

# A Gender Agenda



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*A kit for women who want to stand for local government and for those who want to assist other women to stand*

**WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT COALITION**

Fourth edition 2011

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Connecting Communities  
Strengthening Democracy

Editing by Sophie Arnold

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Fourth edition (2011)

#### Notes on the fourth edition

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

The fourth edition is funded by the Victorian Government's Office of Women's Policy.



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**Case studies:** The case studies included were correct at the time of publication in 2011. Thanks to the following Councillors and former Councillors and others for their input in this and previous editions: Mary Laliou, City of Whittlesea; Lesley McGurgan, City of Kingston; Julie Hansen, Surf Coast Shire; Kathy Magee, City of Monash; Linelle Gibson, City of Hobsons Bay; Matty Biliou, City of Darebin; Jan Palmer, Shire of Indigo; Judy Verlin, City of Ballarat; Libby Mears, Surf Coast Shire; Glenys Romanes, City of Moreland; Elizabeth Eager, Mount Alexander Shire; Faye Ure, Mitchell Shire; Sara Coward, City of Maribyrnong; Beth Davidson, Surf Coast Shire; Jenny Dale, Shire of Indigo; Di Moore, Yarra Ranges Shire; Marj Munro, City of Maroondah; Lorna Hannan, City of Melbourne; Bronnie Hattam, Nillumbik Shire; Janet Halsall, City of Casey; Helen Hoppner, Latrobe City; Lyn Gunter, Murrindindi Shire; Janet Bolitho, City of Port Phillip; Angela Altair, City of Hobsons Bay; Jenny Jones, Golden Plains Shire; Kaele Way, ALGWA; Janet Cox and Dawn Dakin (LOCAL).

**Warning:** While we have tried to make the information in this publication generic, it is up to you as a candidate or campaign team member to understand all aspects of the conduct of local government elections because this may affect how you campaign.

Please enquire with the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) and Local Government Victoria (LGV), the State Government authority responsible for overseeing council elections.

See the WPILGC webpage for information about how to form campaign teams and other useful information. The web pages of the peak local government organisations are also useful. A list of websites and other contact details are included in Appendix 3.

#### Glossary

- MAV: Municipal Association of Victoria
- VLGA: Victorian Local Government Association
- WPILGC: Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition
- VEC: Victorian Electoral Commission
- LGV: Local Government Victoria



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

#### Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition (WPILGC)

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

Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition Secretariat  
c/- Victorian Local Government Association  
60L (Green Building) 60 Leicester St,  
Carlton Victoria 3053  
T: (03) 9349 7999  
F: (03) 9347 9933  
E: [vlga@vlga.org.au](mailto:vlga@vlga.org.au)  
W: [www.women.vlga.org.au](http://www.women.vlga.org.au)

WPILGC has a companion publication, *Now You're A Councillor — a kit for newly elected women Councillors*. Contact the Coalition for a copy at [www.women.vlga.org.au](http://www.women.vlga.org.au)

We respectfully acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Elders and peoples past present and future as the proud traditional owners of the lands and waters.

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# Foreword


**D**emocratic councils must be as inclusive as possible of their constituents if they are to be able to reflect the interests and needs of their communities. This inclusion needs to be demonstrated through their elected representatives, the governance process, the employees and the consultative structures.

To date, women have been under-represented at all levels of government, with their numbers not reflecting the fact that they comprise half the population. And while there has been an improvement since the initial publication of *A Gender Agenda* in 1998 – the percentage of women in local government has increased from 22% to over 29% — there are still more gains to be made.

The lack of women's participation in the decision making structures of local government relates to a range of institutional, social, cultural and economic constraints. In order to challenge these constraints and open up local government to greater involvement by women, a variety of organisations, groups and individuals worked towards the development of the Victorian Local Government Women's Charter.

This kit is an important tool in this process. The Municipal Association of Victoria and the Victorian Local Governance Association are both delighted to be involved with the fourth edition. This edition was funded by the Victorian Government's Office of Women's Policy. We would also like to thank The Stegley Foundation (now concluded) for the support and financial assistance provided to the initial edition.

We believe that *A Gender Agenda* and the other initiatives of the Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition support a diverse range of women to become more active in local government. This will enable councils to better reflect the ethnic, gender and cultural diversity of their citizens.



Cr Bill McArthur

Cr Samantha Dunn

Cr Beth Ripper

President Municipal  
Association of Victoria

President Victorian  
Local Governance  
Association

Chair Women's  
Participation in Local  
Government Coalition



# Background

**T**he Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition (WPILGC) was formed in 1997 to work towards the equal participation of women and men in Victorian local government.

Women have always been under-represented in local government, and the socio-economic and demographic profile of elected women remains limited. As with male Councillors, women of Anglo-Celtic backgrounds, who are employed and tertiary educated, are over-represented among women Councillors. Indigenous women, women from non-English speaking backgrounds and other diversities are still not becoming involved in local government in significant numbers.

The Coalition seeks to provide practical assistance and advice to women who are considering standing, or have decided to stand, for local government. The Coalition's goal is for a wide range of women from different age groups, socio-economic levels and cultural, ethnic and Indigenous backgrounds to be represented on councils throughout Victoria.

The development of the first women's participation kit *A Gender Agenda* involved extensive consultation and research and generated a large amount of interest and enthusiasm — not only from women considering involvement in local government and those already Councillors — but also from women who wanted to actively support other women to be elected. This level of enthusiasm and commitment continues in 2011.

This edition of *A Gender Agenda* incorporates some of the learning from the Coalition's work since 2001 and updates the Councillor case studies. It also reflects the three principles of the Victorian Local Government Women's Charter: gender equity, encouraging diversity in representation and participation and the active citizenship of women.

More than 60 Victorian councils have endorsed the Charter and this number is still growing. This work has been further progressed by the 2010 National Year of Women in Local Government, which Victorian local government strongly supported.

For further information, please go to the WPILGC webpage at W: [www.women.vlga.org.au](http://www.women.vlga.org.au) (have a good look around the webpage and links).

'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.'

### Before using this kit

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 other people want you to be.

# 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.’

**M**ost people have their most direct experience of representative democracy and participation at the local government level. Local government is run through city or shire councils governed by elected Councillors. Councils facilitate essential community networks, provide services and act as an advocate for the diverse needs of communities through physical, social and economic planning.

There are 79 councils in Victoria, which represent about 5 million people.<sup>1</sup> While the numbers of Councillors for each council is specified in legislation, most have

<sup>1</sup> Guide to Local Government (2010), Local Government Victoria, Department of Planning and Community Development, W: [www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/localgovernment/guide-to-local-government](http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/localgovernment/guide-to-local-government)

between five and 12 Councillors elected by the people who live in the local area or who own a local property or business.

Services provided by each council depend on their financial resources and the needs of their community. Most councils receive most of their income from rates and untied Australian Government funds. However, they also receive some targeted State and Australian Government financial grants.

Local government is run according to the provisions of the *Local Government Act (1989)*. It is important that candidates and campaign teams know something of the scope of the legislation.

Local councils:

- Provide leadership and good governance for their communities

- Develop and maintain community infrastructure such as roads, bridges, drains, town hall, libraries, recreation facilities, parks and gardens
- Plan for future growth and development, and provide a diverse range of property, economic, human, recreational and cultural services
- Enforce State and local laws relating to such matters as land use, environment protection, public health, traffic and parking and animal management.<sup>2</sup>

It is important that candidates understand the roles and powers of local councils prior to making commitments or taking a stand on issues.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

## 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.’

**B**eing elected to local government involves candidates competing against each other to win the support of local voters. However, once elected, Councillors must work together to achieve goals and outcomes. Most decision making is done on a majority vote basis so Councillors need to either be able to win the support of other Councillors

or form coalitions to progress ideas to implementation stage. Councillors can’t achieve anything significant on their own.

Every day and every week Councillors perform a diversity of tasks – much beyond attending weekly council meetings and opening the odd fete or two.



Most Councillors spend at least 22-35 hours a week on council matters. The role of the Councillor is like a part-time job, a job which is not fully paid. Councillors do receive a taxable allowance, determined by the council, within parameters set by the State Government. The part-time role of a Councillor can take up a substantial amount of time and is often undertaken while juggling family, community and paid work responsibilities.

The following stories about a day in the life of a Councillor come from women Councillors with some three years' experience. These stories are about "becoming the Councillor you want to be".

### A day in the life of...



**A**fter three years as a Councillor for the Strathbogie Shire Council, Colleen Furlanetto has learnt how to manage the time required to successfully fulfil her council duties in the way she wants to do them. If she has a typical day, it is probably a Tuesday. While Colleen may have "something Council related on every day", Tuesdays are always spent at the Council offices.

"Every third Tuesday of the month is Council meeting day and the rest of the Tuesdays are taken up with other meetings."

Colleen enjoys representing the Shire at meetings, conferences and community events "ensuring a rural voice is heard". She also spends time talking to constituents by phone or while down at the shopping street of her home base, Euroa. "I consider it a privilege to represent the community and I take it seriously in that being an elected representative brings responsibility and accountability."

For the past two summers, Colleen has also been a regular face at the Council's information trailer, which is taken to local events

such as markets, festivals and sporting events. Colleen finds these a great way to meet people, provide information and dispel misunderstandings.

"People can come in and have a chat, get some information, tell us what is bothering them. I find that even if people don't agree with us necessarily, talking to them in this way helps to break down a lot of misconceptions and clear up things that they may not know about".

Adapting to a Council life does, however, take time. "I think it takes 12 months to get your head around everything. You have to learn about reading documents and how to make time for things. And while you make the commitment to be a Councillor 24/7, you also have to learn that the world won't end if you turn your phone off overnight."

Overall, Colleen has found being a Councillor a personally rewarding experience, very much made possible by a "supportive patient family".

— Councillor Colleen Furlanetto,  
Strathbogie Shire Council  
(2008– )

## One day in the life of...

**6:45am** Up and running — literally! A run along Frankston's multi award-winning beach is like being a Frankston Councillor; tiring, but many wonderful experiences along the way.

**8:15am** Emails, emails – a resident whose garage is flooded by a blocked drain — a well-directed request over my first coffee will usually get quick action.

**9am** Being a Frankston Councillor, the allowance pays just under \$26,000, so nearly all of us work in other professions to meet our mortgages. Business commitments occupy my morning.

**1pm** Today my first council-related meeting takes place at a resident's home. She says she'll lose privacy because of the Council development being built next door. As the concrete's being poured, I ring Council's acting Chief Executive Officer and ask her to take a look.

**2pm** The President of the University of the Third Age rang to report that the new classrooms I had negotiated for them have helped send enrolments through their roof, with a 200 member increase in just over six months. Can I call in to their executive meeting? Sure I can! Their smiles are as big as the sponges on the table when I arrive for afternoon tea.

**3pm** Car parking isn't working in the city centre. To provide shoppers with more spaces, incentives are needed for traders and staff to park off the street. A Council manager and I meet with a car park owner to negotiate more "early bird" parking for Frankston workers.

**4pm** Last night was a formal Council meeting — one of two each month. We often don't finish until after 11pm. A few phone calls will bring some anxious residents up-to-date with the way Council voted. A motion I put on behalf of the Environment Advisory Committee was passed unanimously. I let the Committee members know.

**4:30pm** Unanimous support was also given last night for a carnival to bring Summer Fun to Frankston. A quick meeting with Council's marketing team firms up other events that will bring colour, life and people back in to our city streets.

**5pm** What's happening to the proposed marina? That's what the five executive members of the Frankston Beach Association want to know. A heated start quickly calms down to make way for a useful discussion.

**6pm** Down the corridor, nine residents are voicing their concerns about developments in my ward. More homes bring more cement and less trees; more people bring more cars, making streets feel more crowded. Maybe I'd better hold a public meeting.



**7:30pm** Home for dinner and a round-table catch-up with my family. After three years of rewarding and stimulating work as a Councillor, I've never felt more connected to the place I was born, nor prouder of its people.

However, it's those I love most who can lose my attention. My family love to discuss what's happening in their community and offer their ideas. But will their patience stretch through another election and another term on Council? They are united — Yes!

— Councillor Christine Richards,  
Frankston City Council  
(2008–)



### A snapshot of Councillor duties

#### **Decision-making and resource allocation for the municipality**

Council meetings are usually held fortnightly or monthly and typically involve Councillors needing to prepare by reading papers, keeping abreast of community concerns and sometimes reporting back to council meetings on discussions held between meetings.

At the council meetings, all the Councillors come together to develop policies, approve programs and allocate and monitor budgets. Councillors may also be elected to sub-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, environmental or cultural forums.

#### **Advocacy with State and Federal government departments**

To ensure the voice of local government is heard by State and Federal governments, many Councillors may take on an advocacy role for their local community, as well as being involved in the development of policies which concern issues of importance to the municipality.

They can do this through the peak bodies for local government 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).

### You could do it!

'Many women do not realise that they already have the necessary skills to become an effective Councillor from their experience in their local school or community'.

**P**erhaps you have been a member of a child care committee or a sporting club, you may run your own business, be 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.

Council elections are coming up. A couple of your friends have said you would make a good Councillor and have suggested you stand. 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.

## Why I stood for council

**C**oral Ross had a 'myriad of reasons' for deciding to stand for election to the Boroondara Council in 2002. The then journalist had covered local government, studied politics at university and come into contact with councils while involved in her local community.

"I had seen Council from several different sides and I had had quite different experiences while being a Kindergarten President and a member of a local planning issue working group. I had always been interested, so I decided to give it a go."

Having "never expected to get elected", Coral is happily now in her third term as a Councillor. "I love local government and how you can see on the ground that you have done something that has made a difference."

Coral would wholeheartedly encourage other women to stand for council. "It's great for your own personal development and it is a great way of helping your community."



Coral says that prospective candidates need to be mindful of the time that needs to be dedicated to being a local representative, but she says that she has also found council life to be very flexible and accommodating of family needs.

"It is difficult in the beginning to say no to people, but I found after a while that most people are very understanding when you say you can't be at something because it's your son's concert or hockey game etc."

Coral set aside between 4pm and 6pm each afternoon for family duties only. "That meant that I could pick up my children and be with

them while they did their homework and ate dinner. If people wanted to meet with me or for me to be at something, it was always easy enough to arrange at another time." Coral also restricted attending night time meetings to three nights per week.

"You have to remember that you have to be able to look at yourself in the mirror each night. My family, and particularly my children's needs, always came first, but that doesn't mean that I haven't been able to fulfil all my duties as a Councillor."

— Councillor Coral Ross,  
Boroondara City Council (2002–)

So, you should consider running for council if you would like an opportunity to:

- affect issues that you believe in
- contribute to policy and programs that impact on the local community
- meet people from other places and from all walks of life
- know more about what's going on in the local community
- work on interesting and diverse local issues
- have access to an interesting and diverse workload
- develop a range of policy, negotiation and procedural skills.

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" or tapping them on the shoulder.



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

**N**ow 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 will need to develop to get elected.

Remember that you don't have to have all these skills down pat at the beginning. There is training available, once you are elected. Learning about being a candidate and then a Councillor is a step-by-step process.

#### *Public speaking*

In campaigning and when on council you will learn to be confident in speaking in public and being able to succinctly express what you want to say. The more you do it the easier it gets.

#### *Confidence, or the appearance of it!*

You need to appear confident in dealing with people and to be able to handle people with different viewpoints.

#### *Lobbying*

Knowing who has the power to make changes, talking with them and being able to influence 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 listen, will be important in dealing with your community, other Councillors and the people you will meet as a candidate and a Councillor.

#### *Writing*

Knowing how to write letters, prepare press releases and other communication material is a useful skill, and one you can learn.

#### *Meeting procedure*

You may know some of this from observing council meetings or from your own involvement in community groups. As a candidate, 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.

#### *Working with the media*

Knowing local journalists and understanding their deadlines and what they need will be useful in both your campaign and as a Councillor. Managing your presence in social media is equally important.

#### *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.

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### Developing skills

**C**heck through the skill areas listed above. 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 and some are listed below. Once you are elected, councils have a budget for Councillor development and training. You can also build skills by listening, asking questions of friends and mentors and reading relevant information material.

#### *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 an active member of your local sporting club, neighbourhood house or school

## What do you need to know? Thoughts from women Councillors

Councillor Alex Monk had never considered a life in local politics prior to a former Councillor suggesting it to her in 2007. While considering the pros and cons of the suggestion, Alex attended a council meeting.

"I think that is the first thing you need to do as you need to know about the format and the procedures. It is also good to make an appointment with the Council CEO and talk to other council staff about how councils work. If there is another woman Councillor or you can make contact with another woman Councillor, I'd also suggest that."

Once she had decided to stand, Alex then had to work out how to get a broader understanding of the issues and concerns of her community. "I realised pretty quickly that I should try to get an understanding of issues across the whole shire." Alex's Moira Shire covers over 4000 square kilometres and a population of 30,000 people.



"I spoke to people in council, people in community groups and I was lucky that four of the major towns in our area asked candidates to come and speak to them. So, I was able to hear what other candidates were saying, what the people attending were saying."

What you also need to know as quickly as possible, Alex believes, is "not to make promises until you really know where the boundaries of your council are, what council is and is not responsible for".

Having now been a Councillor, Alex says the other thing that you need to know is "how to develop a thick skin. You have to learn how to be diplomatic and to just listen to people when they might be ranting at you".

"You need to learn how to take on board what people are saying and then try to do what you can to resolve their issue. You may not always be able to, but you can usually steer people to more information or council officers. Getting back to people to let them know what you have done is also very important."

— Councillor Alex Monk,  
Moira Shire Council  
(2008–)

council will help you to learn about meeting procedure, public speaking and public policy issues and add to your confidence and self-esteem.

### *Candidate training*

Specific training workshops for local government candidates may be available in your local area. For example, the MAV conducts candidate information sessions in the lead-up to elections. These are hosted by councils. Details of these sessions can be found on the MAV website closer to the

time of the election. Candidate information sessions are also offered by the Victorian Electoral Commission.

### *Councillor training*

Both the MAV and VLGA offer seminars and conferences for Councillors. Check their websites or contact them for 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 government. ALGWA offers mentoring opportunities for both candidates and Councillors.



**C**ouncillor Judy Verlin is currently in her second stint on Ballarat Council, having also served twice as the City's Mayor. Judy initially served from 1996 to 2002, and was Mayor during 1998 and 1999, and then returned to council in 2008 before again being elected as Mayor in 2009 and 2010.

Judy says being able to communicate is a key thing that aspiring and new Councillors need to know. "Good communication skills are critical to being a Councillor. And by communication skills, I mean being able to listen, interpret, instruct and advocate."

"As a Councillor, you need to be able to listen to the community, work out what they want, pass that message on and advocate to achieve an outcome."



Judy would encourage women Councillors and prospective Councillors to undertake training in such areas as dealing with the media and how to develop documents for presentations. But, she also believes strongly "that you learn on your feet. And then your confidence grows with experience".

Judy says that she has also found that you need to know how to treat people openly and honestly.

"I've found that you need to be yourself and you need to be open and honest with people. Not everyone may agree with you, but if you can explain the rationale behind a decision, then they will usually understand the position you have taken."

Judy also can't stress strongly enough the need to be prepared. "Preparation and reading are critically important. If you find yourself standing up in front of a group or a meeting without being prepared, there is no escape. It is a very lonely position to be in."

— Councillor Judy Verlin,  
Ballarat City Council  
(1996–2002, 2008–)

The WPILG Coalition webpage also offers information about mentoring and finding your own mentors.

### *Political parties*

Becoming active in a political party can enable you to practice 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. Remember you will

need to consider making your party affiliation known when running for council.

### *Online resources and social media*

There are now a wealth of resources online – check Appendix 3 for lots of useful websites.

Social media (e.g. blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and many others) is increasingly becoming a useful tool for both candidates and Councillors. Seek out information about what might benefit you as

a campaigner or Councillor, or simply as a person active in your community. See page 27 for more details.

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 and in the role of Councillor.

## Why is it important to have women Councillors?

Local governments are in a unique position to contribute to the global goal of gender equity for women<sup>3</sup>.

The Victorian Local Government Women's Charter was created in 1996. More than 60 of Victoria's 79 councils have endorsed the Charter and this number is still growing.

The Charter's three principles are:

- **GENDER EQUITY:** That women and men have an equal right to be representatives in local governments, committees and decision-making positions.
- **DIVERSITY:** The inclusion of different experiences and perspectives in local government and community decision-making strengthens local democratic governance and helps build cohesive communities. Councils and communities welcome and encourage the participation of all women.
- **ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP:** Local governments will work with the community to increase the numbers and participation of women in public life, so that decision-making more clearly represents and reflects the interests and demographics of communities.

Local democracies are more effective and inclusive if councils reflect their communities and society is enhanced when people respect each other and work together.

<sup>3</sup> Victorian Local Government Women's Charter, W: [www.mav.asn.au](http://www.mav.asn.au) & W: [www.women.vlga.org.au](http://www.women.vlga.org.au)

### Women bring diversity

**F**undamentally, we need local governments that reflect their communities — it just makes sense to ensure that we have a good balance of men and women, and then importantly young people, who also traditionally are under-represented.

Having a council with at least half women is a very important way to ensure communities can identify and connect with their local government. In my experience, communities that feel represented in this way, engage and participate in local democracy.

Having lived in and represented small communities I do believe that women bring a particular set of skills that support active participation. Many women Councillors I have had the pleasure of working with will readily look for innovative approaches or ways that a "win win" can be achieved. This often takes time and a willingness to consider other perspectives. When men and women engage in these kinds of conversations outcomes can be enhanced.



Something that I have always tried to do is really understand the "problem", have a lot of discussion about this and when we are all clear about the problem — then move to solution mode! Sometimes my male colleagues want to jump straight to the solution — often the solution doesn't actually fit the real problem.

Women are part of the answer to ensuring diversity — however we cannot stop there. We must also ensure that representation of age, nationality and life experience is also brought to the council table.

— Councillor Libby Mears,  
Surf Coast Shire (2004– )

### What do women bring to local government?

- Skills and experiences that complement those of men and strengthen local decision-making
- A perspective from caring and community roles that enhance the development of more liveable communities
- Our gender difference can mean we do things differently, and women may be more used to sharing information, listening, encouraging participation and mutual support that can help transform council cultures and improve local governance.



### The Local Government election system – an overview

**A**s a candidate or candidate supporter, it is vital that you are familiar with how elections work in your area and the most current regulations regarding the conduct of elections.

These regulations can change between elections, so you must check prior to each campaign. Contact Local Government Victoria (W: [www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/localgovernment](http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/localgovernment)) or the Victorian Electoral Commission (W: [www.vec.vic.gov.au](http://www.vec.vic.gov.au)) for the most recent details about how elections are to be conducted.

#### *Who is eligible to stand for local government?*

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, approximately 8 weeks before election day – always check VEC for accuracy) is eligible to stand for council. Candidates do not need to live or be enrolled in the ward they are seeking to represent, but they must be enrolled in the municipality.

The *Local Government Act* (1989) disqualifies some people from standing, such as where they are an undischarged bankrupt. Seek advice from the Victorian Electoral Commission about this if you have any questions.

#### *Who is eligible to vote for local government?*

The voters' roll is made up of two groups:

- 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 Australian citizen residents. If you are a non-Australian citizen you should check your voting status with the Returning Officer or the VEC. Voters can only exercise one vote per municipality.

#### *How do I nominate as a candidate?*

A candidate must complete a nomination form that includes:

- The specific office of Councillor for which he or she is a candidate
- A declaration stating the candidate's eligibility to be a candidate and their awareness that it is an offence under the *Local Government Act* (1989) to submit a nomination form if a person is not qualified to be or capable of being a Councillor
- Signature and date of the notice
- Payment of the prescribed fee.

This form is available from the Returning Officer established in each council. Candidates are prohibited from nominating for election to more than one council.

Candidates must pay a prescribed

fee when nominating. In 2011, this fee was \$250.

Nominations are invited and close at 12 noon on the thirty first day before election day. Dates for lodging nominations are advertised in the local media. The nomination fee (or deposit) will be refunded if a candidate polls at least 4% of the first preference votes.

#### *How many candidates will be elected?*

Internal boundaries (wards) and the number of Councillors are determined by the *Local Government Act* (1989). 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?*

Since 2008, all councils go to elections simultaneously every four years.

### *Which voting system will be used?*

It is very important to understand the information relating to your local situation. Understanding the voting system and using this understanding in your campaign increases your chances of getting elected.

### *Preferential voting*

The *Local Government Act* (1989) 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.

The first is for a multi-ward council with each ward having only one Councillor. The voting system in these kinds of election is called **simple preferential** and is the same as for a State or Federal election.

If your council has wards with two or more Councillors in each, the system of election is called **proportional representation**.

Proportional representation is also used if your council is not divided into separate wards with ward Councillors, but is a single un-subdivided council.

Further details on using the preference system effectively according to how your council is structured are provided in other sections and in Appendix 1. It is essential that you understand the voting system which will apply to you.

Note – The City of Melbourne uses a different form of proportional representation as set out in the *City of Melbourne Act* (2001).

### *How will voting take place?*

The *Local Government Act* (1989) allows councils to decide whether voting will be by attendance or postal vote. Voting in most local government elections is by postal voting, where voters receive candidate information by mail and return their votes in a sealed envelope prior to the close of voting. However, some councils choose elections by attendance voting, where voters attend a polling booth on election day.

The type of voting system to be used in your election will determine the strategies you use in your campaign.

For further details on maximising chances through postal voting, see page 37 of this kit.

### *Declaration of election donations*

All candidates, whether successful or not, must complete and submit a campaign donation return to the Chief Executive Officer of the council in which they stood as a candidate. The return must be submitted within a certain number of days (currently 40 days) following election day and must contain the details of any 'gift' valued at above a certain amount stated in the Act. In 2011, this amount was for gifts worth more than \$200 which were received during the 'donation period'.

The donation period is also stated in the Act. At the time of publication, this period starts 30 days after the previous election and finishes 30 days after the current election. A penalty applies for failing to submit a return or for providing particulars or information that the candidate knows to be false or misleading.

## Becoming a candidate

### Deciding to stand

There are a number of useful website resources which might help you help you assess the potential impacts of standing on your life. *Deciding Whether to Stand* can be found at the WPILGC webpage at W: [www.women.vlga.org.au](http://www.women.vlga.org.au) or visit W: [www.standforcouncil.com.au](http://www.standforcouncil.com.au)

Thoughtful and holistic decision-making at an early point will help you deal with the challenges of campaigning and, potentially, being a Councillor.

When you're deciding about whether or not to stand, write down your values. Putting them into words can help you decide, clarify your communication with others and guide you in challenging situations to remain true to yourself.

### Planning your campaign

Once you have decided to stand for election, you need to start planning your campaign strategy. It is time to develop a time frame outlining what needs to be done, who's going to do it and when it is going to be done.

Most of the Councillors interviewed during the development of this kit estimated that they spent from four weeks to three months on their campaign. Typically, those in rural areas spent less time on the campaign trail than those in metropolitan areas.

With the benefit of hindsight, many former candidates would

### The tricky issue of preferences

While Yarra City Councillor Alison Clarke can understand prospective Councillors finding the issue of preferences daunting, she says it's important to remember that they are only one part of being elected.

"I still think that getting elected to council is always going to depend on how much shoe leather you wear out during the campaign. If you haven't done all the work, then preferences won't get you over the line", says Alison, who was elected to the City of Yarra in 2008 and Mayor in December 2010.

As a member of a political party (the Greens), Alison had support from experienced preference negotiators, and plenty of help with checking out other candidates. That's not the case for independents, and she says, "preferences are certainly something extra an independent candidate would have to get their head around".

Alison's advice is to talk to other candidates to determine whose policies and approaches "are most like yours. Keep in mind that there are deals done and people might



say things to you that they think you'll want to hear, and then the opposite to another candidate, but you just have to work through this".

Alison says knowing as much as you can about the other candidates prior to the campaign is essential in being able to understand where they truly stand and whether you would work well with them as elected council representatives. "Don't forget you can lodge and print more than one How To Vote Card, if you need more time to think, or want to send preferences in more than one direction."

And when everything gets frenetic, just before preferences have to be lodged and final deals are being made, "try and stay calm", says Alison.

— Councillor Alison Clarke, City of Yarra (2008–)

advise others to start planning up to 12 months before the election, even if you do not announce your candidacy until much later.

The table on pages 19–20 provide a sample timeline of tasks and responsibilities.

## The 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.'

**E**stablishing an effective campaign team is very important. 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.

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 party in the local area.

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.

### Campaign teams

**C**ouncillor Nora Lamont says she wouldn't be an elected Councillor if she had tried to run for council in 2008 without a campaign team.

"Luckily I had some experienced people willing to be part of my team and friends and family who were all willing to do whatever they could – and they ended up doing the lot. I couldn't have done it all by myself."

Nora's campaign team "did everything". Led by a campaign manager, they designed, wrote and edited her printed campaign material; arranged printing and delivery; oversaw her candidate statement; arranged the 13,000 residents in her ward in maps that could be handed out to letterboxing teams and arranged people into teams and onto rosters for letterboxing and handing out material at shopping centres.

"As the candidate, you can't do all that by yourself. If I had tried, I would have got bogged

down in all of that and not been able to focus on the broader picture. Someone else coordinated all of the detailed work so that I could concentrate on talking to people and finding out what I needed to know about my area."

Nora said that she had lots of people willing to help her, but making effective use of a multitude of volunteers is challenging. "Not everyone wants to speak directly to other people; they would rather stay in the background. Others wanted to do the letter boxing; some wanted to be at the shopping centre visits. I needed someone to coordinate all of this too."

Along with making sure they put together a campaign team, Nora would urge other prospective Councillors to "get out early and raise the money needed for campaign materials etc".



"I'm sure it is probably easier once you're an incumbent running for re-election, but I found it very difficult to raise funds because not many people knew me and I didn't know who to go to for money."

Nora says that a campaign manager could also help with the vexed issue of preferences – something she says she found difficult to master.

"My advice to others would be to get to know the other candidates before you make your preference choices. I was lucky that I knew the incumbent, but I didn't really know much about the other candidates. I want to be better prepared next time to ask the other candidates questions which will help me to know where they stand."

— Councillor Nora Lamont, Maroondah City Council (2008–)



## The campaign manager or team leader

Your campaign manager or leader will be the most important member of the campaign team, as this person will have overall responsibility. 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 without you having 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.

A sample checklist for the role of campaign manager:

- Make sure that the candidate's nomination form is filled out and lodged on time
- Plan the campaign, including fund raising and a communication plan
- Arrange the design, authorisation and printing of publicity material
- Ensure that publicity material, such as posters or garden signs, are placed to give maximum exposure
- Recruit and train supportive volunteers to letter box, doorknock, answer phones
- Organise media coverage
- Prepare material to attract postal votes
- Ensure that an effective preference strategy is developed for the how-to-vote cards

### The role of the campaign manager

Councillor Mary Lalios attributes her success in being elected to the Whittlesea City Council to the hard work and support of her campaign manager, Cathy Hayes.

"Cathy was an absolute gem.

She not only mentored me through the emotional and psychological thoughts that go through your mind about the election, but she also helped me with all the logistical side of things – the campaign



Cathy Hayes (left) and Mary Lalios

materials, the rosters, the letterbox maps, the timetables."

Mary said she would advise other prospective Councillors to seek out a campaign manager who has had experience of council elections. Cathy Hayes had previously been a Whittlesea Councillor herself.

"People who have been involved in campaigns before know all about the timing of everything, which is really important in terms of getting your material out to residents. Someone who has had that experience can guide you and you can concentrate on getting out there and doing what is needed to raise your profile. You need

someone else to be thinking about the deadlines and the paperwork."

As a first-time candidate, Mary said that Cathy also helped her to raise her public profile by providing advice about letters to residents

and articles in the local papers. Cathy also helped her to develop her campaign brochures, authorised all her material and helped organise rosters and maps for the volunteers

involved in

letterboxing.

"She helped me through the whole process and was absolutely vital, particularly as it was my first campaign."

The success of her first campaign, under Cathy's leadership, and the increased profile and connections developed during her first term as Councillor gave Mary the confidence to run her re-election campaign without a manager.

"But, Cathy was in the background, helping me to letterbox and there if I needed her advice."

— Councillor Mary Lalios, Whittlesea City Council (2005– )

- If voting is at booths, check the number and location of booths to work out how many workers are needed on election day
- Draw up the rosters for election day
- Arrange scrutineers and make sure they know what to do on the day
- Ensure that material, such as how-to-vote cards, is distributed as widely as possible.

## Campaign tasks and timelines



TASK	RESPONSIBILITY	TIME FRAME
<b>Decide what will make a successful campaign,</b> taking into account what you have control over.	You	At the beginning
<b>Identify and contact key people,</b> such as past or present Councillors, who could advise you on effective campaigning.	You	As early as possible
<b>Tell people that you are going to run</b> — your friends, groups you are involved with and organisations you think will be important for you.	You	As early as possible
<b>Find a campaign manager</b> — someone you trust to run things.	You	Between 6 and 2 months before the election
<b>Form the campaign team</b> — people prepared to help.	You/campaign manager	Between 6 and 2 months before the election
<b>Identify relevant community groups and organisations</b> to target using municipal directories.	You	Between 6 and 2 months before the election
<b>Go to pre-election council information session</b> and available training sessions (check MAV, VLGA, WPILGC websites). If you are representing a political party, contact them to organise assistance and training.	You	Check your local dates
<b>Set meeting dates for campaign team.</b>	You/ campaign manager	Between 6 and 2 months before the election
<b>Plan your campaign strategy</b> — what will your messages be? Why should people elect you? How will you communicate with the community?	You/campaign manager	As early as possible before the election
<b>Work out your campaign budget</b> — how much will it cost and where will the money come from?	You/campaign manager/ Treasurer	As early as possible before the election
<b>Prepare your strategy for different preferencing options</b> and negotiations, preferably with the help of an experienced person or mentor.	You/ campaign manager	As early as possible before the election
<b>Set up your campaign team meeting place or office</b> — where will it be and what will you need?	You/campaign manager/ campaign team	As early as possible before the election
<b>Check all the relevant dates</b> — remember you need to nominate a number of weeks before election day.	Campaign manager/You	At least 3-2 months before the election
<b>Be aware of the deadlines</b> for postal votes. Think about a strategy for attracting postal votes.	Campaign manager/You	At least 3-2 months before the election
<b>Arrange photographs for leaflets and publicity material.</b> Make sure these comply with current regulations — check VEC.	You/campaign manager	Between 6 and 3 months before the election

CONTINUED OVER PAGE



## Campaign tasks and timelines



TASK	RESPONSIBILITY	TIME FRAME
<b>Check deadlines for local papers, submit media releases</b> and advise journalists you are available for interviews. Write letters to the editor.	You/campaign manager	As early as possible before the election and during campaign
<b>Identify and contact other candidates, decide on a preference strategy and allocate preferences.</b> 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
<b>Plan and produce campaign materials and advertising.</b> These could include leaflets, billboards and garden signs.	You/campaign manager/ campaign team	2 months before the election
<b>Meet the people</b> , be seen in public places, and ask to address local groups.	You	Ongoing until election day
<b>Door knock and letterbox.</b>	You/campaign manager	Ongoing until election day
<b>Postal elections:</b> remember that many people vote as soon as they receive the voting material in the post. Plan your campaign timelines accordingly.	Campaign manager/ campaign team	According to your local conditions
<b>Attendance elections:</b> Draw up rosters for booths, ensure that there's a phone to take calls from voters for information, assistance and transport.		
<b>Appoint scrutineers</b> for vote counting. The VEC provides information for scrutineers. Keep in regular touch with them as counting goes on.	You/campaign manager	From 4 weeks before the election.
<b>Prepare speeches</b> – one for Declaration of the Poll if you are elected; another to thank your team at the celebration.	You	Two days before the election
<b>The night before election day, get a good sleep.</b>	You	The night before the election
<b>On the day</b> , 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.	You/ campaign manager	On the day of election
<b>After the poll</b> , 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
<b>Evaluate the election result.</b> 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

## Campaign supporters

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

**‘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 will meet other supporters along the way.

These people will encourage you to run, assist you with your campaigning, hang in there 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’.

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

It is important to remember that your supporters are not paid staff and, as such, can choose what they will and won’t do. It is also important to keep in mind that volunteers burn out.

Your campaign manager will need to work to keep the volunteers busy and happy. They will need to work out what tasks volunteers are willing to do and where their skills would be best used. They also need to make sure that volunteers are kept informed and made to feel appreciated.

Don’t accept an offer of help and then not make use of it. And make sure that you, as the candidate, also recognise the work of volunteers and thank them personally.

*A Guide for Candidates and campaign teams 2012* can be found at W: [www.women.vlga.org.au](http://www.women.vlga.org.au), while *Citizen to Councillor: A Guide for Prospective Councillors* can be accessed at W: [www.mav.asn.au](http://www.mav.asn.au)



*Victorian Local Government Women’s Charter Awards October 2010*



### Mentors

**A**long with personal support, campaign managers and teams, mentors often provide important support. There are many ways of getting mentored. See W: [www.women.vlga.org.au](http://www.women.vlga.org.au) and W: [www.algwa.net.au](http://www.algwa.net.au) for ideas, including having multiple mentors.

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 a current or past Councillor, run a successful campaign, or 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 may be and initiate the relationships.

The key thing 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 people approached to be mentors are usually 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.

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

# Your campaign, communicating to voters and more

## Communicating what you stand for

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

**A**s a candidate, you will need to prepare information about the things you stand for, the things you want to change and the things you want to improve. And you need to make sure that this is well distributed so people can see it before they vote (see next sections about communication materials and tools).

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 a fixed policy position.

Make sure you don't make promises you can't keep. Change requires the support of other Councillors. Some things you would like to change may not even be part of the responsibilities of local government.

If you are standing as a member of a political party there may already be a defined process for policy development or policies which you can adapt to your community.

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, keeping a community facility open or changing local planning regulations.

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

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## How do you develop an understanding of key local issues?

### *Find out what your council is doing*

**O**ne important way to find out about the important prevailing issues in your community and to develop policies or positions is to attend council meetings.

Contact your council office and ask when the meetings are and how to obtain an agenda for the meeting. 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 meeting on a specific issue run by council or current Councillors.

It is useful to make yourself known as a potential candidate to the Chief Executive Officer of the municipality and/or the Governance Officer (or equivalent, the officer who organises elections and candidate information).

Ask them if you can also meet council officers from key departments such as planning, environment, human services and infrastructure. These officers are a rich source of information

about the key issues in their area and what the community is most concerned about. Ask for the information you want and take notes. Once elected, Councillors ask questions constantly on behalf of the community and you will not be expected to know everything already.

Ask for key council policy documents and other background information about the municipality, such as strategic, corporate, business plans and annual reports. There will also be current documents on exhibition, for consultation with



the community, before they are finalised and adopted by council.

Familiarise yourself with your council's website as it will have a wide range of information available online.

### *Read your local newspaper*

Your local newspaper will usually include coverage of council meetings and 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 which you feel strongly about 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 chamber, local newspaper and, possibly social media, this will give you an idea of the things people see as important.

### *Focus on particular area of interest*

You do not have to be an expert on everything. Focus on the things you feel passionate about and run with them. Find out all you can. 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 position on, the issues most important to you.

- What are my values?
- Why did I decide to run for council?
- If I had the chance to change policy in only one area what would it be?
- Why is the community important?
- How would I see my role as a representative of the community?
- Why is it important for women to be Councillors?
- How can I be the Councillor I want to be?

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## Developing your campaign material

'My biggest campaign expense was photos. We had them professionally done. 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.'

**C**hanges to the Electoral Regulations between elections can affect how you need to think about campaigning and your campaign materials. Make sure you are familiar with all current requirements. Check with the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) prior to every campaign.

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.

If you are standing in a postal election, you will need to lodge a short personal statement, with a strict word limit, 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.

This information is of great importance. It may be the only thing that the voters know of you prior to deciding how to vote.

A candidate statement is a requirement in postal elections, but preparing a candidate statement, no matter what kind of election you are in, can assist in crafting your message. As such, it could be useful in any election. (Some examples are provided in Appendix 2).

After deciding on the message you want to convey to the community, you will need a photo. A good quality photo will be important in conveying you and your message. These can either be done professionally or by a skilled supporter, but don't underestimate their importance. 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 can 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 such statements need to be the same or consistent.

You may need to include an authorisation, as well as the name of the printer on your campaign materials. Check all the requirements, including

those relating to the distribution of printed electoral material at polling stations, with the local Returning Officer, the election contractor (for example, VEC) or Council.

The Returning Officer is the person charged with the responsibility for conducting the election. The Returning Officer can be appointed by the council or by the agency running the election, e.g. Victorian or Australian Electoral Commissions. The Electoral Commission may also check material for you.

## How I communicated what I stood for

**W**hen Councillor Yvonne Jennings first ran for Swan Hill Shire Council she didn't appreciate the importance of communicating with prospective voters and paid the price when not elected.

When she next ran, in 2005, she was elected unopposed, so it was only when she realised how much she wanted to be re-elected that she made communicating her messages a key priority.

Yvonne paid for DL size calling cards to be created for the election campaign, which included two, equally important, features: a very good photograph and three or four key statements about what she would do if re-elected.

"It's very important to use a good photograph and mine included all my family, including my grandchildren, which connected me to their networks as I was focused on family issues. I also worked out the key sentences which I thought most explained what I was thinking

and wanted to do. I repeated these in everything I did during the campaign. My calling cards, self-printed business cards, survey and A4 size posters all had the same head shot photo that went in on the VEC flyer."

Coming from a business background, Yvonne visited businesses as well as doorknocking residents and she worked with her son to set up a webpage (and included the web address in her candidate statement). At the end of each day, Yvonne sat down and updated her blog with details of who she had come into contact with that day and the issues that had been raised with her.

Yvonne also enlisted her campaign team and supporters to help her distribute a survey to residents asking them to outline their concerns and what they would like Councillors to deal with. Yvonne says the surveys – completed by some 200 local residents – were used to inform decisions during the



campaign and have been a useful touchstone during this term as Councillor.

Community and commercial radio is an important vehicle for communication that Yvonne would advise other candidates to explore, particularly in rural areas. Yvonne paid for advertisements on both. "Social media will play a big part in future elections, so get on board and mention the fact in your statement."

— Councillor Yvonne Jennings,  
Swan Hill Shire Council (2005– )



### Your materials

The extent of your campaign material will be determined by your budget and how you plan to use the material. Here are some suggestions:

- 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 including your photograph, information on your position on a few key issues and your contact details. These will be used when doorknocking, letterboxing, and in your general 'meet-the-community' initiatives. The contents should be checked with the Returning Officer.
- Depending on your budget, posters could also be printed. These should feature your photograph and your key message. These can be displayed in key public places and your supporters could also display them on stakes in their gardens.
- Business cards are considered very useful and can be left 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, you and your supporters will distribute them at the booths on polling day. Check how-to-vote cards with the Returning Officer.
- Banners, car signs, bumper stickers, fridge magnets.

### Making good use of communication materials



"Through many community campaigns I have become obsessively fussy about the design and look of materials. The first task is to work out what you want to say, strip out any excess words, and develop consistent messages that can be used through any and all material.

"For the 2008 campaign I started a blog W: <http://portfocus.blogspot.com> as many constituents live in apartments that do not have accessible mailboxes. It is free, flexible and versatile. I have kept the blog going as a means of communicating and it is good for me and constituents to check back on the election commitments I made.

"Getting a good photograph that you are at ease with is important since that may be the single thing people remember about you. I wanted to use a visual style and plain words that I was comfortable with; a graphic designer assisted me to get the look I wanted.

I used the same look and feel but different styles of leaflet that were quick to read from the outside, but opened up to reveal more information if people were interested.

"Using recycled paper is fundamental as people are offended by the waste associated with election campaigns. I broke up my ward into three areas that had particular common interests, and produced leaflets appropriate to their concerns.

"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. 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."

— Councillor Janet Bolitho,  
City of Port Phillip (2004 –)

## Communicating your message through traditional and social media

‘To be a Councillor, you need a high profile. You need to have your name around. You need to be seen as a community leader.’

**W**hen 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 with will ensure your name is heard around your area. When meeting people for the first time, they may at least recognise your name even if they don't know your face.

Getting your name known can also be achieved through your local and social media.

### *Social media*

Taking advantage of social media will depend on your capacity and interest in this area and the needs of your local community.

However, social media represents great opportunities for candidates and Councillors to communicate quickly and cost-effectively with voters.

Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, and blogs can all be set up quickly and cheaply and can be used to get messages to people without the lead times, cost and delivery of printed materials to people's homes and businesses.

These different mediums can also convey your messages directly to people so that they can see for themselves your opinions and reactions to events and issues of concern.

Competitive athletes are now told that they shouldn't put anything out on social media that they would not be happy to see on a billboard in the middle of their capital city.

Candidates and Councillors should take the same approach – use Twitter or Facebook as an alternative to an expensive billboard in your main street – but remember that the impact will be as public and, potentially, permanent. Some Councillors suggest making ‘rules’ for yourself to avoid making rash or reactive comments which you might regret later.

Don't send anything out until you are sure it complements your campaign material and messages.

WPILGC has developed some online tutorials for women Councillors about using social media at W: [www.youtube.com/user/VLGAInc](http://www.youtube.com/user/VLGAInc)

### *Traditional 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.

Some experienced candidates say that billboard advertising is more cost-effective in a local campaign than mass media advertising.

Unpaid media coverage includes stories in local papers or letters to the editor. You can communicate with the media either in person — by being interviewed by a reporter — or indirectly, by a media release.

Become familiar with your local newspaper by following how it covers the issues that concern people in your areas. Contact the paper and introduce yourself to the journalist/s. Find out how best to send them your media releases or statements.

### *Media releases*

Send these as required by the local journalists and in time for their deadlines.

Provide specific information about the issues and include clear statements outlining what you believe. Keep media releases to one page – provide additional information to the journalist when you, or a member of your campaign team, follow up with a phone call.



## Social media – a “fantastic tool”

Maribyrnong Councillor Sarah Carter is a firm believer that social media can be a “fantastic tool” for candidates and Councillors.

“There are so many people engaged in social media and spending so much time on it, that it is a great way to engage with people and to disseminate your information to a much broader audience than through any other media forum.”

“At first, we all thought it was just going to be about young people, but this has all changed. I found that I could access local ‘friends of’ groups, primary schools, mothers groups – all sorts of community based groups – through their Facebook pages.”

Sarah says the low-cost and immediacy of social marketing should also appeal to candidates and Councillors. “It’s a fantastic way to utilise photos and provide updates to people in a visually attractive way. I can put photos up of lots of the people I meet, events I go to, some council meetings etc. and people really respond to that.”

As with any form of communication, Sarah advises that social media be given “thought and consideration” – make sure that people in your photographs cannot be identified or have given their permission for

them to be used; don’t ever say anything defamatory about people and don’t upload any confidential briefing or information materials.

“You should always make sure that you would be happy for anyone to see what you post or say and don’t forget that what does go up will be out there forever.”

Sarah also says that thought should be given to the issue of moderating comments made on your social media or allowing a free debate – even if this means copping criticism from time to time. “If you get negative feedback, you have to consider how you are going to respond. It’s the same as with any other forum in which you need to listen to people and respond respectfully.”

And while an advocate for the benefits of social media, Sarah believes that it should be seen as a complementary, rather than a replacement, communication tool.

“I still don’t think you can beat face to face contact. I was the underdog in my campaign and not expected to win, so I spent a lot of time doorknocking with my business cards and letterboxing my DL postcard sized flyers.



“A lot of people later commented that they saw me out every night delivering my flyers and I think they saw that I was prepared to put a lot of time and effort into getting elected.”

When running for election, Sarah used her skills and experience as a former council marketing officer to develop an effective communications campaign. Under the brand ‘Maribyrnong Matters’, Sarah made sure that all her campaign materials had a consistent look and feel to them, including strong use of photos and colour. She extended this to her Facebook page.

— Councillor Sarah Carter  
Maribyrnong City Council (2008–)

There is good information about how to write an effective media release on the web. In general, a good media release will always answer:

- **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.

## Stories/opinion pieces

Ask your local journalists if there is an opportunity for you (or your campaign team) to write an article about an issue you are concerned about and how it affects your area. Ask if they need photographs supplied.

## Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor are one of the most widely read sections of the local newspaper. They represent a free opportunity for you to express yourself about an issue of concern. Most importantly, 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. 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 details published you can request that they be withheld from publication. Ideally, a Letter to the Editor is less than 200 words long.

## Working with traditional media



Many of the tips offered below are equally applicable to using social media – after all it's all about communicating.

- Stay on top of the local news. What are the issues? Listen, watch and learn.
- Focus on the local news outlets — the local newspaper and radio
- Determine what media dominates the market. Is it your local newspaper, radio or TV station? Direct most of your energy to what has the most impact on your area.
- Always return calls or emails from journalists promptly. Remember they are working to deadlines.
- Have a clear purpose for talking to a reporter. Prepare this before the meeting.
- Try to anticipate the 'angles' the reporter may take
- 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

## Speeches and presentations

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

- 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
- Test your presentation timing before the event to make sure you keep to the time allocated – or less! People respect this.

### *Community campaigning*

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.

All the planning around your community campaign needs to relate to your local conditions.

Answer such questions as:

- Can I rely on my local profile or will I need to get help to cover the whole municipality?
- What kind of election will it be – postal or attendance?
- If it's a postal ballot, when are the ballot papers going to be sent out? (It is believed that many postal voters complete the papers as soon as they get them).

Here are three different quotes about community campaigning.

'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.'

'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.'

# Campaign strategies, your budget and preferences

## Your campaign strategy

'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. Your campaign team and campaign manager will be able to assist with this.'

### *Building your profile and networks in the community*

You and your campaign team will already have existing community, business, service and school networks. Groups members will already know you and be more likely to support you when you actively campaign.

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.

There are specific requirements about electoral material and the way it can be used. Check the *Local Government Act (1989)* (ss55, 55A, 55B and 55c).

## Common forms of community campaigning



Activity	Impact	Cost	Resources required
leafleting/letter boxing	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
local media	high	low (unpaid media)	time
social media	high	low	time



### *Low impact community campaigning*

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

Distribution of campaign information through letter boxing is the most basic form of community campaigning. Your supporters and other volunteers can do this for you. They will need leaflets, written instructions, maps 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. Posters might cost more than leafleting, but, 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*

**'I doorknocked everywhere. There was a lot of a 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.'**

Doorknocking is one of the most common community campaigning activities. You or your supporters knock on the door of a voter and talk to them. You should try and leave some campaign literature with the resident. If there is no one home, leave some contact information. Make sure you include your contact details on your campaign material.

In addition to helping potential voters identify you, doorknocking may also help you to identify your supporters and even to recruit enthusiastic voters as volunteers.

You and your supporters might benefit from some training prior to going doorknocking. This could include some role-play to practice 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.

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 local issues.

Telephone calls to residents can be useful. However, they can be expensive and you will need to make sure you are not intrusive.



*Victorian Local Government Women's Charter Awards October 2010*

## Finances and fundraising

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

Before you begin your campaign you will need to establish a campaign budget with your campaign manager. The budget will be based on your campaign plan and take into account what you will need to spend, and your anticipated income from donations or any other sources. The difference between how much you need to spend and how much income you can count on will then become your fundraising target.

Many successful candidates have told us that they did not have any other source of funding apart from their money or that of their family. One of the major roles of your campaign committee will be to help you raise funds.

Remember that it is necessary to declare donations over a specified amount and that expenses incurred while campaigning can be tax deductible up to a set amount. Check current regulations and tax rulings prior to each campaign. In 2011, the Local Government Act (1989) required the declaration of donations over \$200.

A 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.

<b>CAMPAIGN COSTS</b>		<b>CAMPAIGN INCOME</b>	
	\$		\$
Nomination Fee	250.00	Donations	650.00
<b>Materials</b>			
Professional photos	300.00	Candidate's own funds	550.00
Flyers with how to vote info	300.00	<b>Total</b>	<b>1200.00</b>
Business cards	300.00		
Campaign brochures/DL flyers	300.00	<b>Shortfall and Fundraising Target</b>	<b>1570.00</b>
Garden stakes	50.00		
Envelopes	donation		
Paper	donation		
Labels	donation		
<b>Administration Costs</b>			
Computer	on loan		
Photocopying	donation		
Postage	optional		
Phone	220.00		
<b>Additional Costs</b>			
Child care (20 hours in last week)	500.00		
Home help (12 hours in last week)	300.00		
<b>Contingency costs (approx. 10% of total costs)</b>	250.00		
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>2770.00</b>	<b>Total Income</b>	<b>2770.00</b>

Remember that campaign costs may be tax deductible – so be thorough in your record keeping. Donations over \$200 must be declared in your election return.



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

A budget will help you 'spend smart'. All campaigns have limited resources, with no money to waste.

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

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

### *What to include in the budget*

The budget provided overleaf is an example of a campaign budget used by a successfully elected Councillor in her campaign. Remember this represents just one campaign (and the amounts are a guide only). Other candidates told us they have managed on much



*Women candidates celebrate their campaigns*

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, you may also need to obtain additional paid support for childcare or help in the home. This should be included in your budget. This additional support might also be provided by your family or friends as their contribution.

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 fundraising costs such as raffle prizes, advertising, food and beverages or hiring venues, need to be taken into account. Check regulations relating to raffles.

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

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## **Maximise your chances by understanding preferences**

The preferential voting system used in Victorian local government elections 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 the system. 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 using 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 numbers 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 numbers 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 inform the Returning Office of the how-to-vote card you will be using by a specific date. 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 register more than one how-to-vote card in order to leave your options open.

**Note that there may only be a few days between the announcement of official candidates and when your how-to-vote card is due in. That's why it's best to start 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. Prepare some key questions beforehand to help you find out what you really want to know.

### *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 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. 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 not want to see them elected, would you swap preferences with them? Be true to your values and ask yourself how much do you 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 how-to-vote card in their preference order.

When you get to four and more candidates the same sort of considerations apply but with more complexity.

### Some "do's and don'ts" about preferencing



<p><b>DO</b> ensure you understand the voting system that applies in your municipality</p> <p><b>DO</b> 'survey the political landscape' (Find out: who is running? How strongly supported are they? How involved are political parties?)</p> <p><b>DO</b> talk to other candidates</p> <p><b>DO</b> be aware that anyone who speaks to you about the election could be a potential candidate</p>	<p><b>DO</b> make sure you are clear about what has been agreed, at the end of any discussion about preferences</p> <p><b>DON'T</b> swap preferences before you have thoroughly thought it through</p> <p><b>DON'T</b> leave it too long as all the other candidates are likely to be doing preference swaps too.</p>
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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.

**Appendix 1 provides more information about the maths — and the art — of preferencing. Some guidelines for strategies for different ward arrangements are included. You can do it!**

## **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. Candidates accustomed to voting in state and national elections will find this system has a significant impact on campaigning.

Make sure you are on top of both preferencing issues and how postal voting versus attendance voting might affect your chances. Postal voting affects the timing of a campaign strategy. For example, it is wise to doorknock **before** voting papers arrive in the post.

Candidates in postal ballots provide the Returning Officer with information which is posted to voters. This might include:

- a short candidate statement with a strict word limit
- a recent passport-size photograph (Check to see if an electronic photo can also be submitted)
- an indication of preferences (how-to-vote card).

Make sure you have checked with the VEC or Returning Officer what is required and the due date.

The required information you have supplied will be posted to all voters on the election 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, you should note there is a widely held view that many voters complete and post their voting papers as soon as they receive them.

## How to make postal voting work for you

**T**here 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 to have the process explained to them. I also visited community centres.

**“Newly arrived migrants:** They found 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.

“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, former Councillor, City of Melbourne



## Assessing your campaign

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 checklist which will enable you to assess how your own campaign is going.

### Campaign assessment checklist



- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have you researched the local area, talked to voters and found out the issues?        | <input type="checkbox"/> Have you prepared a campaign budget? Is the campaign working within budget?  | <input type="checkbox"/> What other ways are you making contact with the community? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have you collected all the relevant information or materials from your local council? | <input type="checkbox"/> Is your campaign team working well?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Have you accessed the local media?                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have you established a campaign team?   | <input 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 type="checkbox"/> What is your opposition saying about you?                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have you developed an overall campaign plan?  |   | <input type="checkbox"/> Have you developed an effective preferencing strategy?     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have you worked out your campaign timelines?  |   |   |



## 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 this could involve personal attacks.

‘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.

Activity	Time commitment per week
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

‘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.’

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, friends *are*..

## Juggling family, work and council...

**W**hen Councillor Beth Ripper was first encouraged to stand for Wellington Shire Council, she had recently assumed the care of her granddaughter, Tilly, and was working full-time. As such the timing wasn't right for her to add the further commitment of a position in local government.

However, in the lead up to the 2006 elections, a group of women friends encouraged Beth to stand, promising that they would help her to juggle family/work and council commitments. "They, and family members, said they would do the childcare and other things to help me make it work and they did. It was fantastic."

Beth said good family day care and child care facilities also provided Tilly with "stability and constancy", while enabling Beth to fulfil her council duties.

Beth's advice to other women thinking about standing for election, but concerned about the potential impact on their own work/life balance is "to have a support team around".

"And not just while you're running for Council but also on an ongoing basis. If you don't have people you can debrief with and strategise with, it can be very isolating, particularly if you are in a council with a small number of other women Councillors."

Beth says that she has also been lucky enough to be part of a network of women Councillors across Gippsland.

"We get together for dinner every few months and we use the time to talk about all the things that have happened in the previous months and how people have dealt with them.

"It's really important to be able to support other women. We also share strategies that can be implemented in our councils. For example, what is a reasonable childcare budget for councils to adopt that supports Councillors with full time care responsibilities."



*Beth (left) and Tilly.*

And the signs are good in Gippsland that there is going to be increasing support for women who take the plunge into local government. Beth says that several other councils in the area have established women's support networks which are now meeting regularly.

— *Councillor Beth Ripper,  
Wellington Shire Council  
(2006–)*

# 5

## 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 initially disappointed, 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.

'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.'

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.

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

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### What if you are 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 occurring within a few hours of the poll being declared. Now is a good

time to re-read *Being the Councillor you want to be* (see Appendix 3: Resources for candidates and supporters).

#### *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.

### *Access to information*

You must be given access to the council-held information which is necessary to enable you to perform your duties and meet your responsibilities. Many councils run in-service training for new Councillors on how to access information. If such training is not provided, ask for assistance.

### *Code of Conduct and Good Governance*

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 – currently being updated) which sets out the essential features of good governance. Check their websites for information.

### *Conflict of interest*

Familiarise yourself with the regulations about potential conflicts of interest prior to your first council meeting. Check the *Local Government Act* (1989) and seek advice from council officers as this is complex and very important matter to understand.

### *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. Insurance will also be provided to cover you in the event that you are injured while performing your duties.

### *More information*

**Your council will have a lot more information available to assist you to be an effective Councillor.**

There are resources and contacts listed in Appendix 3.

*Now You're a Councillor* is a companion document to *A Gender Agenda*. Also based on research involving past and present women councillors, this guide offers practical advice and information. It can be accessed by contacting the WPILGC or accessing W: [www.vlga.org.au](http://www.vlga.org.au)



# Appendix 1: More on preferencing strategies

## 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

### 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.

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
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16,000</b>

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

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

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

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.

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. ('Weak' and 'strong' refer here 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.

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!



### Preferences in multiple Councillor wards and 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 un-subdivided ward involving seven Councillor positions and 60,000 formal votes, the quota would be  $[60,000 \div (7+1)] + 1 = 7501$ .

Any candidate to receive 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. This process continues until all vacancies are filled. Many consider this to be the most democratic of all voting systems.

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.

Every time a candidate is elected with a quota, the votes above quota are redistributed in accordance with preferences indicated on the ballot paper. With proportional representation, 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 VEC.

# Appendix 2: A guide to writing your candidate statement

A candidate statement is a requirement in postal elections only, but preparing a candidate statement can assist in crafting your message. As such, it could be useful in any election.

Your statement should state why you're running and why people should vote for you, and include:

- A brief outline of your policies, proposals, and party affiliations (if any)
- Your reasons for standing for council – make clear what you can contribute to your electorate that other candidates can't
- An overview of your goals if elected
- Personal or community experiences as examples of what you believe in
- Information about your connection with your area: how long you've lived there, family history, community or business involvement

Ask people to vote for you on the basis of what you have provided above.

Present and arrange your statement to attract the attention of voters

Where possible, mention specific problems that you want to try and address in your area – BUT DON'T MAKE PROMISES YOU CAN'T KEEP

Look at what other candidates are saying and how they are presenting their information. See how you can make yourself and your material different.

Try to persuade voters that your presence on council will ensure their voice is heard.

Emphasise your accessibility and skills and your pride in making your area a great place to live and visit.

Consider a professional photo or arrange for a high quality photo to be taken by a supporter. Smile and make sure voters can clearly see what you look like.

Ensure your authentic voice comes through.

Make sure the statement does not contain spelling or production errors. Ask a supporter to proof read it.

The following are examples of possible candidate statements.



### **Example 1: Family and community**

As a mother of four and long-time resident of Main Ward I understand the concerns of families in the shire. I will advocate for access to services for all residents.

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. I am also committed to promoting residents' safety.

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 school districts
- Preserving our green corridor and beautifying our parklands.

### **Example 2: Representing local causes**

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 roads in the Westlands region are upgraded, irrigation work completed and 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 and expertise to review budgets and ensure all residents have access to high quality services.

### **Example 3: The returning Councillor**

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 four years are critical. My focus is on:

- 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 and the community, I will promote continued growth for our ward into the next decades.

# Appendix 3: Useful resources

## Being a candidate and potential Councillor

- *Being the Councillor you want to be: a new approach to councillor development*, Alice Aird (for WPILG Coalition)  
W: [www.vlga.org.au/Resources](http://www.vlga.org.au/Resources)
- *From Citizen to Councillor: A guide for Prospective Councillors*  
W: [www.mav.asn.au](http://www.mav.asn.au)
- *Good Governance Guide (2004)*, Good Governance Advisory Group, MAV, LGPro, DVC, VLGA, update underway  
W: [www.vlga.org.au/Resources](http://www.vlga.org.au/Resources)
- *Now You're A Councillor (4th edition due 2012)*, Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition  
W: [www.vlga.org.au/Resources](http://www.vlga.org.au/Resources)
- *Our Government: Overview of Australian local government and federal government policy*  
W: <http://australia.gov.au/topics/government-and-parliament>
- *Running Your Own Election*  
W: [www.vec.vic.gov.au/publications](http://www.vec.vic.gov.au/publications)
- *The Women's Power Handbook*, Kirner, Joan and Rayner, Moira, (1999) Viking, Penguin Books Australia Ltd.
- *Victorian Local Government Women's Charter*, Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition (2003)  
W: [www.women.vlga.org.au](http://www.women.vlga.org.au)
- W: [www.standforcouncil.com.au](http://www.standforcouncil.com.au)

- *Think women for local government 2012 Project*

The Project aims to build the numbers and diversity of women candidates in the 2012 elections and can provide resources and information.

W: [www.thinkwomenlg.org.au](http://www.thinkwomenlg.org.au)

E: [info@thinkwomenlg.org.au](mailto:info@thinkwomenlg.org.au)

## Preferential voting

- Preferential slide show: Step by step explanation of how the preferential voting system works. W: [www.vec.vic.gov.au/education/education](http://www.vec.vic.gov.au/education/education)
- Preferential system voting tool: Learn about preferential voting and then use the preferential counting tool to count the votes in your election.  
W: [www.aec.gov.au/Education](http://www.aec.gov.au/Education)
- Preferential voting video: Find out how preferential voting works in a Federal election.  
W: [www.aec.gov.au/Voting](http://www.aec.gov.au/Voting)

## Councillor working conditions and related issues

Go to W: [www.vlga.org.au/Resources](http://www.vlga.org.au/Resources) for several good resources, including:

- Municipal Councillors Workcover Guidelines 2010 – Gazetted on Thursday 1 July 2010, this guideline offers clarity around the duties of a councillor. This guideline was adopted following extensive consultation with the VLGA.

- Municipal Councillors Fact Sheet – Some very helpful information for elected councillors, CEOs and interested community members.
- Circular 26/2008 – Mayoral and Councillor Allowances and Resources Support (letter from Local Government Victoria)
- Attachment to Circular 26/2008 – Mayoral and Councillor Allowances and Resources Support

## Elections

- Local Government Victoria:  
W: [www.dpced.vic.gov.au/localgovernment/](http://www.dpced.vic.gov.au/localgovernment/)  
Information on legislative arrangements and other matters concerning local government
- Victorian Electoral Commission:  
W: [www.vec.vic.gov.au](http://www.vec.vic.gov.au)  
Information on elections, including nominations, voting and council boundaries

## Local government information

- Municipal Association Victoria:  
W: [www.mav.asn.au](http://www.mav.asn.au)  
The MAV is a peak organisation for councils. Its website provides information, resource materials and training programs for councils. It also provides candidate information sessions in the lead-up to council elections.



- Victorian Local Governance Association:  
W: [www.vlga.org.au](http://www.vlga.org.au)  
The VLGA is a unique peak body of local governments, councillors and community leaders working together for progressive social change. For general information about local government, resources, membership and training opportunities. VLGA also hosts the WPILGC webpage as a supported network on behalf of Coalition partners.
- LGPro Local Government:  
W: [www.lgpro.com](http://www.lgpro.com)  
A professional organisation for local government officers and useful for general information about local government issues.  
  
Check your own council's website for lots of useful information about your community.

### Women in local government

- Australian Local Government Women's Association:  
W: [www.algwa.net.au](http://www.algwa.net.au)  
A network for women councillors and other women interested in local government, and runs the national 50:50 Vision: Councils for gender equity program.

- Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition:  
W: [www.women.vlga.org.au](http://www.women.vlga.org.au)  
A broad coalition of local government, community and women's organisations and individuals seeking to achieve the three principles of the Victorian Local Government Women's Charter – gender equity, diverse representation of women in local government and recognition of women's active citizenship.

### Victorian Government

- Office of Women's Policy:  
W: [www.dhs.vic.gov.au](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au)
- Rural Women's Network:  
W: [www.dhs.vic.gov.au](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au)
- Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission: W: <http://www.humanrightscmission.vic.gov.au>

### Federal Government

- Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission:  
W: [www.hreoc.gov.au](http://www.hreoc.gov.au)
- Office for Women's Policy:  
W: [www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/women/](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/women/)
- Our Government: Overview of Australian local government and federal government policy  
W: <http://australia.gov.au/topics/government-and-parliament>

### Community Women's Organisations (and there are lots more)

- Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL): W: [www.wel.org.au](http://www.wel.org.au)  
A feminist non-party-political lobby group for women

- Victorian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Coalition:  
W: [www.virwc.org.au](http://www.virwc.org.au)  
The VIRWC advocates for and supports immigrant and refugee women and their community organisations.
- Women's Planning Network:  
W: [www.wpn.org.au](http://www.wpn.org.au)  
A network for women involved in and interested in planning and related issues. Also offers mentoring and undertakes research.
- Victorian Women's Trust:  
W: [www.vwt.org.au](http://www.vwt.org.au)  
An independent, non-profit body dedicated to improving the status of all Victorian women.
- YWCA:  
W: [www.ywca.org.au](http://www.ywca.org.au)  
An organisation managed and owned by women, which develops and delivers community programs and services to create better lives for women, families and young people.

### Political parties

- Australian Greens (Victoria):  
W: [www.vic.greens.org.au](http://www.vic.greens.org.au)
- Australian Labor Party (Victorian Branch):  
W: [www.vic.alp.org.au](http://www.vic.alp.org.au)
- EMILY's List Australia:  
W: [www.emilyslist.org.au](http://www.emilyslist.org.au)
- Liberal Party of Australia (Victorian Division):  
W: [www.vic.liberal.org.au](http://www.vic.liberal.org.au)
- The Nationals (Victoria):  
W: [www.nationals.org.au](http://www.nationals.org.au)

**A**ustralian women are under-represented at all levels of government. In Victoria, women make up less than 30% of all Victorian local government Councillors (2011). 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 at [www.women.vlga.org.au](http://www.women.vlga.org.au).

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 government more representative of, and responsive to, its citizens and communities.

'It is not women against men, it is women and men, and not that the world will be a better place if women run it, but that the world will be a better place when women who bring their perspectives, share in running it.'

— **Dame Indira Patel OBE,**  
**National Council of Women Great Britain,**  
**champion of international women's rights**  
**(Melbourne 2002)**