

Being a Councillor

What do I do and what can I achieve?

Citizens exercise their democratic rights through three spheres of government in Australia; being local, state and federal governments. Local government is the first level of government for Australian citizens, a level of government about the needs interests and aspirations of communities.

Victorian local governments are responsible for \$39 billion of infrastructure. These are our roads, bridges, town halls, recreation and swimming pools, drains, libraries and parks. They govern, advocate and plan and provide more than 100 services for local communities. Every time a person leaves their house, they are using services provided by local governments.

Councillors have an exciting and challenging role to fulfil. They must be in touch with their community. They must balance the needs of the community while being financially accountable. The work of councillors is varied and often takes place within a highly passionate and political environment.

One of the most challenging aspects of this work is that councillors are required to make decisions that affect people's lives. Often these decisions will not always be popular with their community.

Standing for election provides a great opportunity to influence the future direction of the local community. It can be daunting and time consuming, but also rewarding. Local government is complex and vibrant organisations that require talented and dedicated individuals to participate in making the decisions that count.

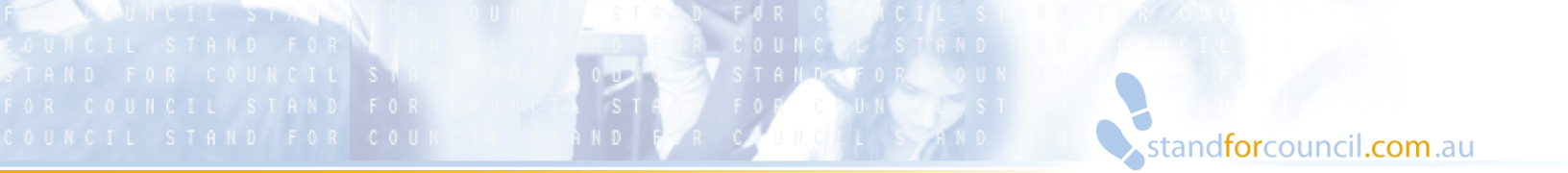
The Local Government Act places a clear responsibility on elected councillors to provide leadership and good governance for the municipal district and the community.

A councillor's role is exciting, diverse and demanding. As the governing body of a local municipality, councillors play a vital leadership role in creating and implementing their community's vision, strategic direction and the values within which they operate.

Councillors guide the development of local policies, set service standards and priorities and monitor the performance of the organisation. Other responsibilities of councillors include determining the financial strategy and budget, allocating resources, and liaising with other levels of government, the private sector and non-government community groups.

There are many rewards for serving your local community. It is an important and challenging role and provides one of the most direct means an individual can influence the decisions that affect their local area.

Satisfaction in Serving the Community Councillors, by virtue of their elected role, have influence and involvement in the planning and development of their local environment. They like getting a better deal for their community. They value being in or close to the places where decisions are made. Councillors have differing interests, motivations and skills. They will make different contributions to the council and will draw their own levels of satisfaction from the outcomes.



Personal Enrichment Citizens elected as councillors bring with them a wide range of employment, educational, community and general life experiences. Through full participation in local government, councillors learn about democratic processes, consultation processes at a formal and informal level, and to be responsible and accountable for what they do. To see the development and implementation of programs they have initiated or been involved with are rewarding.

Professional Development Councils are expected to support new councillors by offering professional development programs. Councillors, through a combination of on-the-job experience and professional development programs, will gain knowledge and skills in areas which help them perform effectively – for example in budgeting, council planning, meeting procedures, advocacy, negotiation and media. Professional development will be voluntary but is strongly encouraged and accessible.