**VLGA Welcomes the Introduction of the *Local Government Bill 2019***

The Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) welcomes the introduction of the *Local Government Bill 2019* in the Victorian parliament today. This Bill is the culmination of years of consultation and collaboration between the state government and the local government sector, in which the VLGA has been an active participant as the independent peak body for local government.

The VLGA supports many of the proposed reforms we understand to be contained within the new Bill, such as those aimed at improving councillor conduct and involving communities in developing major policies and longer-term planning.

The VLGA is already working with councils and communities on the proposed candidate training reforms and councillor education requirements leading up to the local government elections in October 2020.

The VLGA has a strong history of candidate and councillor training – it is core business for the VLGA and is consistent with our purpose to support good governance at the local level and in recognition of the significant scope and complexity of the business of local government – something that is not always well understood by voters and candidates alike.

The VLGA has concerns over the proposed single member ward structure, as the current electoral representation and boundary review processes independently conducted by the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) are transparent and allow for community input.

While disappointed with the delay in the proposed donation reforms, due to the current IBAC investigation into the City of Casey over (alleged) donations and planning decision irregularities, the VLGA will continue to advocate for strict donation caps for local councils to the state government and are pleased that the government has indicated their intention to progress donation reform following the Casey investigation.

The VLGA is pleased that the government heard our feedback and that of the sector in regard to the original reform proposal for the 25% community petition and as a result have withdrawn this provision.

As stated in our previous submissions, the VLGA is urging the state government to carefully consider the impact of the Bill on Victorian rural councils, and to provide them with the necessary resource and policy support within a rate capped environment.

The VLGA looks forward to working with the state government and the sector to progress the Bill, including the extensive transitional arrangements involving supporting regulations and guidance material.

ENDS.

Please attribute to VLGA President Cr Lambros Tapinos

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