

Media Release

20 June 2018



VLGA welcomes debate on the Local Government Bill (2018)

Debate on the Local Government Bill (2018) started yesterday. The VLGA believes that the lower house will pass the Bill (2018) without significant amendments tomorrow. It is likely that the upper house will recommend the Bill be reviewed by a Parliamentary Committee. The transcript from yesterday's debate - https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/daily-hansard/Assembly_2018/Assembly_Feb-Jun_2018_Daily_19_June_2018.pdf - (pp. 55-68).

VLGA has been lobbying members of parliament about its concerns based on consultation and feedback from Victorian councils. We are also working with Local Government Victoria to ensure councils are prepared for implementation of the Bill when passed.

The VLGA is broadly supportive of the Bill. However, in its current form, the Bill presents councils with significant challenges relating to service delivery, good governance, and electoral representation. We have raised our concerns and advocated on behalf of our members. In the past three years, we have actively consulted our members about changes to the legislative framework. We are now working with Local Government Victoria to ensure councils are prepared for the implementation and roll out of the Bill

We are pleased to see that the tabled Bill picked up our recommendation to include sexual harassment (as defined in the Equal Opportunity Act (2010) as serious misconduct by councillors.

The VLGA maintains its position on three matters in the current Bill.

Mayoral powers: The VLGA is opposed to the mayor being given power to appoint councillors as chairs of delegated committees and for this appointment to prevail over the decision of the council. This power should be removed from the Bill.

The VLGA advocates for the review of rate capping to be brought forward to 31 December 2020, rather than end of 2021 as proposed in the Bill. This will give current councils an opportunity to provide meaningful feedback on the impacts of rate capping, and for new councils elected at the 2020 elections to fully study the review.

The VLGA strongly advocates for a partial preferential system for ballot papers, based on evidence and data from the Victorian Electoral Commission's study into recent local government elections. This reform will enhance electoral participation and voter franchise. This reform is also vital as the Bill provides the Minister

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for Local Government to determine a single method of election, which will almost certainly see postal voting for all councils in Victoria. This will give rise to an increase in the number of “dummy candidates” – something a partial preferential system for ballot papers will address.

ENDS:

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