and the amount of time and energy you can commit to the race, there are others around you who will no doubt have strong opinions about this decision.

Family, friends, leisure, paid work and the campaign

Ideally you need to achieve a balance in your work, family and life. As a candidate this balance will need to include the campaign period.

To get a broad picture of your time commitments, list the five things that are most important to you in your life and the time you currently allot to them.

Next, ask yourself some questions:

- How will the campaign impact on these commitments and the time I have to spend on them?
- Are there any alternative arrangements I can make during the campaign for one or more of these commitments?

Remember, the campaign is not forever – your family and friends are.

‘I was really determined to win. I worked really hard. It was my first priority; I was driven with determination. Taking weekends off was really the only time I could see my family.’

Activity	Time commitment per week
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

The work, family and campaigning balance

To make the balance begin to work it is important to find a really dynamic person or two who are willing to act as a private cheer squad and manage your campaign. Be aware that it is a **THIRD** job if you intend to stand for Council when you have children and paid work already.

Don't rely too much on family. I have found that my three children are well aware that this Council thing will mean their mother is no longer home to serve their every need. The emotional blackmail ("Mum, you're never home," moans one of my sons, while my daughter yells from the other room, "What's for dinner mum?!") is draining on the spirit and hard on the nerves. My husband needs cooking classes, and I now understand why some women wish they had a wife at home!

The work/family/Council dilemma is made lighter, however, by the knowledge that my daughter is actually immensely proud of her mum, and I am certain that it will not do my sons any harm to learn to be a little more independent.

And it's such a buzz on Council – go for it girls!

*Councillor Bronnie Hattam,
Nillumbik (2004–)*



Congratulations – you’ve finished the campaign!

‘I found the whole process really positive. The campaign has shown that the issues I care about are widely felt in the community.’

What if you’re not elected?

Although you may not get elected, the most important thing is that you feel you have undertaken a successful campaign on your own terms. Many first time women candidates have said that, while disappointed initially, they realise that simply putting their hands up in this way had expanded their sphere of influence immensely. They had developed many more skills as a result of the campaign and learned more about their community.

Remember that while you too may be disappointed with the final election result, many opportunities will have opened to you as a result of your candidacy. You will be in a better position to have influence with your Council. Perhaps you will join Council committees or advisory groups. You will be a more skilled advocate for the issues you care about.

‘After I lost I stayed at home and licked my wounds for a while. However, when the next local poll was announced, I was ready and raring to give it a go again – this time with a lot more skills and experience.’

‘I will now take credit for what I do. I am going to find the tools I need to win next time.’

What happens when you get elected?

‘The most important skill once you get on to Council is listening. You listen and you learn a lot. After 12 years, including a few as Mayor, I have never stopped learning.’

Once you are elected and after the celebration, it will be time to take stock and to think about the next stage of your life as a Councillor. As well as deciding on your priorities for policy implementation and familiarising yourself with your fellow Councillors and Council staff, there will be some formalities which will need to be addressed.

Remember that Councillors are elected to ensure that there is good governance in the municipality. This requires a good partnership between the Mayor, the Councillors, the CEO and the administration of Council. See the *Good Governance Guide 2004* for further information (details in *Useful resources and contacts*).

So what are the formalities for new Councillors?

Declaration of Office and Oath of Allegiance

The first formal occasion is the Declaration of Office which occurs at the first meeting of the new Council. You and the other new Councillors will be required to make a formal Declaration before the Chief Executive Officer regarding your willingness to act in



the best interest of the people in the municipality. This will be recorded in the official Council minutes. You will also take an Oath of Allegiance or Affirmation.

Pecuniary interests and other conflicts of interest

You will need to be aware of potential conflicts of interest you may have in your new role. A pecuniary interest or conflict of interest is any personal interest capable of being measured in terms of money or other value. It can be something that involves either an advantage or a disadvantage to you. You will need to ensure that there is no conflict or incompatibility between your personal interests and the impartial fulfilment of your public duties.

When a matter in which you have an interest comes before a Council

meeting, you will need to declare your interest. Although you can remain in the Council chamber during discussion or debate, you must leave the chamber before any vote on the matter can be taken. You will also need to complete a form disclosing any interests which might be in conflict with your duties.

Access to information

You must be given access to all Council-held information necessary so you can perform your duties and meet your responsibilities. Many Councils run in-service training for new Councillors on how to access information, and from whom to get it. If you find that this in-service training is not provided and you feel that it would be of benefit, make sure you ask for it.

Code of Conduct

A Code of Conduct will usually have been developed by your Council to help you in the performance of your role as Councillor. The Municipal Association of Victoria and the Victorian Local Governance Association have also issued a *Good Governance Guide* (2004) which sets out the essential features of good governance.

Insurance protection

Your Council will be required to protect you by insuring you against claims in respect of actions taken or not taken while performing your role as a Councillor.

What support will you need?

‘Some introductory training on meeting procedures is really useful, as you must be aware of the rules on motions and debates. Unless you do, you will get in and you will lose motions even when you have support behind you.’

Outlined below are the types of support that Councillors generally receive and some additional areas of assistance you should request if you need it. These supports will enable you to feel confident in representing your constituents.

Regardless of the degree of assistance, support and training beginning your term as a Councillor will be exciting, challenging, and time-consuming. You will need to put some strategies in place to ensure that all runs smoothly.

‘I told them I needed a room with fruit in the fridge and toys and a television so my children could survive until 7.00pm – until I could go home and feed them.’



Support you are entitled to receive

Information relating to Council business

Meeting agendas, related briefing notes and relevant Council staff will be available on call to assist you on specific matters. You will need to find out the local law on meeting procedure for your Council.

A dedicated telephone and fax

The phone will usually be a mobile phone and there will also be Council support staff who will ensure any phone messages are taken down and passed on to you.

An office at the Council chambers

Office facilities will be available to you. However, you may be required to share them with the other Councillors. If you are the Mayor you will usually have your own office.

Information or training on specific procedural matters

This could include training regarding formal meeting procedures set out in your local laws, such as how to chair a meeting, move or amend a motion, dealing with points of order.

A briefing on planning and statutory responsibilities

You will need to be aware of the scope of local government planning powers and responsibilities and Councillor responsibilities.

Media and public relations training

This training will be useful when speaking to the press or the public.

Other relevant training

This could include training in time management skills or financial skills.

Childcare and carer assistance

This could include reimbursement for child care and space and toys to enable children to be safely occupied while you are attending meetings. A payment for child care expenses will usually be included within the special allowances you receive as a Councillor. You may have an older dependent, such as a frail parent, who may require care. This can also be requested.

Computer and email

While access to a computer and email varies, these are tools which will enable you to undertake your role for the community more efficiently.

Managing time and family as a Councillor

When I stood for Council, I had a three-year-old, and then I had another baby. As we don't have extended family living close by, child care was sometimes an issue for me. The Council paid childcare expenses incurred during formal Council functions, but at other times, such as meeting with residents, I paid for care or took the children with me.

My ward was known locally as the 'maternity ward' because of the high birth rate. So there was a high degree of acceptance by residents when I turned up to meet them accompanied by my two 'rug rats'.

My husband was very supportive of my role in local government. He was most helpful in a variety of practical ways. Although he had a full-time job, he looked after the children at weekends when I needed to undertake Council activities. My fellow Councillors were also very accepting of the baby's presence at

meetings when he was very young, and they coped well with the breast-feeding and with my occasional absences for nappy changes.

Time management was a constant issue for me, and I was often reading my Council papers at the same time as feeding my baby. But then achieving two (or three) things at once is what women everywhere are always doing, isn't it?



*Janet Halsall
Councillor, City
of Casey
(1997–2000)
with husband
Bob and their
children Peter
and Rebecca.*



Meeting the expectations of the local community

If you have been elected according to your stand on a particular policy issue, and your supporters have joined your campaign because of this particular issue, they will expect you to implement your policies and deliver on your promises when you are elected.

However, you are now one of a Council of eight or ten. Other Councillors may have different

policy priorities and different promises to implement. Resources may be constrained and there may be other more pressing and pragmatic priorities.

So how do you meet the expectations placed upon you?

Firstly you'll need to be very clear about what you can and cannot do as a Councillor.

It is important to keep your constituents informed of

developments, involved in issues of concern and understanding the limits of your role.

Effective Councillors will:

- set up a system to deal with concerns raised with you by your constituents
- involve the Council staff
- refer matters to the appropriate person
- always get back to the person who raised the concern.

Working with the team

'When I went to the meetings with Council staff I walked into a sea of suits.'

You may have been elected as an individual, or as part of a community group or political party. No matter how you were elected, once you get on to the Council and you want to achieve your policy priorities, you are going to have to work as part of a wider team.

This team will be made up of your fellow Councillors, the Chief Executive Officer and the other Council staff. You will be reliant on each of these groups to support you at different times, as they will be reliant upon you.

The overall success of the Council is based on a cooperative approach between the Councillors, the executive and the staff, each with their own roles to play.

Other Councillors

During your term on the Council you will get to spend a lot of time with your Councillor colleagues, in both formal and informal

meetings, as well as out in the community. It will therefore be important to build up a degree of goodwill, trust, flexibility and cooperation, even though you may not always be advancing common goals.

It will also be useful to establish relationships with Councillors from nearby or similar Councils. By attending forums and meetings arranged by the Municipal Association of Victoria, the Victorian Local Governance Association, the Australian Local Government Women's Association and the Women's Planning Network you can extend your networks and share ideas. There may also be regional meetings of Councillors in your area for you to attend.

The Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officer is prescribed in the *Local Government Act (1989)* as being generally responsible for:

- implementing Council decisions without delay
 - managing the day-to-day operations of the Council in accordance with the corporate plan
 - providing timely advice to the Council
 - appointing, directing and dismissing staff
 - ensuring that staff are appointed in accordance with the Council-approved organisational structure.
- Your role as a Councillor is to hold the Chief Executive Officer accountable for their own professional performance and for that of their staff. A high level of trust will need to be developed between the Councillors and the Chief Executive Officer to enable a sound and effective working relationship to be achieved.

Words of wisdom from Councillor Beth Davidson

Meeting community expectations

What are the expectations of your community? You may have some idea from the groups you mix in, however there will be lots of other views in different sections of the community. Discover what these alternate views are and try to find common ground.

Be an active listener

We often think we do this well, however it's a good idea to test your skills in this area with friends and supporters. Note both what is being said and what is left unsaid; community expectations are usually grounded in how people *feel* about an issue, for example their connection to a particularly valued place.

Always get the facts: what seems a simple issue may have a range of dimensions that are not always obvious when emotions are running high. You don't have to solve all the problems, however you can be a very valuable community advocate, acting as the connection point between the problem and a potential solution.

Tell people how Council works

Learn the Council processes so that you can help community members use them productively to explore issues in a systematic way. People can usually accept the outcome, even an unfavourable one, if they feel that the process was fair and transparent, and that they got a good hearing.

Understand the differing roles of a Councillor

A Councillor is sometimes a community advocate, sometimes a community representative and sometimes a legislator. For example, in planning matters you act in a legislative role under the *Planning*

and Environment Act, so if community expectations are in conflict with planning law you cannot deliver what they want. This is often not understood and can be the source of much community and Councillor angst.

There are three sets of 'players' in your new role as a Councillor: community, Council colleagues and Council staff. Building good relationships within each of these groups is critical to your success in achieving community aspirations.

Protect your health and wellbeing

It is unrealistic to be available at all times. For example, it is legitimate to use your answering machine to manage community contact.

Develop a close confidant who you can test your views against and who can support you in the difficult times and challenge your views and actions when you get a bit too comfortable.

Being a member of government is a serious and time consuming business, however it's got to be fun so celebrate with your community around your joint successes. You can't be all things to all people, you can't solve all problems and you will never keep all people happy. Be kind to yourself: there will be enough other people wanting to belt you up without doing it to yourself!



*Councillor Beth Davidson,
Surf Coast Shire (1998–),
Mayor (2001–2004)*



Helen Hoppner's rules and guiding principles for meeting community expectations

- You are only human and you were not elected by your community to be a martyr
- You are not public property
- Make decisions in the best interest of the whole community, not sectional groups, even though they will pressure you to do so
- Be honest and sincere in your public duties but also be frank
- Do not make promises that you can't keep
- Learn to delegate responsibilities to the Council staff because this is their job and, for most, their career
- Be part of community committees, but don't spread yourself too thinly because no one will benefit, least of all you
- Always return phone calls as quickly as possible
- Don't be afraid to ask questions
- Get the facts right before you make that all important decision
- Take advantage of the many learning opportunities open to you as a Councillor
- Be a role model to other women in your community
- Don't make decisions just to get re-elected because you won't be
- Involve your community in decision making.



*Helen Hoppner, Councillor, La Trobe Shire (1997–2000)
(far right) at the ALGWA conference in Moe, 1998*

The importance of teamwork

As Councillors we have a common goal: to represent and assist our communities. This is where teamwork comes in. This doesn't mean that we all have to think the same; we are entitled to have differing opinions. While this is healthy for debate, it should never become personal. Councillors need to respect the opinions of officers and the community.

When a Council debate is finished, a vote is taken. Councillors vote for what they believe is the best outcome for the community. So, being part of a Councillor team allows you to have your individual opinion, a vote as a whole and an outcome with or without dissent.

If the occasion arises where you feel that you are the only person on the team, don't be too concerned. There is still the common goal – working for the community – and to me that is what our teamwork should be for.



*Councillor Lyn Gunter,
Deputy Mayor, Murrindindi Shire
(1997–)*

The Council staff

You will depend on the Council staff for timely, authoritative and consistent advice.

Some of this advice will be provided formally and some

informally, however you will need to respect the boundaries of the relationship.

Be clear about the different roles and lines of authority among Council staff. They are usually the first port of call in dealing with

concerns raised by local residents and businesses. Always be polite and courteous and remember that your relationship with Council staff can facilitate or frustrate your role as Councillor.

Maintaining your support base

Be aware that you do not have a job for life as a Councillor and when the next election comes around, you will have to campaign again. Keep in touch with your support base.

Here are some of the ways that successful women Councillors have ensured contact with their support base, and built a wider one:

- Put together a monthly newsletter. Save paper by using email for those who have email access.
- Form a support team with meetings every two or three months. You will benefit from

their experience and they will learn about the differences between being a candidate and being a Councillor.

- Get out and meet your community. Ask your supporters if they can host morning/afternoon teas or barbecues in their homes.
- Use the local media. Letters to the Editor or regular interviews will ensure that your constituents know what you're doing and why you are doing it.
- If you are a member of a political party or a community organisation, make sure you

attend the meetings and report on actions you have undertaken.

Above all make sure you attend every Council meeting, unless you have sought a leave of absence.

For further information about an approach to being the Councillor **you** want to be, your term of office and whether to engage in "continual campaigning" or see it as a phase within your term, explore the WPILGC webpage: <www.vlga.org.au/issues/women_gov.html> (see *Be the Councillor you want to be*).

Encouraging others to stand

'Gender equity is more than a goal in itself – it is a pre-condition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting development and building good governance'

Kofi Annan, Secretary-General, United Nations (2000)

Whether you are thinking of standing for Council yourself, or supporting another woman, it is likely you have an interest in increasing women's participation in local governments. Standing for Council may or may not be the best way for you to contribute to your local community. It may or may not be

the right time for you to stand.

You may be reading *A Gender Agenda* because you are an elected Councillor already, and you want to ensure that your Council represents the gender balance of your community. Although you've worked hard to get elected and you're enjoying your life as a Councillor, you may not want to

be there forever. You might also be committed to ensuring other women join you on the Council.

How can you ensure that women are represented equitably on your Council?

Below are listed some ways that you could encourage women to take up the challenge:



- Invite a woman you know, who you think would make a good Councillor to take the bold step of standing. Set up a community support group or network which encourages women to think about community leadership
- Help prospective women candidates with their campaigns
- Act as a mentor to a woman wanting to run or to a new woman Councillor.

Joining existing organisations is a great way to work with other women and men towards the goals of gender equity and diversity in local governments.

The Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA) is a network of women Councillors and others interested in women and local governments. There are also other groups, such as the Women's Electoral Lobby, that you could become involved with.

The Victorian Local Governance Association welcomes individual members and can also be a useful way to work towards gender equity.

You are also warmly invited to join WPILGC, the Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition.

LOCAL: an example of a support group for women interested in local governments

Ladies of the City Action League, once called by our local press the 'very vocal LOCAL', held its first public meeting in November 1996 to encourage women to run as candidates for the 1997 Council elections in the Cities of Greater Dandenong and Casey.

The intention was to practise for the year 2000, but the result was unexpectedly good. It proved that even a few women working together could make a considerable difference.

LOCAL gave varying levels of information, mentoring and physical support to nine candidates some of whom helped and supported each other, resulting in substantially more women than ever before winning seats on the Greater Dandenong Council.

Another notable feature of success was that all the candidates who did not win remained to assist women in the next round of elections.

LOCAL was non-party political and welcomed any community-minded woman. It included current, former and prospective women Councillors, women employees of local governments and journalists, plus other women who did not wish to stand themselves but were willing to help others take their rightful place in our community decision-making forums.

LOCAL ceased operating in 2004.

Janet Cox and Dawn Dakin (2004)

Appendix 1

Preferencing strategies, wards and all that...

Preferences in single Councillor Wards

To win in a single Councillor ward you must get a clear majority, that is, 50% plus 1 of the total votes, after the last distribution of preferences.

With all this in mind, what is your best vote maximising strategy in a one Councillor ward? From the perspective of votes alone, you would try to swap with the person who is going to be in third position after all other candidates are eliminated. That is, you would aim to be higher on this person's how-to-vote card than your main rival.

In addition or instead, you can try getting several 'weak' candidates to preference to you, but the problem with that is you have to give something back. In other words you have to preference to each other, and you can only give your second preference to one other candidate in exchange for their number 2 spot. You can work on exchanging number 3 positions and positions further down your tickets. (See example of how the preference system works pages 33–35)

A 'weak' candidate may swap a number 2 spot for your number 3 if they think you will make a good Councillor. If you are perceived to be the strongest candidate, few other candidates may be interested in swapping preferences with you, because your second preferences are very unlikely to be distributed. Note that 'weak' and 'strong' refer here only to the number of votes

the candidate is predicted to get.

In some elections, candidates may encourage others to run, simply to get their preferences. Such 'dummy' candidates *may* attract primary votes from rivals, but there is a danger of simply splitting the candidate's primary votes, with no net gain. This is possible if the dummy candidate is perceived by voters as very similar to the main candidate. You need to decide how you will deal with this situation if it is common in your local elections. Discuss the issues of "dummy candidates" and running mates with your campaign team.

Preferences in multiple Councillor wards and preferences in undivided municipalities

In undivided and multiple Councillor wards, Proportional Representation is the system of voting used. It is designed to elect candidates in proportion to the amount of support each has in the municipality. Under this system, the candidates are elected in proportion to the number of votes they receive, which does not require a candidate to obtain an absolute majority of votes to be elected.

The Returning Officer will determine a *quota*. The quota is obtained by dividing the total number of formal votes by one more than the number of candidates required to be elected, and increasing the result by one. For example, in an unsubdivided

ward involving seven Councillor positions and 60,000 formal votes, the quota would be $[60,000 \text{ divided by } (7+1)] + 1 = 7501$.

The candidate who receives a number of first preference votes that is equal to or greater than the quota is elected. If all the vacancies have not been filled the surplus votes of each elected candidate will be transferred to the continuing candidates according to a formula for the distribution of surplus votes.

If all the vacancies have not been filled when the surplus votes for all elected candidates have been distributed, exclusion of candidates with the lowest number of votes commences. These processes continue until all vacancies are filled.

To maximise your vote, it might be advisable to try to be on a "ticket" and to get as many people as possible to preference you through your ticket. Every time a candidate is elected with a quota, a proportion of the votes above quota are redistributed in accordance with preferences indicated on the ballot paper. With Proportional Representation the aim is to try to get as high as possible on everybody's ticket, in order to get as many as possible of these 'votes above quota' preferences distributed to you.

For more information on the voting systems and counting methods for local government elections contact the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) on 13 18 32.



Appendix 2

A guide to writing your 150 word statement

A requirement of the formal nominations process in postal voting (2005), writing 150 words is also a chance to hone your policy statement.

Excerpt from: Mathew, Carol (2000), *Final Report, Women's Participation in Local Government Phase 2, Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition, Victoria*

Your statement is a unique reflection of you and your commitment to your electorate. It should succinctly state why you're running and why people should vote for you.

Although each statement will reflect the individual circumstances of the candidate, there are a number of key areas that your statement needs to address:

- A brief outline of your policies, proposals, and party affiliations (if any). After a brief introductory paragraph or two, you can use point form to outline your key concerns, but include no more than four
- Explain your reason for standing for Council – make clear what you can contribute to your electorate that other candidates can't
- An overview of your goals and themes on gaining a seat on Council
- Demonstrate your competency and illustrate this with your personal or community experiences
- Create a sense of relatedness with the voter through describing your connection with the region – how long you've lived there, family history and any community or business involvement you have
- Ask for their vote.

1 How you style your statement and in what order you cover the above points depends on you and your standing in your community. What will attract the voter to your issues and get them to vote for you?

If you are a returning Councillor, mention your future plans in light of your achievements and remember that you already have a profile in the community.

If you're a new face and you're running because of a particular personal concern such as safety for children in your ward then you may want to begin by outlining your personal situation as, say, a parent or schoolteacher.

If you are retired or your day is flexible for other reasons, emphasise that you have plenty of time to devote to the community. Where possible, mention specific problems that you plan to address in your area – voters will relate when you mention real issues that touch their lives.

2 Take note of what other candidates may say and how they present themselves to the voters. Consider how you can differentiate yourself and your policies from other candidates in your statement.

3 Make the voter feel important – that your presence on Council will ensure their voice is heard and their needs will be met. Emphasise your accessibility and partnership skills and your pride in making the ward a great place to live and visit.

4 Have a professional press photo taken. Remember to smile. Don't change your appearance too much – remember that people will be meeting you in person and want to relate to you in your photo. Get feedback from friends before you choose the photo.

5 Ensure your authentic voice comes through, however you must also keep in mind your use of English. Spelling errors and bad grammar draw the readers' attention away from the content. Voters are looking for representatives with excellent communication skills to stand for their views on Council. Make sure you have your statement and all other printed materials professionally proofread for spelling and grammatical errors before it is sent out.

6 Emphasise what you believe are your strong characteristics. Whether you're a strong leader, a good listener, honest or hardworking, you need to back up your comments with an example from your life, e.g. my commitment to sustainable financial growth can be seen in my involvement with the Chamber of Commerce.

7 Don't get discouraged. Remember that you have something unique to offer and many people will relate to you and what you have to say.

8 While you can't attract every vote, pick four key areas that are important to you and your lifestyle. Your choices will undoubtedly also appeal to a cross section of the electorate.

Below are a number of broad categories worth exploring as part of your four issues. However, it's best that your choices relate to specific concerns in your community, e.g. an environment issue could be cleaning up the local creek or planting more trees in the parks; providing services for marginal groups could be constructing a skate board ramp or introducing meals on wheels; and tourism could be repairs on the local information centre or the introduction of a tourist radio station.

Local Council issues to consider are:

- Equity of services across the municipality
- Health services
- Environment
- Upgrading public spaces
- Roads, footpaths and traffic signage

- Local tourism
- Business growth or attracting businesses to the area
- Planning, building and development
- Local heritage protection and sustainable development
- Local employment issues
- Financial management/Council fiscal responsibility
- Asset management
- Services for marginal groups
- Intercommunity harmony and equity in service provision
- Waste management and recycling, commercial and domestic
- Arts and cultural development
- Rates.

Example 1: Family values and lifestyle

In this statement you are creating relatedness between the voters and your issues. These are lifestyle maintenance, family values and community safety.

Choosing family and community-based causes as the basis of your campaign has broad appeal. Voters will be able to see a personal benefit in the realisation of your goals, even though the campaign is based around what are traditionally women's concerns.

"As a mother of four and long-time resident of Main Ward I understand the concerns of families in the shire. I will fight for access to services for all residents. Primarily, I want to see the community health centres completed and operating.

I will represent your voice on Council with hard work and honesty. I am committed to ensuring a better lifestyle for all residents and greater access to public spaces for all.

I am also committed to promoting residents' safety. With community

consultation, I hope to expand the road safety and Neighbourhood Watch strategies.

With your vote I will work to fast-track the following issues:

- **Completing the building of the community centre and approval of the Health Centre construction plans**
- **Promoting road safety – installing traffic lights at key intersections, including the school districts**
- **Preserving our green corridor and beautifying our parklands."**

Example 2: Representing local causes

You would use this sort of statement if you had a low community profile and a strong dissatisfaction with Council services and procedures. The language is much stronger than the others and hopes to use emotion to rally voters.

To appeal to the emotions, you can use some negative language to explain the current situation in your area. However, make sure your facts are correct and that community perception of the situation is also in your favour.

Your statement should appeal to both rural and urban voters and you can use your independent status as evidence that your running is based solely on your commitment to improving your community. Including your profession may, in this case, encourage voter confidence in your abilities. Time availability to the electorate is also an advantage worth publicising.

"I have lived and worked in Beacon for over 10 years. The decline of shire services over this time has inspired me to stand for Council.



With your vote I will work to ensure that bitumen replaces the gravel now covering all roads in the Westlands farming region, that irrigation work is completed and that all residents have access to fair and equitable services.

I feel that the community voice has not been heard on Council because of party political bickering. As an independent, I am committed to genuine community consultation so we can address the issues we face together.

I am passionately committed to the community of Beacon. Our Shire deserves truly democratic local government. As a newly retired administrator with a background in social services, I have the time, energy and expertise to review budgets and ensure all residents have access to high quality services."

Example 3: The returning Councillor

This statement needs to show why voters should give you a second opportunity on Council. It needs to use a mix of past achievements and future goals to again attract sufficient support. You need to remind voters of the benefits they and the community have received from the current Council.

Giving readers a sense that your work is going well but only half done will encourage them to vote for you so you can finish the job.

If Council has been unsuccessful or is in disagreement with community attitudes, then you should highlight your opposition to their proposals and your commitment to an alternative outcome.

"The last three years have seen many of our community dreams realised. We now have an active Chamber of Commerce and modern tourist information office. Much of my Council work has focused on improving the facilities in the National Park to encourage sustainable tourism and development.

Our unique natural resource can bring prosperity to our whole community if we manage it with care and careful planning. With your vote I can continue to work on developing the facilities in and around the park.

The next three years are critical. My focus is:

- Completing the pathways and roads upgrade around the municipality
- Holding regular community consultation forums
- Strategies to encourage and support local business, such as tourism.

Through strong leadership and creating partnerships between Council, business interests and the community, I will promote continued growth for our ward into the next decades."

Useful resources and contacts

See the Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition (WPILGC) webpage for further resources: <www.vlga.org.au/issues/women_gov.html>

Resources

- Good Governance Advisory Group (2004) *Good Governance Guide*, VLGA, MAV, LGPro, DVC
- Kirner, Joan and Rayner, Moira (1999) *The Women's Power Handbook*, Viking, Penguin Books Australia Ltd.
- Kirner, Joan and Rayner, Moira (2000) *The Women's Power Pocket Book*, Penguin Books Australia Ltd.
- McKenzie, Bonnie C. (1995) *Friends in High Places. The Executive Women's Guide*. Business & Professional Publishing, How to achieve your ambitions, goals and potential with the help of a mentor.
- Municipal Association of Victoria (2004) *From Citizen to Councillor: A guide for prospective Councillors*.
- Municipal Association of Victoria (1997) *Citizens not Customers: Local Democracy and Active Citizenship*. (video)
- Wettenhall, Gib & Alexander, Karen (2000) *Building Partnerships between Councils & their Communities*, Victorian Local Governance Association and Stegley Foundation.

- Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition (2002, 2005) *Now you're a Councillor*
- Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition (2003) *Victorian Local Government Women's Charter*
- Women's Planning Network Vic. (1997) *Women's Guide to Town Planning*
- Women's Planning Network Vic. (2002) *Women's Participation in Local Decision Making Research Report*

Websites

- Consultation and Engagement website, Victorian Local Governance Association, **W:** <www.vlgaconsultation.org.au/> This website provides information, tools and support to consult effectively.
- Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition website **W:** <www.vlga.org.au/issues/women_gov.html>

Contacts

Political Parties

Australian Democrats (Victorian Division)

Eastbourne House
62 Wellington Pde
East Melbourne Vic 3002
T: (03) 9419 5808
W: <www.democrats.org.au>

Australian Greens (Victoria)

1st Floor, 377 Little Bourke St
Melbourne Vic 3000
T: (03) 9602 1141
W: <www.vic.greens.org.au>

Australian Labor Party (Victorian Branch)

360 King Street
West Melbourne Vic 3003
T: (03) 9933 8500
W: <www.vic.alp.org.au>

EMILY's List Australia

E: vic@emilyslist.org.au
W: <www.emilyslist.org.au>
A financial and political support network for progressive Labor women candidates

Liberal Party of Australia (Victorian Division)

3rd Floor, 104 Exhibition St
Melbourne Vic 3000
T: (03) 9654 2255
W: <www.vic.liberal.org.au>



Central Council of Women's Sections Liberal Party of Australia

(Vic Division)
3rd floor, 104 Exhibition St
Melbourne Vic 3000
T: (03) 9654 2255
W: <www.vic.liberal.org.au>

The Nationals (Victoria)

Level 7, Farrer House
24 Collins St
Melbourne Vic 3000
T: 03 9654 6588
W: <www.vic.nationals.org.au>

Electoral Office

Victorian Electoral Commission

Level 8, 505 Little Collins St
Melbourne Vic 3000
T: 13 18 32
W: <www.vec.vic.gov.au>
For information on elections, including nominations, process for voting and Council boundaries.

Victorian Government

Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria

Level 3, 380 Lonsdale St
Melbourne Vic 3000
T (03) 9281 7111
Toll free: 1800 134 142
W: <www.eoc.vic.gov.au>

Local Government Victoria Department of Victorian Communities

1 Spring St
Melbourne Vic 3001
T: (03) 9208 3333
W: <www.dvc.vic.gov.au>
For information on legislative arrangements and other matters concerning local governments.

Office of Women's Policy Department of Victorian Communities

1 Spring St
Melbourne Vic 3001
T: (03) 9208 3333
W: <www.dvc.vic.gov.au>

Rural Women's Network Department of Victorian Communities

1 Spring St
Melbourne Vic 3001
T: (03) 9208 3333
W: <www.dvc.vic.gov.au>
Works with rural women to enhance skills and confidence to increase advocacy and participation.

Federal Government

Commonwealth Department of Transport and Regional Services

GPO Box 594
Canberra ACT 2601
T: (02) 6274 7111
W: <www.dotars.gov.au>
Overview of Australian local governments and federal government policy.

Australian Government Office for Women

Department of Family and Community Services
Box 7788
Canberra Mail Centre
ACT 2610
T: 1800 808 863
W: <www.ofw.facs.gov.au>

Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission

Level 8, Piccadilly Tower
133 Castlereagh St
Sydney NSW 2000
T: (02) 9284 9600
W: <www.hreoc.gov.au>

Associations for Councillors, citizens and local government employees

Local Government Professionals (LGPro)

Suite 4, 27-33 Raglan St
Sth Melbourne Vic 3205
T: 9686 3833
W: <www.lgpro.com.au>

Municipal Association of Victoria

Level 12, 60 Collins St
Melbourne Vic 3000
T: (03) 9667 5555
W: <www.mav.asn.au>
For general information, resource materials and training programs concerning local governments.

Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA)

Green Building
60 Leicester St
Carlton Vic 3054
T: (03) 9347 2233
W: <www.vlga.org.au>
For general information, resource material and training programs for local governments and citizens.

Women's Organisations

*Also see the women's sections under Political Parties

Australian Local Government Women's Association Victoria

T: (03) 9877 1901
W: <www.algwa.com.au>
A network for women Councillors and other women interested in women and local governments.

Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL)

W: <www.wel.org.au>
A feminist non-party-political lobby group for women.

Australian women are under-represented at all levels of government. In Victoria, women make up approximately 30% of all Victorian local government Councillors (2005).

The constraints for women participating in local governments include institutional, cultural and social barriers that are often difficult to overcome.

This Participation Kit is one initiative to encourage women to consider standing for Council. It has been developed by a coalition of women's and local government organisations, members of the Women Participation in Local Government Coalition (WPILGC). Further information about the Coalition's activities can be seen on the webpage: <www.vlga.org.au/issues/women_gov.html>.

This Kit contains practical advice and information for women standing for election to local governments, and those who wish to support them. The stories from past and present women Councillors offer useful examples of how individual women have approached being a candidate.

The kit aims to make local governments more representative of, and responsive to, their citizens and communities.