

Media Release

9 November 2020



Local Democracy in Victoria – Moving Closer to Being Representative of the Community

As of Monday evening 9 November 2020, the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) has declared the results of over 93 per cent of Victorian council elections. All elections are due to be declared by Friday 13 November.

In October, 76 of Victoria's 79 councils went to the polls, with 71 councils declared as of today.

The VLGA welcomes the results of the elections and believes that democracy and good governance are supported by the trend towards increased diversity in our elected representatives.

There will be more than 300 councillors taking up their positions in the council chamber for the first time.

23 of the councils declared so far have a majority of women councillors, with an additional 20 councils reaching gender parity. That means that 43 Victorian councils, or 57 per cent, so far have a majority or equal number of women and men.

Victoria is on track to reach levels of unprecedented women's representation, with women making up at least 42 per cent of Victorian local government councillors in the 2020-2024 term.

South Gippsland Shire Council is due to elect a cohort of 9 additional councillors in 2021 when the council returns to elected representation. This may also impact the overall percentage of women councillors across the state.

The Victorian Government has set a target of 50 per cent women's representation by 2025 in its Gender Equality Strategy, *Safe and Strong*. The early results from these elections represent an increase of 4 per cent from the last elections. Although this is a substantial increase, a continued and concerted effort will be needed to reach gender parity by 2025, with only one more election cycle remaining.

The VLGA's *Local Women Leading Change* project to increase women's participation in local government reached more than 400 different women over the last 18 months, with over 60 training sessions held in person and online since June 2019.

More than 1500 Victorians participated in the VLGA's *Candidate Training Sessions*, an additional workshop to complement the mandatory candidate training prescribed by the new *Local Government Act (2020)*.

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ENDS:

Quotes attributable to Kathryn Arndt, VLGA Chief Executive Officer:

The VLGA congratulates all candidates and councillors-elect on taking part in this important democratic process. Well done on your efforts throughout the campaign.

We would like to acknowledge the return of VLGA President Lambros Tapinos who has been elected for another term at Moreland City Council.

The Victorian Electoral Commission has done an outstanding job of conducting 76 separate elections across the state in challenging circumstances. We thank the VEC staff across the state for the crucial role they play in supporting our local democracy.

Women's representation on Victorian councils is at an all-time high. But this progress does not happen without concerted efforts to increase the representation of women in elected representative roles, like our project, Local Women Leading Change. We call on the Victorian Government to guarantee dedicated funding across the next election cycle, as we support their target of 50 per cent women councillors by 2025.