

Media Release

21 August 2020



Victorian Local Government Elections October 24, 2020

The Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) acknowledges the recent announcement by the Minister for Local Government, the Hon Shaun Leane, confirming that the Victorian local government elections will proceed in October says Cr Lambros Tapinos, President of the VLGA.

However, despite the significant governance responsibilities of councillors to set the budget and strategy for these multi-million-dollar businesses, voter participation in local government elections in Victoria is lower than any other level of government. Kathryn Arndt, Chief Executive Officer of the VLGA, cannot overstate the importance for those eligible to vote in local government elections to ensure that they are enrolled to vote by 4pm on 28 August 2020 and participate in these elections. She encourages voters to cast their vote in an informed way – and understand the responsibilities the candidate they are voting for will have. It is important that voters scrutinise candidate statements and ask questions. After all, says Ms Arndt, we only get the elected representatives we vote for.

Cr Tapinos says potential candidates are encouraged to attend the VLGA's candidate information sessions that outline what it is to be a 'councillor'. The *Local Government Act 2020* requires that all candidates intending to nominate for election must complete a mandatory online eLearning module prior to nominating. For more information refer to the VEC Campaign Handbook and the Safe Campaigning Guidelines.

Amid COVID-19 and the introduction of a new Local Government Act, now more than ever, Victoria needs councillors with community standing as well as financial, organisational, and political acumen. So candidates need to fully understand and appreciate these responsibilities when they nominate to be considered for election.

The scope and responsibilities of Victorian councils are legislated for under the *Victorian Local Government Act 2020* – they are essentially a creation and extension of the state. And, despite the often ill-informed opinion that the business of local government is limited to or should be limited to *roads, rates* and *rubbish* – the fact is the responsibilities are far reaching and complex and, as a result, the role of a councillor is not simple.

Local government plays an integral role in connecting and caring for people and communities, which is clearly evidenced by state and federal levels of governments delegating the delivery of critical services to local government. It is the grass roots level of government and closest to the community.

If considering nominating as a candidate in local government elections, Cr Tapinos states that it is important to understand as much as possible about the role's responsibilities and the regulatory environment in which it operates. Once elected and when entering the council chamber, a councillor will be required to make decisions regarding multiple issues which will impact the entire community.

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It is vital that councillors are representative of their communities – diversity in the chamber leads to better decision making on behalf of the municipality. Young people, women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Victorians and those from CALD communities are encouraged to participate as both voters and candidates in these upcoming elections and the VLGA offers a number of programs to support this involvement.

ENDS:

Media Contact: Liddy Clark 0403 542 411

Links: [VEC](#) [VLGA](#)

Additional Information

The VLGA is an independent governance body supporting councils and councillors. We provide opportunities for councillor networking, professional development and information exchange and we actively engage with key policymakers and broader stakeholders to inform, influence and lead the conversations that determine the priorities for the local government sector in Victoria and support good governance at the local level. Throughout the VLGA's 25 years we have worked to support communities and councils in good governance over many election cycles.

It is crucial that candidates start early in their preparation for local government elections. By providing quality information, resources, and education about the business of local government and candidate development, the VLGA can assist councils in attracting and supporting high calibre candidates who reflect the communities they serve.

The VLGA invites councils to partner with the VLGA to deliver workshops in their local communities ahead of the 2020 elections. These workshops are designed to increase understanding of councils and council elections in the community, leading to more informed candidates and voters - [VLGA Candidate Training](#)