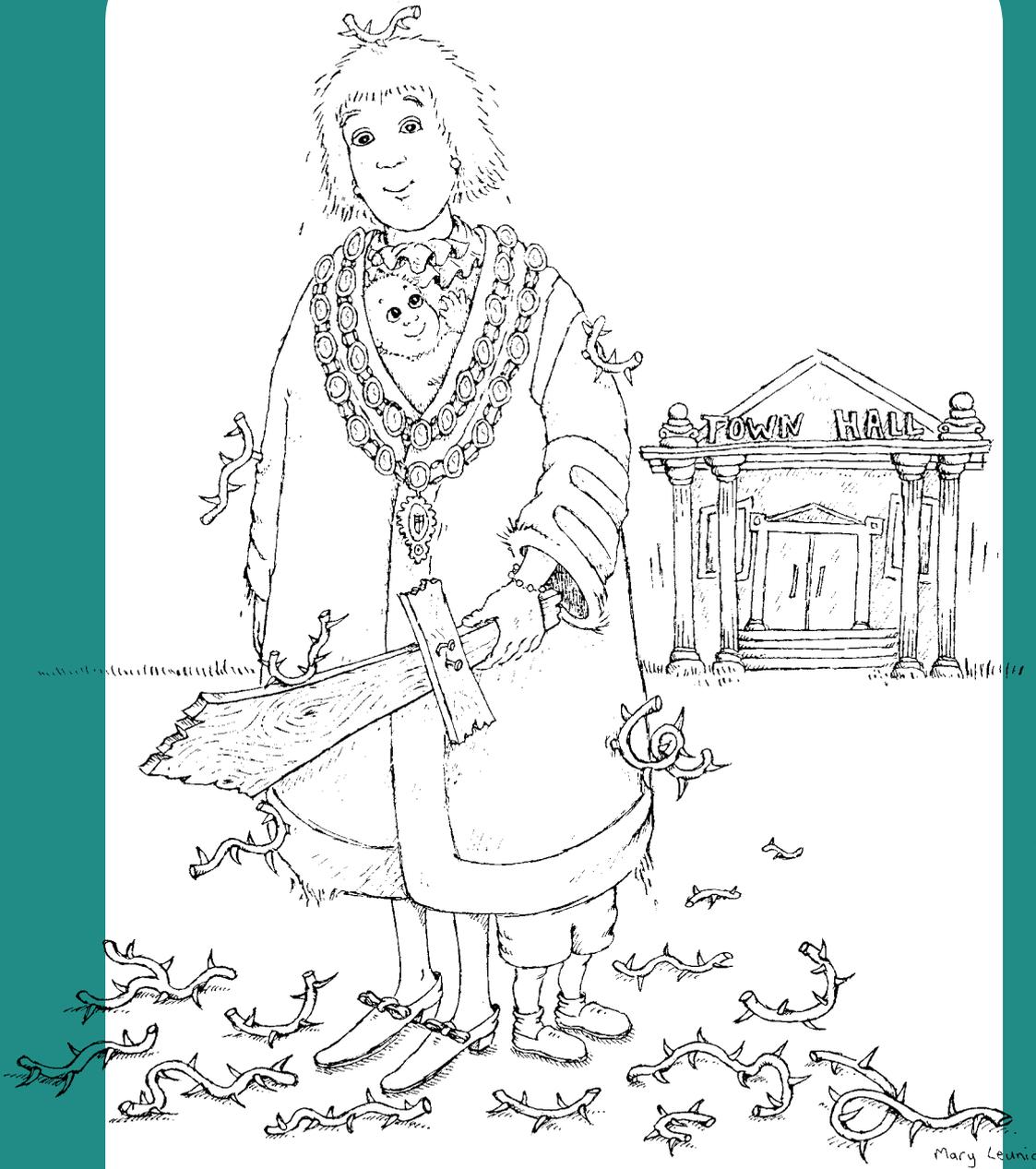


# A Gender Agenda



## NAVIGATING

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***A kit for women who want to stand for local government and for those who want to assist other women to stand***

Published by the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) and the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV)



Victorian Local Governance Association



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**Warning:** While we have tried to make the information in this publication generic, it is up to you as a candidate or campaign team member to understand all aspects of the conduct of local government elections because this may affect how you campaign.

Please enquire with the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC), the State Government authority responsible for overseeing council elections.

Check out the Gowomenlg website [www.gowomenlg.org.au](http://www.gowomenlg.org.au).



We respectfully acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Elders and peoples past, present and future as the proud traditional owners of the lands and waters.



WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION  
IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
COALITION  
STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES  
THROUGH WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

The Victorian Women's Participation in Local Government (WPILG) Coalition – 1997-2013

The Coalition was a non-party political partnership of local government peak, community and philanthropic organisations, women councillors and individual women, formed in 1996. Its aim was to achieve equitable participation of women and men in local governments in Victoria through the Victorian Local Government Women's Charter.

At the end of 2013, the Coalition decided it was time to hand the mantle of Charter guardianship jointly to the VLGA and the MAV, Victoria's peak bodies for local governments.

Coalition partners have included Australian Local Government Womens Association (ALGWA Vic), Local Government Professionals (LGPro), Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), Victorian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Coalition (VIRWC), Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA), Victorian Women's Trust (VWT), Women's Electoral Lobby Victoria (WEL), Women's Planning Network (WPN), and YWCA Victoria as well as individual women Councillors and citizens.

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# Foreword

**D**emocratic councils must be as inclusive as possible of their constituents if they are to be able to reflect the interests and needs of their communities. This inclusion needs to be demonstrated through their elected representatives, the governance process, the employees and consultative engagement with communities.

To date, women have been under-represented at all levels of government, with their numbers not reflecting the fact that they comprise half the population. And while there has been an improvement since the initial publication of *A Gender Agenda* in 1998 – the percentage of women in local government has increased from 22% to over 34% — there are still more gains to be made.

The lower levels of women's participation in the decision making structures of local government relates to a range of institutional, social, cultural and economic constraints. In order to challenge these constraints and open up local government to greater involvement by women, a variety of organisations, groups and individuals worked towards the development of the Victorian Local Government Women's Charter.

This kit is an important tool in this process. The Municipal Association of Victoria and the Victorian Local Governance Association are both delighted to be involved with the fifth edition. This edition was co-funded by the Victorian Government's Office of Women's Policy. We would also like to thank The Stegley Foundation (now concluded) for the support and financial assistance provided to the first edition.

We believe that *A Gender Agenda* and the other initiatives which support a diverse range of women to become more active in local government are really important. These will enable councils to better reflect the ethnic, gender, cultural and other diversities of their citizens.



Cr Bill McArthur

Cr Sebastian Klein

President Municipal  
Association of Victoria

President Victorian  
Local Governance  
Association



# Background

**T**he Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition (WPILGC) was formed in 1997 to work towards the equal participation of women and men in Victorian local government through the Victorian Local Government Women's Charter. By 2013, as the work for gender equity in local government became stronger, the Coalition dissolved itself and handed responsibility for this work to the statewide organisations, the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) and the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA)

Women have always been under-represented in local governments and the socio-economic and demographic profile of elected women remains limited. As with male councillors, women of Anglo-Celtic backgrounds, who are employed and tertiary educated, are strongly represented among women councillors. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women from non-English speaking backgrounds and other diversities are not yet involved in local government in significant numbers.

The VLGA and the MAV provide practical information and advice to all candidates, including to women who are considering standing, whether as new candidates or incumbent candidates. Our shared goal is for a wide range of women from different age groups, Indigenous backgrounds, and socio-economic and cultural, ethnic backgrounds to be represented on councils throughout Victoria.

There is a role for all in achieving this goal. Women can stand, or support another woman to stand. Men can support women and advocate for gender equity and diversity.

This edition of *A Gender Agenda* incorporates some of the learnings from the gender equity work of the Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition partners since 1997 and updates the councillor case studies. It reflects the three principles of the Victorian Local Government Women's Charter: gender equity, encouraging diversity in representation and participation, and the active citizenship of women.

More than 60 Victorian councils have endorsed the Charter and this number is still growing. The Charter stands as an important local policy to support the increasing participation of women as local government candidates and elected councillors.

'I realise now when I look back that I learned as I went. I jumped in and gained more confidence along the way. Now I have some great skills but it was a step-by-step journey. I started off learning how to be a candidate, and now I'm learning how to be a councillor.'

### Before using this kit

Before you begin reading this kit, remember that:

- Every campaign and every candidate is different.
- There are many ways of campaigning and many ways of being an effective local representative.
- The suggestions contained in this kit are just that – suggestions.
- What has worked for others may or may not work for you.

Our message is be true to yourself and work out ways to be the candidate and councillor you want to be – not the one other people want you to be.

# Putting your toe in the water

## What is local government and what does it do?

‘Why take an interest in local government? My simple answer is because local government creates and maintains the immediate environment in which we live.’

**M**ost people have their most direct experience of representative democracy and participation at the local government level. Local government is run through City, Rural City or Shire councils governed by elected councillors. Councils facilitate essential community networks, provide services and act as advocates for the diverse needs of communities through physical, social and economic planning.

There are 79 councils in Victoria, which represent 5.8 million people (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013). All councils have between five and 12 councillors elected by the people who live in the local area or who own a local property or business.

Services provided by each council depend on their financial resources and the needs of its community.

Most councils receive the majority of their income from rates and untied Australian Government funds. However, they also receive some targeted State and Australian Government financial grants.

Local government is run according to the provisions of the *Victorian Local Government Act (1989)*.

It is important that candidates and campaign teams know something of the scope of the legislation.

Local councils:

- Provide leadership and good governance for their communities
- Develop and maintain community infrastructure such as roads, bridges, drains, halls, libraries, recreation facilities, parks and gardens

- Plan for future growth and development
- Provide a diverse range of property, economic, human, recreational and cultural services
- Enforce State and local laws relating to such matters as land use, environment protection, public health, traffic and parking and animal management.<sup>1</sup>

It is important that candidates understand the roles and powers of local councils prior to making commitments or taking a stand on issues.

1. *Victorian Local Government Act (1989)*

## What does a councillor do?

‘I love local government. It’s a very privileged thing to do. You could spend 20 hours a day on it and it wouldn’t be enough.’

**B**eing elected to local government involves candidates competing against each other to win the support of local voters. However, once elected, councillors must work together to achieve goals and outcomes. Most decision making is done on a majority vote basis so councillors need to be able to win the support

of other councillors to progress ideas to implementation stage. Councillors can’t achieve anything significant on their own.

Every day and every week councillors perform a diversity of tasks – far beyond attending weekly council meetings and opening the odd building.



On average, councillors spend between 11-30 hours a week on council matters (MAV Councillor Census 2013). The role of the councillor is like a part-time job, a job which is not fully paid.

Councillors do receive a taxable allowance, determined by the council, within parameters set by the State Government.

The part-time role of a councillor can take up a substantial amount of time and is often undertaken while juggling family, community and paid work responsibilities. But remember, apart from the minimum legal requirements to attend council meetings, you are the one who can do the job as you see fit.

The following stories about a day in the life of a councillor come from experienced women councillors.

All the stories of women councillors in this Kit are about “becoming the councillor you want to be”.

For more stories about what women councillors actually do, explore the [Now You're a Councillor](#) website.

### A day in the life of...

**A**fter six and a bit years as a Councillor for the Strathbogie Shire Council, Colleen Furlanetto admits she is still on a learning curve when it comes to managing the time required to successfully fulfil her Council duties in the way that she would like.

The last six years have been a wild ride at times, but I know after working very hard and with some support from Council I am now privileged to be involved in conversations where a rural voice may not have been heard before.”

Colleen enjoys representing the Shire at meetings, conferences and community events. She also spends time talking to constituents by phone or while down at the shops of her home, Euroa. “I consider it a privilege to represent the community and I take it seriously in that being an elected representative brings responsibility and accountability.”

Colleen emphasises the importance of Councillors prioritising their time, their Council activities and all the other things in their lives. “Saying NO to a few things showed me the sky didn't fall in by not attending absolutely everything.”

Colleen prioritises her time by asking herself whether attending each function would really make for a better, more effective Councillor and for a better deal for



her community. She focusses on maintaining a balance. “Being very organised has assisted greatly, but that too takes work and time.”

And she strongly emphasises that all her work as a Councillor is only made possible by a “long suffering, supportive, patient family”.

Overall Colleen has found being both a Councillor and Deputy Mayor a very personally rewarding experience, “I am especially committed to and proud of my advocacy role in the Prevention of Violence against Women and Children. 2015 has to be the year we will all look back on as the year we as a society got our act together for long term social change in regards to No More Violence.”

— Councillor Colleen Furlanetto,  
Strathbogie Shire Council  
(2008 –)

## One day in the life of...

**8:00am** Get kids ready for school.

**9:00am** Emails, lots of emails. Respond to a few quick ones. Forward and register those emails requiring Council actions to Council customer feedback system. Check and follow up with old requests to make sure they were actioned in time.

**10:00am** Parking around the school area and traffic flow has become a real nightmare for the Primary School due to the rapid growth of students. Organised a meeting this morning with the Principal and Council officers to visit the school area, discussed the possible changes to improve the traffic flow and options for additional parking space.

**11:00am** A charity group advocating for abandoned children, many of whom have disabilities, is planning a charity fundraising walk at beautiful Westerfolds Park in Templestowe. The group wants to encourage more local students to participate in the walk and increase awareness of the cause. Attended a meeting with the group with a local school chaplain to brainstorm ideas and connect to other like-minded groups.

**12:30pm** Go through phone messages, emails, and social media over a quick lunch. The requests and messages received via social media have increased over the past six months.

**2:00pm** Called Council Communications Department to organise Doncaster Rail Campaign materials (petition, table, banner, information boards etc.) to be delivered to a weekend community event. Then got on to social media to call for volunteers to come to help promote the Rail Campaign on the coming weekend. Glad to lock in a few volunteers within ten minutes, thanks to social media.

**3:30pm** Picked kids up from school. Caught up with a school parent on the way back to discuss her parking fine issue. A quick chat about why and how Council patrols the area during school pick-up and drop-off times, how Council handles the privacy issue around photos taken as evidence of illegal parking and how the parent might apply for an internal review of the fine.

**4:00pm** Got some snacks for kids to eat and had a chat about what they did at school today. Lots of kisses and cuddles. After a quick break for 40 minutes with kids, in the car again taking them to grandparents before I head off to next meeting.

**5:00pm** Met with committee members from Doncaster and Templestowe Badminton Association at Council to discuss their challenges with ever increasing memberships and long waiting lists. How could Council better allocate and manage the sports facility to cater to various and sometimes competing demands?



**6:30pm** Attended Eastern Transport Coalition (ETC) meeting as Manningham Council's representative, and provided Doncaster Rail campaign updates to the group. ETC consists of seven eastern metropolitan Councils who advocate for sustainable and integrated transport services for Melbourne's outer east area. Each member Council hosts a monthly meeting in turn, so I always have to make sure I'm turning up to the right venue every month.

**10:00pm** Got home after a long day. Go through emails and diary to plan for the next day.

— Councillor Jennifer Yang,  
Manningham City Council  
(2011 – )



## A snapshot of councillor duties

### Role of a councillor

- participate in council decision making
- represent the local community in that decision making
- participate in development and review of strategic policy and annual budget
- consider the diversity and needs of the community
- provide civic leadership based on good governance principles and integrity
- participate in employing and managing the working relationship with the CEO

### Council meetings

At the council meetings and councillor briefings, all the councillors come together to consider information, discuss and develop policies, approve programs and allocate and monitor budgets.

Councillors may also be elected to sub-committees which meet separately and report back to the council meeting.

Council meetings are usually held fortnightly or monthly and typically involve councillors needing to prepare by reading papers, keeping up-to-date with community concerns and sometimes reporting back to council meetings on discussions held between meetings.

### Working with the community

Councillors generally maintain frequent contact with the people they represent, listening to concerns and answering questions, giving information and helping constituents find the right avenues of assistance from the council. This may be on an individual basis or in forums such as residents' meetings.

This reflects the role of a councillor in building effective local democracy based on community participation.

### Questions to ask yourself

Am I a good listener and do I like consulting with others?

Do I like learning?

Do I like to hear all sides of an issue before I decide?

Do I like to work in a way that builds partnerships?

Do I have good communication skills?

Do I prefer to undertake leadership and use power "for" and "with" rather than "over"?

What experiences and skills in my life match the skills a councillor needs to have ?

\*Updated November 2015 to reflect Local Government Amendment (Improved Governance) Bill 2015

## You could do it!

'Many women do not realise that they already have the necessary skills to become an effective councillor from their experience in their local school or community'.

Perhaps you have been a member of a child care committee or a sporting club, or you may run your own business, be actively involved in the local environment group or on your children's school council. You may know most of the neighbours and have attended a couple of council meetings relating to issues dear to your heart.

Council elections are coming up. A couple of your friends have said you would make a good councillor and have suggested you stand. You think: 'Not me... I couldn't do it, and why would I want to do it anyway?'

Women councillors say that the major reason they stood was to make a difference in their community. They say their greatest satisfaction comes from assisting

people in their communities with their individual problems or concerns.

So, you should consider running for council if you would like an opportunity to:

- affect issues that you believe in
- contribute to policy and programs that impact on the local community

## Why I stood for Council

Coral Ross had a 'myriad reasons' for deciding to stand for election to the Boroondara Council in 2002. The then journalist had covered local government, studied politics at university and come into contact with Councils while involved in her local community.

"I had seen Council from several different sides and I had had quite different experiences while being a Kindergarten President and a member of a local planning issue working group. I had always been interested, so I decided to give it a go."

Having "never expected to get elected", Coral is happily now in her fourth term as a Councillor. She has also been elected Mayor several times. "I love local government and how you can see on the ground that you have done something and it has made a difference."

Coral would wholeheartedly encourage other women to stand for Council. "It's great for your own personal development and it is a great way of helping your community." Since being elected Coral has gone on to add other elements to her Councillor work, such as being President of the Australian Local Government Women's Association and Vice



President of the MAV. She is currently serving her third term as Mayor.

Coral says that prospective candidates need to be mindful of the time that needs to be dedicated to being a local representative, but she says that she has also found Council life to be very flexible and accommodating of family needs.

"It is difficult in the beginning to say no to people, but I found after a while that most people are very understanding when you say you can't be at something because it's your son's concert or hockey game etc."

Coral sets aside between 4pm and 6pm each afternoon for her family. "That meant that I could pick up

my children and be with them while they did their homework and ate dinner. If people wanted to meet with me or for me to be at something, it was always easy enough to arrange at another time." Coral also restricted attending night time meetings to three nights per week.

"You have to remember that you have to be able to look at yourself in the mirror each night. My family, and particularly my children's needs, always came first, but that doesn't mean that I haven't been able to fulfil all my duties as a Councillor."

— Councillor Coral Ross,  
Boroondara City Council  
(2002 – )

- meet people from other places and from all walks of life
- know more about what's going on in the local community
- work on interesting and diverse local issues
- learn more about your community through an interesting and diverse workload

- develop a range of policy, negotiation and procedural skills.

And remember, if you know a woman who you think would make a good councillor, ask her to stand.

Many women councillors speak of the importance of someone "extending the hand of invitation" or tapping them on the shoulder.



### What do you need to know? A step-by-step process

**N**ow that you have decided that you might want to put your toe in the water, you need to make an assessment of the skills you already have and the ones that you will need to develop to get elected.

Remember that you don't have to have all these skills down pat at the beginning. There is training available once you are elected.

#### *Public speaking*

In campaigning and when on council you will learn to be confident in speaking in public and being able to succinctly express what you want to say. The more you do it the easier it gets.

#### *Confidence, or the appearance of it!*

You need to appear confident in dealing with people and to be able to handle people with different viewpoints.

#### *Lobbying*

Knowing who has the power to make changes, who you need to work with, talking with them and

“Learning about being a candidate and then a councillor is a step-by-step process.”

being able to influence their point of view will be important.

#### *Listening and talking*

Talking to people on a one-to-one basis and, most importantly of all, knowing when to listen, will be important in dealing with your community, other councillors and the people you will meet as a candidate and a councillor.

#### *Writing*

Knowing how to write – e.g. for reports, ward newsletters, the press and other written communication – is a useful skill, and one you can learn. In many councils this will be done by the paid staff.

#### *Meeting procedure*

You may know some of this from observing council meetings or from your own involvement in community groups. As a candidate, you will need to know

the basics and, as a councillor, you will need to learn a lot more.

#### *Time management*

Being able to manage your time, working out your priorities and ensuring that the important things get done will be invaluable.

#### *Working with media*

Knowing local journalists and understanding their deadlines and what they need will be useful in both your campaign and as a councillor. Managing your presence in social media is equally important.

#### *Team work*

You are the candidate but there are many other people who will play a pivotal role in your campaign and in your election. Being able to work well in a team and to recognise the contributions of others is a real asset.

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### Developing skills

**C**heck through the skill areas listed above. Assess whether you already have them. Note the areas you need to improve. Women typically underestimate their skills, so ask your friends and family what they think. Then make your plan for further action.

There are many ways to build on your existing skills and some are listed below. Once you are elected, councils have a budget for councillor development and training. You can also build skills by listening, asking questions of friends and mentors and reading relevant information material.

#### *Clubs and organisations*

Clubs and organisations in the community are great grounding for future political life. You will be increasing your community contacts while doing a valuable job for your community too. Being an active member of your local sporting club,

## What do you need to know? Thoughts from women Councillors

Councillor Alex Monk had never considered a life in local politics prior to a former Councillor suggesting it to her in 2007. While considering the pros and cons of the suggestion, Alex attended a Council meeting.

"I think that is the first thing you need to do as you need to know about the format and the procedures. It is also good to make an appointment with the Council CEO and talk to other Council staff about how Councils work. If there is another woman Councillor or you can make contact with another woman Councillor, I'd also suggest that."

Once she had decided to stand, Alex then had to work out how to get a broader understanding of the issues and concerns of her community. "I realised pretty quickly that I should try to get an understanding of issues across the whole shire." Alex's Moira Shire



covers over 4000 square kilometres and a population of 30,000 people.

"I spoke to people in Council, people in community groups and I was lucky that four of the major towns in our area asked candidates to come and speak to them. So I was able to hear what other candidates were saying, and what the people attending were saying."

What you also need to know as quickly as possible, Alex believes, is "not to make promises until you really know where the boundaries of your Council are, what Council is and is not responsible for".

Having now been a Councillor, Alex says the other thing that you need to know is "how to develop a thick skin. You have to learn how to be diplomatic and to just listen to people when they might be ranting at you".

"You need to learn how to take on board what people are saying and then try to do what you can to resolve their issue. You may not always be able to, but you can usually steer people to more information or Council officers. Getting back to people to let them know what you have done is also very important."

— Councillor Alex Monk,  
Moira Shire Council  
(2008 –)

neighbourhood house or school council will help you to learn about meeting procedure, public speaking and public policy issues.

### Candidate training

Specific training workshops for local government candidates may be available in your local area. For example, the MAV and the VLGA conduct candidate information sessions in the lead-up to elections. Details of these sessions can be found on the MAV and the VLGA websites closer to the time of the election. Candidate information sessions are also

offered by the Victorian Electoral Commission.

The VLGA offers resources designed for women candidates through the [GoWomenLG](#) project.

### Councillor training

Both the MAV and the VLGA offer seminars and conferences for councillors. Seminars and other training programs run by clubs, formal training bodies and other organisations will help you build specific skills in a time-efficient manner.

### Mentoring

Mentoring can be very valuable. You may want to approach someone you think is more experienced than you for help or support. The Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA) is open to any person with an interest in supporting women in local government. ALGWA offers mentoring opportunities for both candidates and councillors. The [GoWomenLG](#) website also offers information about mentoring and finding your own mentors.



### Be true to your values

The 2006 Building Communities Leadership Program with the VLGA and the Think Women for Local Government activities in 2011 had primed Sandra Wilson to make the decision to stand in 2012, but she still found the actual campaign really tested her personal values.

“When you move into a new public role like candidate or Councillor, it feels like your relationships will change with people close to you and with those in the wider community. Your motivation and values are frequently questioned, which I believe has something to do with the level of cynicism that has developed about people who aspire to political office.”

Sandra had always put her hand up to be involved in community activities .

“I had a passion for good governance in my roles on the school council and the footy club committee, and a strong belief in strategic advocacy after campaigning about our reduced train services on the Altona Loop. But standing for election was a different proposition because I had never considered myself politically ambitious.”



Sandra read through all the resources on offer, including A Gender Agenda, and reflected on the learnings from the leadership course which she had attended, but she understood that she wouldn't know exactly how it would be until she jumped in.

“Before you have children, people often tell you what it's like but you don't really know until you've been through it. Standing for election was a bit like that; I could read it all, talk to people about it, but I didn't know how it would work in practice and how I might respond to the challenges, particularly the challenges to my values”.

Sandra says her values were challenged early on in her

campaign by some of the negative campaigning tactics she was exposed to.

“Negative campaigning is a sad reality and it can really knock you for six, but staying positive with your community and focussing on building healthy relationships will put you in good stead if negative campaigning rears its ugly head.”

Sandra advises prospective candidates to spend some time early on working out what their personal values are and what's important to them, practice saying these values out loud, and constantly use these to guide how they want to be as a candidate or Councillor.

In Sandra's case these values are “treating everyone with respect – even the most difficult people; recognising that views different to your own are valid and need to be heard; being honest, open and accountable for your actions and decisions and always acting with integrity.”

“Politics can test your values at times, but so far I have stayed true and that's how I want to do my job.”

— Councillor Sandra Wilson, Hobsons Bay City Council (2012 – )

#### Political parties

Becoming active in a political party offers practice in many of the skills you may need as a candidate and as a councillor – local leadership, partnerships, communication skills, political understanding, governance, meeting procedures, and so on. Remember, you will need to consider making your party affiliation known when running for council.

#### Online resources and social media

There are a wealth of resources online. Social media (e.g. blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and many others) is increasingly a useful tool for candidates and councillors.

Seek out information about how to use these communication tools effectively – and safely! They can benefit you as a campaigner or

councillor, or simply as a person active in your community. See [page 27](#) for more details.

Remember that even with the formal skills you can acquire, the importance of your knowledge and experience in your local community cannot be underestimated in the campaign and in the role of councillor.

## Why is it important to have women councillors?

Local governments are in a unique position to contribute to the global goal of gender equity for women<sup>2</sup>.

The **Victorian Local Government Women's Charter** was created in 1996. More than 60 of Victoria's 79 councils have endorsed the Charter and this number is still growing.

The Charter's three principles are:

- **GENDER EQUITY:** women and men have an equal right to be representatives in decision-making positions.
- **DIVERSITY:** different experiences and perspectives in local decision-making strengthens local democratic governance and helps build cohesive communities.
- **ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP:** Local governments will work with the community to increase the numbers and participation of women in public life, so that decision-making reflects the interests and demographics of communities.

Local democracies are more effective if councils reflect their communities and when people respect each other and work together.

<sup>2</sup> Victorian Local Government Women's Charter [www.mav.asn.au](http://www.mav.asn.au) & <http://www.vlga.org.au/>

### The importance of diversity on Council

Debra Nelson believes that diversity in all its guises is vital for a truly representative Council.

"Hindmarsh Shire comprises roughly 50 percent each of males and females, so gender diversity on Council is important to reflect our community. Diversity of age, professions, and life experiences is equally important to be able to have a Council that reflects the whole diversity of the community."

The Shire in North-West Victoria was formed in 1995 following the amalgamation of the Lowan and Dimboola Shires. In that time there had never been a female mayor. In 2012 three women were elected to Council resulting in a 50:50 Council for the first time.

When Debra ran for Mayor in 2013 and 2014, the votes were both tied and the result was determined by drawing a marble from a bag. In 2013 Debra was elected the first Deputy Mayor for Hindmarsh Shire. In 2015 she became the first Hindmarsh woman Mayor.

"Generally men and women may think a little differently but there is also diversity of thinking within gender groups as we are all unique individuals. Some might consider that childcare, playgroups,



kindergartens and other children's services are women's issues but I think that they are community issues affecting both men and women — and their children."

While women generally are more likely to be actively involved in the care of children, it doesn't mean that they are the only ones who have a good understanding of these issues."

Debra hopes to encourage more women to consider standing for council. "Women can be important role models for the younger generation in rural areas."

She advises "Just be authentic and true to yourself when running a campaign. My life is quite a challenge at times – juggling work, family and council responsibilities but it is an honour to represent and advocate for the community and I find it to be personally very rewarding."

— Councillor Debra Nelson, Hindmarsh Shire Council (2012 – )

### What do women bring to local government?

- Life skills and experiences that strengthen local decision-making
- A perspective from caring and community roles that enhance the development of more liveable communities

- Our gender difference can mean we do things differently, and women may be more used to sharing information, listening, encouraging participation and mutual support. These can help transform council cultures and improve local governance.



### The Local Government election system – an overview

**A**s a candidate or candidate supporter, it is vital that you are familiar with how elections work in your area and the current regulations regarding the conduct of elections.

These regulations can change between elections, so you must check prior to each campaign. Contact the **Victorian Electoral Commission** (VEC) for the most recent details about how elections are to be conducted.

#### *Who is eligible to stand for local government?*

Any Australian citizen enrolled for state and federal elections in the municipality or on the council voter roll on Entitlement Day is eligible to stand for council. Entitlement Day is the day the voter roll closes 57 days or around 8 weeks before election day. (Always check the **VEC website** to confirm dates). Candidates do not need to live or be enrolled in the ward they are seeking to represent, but they must be enrolled in the municipality itself as residents or ratepayers.

The **Local Government Act (1989)** disqualifies some people from standing, such as if they are an undischarged bankrupt. Seek advice from the **VEC** about this if you have any questions.

#### *Who is eligible to vote for local government?*

The voters' roll is made up of three groups:

- People 18 years and over who reside in the municipality and are enrolled for State and Federal elections
- Ratepayers
- Eligible applicants (e.g. owners and occupiers of property within the municipality who do not reside there).

Voting is compulsory for all, with a few exceptions. If you are a non-Australian citizen you should check your voting status with the Returning Officer or the **VEC**. Voters can only exercise one vote per municipality.

#### *How do I nominate as a candidate?*

To nominate, an eligible candidate must :

- complete the nomination form available from the **VEC**
- pay the prescribed fee (as an indication, in 2011 this fee was \$250 but it may change).

It is essential that you check and double check all the requirements for nomination. The **VEC** is the most reliable source for this information.

Remember that the Victorian Government may review and change electoral regulations before each election.

Candidate nominations open and close at specific times and dates some weeks before the close of voting. Nominations close at

12 noon on the thirty first day before election day (approximately 4–5 weeks). Key dates for lodging nominations and other details are advertised in the local media and through the **VEC**.

The nomination fee (or deposit) will be refunded if a candidate polls a certain percentage of the first preference votes.

#### *How many candidates will be elected?*

Internal boundaries (wards) and the number of councillors are determined by Electoral Reviews conducted under the **Local Government Act (1989)**. Councils consist of between five and 12 councillors. Municipalities can be subdivided into wards or remain un-subdivided. If there are wards (subdivided), all councillors are considered to represent the whole area of the municipality, not just their ward.

Some councils have no wards, known as “un-subdivided”. Some have single councillor wards. Yet others are subdivided into multi-councillor wards. Some councils have the same number of councillors in each ward. Others have differing numbers of councillors in different wards.

It is important to understand how your municipality is structured. If you live in Greater Geelong or Melbourne City there are some unique differences. Make sure you find out about your municipality. This may influence the strategies you use in your campaign.

### *How long is a councillor's term of office?*

All councils go to elections simultaneously every four years.

### *Which voting system will be used?*

The Victorian local government voting system is somewhat different from that in State and Federal elections.

Victorian State and local council elections use versions of the preferential voting system. This involves numbering candidates in the order of your preference.

When you are required to number every candidate in order of your preference, the system in use is full preferential voting. Full preferential voting is used in most elections in Victoria (see the [VEC website](#)). Check the useful resources at the end of this Kit.

Once voting closes, votes are counted to determine the result.

Vote are counted somewhat differently when only one candidate is to be elected (e.g. in a single councillor ward) compared to when a number of candidates will be elected (e.g in multi-councillor wards and un-subdivided municipalities.)

In counting votes in single member wards, preferences of voters are distributed to each preferred candidate and this determines the result of the election.

In multi-member wards and un-subdivided councils where more than one person is to be elected, a Proportional Representation

count is conducted to determine the result.

The Proportional Representation system ensures that the required number of candidates are elected in proportion to their support in the electorate.

Search the [VEC website](#) for more detailed explanations if you or your campaign team are interested.

It is important to understand how the voting system in place in your municipality affects your campaign.

Understanding the voting system and using this understanding in your campaign increases your chances of getting elected.

### *How will voting take place?*

The [Local Government Act \(1989\)](#) allows councils to decide whether voting will be by attendance or postal vote.

#### Postal voting

Postal voting is where voters receive candidate information by mail and return their votes in a sealed envelope by a set date prior to the close of voting.

#### Attendance voting

Attendance voting is where voters attend a polling booth on election day. They can vote early if circumstances prevent them from attending on the day.

For further details on maximising your chances through postal and attendance voting, see [page 38](#) of this kit. The type of voting system to be used in your election influences the strategies you use in your campaign.

### *Declaration of election donations*

All candidates, whether elected or not, must complete a Campaign Donation Return to the Chief Executive Officer of the council in which they stood as a candidate.

The return must be submitted within a certain number of days (e.g. was 40 days in 2012) following election day and must contain the details of any 'gift' valued at or above a certain amount stated in the Act.

You must make sure you know the current regulations about donations and the period for which you need to keep records. Go to the [VEC website](#).

A penalty applies for failing to submit a return or for providing particulars or information that the candidate knows to be false or misleading.

A return must be submitted even if a candidate receives no donations.

## Becoming a candidate

### Deciding to stand

It is important to think about the likely impacts on your life of standing. A useful resource – *Deciding Whether to Stand* – can be found at [GoWomenLG](#) and visit the [MAV at Standforcouncil](#).

Thoughtful decision-making at an early point will help you deal with the challenges of campaigning and, potentially, being a councillor.

When you're deciding about whether or not to stand, write down your values. Putting them into words can help you decide, clarify your communication with others and guide you to remain true to yourself in challenging situations. A good place to start your values work is "The Womens Power Handbook" by Joan Kirner and Moira Rayner (see [Appendix 2](#)).

### Deciding to stand

**M**aria McCarthy began the 2012 campaign as a running mate to another candidate, with the idea that she would help him to win through her preferences.

"Once I started campaigning, I decided I really wanted to get elected and I changed my whole approach. I focussed on what I needed to do to be a serious candidate – and I got elected." Maria was elected to Mayor for the 2015 year.

The first thing Maria did in her revitalised 2012 campaign was talk to family and friends. Maria's husband wanted to help and her children provided encouragement and kept her down to earth. "They said whatever you do, you are still our Mum."

Maria had previously stood for Council in 2005, and was not elected, but this time she was standing in a different ward, so she needed to quickly get up to speed on all the local issues. She started with a list of questions and went about finding people who could help her with answers.

Maria credits her local member The Hon. Christine Fyffe as her mentor and role model: "She gave me courage, telling me like it was and answering all my questions. I still go to her for advice, particularly on state issues."

Maria says that she developed the skills she needed to run her campaign through running her



own business. During this time she became an active member of the Chamber of Commerce and several other local community groups. These activities taught her a lot about campaigning, honed her skills and introduced her to others who would support her campaign.

Maria would not do anything differently if she ran next time around. "I was so pleased with my campaign. Every household in my ward got a brochure about me and this was the best advertising I could have done. I was also given a donation that I used for an advertisement in the local paper."

When asked for advice to other women who might be weighing up whether to stand or not Maria says "Just go for it. There's nothing to lose. Everyone should give it a go. It should be like jury duty and if it was, then everyone would know what local government is and how important it is to the community."

— Councillor Maria McCarthy,  
Yarra Ranges Shire Council  
(2012 – )

## Deciding to stand

**W**hen Sophia Shen heard that only 25 percent of the Greater Geelong Councillors were female, while 50 per cent of the local government electorate were women, she was shocked.

“Women should have an equal say in local government. I come from a migrant and ethnic background and I believe we need a voice too. So I thought I would have a go.”

Inspired by a workshop run by Women in Local Democracy (WILD) in Geelong, supported by a series of workshops organized by the Victorian Women’s Immigrant and Refugee Coalition (VIRWC), influenced by the guest speakers who were previous Councillors, Sophia built up her confidence and decided to stand for the election.

“I wouldn’t have nominated myself without the support from these two groups (WILD and the VIRWC). I needed to really understand the local community, what their priority needs were, and how I could help them meet their demands. I also needed to understand the election process. Candidates who come from ethnic communities can be disadvantaged compared with others, but I always believe if you sincerely stand for the benefits of your community, the residents will vote for you and put trust in you.”

Sophia’s campaign went well. She received the highest percentage of first preference votes – 30 per cent – but lost on the distribution of preferences.



“In my ward there were five candidates to vote for. Four were men and then there was me. I didn’t fully understand the preference system. I refused to have a running mate. My advice for any candidates would be: if you want to succeed in an election, you have to work within the system.”

Although she did not win in her ward, the campaign boosted her confidence, public speaking and multi-tasking skills. It also broadened her knowledge and understanding of her community and of local government’s role in the community. And it had other spin offs too. “Through my active participation and contribution to the wider community, I gained recognition and encouragement. I received the 2013 Victorian Women’s Governance Scholarship Program which sponsored me to complete the Australian Institute of Company Director’s Board Directorship Course.”

— Sophia Shen, candidate  
Greater Geelong elections 2012

## Planning your campaign

**O**nce you have decided to stand for election, you need to start planning your campaign strategy. First, develop a time frame of what needs to be done, who’s going to do it and when it is going to be done.

Most of the women councillors interviewed for this kit estimated that they spent from four weeks to six months on their campaign. With the benefit of hindsight, many would advise others to start planning up to 12 months before the election, even if you do not announce your candidacy until much later.

However it is up to you how you do it – become the expert in knowing what time frame will work for you.

The table on [pages 20-21](#) provides a sample timeline of campaign tasks and responsibilities.



## The campaign team

‘The first time I stood on my own I didn’t have any organisational support. By the third campaign I knew what I was doing and I had a really strong campaign team.’

**E**stablishing an effective campaign team or support group is very important. Although you might be tempted, you won’t be able to run the campaign entirely by yourself. A good campaign is more work than one person can handle. You need to be out there meeting the voters, not stamping envelopes. You

will need people around you for moral support as the campaign progresses.

Set up your campaign team as soon as possible. This is the first step in a successful campaign.

Who you choose to be part of the campaign team will be important to your election. As well as being

people who are loyal to you and committed to your success, they need to be people who can quickly pick up particular skills, such as publicity and fundraising. If you have people with some experience of previous campaigns, so much the better.

There are more ideas on the GoWomenLG website.

## Campaign teams

**C**ouncillor Nora Lamont says she wouldn’t have been elected if she had tried to run for council in 2008 without a campaign team.

“Luckily I had some experienced people willing to be part of my team and friends and family who were all willing to do whatever they could – and they ended up doing the lot. I couldn’t have done it all by myself.”

Nora’s campaign team “did everything”. Led by a campaign manager, they designed, wrote and edited her printed campaign material; arranged printing and delivery; oversaw her candidate statement; arranged the 13,000 residents in her ward in maps that could be handed out to letterboxing teams and arranged people into teams and onto rosters for letterboxing and handing out material at shopping centres.

“As the candidate, you can’t do all that by yourself. If I had tried, I would have got bogged down in all of that and not been able to focus on the broader picture. Someone else coordinated all of the detailed

work so that I could concentrate on talking to people and finding out what I needed to know about my area.”

Nora said that she had lots of people willing to help her, but making effective use of a multitude of volunteers is challenging. “Not everyone wants to speak directly to other people; they would rather stay in the background. Others wanted to do the letter boxing; some wanted to be at the shopping centre visits. I needed someone to coordinate all of this too.”

Along with making sure they put together a campaign team, Nora would urge other prospective Councillors to “get out early and raise the money needed for campaign materials, etc”.

“I’m sure it is probably easier once you’re an incumbent running for re-election, but I found it very difficult to raise funds because not many people knew me and I didn’t know who to go to for money.”

Nora says that a campaign manager



could also help with the vexed issue of preferences – something she says she found difficult to master.

“My advice to others would be to get to know the other candidates before you make your preference choices. I was lucky that I knew the incumbent, but I didn’t really know much about the other candidates. I was elected, but I want to be better prepared next time to ask the other candidates questions which will help me to know where they stand.”

— Councillor Nora Lamont, Maroondah City Council (2008–)

## The campaign manager or team leader

**Y**our campaign manager or leader will be the most important member of the campaign team, as this person will have overall responsibility. You will be out there getting known in the community, promoting your candidacy and the issues you are running on. It will be your campaign manager who attends to the day-to-day running of the campaign.

You need to work well with your campaign manager. Choose someone you can trust to get things done without you having to check all the time; someone who can give you constructive advice and criticism, if you need it; and someone to help keep you motivated when you are feeling tired and stressed. It would also help if your campaign manager had some previous experience of running a campaign. However these skills can be learned.

Some of the things a campaign manager could organise include:

- Keep you up to date with key timelines e.g. the nomination form is filled out and lodged on time
- Draft a campaign plan for your approval, including fund raising and a communication plan
- Design, authorise and print publicity material
- Recruit and train supportive volunteers to letter box, doorknock, answer phones
- Make sure the campaign has an effective preference strategy for the how-to-vote cards

### The role of the Campaign Manager

**C**ouncillor Mary Lalios attributes her success in being elected to the Whittlesea City Council to the hard work and support of her campaign manager, Cathy Hayes.

“Cathy was an absolute gem. She not only mentored me through the emotional and psychological thoughts that go through your mind about the election, but she also helped me with all the logistical side of things – the campaign materials, the rosters, the letterbox maps, the timetables.”

Mary said she would advise other prospective Councillors to seek out a campaign manager who has had experience of Council elections. Cathy Hayes had previously been a Whittlesea Councillor herself.

“People who have been involved in campaigns before know all about the timing of everything, which is really important in terms of getting your material out to residents. Someone who has had that experience can guide you and you can concentrate on getting out there and doing what is needed to raise your profile. You need

someone else to be thinking about the deadlines and the paperwork.”

As a first-time candidate, Mary said that Cathy also helped her to raise her public profile by

providing advice about letters to residents and articles in the local papers. Cathy also helped her to develop her campaign brochures, authorised all her material and helped organise rosters and

maps for the volunteers involved in letterboxing.

“She helped me through the whole process and was absolutely vital, particularly as it was my first campaign.”

The success of her first campaign, with Cathy’s support, and the increased profile and connections developed during her first term as Councillor gave Mary the confidence to run her re-election campaign without a manager.

“But, Cathy was in the background, helping me to letterbox and was there if I needed her advice.”

— Councillor Mary Lalios, Whittlesea City Council (2005–)



Cathy Hayes (left) and Mary Lalios

- Arrange scrutineers for the vote count and make sure they know what to do
- Make sure that you are supported.



## Campaign tasks and timelines



### TASK

### RESPONSIBILITY

### TIME FRAME

**Decide what will make a successful campaign,** taking into account what you have control over.

You

At the beginning

**Identify and contact key people,** such as past or present Councillors, who could advise you on effective campaigning.

You

As early as possible

**Tell people that you are going to run** — your friends, groups you are involved with and organisations you think will be important for you.

You

As early as possible

**Find a campaign manager** — someone you trust to run things.

You

Between 6 and 2 months before the election

**Form the campaign team or support group** — people prepared to help.

You/campaign manager

Between 6 and 2 months before the election

**Identify relevant community groups and organisations** to contact, using municipal directories.

You

Between 6 and 2 months before the election

**Set meeting dates for campaign team**

You/campaign manager

Between 6 and 2 months before the election

**Get used to thinking about preferencing strategies. Don't run away because it's too hard.**

Get help from an experienced person or mentor. If you decide not to preference make sure you decide consciously.

You/ campaign manager

As early as possible before the election.

**Plan your campaign strategy** — what will your messages be? Why should people elect you? How will you communicate with the community?

You/campaign manager

As early as possible before the election

**Work out your campaign budget** — how much will it cost and where will the money come from?

You/campaign manager/  
Treasurer

As early as possible before the election

**Set up your campaign team meeting place or office** — where will it be and what will you need?

You/campaign manager/  
campaign team

As early as possible before the election

**Meet the people,** be seen in public places, and ask to address local groups.

You

Ongoing until election day

**Check all the relevant dates** — remember you need to nominate a number of weeks before election day.

Campaign manager/You

At least 3 months before the election

**Be aware of the deadlines** for postal votes. Think about a strategy for attracting postal votes.

Campaign manager/You

At least 3 months before the election

**Arrange photographs for leaflets and publicity material.** Make sure these comply with current regulations — check the VEC website for details.

You/campaign manager

Between 6 and 3 months before the election

CONTINUED OVER PAGE

## Campaign tasks and timelines



### TASK

### RESPONSIBILITY

### TIME FRAME

**Check deadlines for local papers, submit media releases** and advise journalists you are available for interviews. Write letters to the editor.

You/campaign manager

As early as possible before the election and during campaign

**Plan and produce campaign materials and advertising.** These could include leaflets, billboards and garden signs.

You/campaign manager/  
campaign team

2 months before the election

**Identify and contact other candidates, decide on a preference strategy and allocate preferences.** Ensure that you include preferences on How-To-Vote cards and other materials.

You/campaign manager

Between 8-5 weeks before the election, or earlier if candidates are known

**Act on your door knock and letterbox plan.**

You/campaign manager

Ongoing until election day

**Postal elections:** remember that many people vote as soon as they receive the voting material in the post. Plan your campaign timelines accordingly.

Campaign manager/  
campaign team

According to your local conditions

**Attendance elections:** Draw up rosters for booths, ensure that there's a phone to take calls from voters for information, assistance and transport.

**Appoint scrutineers** for vote counting. The VEC provides information for scrutineers. Keep in regular touch with your scrutineers as counting goes on.

You/campaign manager

From 4 weeks before the election.

**Prepare speeches** – one for Declaration of the Poll if you are elected; another to thank your team at the celebration.

You

Two days before the election

**The night before election day, get a good sleep.**

You

The night before the election

**In Attendance elections,** move around the booths to meet the voters or stick to the booths with the biggest enrolments. Ensure that there's a worker at every booth.

You/ campaign manager

On the day of election

**After the poll,** celebrate your success. Publicly and privately thank all your friends and supporters whether you get elected or not.

You/everyone

On the night of election

**Evaluate the election result.** What worked? How could it be done better next time? Refer back to the first step of your campaign – defining your own success.

You/campaign manager/  
campaign team

A week after the poll



### Campaign supporters – part of a team

**C**ampaign supporters will be crucial to your campaign as you try to maximise your campaign effectiveness and to minimise your campaign expenses.

**‘Often you need other women to encourage you to stand and then to keep encouraging you as you take the next step. It’s important to have people to talk with to help you to focus and be clear.’**

All the women approached when putting together this kit emphasised the importance of their family, friends and supporters in encouraging them to run for council, and in providing support to them through the campaign and when they became councillors.

You will draw your campaign supporters from your family and friends and, if you are a member of a political party or a community group, from that party or group. You will meet other supporters along the way.

These people will encourage you at tough moments, assist you with your campaigning, hang in there with you when it is raining and you still have 100 doors to knock, deliver food when you are exhausted. They will be the ones to commiserate with and support you when you are feeling low. They will help you to decide what is appropriate action when other candidates seem to be using ‘dirty tricks’. And they will celebrate your campaign at the Declaration of the Poll, whether you are elected or not.

It is important to remember that your supporters are not paid staff and, as such, can choose what they will and won’t do. It is also

important to keep in mind that volunteers can burn out. Look after them.

Your campaign manager will need to keep the volunteers busy and happy. This includes working out what tasks volunteers are willing to do and where their skills would be best used. It is important to make sure that volunteers are kept informed and made to feel appreciated.

**‘It’s good to have someone’s shoulder to cry on as you’re getting there’**

Don’t accept an offer of help and then not make use of it. And make sure that you, as the candidate, recognise the work of volunteers and thank them personally.

Information for candidates and campaign teams can be found at [GoWomenLG](http://GoWomenLG).



*Celebrating the Victorian Local Government Women’s Charter*

## Mentors

**A**long with personal support, campaign managers and teams, mentors or “critical friends” provide important strategic support. There are many ways of getting mentored.

If you don't already have mentoring in mind, do some research about the benefits and how to find a mentor. See [GoWomenLG](#) and [ALGWA](#) for ideas, including having multiple mentors.

Many women emphasise the great value they derive from diverse mentoring arrangements. Others said they wished they had a mentor. Approaching someone to be your mentor can be a more structured way of obtaining support. Your mentor could be someone who's a current or former councillor, run a successful

campaign, or someone who is a past or present member of State or Federal parliament.

The relationships you have with your mentors may be formal, with set meetings, agreed short and long-term goals and a set time-frame for the relationship. Or it could just be someone you occasionally ring or have coffee with when you have a question or feel you need support.

Unless you are lucky enough to participate in a formal mentoring program, in which you will be matched with a mentor and have training provided, you will usually be the one to identify who your mentors may be and initiate the relationships.

The key thing is to identify what you need from the mentoring relationship and then approach someone who can meet these needs. You need not feel nervous as people approached to be mentors are usually flattered that someone thinks they can learn something from them. Remember, it's a two-way process: the mentor will gain from the relationship too.

**'It was really great to have someone at the other end of the phone who had been involved and had lots of local knowledge.'**



# Your campaign, communicating to voters and more

## Communicating what you stand for

**'It's a strength to know what you want to achieve. Everyone needs to know what you stand for.'**

**A**s a candidate, you will need to prepare information about the things you stand for, the things you want to change and the things you want to improve. And you need to make sure that this is well distributed so people can see it before they vote.

It is not necessary to have a position or a well-developed policy on every local issue. Several

successful candidates tell us they prefer to listen to the issues and concerns raised by the local residents and businesses while campaigning, promising to raise them if they were elected, rather than responding with a fixed policy position.

If you are standing as a member of a political party or community group, you might have a defined position on the particular local issue with which your group is concerned, for example, keeping a community facility open or changing local planning regulations.

“Conflict of interest “ as it applies to elected councillors is not an issue for candidates. Your job as a candidate is to listen to community, advocate some positions and views, and remain open, transparent and honourable. Make sure you don't make promises you can't keep. Change requires the support of other councillors. Some things you would like to change may not even be part of the responsibilities of local government.

Never be afraid to say: “I don't know but I'll find out and get back to you”.

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## How do you develop an understanding of key local issues?

### *Find out what your council is doing*

**W**hether you are the candidate or a supporter, it's worth finding out about wider community issues, council policies and the work of councillors. One way to start this is to attend council meetings

Contact your council office and ask when the meetings are and how to obtain an agenda for the meeting. Collect the agenda even if you are unable to attend the meeting, as it will set out the issues under discussion. It is also useful to attend other council related meetings such as a ward

meeting or meeting on a specific issue run by council or current councillors.

Make yourself known as a potential candidate to the Chief Executive Officer.

Ask them if you can also meet council officers from key departments such as planning, environment, human services and infrastructure. These officers are a rich source of information about the key issues in their area and what the community is most concerned about. Ask for the information you want and take notes.

**Remember you will not be expected to know everything. Once elected, councillors ask questions constantly about many issues and processes.**

Ask for copies of key council policy documents such as strategic, corporate, business plans and annual reports – often on the council website . There may also be documents on exhibition for consultation with the community, before they are finalised and adopted by council.

Familiarise yourself with your council's website as it will have a wide range of information available.

### *Read your local newspaper*

Your local newspaper will usually include news about council meetings and issues that are considered important in your local community. Remember a newspaper story may give an incomplete picture. Find out more about an issue which you feel strongly about before declaring your position, or decide to have an open mind.

### *Know how social media is being used*

There may be resident action groups or other open sites which will help you gauge the issues for your community. Facebook, Twitter, blogs or other media sources can be useful ways to find out what the community cares about. If you are not an expert

yourself, have someone on your campaign team who is up with social media.

### *Keep your eyes and ears open in your local community*

Look around your community and listen to what's being said by residents and businesses. Ask people what they think. Along with what is being talked about in the council chamber, local newspaper and, possibly social media, this will give you an idea of the things people see as important.

### *Focus on particular area of interest*

You do not have to be an expert on every issue. Focus on the things you feel passionate about and run with them. Find out all you can. Develop a list of issues, concerns and actions.

### *Test your ideas out with your network of supporters*

Your family, friends and others, especially anyone different from you, will give you feedback on your responses to local concerns and issues and the effectiveness of your presentation.

### *Ask yourself*

These questions may help you develop a position on the issues most important to you.

- What are my values?
- Why did I decide to run for council?
- If I had the chance to change policy in only one area what would it be?
- Why is the community important?
- Why is it important for women to be councillors?
- What kind of councillor do I want to be?
- How can I be the councillor I want to be?

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## **Developing your campaign material**

**C**hanges to the Electoral Regulations between elections can affect how you need to think about campaigning and your campaign materials. Make sure you are familiar with all current requirements. Check with the [Victorian Electoral Commission](#) (VEC) prior to every campaign.

Your campaign material will introduce you, your messages and your policies to the community.

It should be as good as you can manage within your budget.

It is really important that you and what you stand for come across clearly and simply in your campaign material. It doesn't have to be slick, but it has to be you.

If you are standing in a Postal election, you will need to lodge a short Candidate Statement with a strict word limit, and other material including How-To-

Vote card or with the Returning Officer. The dates are critical and there is a short timeline, so be prepared as soon as nominations close. This material will be sent out to voters with the ballot papers.

This information is of great importance. It may be the only thing that the voters know of you before they decide how to vote.

**'My biggest campaign expense was photos. We had them professionally done. This really paid off in the vote. We thought it was important for presentation and for some people this was the only way they recognised me.'**



The extent of your campaign material will be determined by your budget and how you plan to use the material. Here are some suggestions:

A short summary of your biographical details, including your community background and important aspects of your message – for using as necessary and included with any press releases.

A campaign brochure with your photograph, information on your position on a few key issues and contact details – for doorknocking, letterboxing, and in general ‘meet-the-community’ events. The contents should be checked with the Returning Officer.

### How I communicated what I stood for

**M**ikaela Power knows from personal experience the importance of communication.

“I think people can be a bit confused about the role of local government, so it’s important to give them something that they can connect to. Sometimes this is something to vote against, though. At the last election, there was a small but significant portion of men who put all the women candidates in my ward lowest on the voting paper. They were never going to be my audience. In a small town or rural area, people might know you, but not know what you stand for, so listening and talking to people is really important.”

Mikaela used a variety of techniques to get her message out. These included a professional photo and A5 flyers, letters to the local newspapers before the actual campaign began, radio and print advertisements, a Facebook page and signs in prominent places and on the back of a car that could be moved around. Mikaela also stood outside her local supermarket handing out flyers and talking to people. “It gave me good visibility and a chance to talk, but you have to be prepared to answer whatever comes up!”

Mikaela participated in a panel Q&A organised by the local ratepayers’ association. “It was nerve-racking, but I’m glad I did it. I was the only female candidate there on the night and I was right in the middle of the lineup. ”

When asked what was her most effective communication tool, Mikaela highlights her flyers and radio advertisements. She also emphasises the importance of strategy.

“I don’t think it’s any one thing. It’s the overall approach and consistency that matters. Starting from your 150 word candidate statement, everything should demonstrate your values. Work out what works best in your area. For regional areas and some suburbs, local papers can still be a good avenue, but you would need to link this with signage and other ‘reminders’ using social media, printed collateral or posters.”

Mikaela offers the following advice to prospective women candidates:

- Use the networks you already have, don’t be afraid to talk about why you’re running and seek support.
- If you don’t have experience in dealing with the media or marketing, find someone to help,



or at least someone who will read things through before you go to print.

- Have a communication plan – what you will do, by when, and estimated costs.
- Attend a few Council meetings and talk to current Councillors, if possible. it’s good to know where they stand on matters that matter to you.
- Don’t make personal attacks on current Councillors or other candidates; remember that you might both end up in the Council chamber together. Address the issues instead.

— Councillor Mikaela Power, Baw Baw Shire Council (2012 – )

## THE BASICS

### *Candidate statement*

Although a Candidate Statement is a requirement in postal elections, no matter what kind of election you are in, it can assist in crafting your message. So start crafting this early. Some examples are provided in [Appendix 2](#).

### *Photo*

After deciding on the messages you want to convey to the community, you will need a photo. A good quality photo is important in introducing you and your message. These can either be done professionally or by a skilled supporter, but don't underestimate

their importance. Get feedback from others before you decide on the final photos. It is best to use the same photograph in all your material so that people will get to know your face

You may think of a central message or slogan to go with your photo. This should be clear, concise and something that is associated with you. If you are standing as part of a team these statements need to be the same or consistent.

### *Authorisation*

You will need to include an authorisation, as well as the name of the printer on ALL your

campaign materials, including online. Check all the electoral requirements for online and printed campaign materials, including how to distribute printed electoral material at polling stations. Always check with the local Returning Officer, or the [VEC website](#) or phone line.

### *Know your Returning Officer*

The Returning Officer is the person charged with the responsibility for conducting the local election. The Returning Officer is appointed by the Victorian Electoral Commission.

## Communicating your message through traditional and social media

'To be a councillor, you need a high profile. You need to have your name around. You need to be seen someone who can do community leadership'

**W**hen you have formed your position on the most important local issues, the next step is to find a way to get your ideas out there into the community. People need to know who you are and what you stand for. Then they can choose to vote for you.

Your networks and the community groups you are involved with can help make sure your name is heard around your area. When meeting people for the first time, they may recognise your name even if they don't know your face.

Getting your name known can also be achieved through traditional and social media.

### *Social media*

Taking advantage of social media will depend on your capacity and interest in this area and the needs of your local community.

Social media has increased the opportunities for candidates to communicate quickly and cost-effectively with voters and the community. While there are some downsides, you can use it effectively and safely with the right information.

Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, and blogs can all be set up quickly and quite cheaply. They can get messages to people without the lead times, cost and delivery of printed materials to people's homes and businesses. It also depends on who you want to reach in your community. How do those people like to find out about things?

All these communication methods can convey your messages directly to people. They can see for themselves your opinions and reactions to events and issues of concern.



We tell our young people that they shouldn't put anything out on social media that they would not be happy to see on a billboard in the middle of their neighbourhood.

Candidates should take the same advice – use Twitter or Facebook

as an alternative to an expensive billboard in your main street – but remember that the impact will be as public and, potentially, permanent. Some experienced candidates suggest making 'rules' for yourself to avoid making rash or reactive comments which you might regret later.

Don't post anything until you are sure it is on target with your campaign messages.

See [GoWomenLG](#) for more resources and links on this topic.

### Social media – a “fantastic tool”

**M**aribyrnong Councillor and former Mayor Sarah Carter is a firm believer that social media can be a “fantastic tool” for candidates and Councillors.

“There are so many people engaged in social media and spending so much time on it, that it is a great way to engage with people and to disseminate your information to a much broader audience, better than through any other media forum.”

“Remember when we all thought it was just going to be about young people? Well it hasn't worked out that way! I find that I can access local 'friends of' groups, primary schools, mothers groups – all sorts of community based groups – through their Facebook pages.”

Sarah says the low-cost and immediacy of social marketing should also appeal to candidates and Councillors. “It's a fantastic way to utilise photos and provide updates to people in a visually attractive way. I can put photos up of lots of the people I meet, events I go to, and people really respond to that.”

As with any form of communication, Sarah advises that social media be given “thought and consideration” – make sure that people in your photographs cannot be identified or have given their permission for

them to be used; don't ever say anything defamatory about people and don't upload any confidential briefing or information materials.

“You should always make sure that you would be happy for anyone to see what you post or say and don't forget that what does go up will be out there forever.”

Sarah also advises people to think about the issue of moderating comments made on your social media versus allowing a free debate. This can mean coping criticism from time to time. “If you get negative feedback, you have to consider how you are going to respond. It's the same as with any other forum in which you need to listen to people and respond respectfully. Unfortunately, you may have to work out some strategies to deal with “trolls” if you are unfortunate to be targeted, as I was at one time. But I found that with help from others and personal strength, you can deal with it effectively.”

And while an advocate for the benefits of social media, Sarah believes that it should be seen as a complementary, rather than a replacement, communication tool.

“I still don't think you can beat face to face contact. I was the



underdog in my first campaign and not expected to win, so I spent a lot of time doorknocking with my business cards and letterboxing my DL postcard sized flyers.

“A lot of people later commented that they saw me out every night delivering my flyers and I think they saw that I was prepared to put a lot of time and effort into getting elected.”

When running for election, Sarah's effective communications campaign featured the brand 'Maribyrnong Matters'. All her campaign materials had a consistent look and feel to them, including strong use of photos and colour. She extended this to her Facebook page.

— Councillor Sarah Carter  
Maribyrnong City Council (2008 – )

## Traditional media

Media coverage can be paid or unpaid. Advertising is paid media coverage. Unpaid media coverage includes stories in local papers or letters to the editor. You can communicate with the media either in person — by being interviewed by a reporter — or indirectly, by a media release.

Become familiar with your local newspaper by following how it covers the issues that concern people in your areas. Contact the paper and introduce yourself to the journalist/s. Find out how best to send them your media releases or statements.

If you are going to invest some of your hard-earned campaign funds on advertising, it is advisable to get expert advice.

Some experienced candidates say that billboard advertising is more cost-effective in a local campaign than newspaper advertising.

If you are standing with the support of a political party or a community group see what the party or the group is planning to say on issues. It will be cost-effective to combine that with the message you want to convey.

## Media releases

Send these to journalists well in time for their deadlines. Provide specific information about the topic and include clear statements outlining what you believe.

Keep media releases to one page. You can provide additional information when you, or a member of your campaign team, follow up with a phone call.

There is good information about how to write effective media releases on the web. In general, a good media release will always answer:

- **Who?** Who is the subject of the story? Identify and describe.
- **What?** What is happening that the local community should know about? The goal is to get the media's attention so that your release will be read and the issue reported.
- **Why?** Why is this important? The reason for your press release should be clear, compelling and specific.

## Working with traditional media



Many of the tips offered below are equally applicable to using social media – after all it's all about communicating.

- **Stay on top of the local news. What are the issues? Listen, watch and learn**
- **Focus on the local outlets — local newspaper and radio, regional TV in some places**
- **Determine what media type is most popular in your municipality. Is it your local newspaper, radio or TV station? Direct most of your energy to what has the most impact on your area**
- **Always return calls or emails from journalists promptly. Remember they are working to deadlines**
- **Have a clear purpose for talking to a reporter. Prepare this before the meeting.**
- **Prepare your points. Try to anticipate the 'angles' the reporter may take**
- **Assume that there is no such thing as 'not for publication' or 'off the record'**
- **Be careful of joking with the reporter — a joke in print is not always as funny as it seemed when you said it**
- **Be clear about the major points you wish to make; stick to these and do not get distracted**
- **Be concise**
- **Do not lie or bend the truth**
- **Do not make factual errors**
- **Do not be ashamed to say "I don't know."**
- **Do not promise what you cannot deliver**
- **Do not assume the reporter is your best friend**
- **Do not pass on rumours about your opponent or others to reporters**
- **Do not be afraid to disagree with a reporter. Explain why you do not agree**
- **Do not feel obliged to fill silences in a conversation with a reporter.**



- **Where?** If it is an event or a press conference, where is it going to take place? Be specific about the address, include a map with directions.
- **When?** When will it take place? The date, day of the week, and hour should be included.

Use direct quotes in your release. Keep sentences and paragraphs short. Make sure you include a contact name and contact details.

### *Opinion pieces*

Ask your local journalists if there is an opportunity for you (or your campaign team) to write an article about an issue you are concerned about and how it affects your area. Offer to supply photographs.

### *Letters to the Editor*

Even though newspapers are said to be in decline, many people interested in local issues still read the local Letters to the Editor.

They are a free opportunity for you to express yourself about an issue of concern. Most importantly, even if your letter is not printed, it gives you great practice at composing your thoughts in a clear and concise manner. You will have the best chance of getting your letter printed if you comment directly on a recent article.

Letters to the Editor need to be written immediately after the article or event on which you are commenting appears. Write

**'I didn't doorknock because I thought it was a bit intrusive. However, I did wear a placard in the main street and people knew who I was. If they wanted, they could come up and talk to me.'**

**'I doorknocked two thirds of the electorate, about 6000 houses. It was massive, but it was the most powerful thing to do. It was the most old-fashioned way but people really appreciated it. People could relate to me on the day because they'd already met me.'**

immediately, but carefully and thoughtfully. You don't want a rash comment to come back and haunt you and your campaign. Be as brief as possible.

Refer to the article by title, date of publication and reporter. Sign your letter with your complete name and include your address and phone number. If you do not want these details published you can request that they be withheld from publication. Ideally, a Letter to the Editor is less than 200 words long.

### *Speeches and presentations*

Another way to convey your message to prospective voters will be through speeches and presentations. These steps will help you prepare a speech or presentation. Use your campaign team or mentors to help with feedback and practice.

- Define the purpose of your speech or presentation. Do you want to persuade the audience to do something?
- What do you want the listeners to do? Do you want them to take specific action? Do you want to inspire them

or convince them about something?

- Know your audience. What local groups do they come from? Will you need interpreters or translated materials? Do they know you and your subject? Are they interested in you or your subject?
- Determine what you want your audience to know, to remember, to learn, to do. In approximately 25 words or less, write out the aim of your speech.
- Become familiar and comfortable with the subject or issues about which you will be speaking
- List the three main points you want to make in your speech. Illustrate each point with at least one example (a story or anecdote) that will create a picture in the minds of your listeners.
- Collect quotes, statistics, examples and other interesting information you can use in the speech
- Write the opening attention-getting statement of your speech
- Write the closing part of your speech. Aim for a strong finish.
- Aim for a speech shorter than the time you have been given.
- Know the program for the event at which you will speak. Are you the only speaker? What is the order of appearance? Will you be first or last if there are several speakers?

- Know the location and how the meeting space will be set up
- Be aware of the time allowed afterwards for questions and answers
- Test your presentation timing before the event to make sure you keep to the time allocated – or less! People respect this.

### *Community campaigning*

There are many ways of campaigning. You need to campaign in a way that will work best in your community and with which you feel comfortable.

All the planning around your community campaign needs to relate to your local conditions.

Ask yourself:

- Will I need help to cover the whole municipality or ward in which I am standing?
- What kind of election will it be – postal or attendance?
- If it's a postal ballot, when are the ballot papers going to be sent out? (It is believed that many postal voters complete the papers as soon as they get them).

But remember, every campaign is different.

'I didn't have any confidence. I still don't. It's a personal thing. I decided not to doorknock because that is just not me. I didn't have the answers. Now I am on council, I can tell people what they want to know.'



# Campaign strategies, your budget and preferences

## Your campaign strategy

‘Being known in the community is vital to being elected. The first thing to do is to work out a plan to become better known by decision-makers, opinion leaders, and potential voters. Your campaign team and campaign manager will be able to assist with this.’

### *Building your profile and networks in the community*

You and your campaign team will already have community, business, service or school networks. People in these groups may already know you and be more likely to support you when you start getting active in your campaign.

There are two broad types of community campaigning: high-intensity and low-intensity.

Low-intensity activities are not targeted and do not have a high impact on voter choice, but they can still let the voters know who you are and what you stand for.

High-intensity campaigns are more individualised and more persuasive; they are also more resource intensive.

There are specific requirements about electoral material and the way it can be used. Check the [Local Government Act \(1989\)](#).

## Common forms of community campaigning



| Activity                         | Impact   | Cost                   | Resources required  |
|----------------------------------|----------|------------------------|---------------------|
| leafleting/letter boxing         | low      | low — cost of leaflets | people, time        |
| garden signs                     | low      | moderate               | people, time, money |
| doorknocking                     | high     | low                    | people, time        |
| morning tea with the candidate   | high     | low                    | time, money         |
| shopping centre listening post   | moderate | low                    | people, time        |
| existing events (e.g. festivals) | low      | low                    | people, time        |
| events you create                | high     | high                   | people, time, money |
| telephone                        | high     | moderate               | people, time, money |
| direct mail                      | high     | high                   | time, money         |
| local media                      | high     | low (unpaid media)     | time                |
| social media                     | high     | low                    | time                |

### *Low impact community campaigning*

**'Letter drops are sometimes better than doorknocking. You meet people in their garden and you don't intrude.'**

Putting campaign information in letter boxes is the most basic form of community campaigning. Your supporters and other volunteers can do this for you. They will need leaflets, written instructions, maps with directions telling them where the information is to be distributed and a telephone number to call if there is a problem.

Some candidates may be able to afford bulk posting, but letter boxing can have other advantages. And it can be good for fitness!

Your supporters might also place large posters on a stake in their garden during the final weeks of the campaign. Posters can cost more than leafleting, but if they are placed in strategic areas they will assist in raising your profile in the community.

Leafleting is where you and your supporters distribute information at a public place such as a shopping centre. You can make it fun if you do it with others and it does not take a lot of time or money.

### *High impact community campaigning*

**'I doorknocked everywhere. There was a lot of a backlash over the former Councillors. If people were not at home, I wrote on the pamphlet and I got good feedback as lots of people contacted me.'**

Doorknocking is one of the most common community campaigning activities. You or your supporters knock on the door of a voter and talk to them. You should try and leave some campaign literature with the resident. If there is no one home, leave brief contact information. Make sure you include your contact details on your campaign material.

In addition to helping potential voters identify you, doorknocking may also help you to identify your supporters and even to recruit

enthusiastic voters as volunteers. You and your supporters might benefit from some training prior to going doorknocking. This could include some role-play to practice what you will be saying, as well as some hints on appearance and behaviour. You should also be wary of possible dangers such as dogs and overly enthusiastic supporters.

Many successful campaigns are run without any doorknocking at all. Get advice about your ward. Are residents likely to be home? Are certain areas better to doorknock than others?

Morning teas, barbecues and other social functions to meet the potential councillor are also good ways of building a profile. Your networks may be useful in organising functions for you to attend. Make sure you are there on time and are warm, supportive and aware of local issues.

Telephone calls to residents can be useful. However, you will need to make sure you are not intrusive.



*Women candidates celebrate their campaigns*



## Finances and fundraising

Before you begin your campaign you will need to organise a budget with your campaign manager. The budget will be based on your campaign plan and take into account what you will need to spend, and anticipated income from donations or any other sources. The difference between how much you need to spend and how much income you can count on will then become your fundraising target.

Many successful candidates have told us that they did not have any other source of funding apart from their own money or that of their

‘The campaign has to be run professionally — it might cost several thousand. However, you can get by spending only a little....’

family. One of the major roles of your campaign committee will be to help you raise funds.

Remember the 3 golden rules:

- You must declare donations over a specified amount and type
- Campaign expenses may be tax deductible up to a set amount.
- Check current regulations and tax rulings prior to each campaign.

Read the *Local Government Act (1989)* S. 62 and talk to your accountant if you have one.

A campaign budget will vary for each campaign. It could depend on where you are standing and how many candidates are running. No matter how much or how little you think the campaign will cost, you will still need a budget.

## Fundraising for fun and not for stress

**A**lthough Beth Ripper is no longer an elected Councillor her advice on fundraising certainly stands the test of time. Beth used her business planning skills including budget planning and active marketing early in the campaign to keep her fundraising on track. She started out thinking she might need to self-fund her campaign, even though she was living on a very small income. However she soon found that donations and in-kind support were provided by all sorts of people.

“Within a few weeks I found that a network of supporters developed around me and that essentially a crowd funding process happened. This was before the concept of crowd funding was made popular. But it is a very obvious strategy. Crowd funding relies on people investing in you as a useful representative.”

The business planning that I did certainly helped to define how much

money I needed to cover the campaign. This was a useful target and also useful for people to know how they could provide in-kind support.”

Beth’s support came in the form of cash donations, printing and copying, letterbox dropping and even promises of childcare support. Child care was very important as Beth was the sole carer of her four year old granddaughter when she first stood for council.

This in-kind support was particularly important to Beth. “A friend who is a psychologist even offered as many counselling sessions as I needed to be able to have an emotional release and sounding board.”

When asked what she learnt from her fundraising Beth says, “It is actually heart-warming to get support. Lots of small donations



are almost better than a few big cash donations.”

Beth offers the following advice to women candidates:

Do – make a plan and a budget and keep records of all donations

Do - develop a support base that activates

word of mouth to develop your community recognition further

Do - have good photos taken of you being active in the community.

Don’t – forget to acknowledge your supporters

Don’t – waste energy rebutting other people’s campaigns

Don’t – chase big bucks but gather support through many small donations.

— Beth Ripper, former Councillor Wellington Shire Council

## Why you need to develop a campaign budget, even with limited funds

A budget will help you ‘spend smart’. All campaigns have limited resources, with no money to waste.

Your budget will help you stay with your original campaign plan. When your supporters tell you that the key to winning the election is a hundred personalised fridge magnets, the budget will provide you with the answer. If your budget does not allow for it, it cannot be done.

A budget can also help you establish credibility. Your potential donors and other supporters will know that you are serious when they can see a summary of your budget.

## What to include in the budget

The sample budget is an example of a campaign budget used by a successfully elected candidate in her campaign. Remember this represents just one campaign and the amounts are a guide only.

Other candidates told us they have managed on much less, as low as \$500 including Nomination Fee, while some said they had spent more. It is the budgeting which is important not just the amount of funds available.

As shown in the example, you may also need to obtain additional paid support for childcare or help in the home. This should be included in your budget. This additional support might also be provided by your family or friends as their contribution.

Projected budget shortfalls could

be met by fundraising, seeking more in-kind contributions or through donations.

Some simple fund raising ideas might include:

- a breakfast or lunch — invite your friends and supporters to come and ensure what they pay enables you to cover costs

and make a little extra for the campaign

- a trivia night
- a front yard sale.

Remember campaign costs such as prizes, advertising, food and beverages or hiring venues might be claimable on your tax. Keep receipts.

| <i>SAMPLE ONLY:</i><br><i>Under \$3000 budget</i>             |                | <i>SAMPLE ONLY:</i><br><i>Under \$3000 budget</i> |                |
|---|----------------|---|----------------|
| <b>CAMPAIGN COSTS<br/>(check all costs for current value)</b> |                | <b>CAMPAIGN INCOME</b>                            |                |
|   | \$             |   | \$             |
| Nomination Fee  | 250.00         | Donations   | 650.00         |
| <b>Materials</b>  |                |   |                |
| Professional photos   | 300.00         | Candidate's own funds                             | 550.00         |
| Flyers with how to vote info                                  | 300.00         | In-kind home help                                 | 400.00         |
| Business cards  | 300.00         |   |                |
| Campaign brochures/DL flyers                                  | 300.00         | <b>Shortfall and Fundraising Target</b>           | <b>1170.00</b> |
| Garden stakes   | 50.00          |   |                |
| Envelopes   | donation       |   |                |
| Paper   | donation       |   |                |
| Labels  | donation       |   |                |
| <b>Administration Costs</b>                                   |                |   |                |
| Computer  | on loan        |   |                |
| Photocopying  | donation       |   |                |
| Postage   | optional       |   |                |
| Phone   | 220.00         |   |                |
| <b>Additional Costs</b>                                       |                |   |                |
| Blog design   | 500.00         |   |                |
| Home help (12 hours) and child care (32 hours in last week)   | 800.00         |   |                |
| <b>Contingency costs (approx. 10% of total costs)</b>         | <b>250.00</b>  |   |                |
| <b>Total Costs</b>  | <b>2770.00</b> | <b>Total Income</b>                               | <b>2770.00</b> |

Remember that campaign costs may be tax deductible – so be thorough in your record keeping. Donations over a certain amount must be declared in your election return.

NOTE: ACTUAL COSTS VARY CONSIDERABLY



### Maximise your chances by understanding preferences

The preferential voting system used in Victorian local government elections means that voters must mark their order of preference for all candidates in the election. If their first choice is not elected, they then have a say about who they would prefer next. It is **the most preferred candidate** who is elected, not the candidate with the highest primary or “number 1” vote. Therefore the way you arrange your preferences can be critical to your election chances.

There are two kinds of vote counting systems used in Victorian local government elections. In single councillor wards, a Preferential Voting system is used. In multi-councillor wards and undivided municipalities, Proportional Representation voting is used. However the votes will be counted in your election, you need to understand how preferencing can effect the outcomes.

Your main aim is to get as many votes as you can by persuading voters that you will do a good job of representing them and asking them to vote for you first. That is why you are running a campaign. If the voter rates another candidate higher than you, preferencing gives you another chance to get votes. Many elected candidates gain their position because of this arrangement.

While some candidates shy away from preferencing, we recommend that you at least understand the system. You need to be in a position to make an informed decision in consultation with your campaign manager.

Preferences are hard to explain in a simple way. If you really want to understand the detail of how the votes are counted under these two systems there are some excellent resources on the **VEC** website which apply to Victorian local government.

However if you want to short cut a lot of technical detail, you can understand the basics about preferencing, no matter how the votes are to be counted. Preferencing is mostly a tricky, complicated art rather than a science.

Below are a few principles for beginners.

#### *What is preference swapping?*

Your How-To-Vote card will be handed out at election time or will be posted to voters by the **VEC** if using a postal ballot system.

The general community understanding of your how-to-vote card will be that it simply lists the candidates in order of your preference for their policies and values, starting with a number ‘1’ in the box next to your name. The expectation therefore will be that the number ‘2’ candidate on your How-To-Vote card is the candidate who you consider ‘next best to you’ and so on.

#### *How do I decide who to swap preferences with?*

The aim of preferencing is for you to persuade other candidates that if they are not elected, they would like you to be elected. Then they

would agree to place you on their How-To-Vote card as a preferred candidate to themselves. In an ideal world, you would persuade other candidates likely to get solid voter support, but less votes than you, to place you high on their preference list (or how-to-vote card).

As soon as you know or have some ideas about who the candidates are, it is time to start working on your preferencing decisions.

First find out enough about your rival candidates to be able to answer the question: In what order would I list the candidates as a voter if I was not standing? One good way to find out how you would rate the candidates is to talk to them. Prepare some key questions beforehand to help you find out what you really want to know.

You must inform the Returning Officer of the How-To-Vote card you will be using by a specific date. You will need to arrange swaps before that date. The longer you wait the greater the chance that someone else will have done the swap before you.

Make sure you are familiar with the detail of the short time span between close of candidate nominations – when you will know for sure who is standing – and the date you must register your final How-To-Vote card, photo and Candidate Statement.

You don’t want to be caught by surprise!

## The do's and don'ts of preferencing

**M**eghan was twenty seven when she first stood for Council. She was working for an organisation that supported progressive women getting into Parliament, so when her friend Alice Pryor retired from Council, she thought "it's time for me to walk the talk and put myself forward as a candidate."

Meghan firmly believes that preferences played a huge role in determining who gets elected where she stood. "I have seen exceptional candidates for local government win the primary vote, but get defeated by candidates who polled lower but had the right preference flow."

And she knows this from personal experience. "Based on my primary vote I had a substantial lead over the next candidate, but had the independent candidate who preferreded me, preferreded him instead, I'm not sure that I would have been elected."

However Meghan emphasises that preference deals cannot be the only thing a candidate relies upon when standing for election.

"You still need to do everything you can to get out and win the most votes. Moreland has attendance voting so for me that means a decent amount of postal materials combined with a high visual presence at train stations, shopping

centres, signs (corflutes) in peoples' yards, and of course the campaign team at pre-poll and on election day. It's important to run the best campaign you can whilst also making the best deals available to secure your election."

Meghan's top tips for establishing winning preference deals:

- Do be accessible – try to be the first to meet with each of your fellow candidates.
- Do be honest, direct and realistic with your fellow candidates, and with yourself.
- Do read the guide that is supplied to local government candidates by the Returning Officer, and attend any information sessions hosted by your Council – beneath the boring bits you will find a wealth of useful information.

And what does Meghan advise NOT to do?

- Don't make assumptions about who might preference who. It is no embarrassment to speak to a candidate who you think unlikely to preference you – they may turn you down, but they may also surprise you
- Don't promise anything you can't deliver.
- Be realistic and honest about what



you are able to offer in exchange for a preference – if you promise your second preference to three people, they will find out and your reputation for "dogging" your fellow candidates will do you no favours. Resentment is not a pleasant thing to have following you around during an election campaign!

- Don't experiment with running mates unless you are really confident that you know what you are doing and have picked the right person – you don't want to find yourself accidentally left behind, and them elected!

Being accessible, honest and informed are values which she still applies in her role as councillor and as the 2015 Mayor.

— Councillor Meghan Hopper,,  
Moreland City Council  
(2012 – )

'You need to understand how preferences work. Then it's a matter of striking a balance between maximising your vote and being true to your vision and values. There are times when losing a contest is better than compromising a principle. Equally, if you believe in what you stand for, don't run away from maximising your chances of getting elected.'



*Make your preference swaps when you are ready*

It's usually better not to make any preferencing agreements before you have assessed the whole field. Be wary of making any firm agreement at your first meeting with a candidate. At the end of any meeting with a candidate, make clear whatever agreements you have or have not made so that no misunderstandings can occur. If you have discussed possibilities, make it clear that is all you have discussed – possibilities.

Occasionally you'll come across a candidate who will agree to a preference swap with everybody (meaning they are lying to all but one!). If you do make an agreement you should honour it, so don't be pushed into any swaps before you are ready.

*What about "dummies" and running mates?*

In some elections candidates may encourage others to run simply to get their preferences. Such 'dummy' candidates may attract votes or preferences from rivals, but there is a danger of simply splitting the candidate's primary votes, with no net gain. Voters tend to be unhappy about the use of dummy candidates. However, it has been known that a "dummy" candidate is actually

### Some preferencing do's and don'ts



|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <p>1. <b>DO</b> ensure you understand the voting system that applies in your municipality</p> <p>2. <b>DO</b> get good advice – learn enough to get by, then ask experienced councillors or other campaigners whom you trust. You may be able get advice from political party members. Attend workshops or information sessions</p> <p>3. <b>DO</b> talk to other candidates</p> | <p>4. <b>DO</b> be aware that anyone who speaks to you about the election could be a potential candidate, including incumbent councillors</p> <p>5. <b>DO</b> make sure you are clear about what has been agreed upon at the end of any discussion about preferences</p> <p>6. <b>DON'T</b> swap preferences before you have thoroughly thought it through</p> | <p>7. <b>DON'T</b> leave it too long as all the other candidates are likely to be doing preference swaps too.</p> <p>8. <b>DO</b> focus on your campaign – listen to voters and then tell them your messages</p> <p>9. <b>DO</b> know your values – remember you may have to work with any of these people. Apart from yourself, who else would you prefer to get elected?</p> |
|--|--|--|

elected, despite not being prepared for the role.

Some campaigns openly use running mates to make a team of candidates. That can be a transparent and honest strategy to improve the ability of a candidate to reach out to different parts of the community.

If you can, make a "guess-timate" of the number of votes other candidates are likely to get. In shorthand, this is known as less electable 'weak' and more electable 'strong' candidates.

With this information, you are in a stronger position to work out a preferencing strategy.

Every preferencing strategy is unique. Every election has its own unique context, issues, personalities and power dynamics. So while you can learn from examples, you have to learn your own situation "on the job".

Want to know more? Search the [VEC](#) and [GoWomenLG](#) websites for more information about preferencing. **You can do it!**

**How to maximise your votes in Postal Voting elections**

No matter what kind of election you run in, whether Attendance or Postal Voting, all candidates need to understand how postal voting affects the timing and style of a campaign. Currently, most Victorian council elections are carried out with a Postal Voting

system. Anyone more accustomed to voting in state and national elections will find this system quite different and it has a significant impact on how you need to campaign. Make sure you are on top of which system operates in your local election.

If you have Attendance voting, you still need to understand how Postal voting might affect your chances. It is becoming more common for voters to choose to vote before the day.

Postal voting seriously affects the

## How to make postal voting work for you

**C**ouncillor Ali Cupper grew up in the Mildura/Mallee region which she still calls home. She credits her progressive parents with instilling in her values that mean that she wants to do politics in a way not traditionally practiced in her community.

“I ran for Council in 2012 because I wanted to provide a voice for ideas and issues that were regarded as ‘side issues’ or ‘non-issues’ by our conservative power brokers; concepts like man-made climate change and marriage equality. I also wanted to promote a different style of leadership: one that was more willing to question authority and challenge conventions which I felt were getting in the way of participatory politics and free speech.”

Part of the change to traditional ways of doing things is the way voting is undertaken in Mildura. It is undertaken exclusively by postal vote and there are no voting stations on Election Day nor during the pre-poll period. Ali considers this a positive thing.

“Early voting (by mail-out) gives people a special opportunity they don’t always have at a voting centre and that’s the gift of time! They can sit down with a cup of tea and read

through the candidates’ statements carefully. They can do a bit of follow up research at their leisure by checking Facebook pages, websites and media articles.”

However Ali sees that there are some pitfalls to early voting, including the possibility that if people vote early they may miss out on the benefits of information that comes forward in the later stages of the election campaign. This means that candidates must ensure that all their key messages are promoted before the ballot kits are distributed.

“Voting on the day (at a voting centre) is probably a bit more exciting as you can feel the energy and atmosphere of the last mad stages of campaigning. But that might only be relevant to political types like me! Either way, what matters is you are having a say on the future of your municipality and that’s a pretty amazing thing. We take it for granted but it’s a privilege that people in less fortunate countries would fight and die for. It’s a sobering thought and worth keeping in mind at election time.”



Ali offers the following advice to candidates who want to make the most of early voting:

1. Pay careful attention to the timing of your media statements, particularly those which communicate the core issues or interests you wish to

pursue as a leader

2. Make sure you have given voters all the reasons they need to vote for you prior to the distribution of postal voting packs

3. Use the last two weeks between distribution and the closing of the polls to reiterate and reinforce your messages

4. Make sure you don’t just project what you would do as a Councillor, but also how you would do it

5. In your candidate statement, try to articulate both your broad vision and specific projects or actions you want to pursue. A vague “feel good” statement is unlikely to make you stand out from the crowd.

— Councillor Ali Cupper, Mildura Rural City Council (2012 – )

‘Doorknocking may be seen by some as an old-fashioned way to campaign but with postal ballots it is really important because this may be all the voters get to see of you before they vote. After all, you and your supporters won’t be meeting them at the ballot box on election day. You have to go to them.’

timing of your campaign strategies, so do your research and prepare accordingly. There is a widely held view that many voters complete and post their voting papers as soon as they receive them in the post. So early campaigning is critical.

There are examples of election timelines for both Postal and Attendance Elections at [GoWomenLG](#).

In Postal voting, candidates provide the Returning Officer with

information which is posted to voters. Make sure you have checked with the **VEC** or Returning Officer about **what**, **how** and **when** this information is required.



## Assessing your campaign

Now you are fully involved in the campaign and hopefully running to win. It's time to assess your campaign to monitor how you

are going. This will assist you to revise your strategy if any gaps are identified or things change. The following checklist will help you

to judge how your own campaign is going.

### Campaign assessment checklist

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are you clear on the dates and times when things are due?                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Have you developed an overall campaign plan?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Have you developed a community campaigning strategy? How many people are you contacting? How many doors are you knocking on each week? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have you researched the local area, talked to voters and found out the issues?        | <input type="checkbox"/> Have you worked out your campaign time lines including when you need to submit official documents and preferencing information? | <input type="checkbox"/> Have you accessed the local media?   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have you collected all the relevant information or materials from your local council? | <input type="checkbox"/> Have you prepared a campaign budget? Is the campaign working within budget?   | <input type="checkbox"/> What is your opposition saying about you?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have you established a campaign team?   | <input type="checkbox"/> What other ways are you making contact with the community?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Have you developed an effective preferencing strategy?   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is your campaign team working well?   |  |   |

## Managing your time

'Local government is now so big, it is difficult to survive as a candidate without a lot of support from your family and friends, and time out for yourself.'

Being involved in a campaign can be very exciting, but you won't get elected if you do not put your all into it. Campaigning, particularly when you are the candidate, does require a high-level commitment of time, energy, effort and emotion.

The road to election will sometimes be rough and you will need to remain focused and thick-skinned. Your opponents and antagonists will seek to maximise their chances and this could involve personal attacks.

Your full-scale commitment to being elected will also impact on any long term plans you may have. Although being a councillor is not a full-time paid position, it will take substantial amounts of your time and will probably impact on your availability for paid work, your leisure time and your time with your family and friends.

While you are the one who will make the ultimate decision about whether you will run for council and the amount of time and energy you can commit to the race, there are others around you who will no

doubt have strong opinions about this decision.

### *Family, friends, leisure, paid work and the campaign*

Ideally you need to achieve a balance in your family, work, community and personal life. As a candidate, this balance will need to include the campaign period.

To get a broad picture of your time commitments, list the five things that are most important to you in your life and the time you currently allot to them.

## Juggling family, work and Council — Part 1

In 1986, after the untimely death of her husband, Carolyn Crossley found herself a widow with two small children, while also serving as Deputy Mayor and on many regional and state committees.

This experience was not an easy one. “It was a hostile Council with some members of the senior staff hostile as well. Young women were not welcome and young women with ideas about change were even less welcome. There was no consideration for family commitments.”

“The local media’s view was also very old school. When I declared I was a candidate they wanted to take a photo of me at the kitchen sink in my home. Strangely enough I declined.”

“Last time I was a Councillor I was a young single mum with small children. This time around I am a mature individual with adult children no longer at home. I still have to juggle my priorities to make it all happen as I have a busy small business and it really helps having a supportive partner.”

“Previously I had people knocking on my door and ringing home, which was never ideal with a small family.” Carolyn says that new

technology has made her task as a Councillor this time a little easier.

“With the use of emails and mobile phones the general public is more likely to communicate via those systems. The privacy of the Councillor is better respected this time around.”

This time, the Wellington Shire Council is more supportive of those with family responsibilities. “We pay for childcare when required, and for every Council meeting and workshop day as a standard. To give another example we changed the starting time for our Council workshops from 8.30-9am to no earlier than 9:30am to take into consideration the school and childcare drop off run”.

As Mayor in 2014 she continued to strongly support these changes.

Carolyn offers the following advice to others running for Council:

- Make sure you know what is involved. Then share it with your partner if you have one, as you will need their support
- Have a supportive network around you
- Research the issues in your community



- Check what sort of support is available in your Council for family support
- Learn to prioritise family time. After all there is nothing more important
- Enjoy it, there is much to learn and the experience will add to your skills and will be applicable in whatever you do afterwards
- One term is worthwhile – you do not have to commit to a lifetime of service. You can always have another bite of the cherry like I did
- Seek advice from others that have gone before and join supportive groups
- Take on as much training as is offered.

— Councillor Carolyn Crossley, City of Sale (1989-92) and Wellington Shire Council (2012 – )

Next, ask yourself some questions:

- How will the campaign impact on these commitments and the time I have to spend on them?
- Are there alternative arrangements I can make for one or more of these commitments?

Remember, the campaign is not forever but your family and friends *are*.

| Activity | Time commitment per week |
|----------|--------------------------|
| 1        | _____                    |
| 2        | _____                    |
| 3        | _____                    |
| 4        | _____                    |
| 5        | _____                    |



### Juggling family, work and council — Part 2

**E**milie Davine originally moved to Sale as a graduate and her first 'proper' job was as Human Resources Officer at Wellington Shire Council. She met her husband in Sale and they both moved to London for work and travel. With one child and another on the way they returned to Sale where Emilie became involved in the life of the community and had a third child.

"Given my family's regular visits to the toy library, I ended up joining the Committee of Management and enjoyed this foray back into a volunteering type role. I think it was this experience that got me back to my original thoughts about moving to a country town: you need to be actively involved – the more you put in, the more you get out of it. This, along with a number of other factors, made me stand for Council in 2012."

"Growing up, my father always said if you want to change something, you can't rely on others to do it, you need to make it happen yourself. I wanted my demographic represented on Council, plain and



simple, so I had to do it.... I thought – why not give it a shot?."

Emilie emphasises that balancing her work as a Councillor with family responsibilities is a family matter and her husband plays an active role in this juggle. "We share school drop offs and household chores. The 'who does what when' always changes, depending on what we have on - no two weeks ever seem to be the same in our house."

"In addition to Council, I do paid work four days a week– so it is a constant juggle. We found someone to assist with school pick-ups and minding the kids until we get home – this has given our kids consistency within our home setting – we are very fortunate with our care arrangements for the kids."

Wellington Shire Council is very supportive. Emilie is reimbursed

for child care costs associated with undertaking official Council duties. And for less formal meetings Emilie says she has often brought her children along.

"I sometimes take my three kids along with textas and colouring books – they are now quite used to this and are generally very well behaved. Others accept that I have caring responsibilities and know I may have to rush out and take a child to the toilet – it doesn't seem to be a problem. This has really helped in managing the juggle."

Emilie offers the following advice to other women with small children who might be interested in running for council – "Know what you want to achieve and don't over commit. Your family comes first. It is also important to have a small network of people who can assist with looking after the kids. During times when it feels like an uphill battle, I always like to think about the positive role model I'm being for my children."

— Councillor Emilie Davine,  
Wellington Shire Council (2012 – )

'I got a message during the campaign from a number of people who felt I shouldn't be running because my first duty should be to my children.'

'I was really determined to win. I worked really hard. It was my first priority; I was driven with determination. Taking weekends off was really the only time I could see my family.'

# Congratulations — you've finished the campaign!

## What if you're not elected?

Although you may not get elected, the most important thing is that you feel you have undertaken a successful campaign on your own terms.

Many first time women candidates have said that, while initially disappointed about the result, they realise that simply putting their hands up in this way had expanded their sphere of influence immensely. They had developed many more skills as a result of the campaign, and learned more about their community.

Many thought they might become candidates again. Thus their first campaign would benefit their next campaign as they would be better known and be running as a more experienced candidate.

Remember that while you may be disappointed with the final election result, many opportunities will have opened up to you as a result of your candidacy:

- You will be in a better position to have influence with your council.
- Perhaps you will join council committees or advisory groups.
- You will be a more skilled advocate for the issues that you care about.

In this Kit, there are two stories from women who were not elected this time around – Sophia Shen's story on [page 17](#) and Alice Solomon's story on [page 44](#).

'After I lost I stayed at home and licked my wounds for a while. However, when the next local poll was announced, I was ready and raring to give it a go again- this time with a lot more skills and experience.'

'I will now take credit for what I do. I am going to find the tools I need to win next time.'

'My mother came down the last week of the campaign and that made it so much easier.'



### What if I don't get elected?

The 2012 election was the second time Alice Solomon had stood for local government election.

"I considered it my duty to stand as I was an Indigenous leader in my community. And no one else was around who wanted to stand. I believe that there needs to be an Indigenous presence in all Councils across Australia."

One of the most important things for Alice during her campaign was speaking at the Darebin Aboriginal Women's Local Government Leadership workshop to other Indigenous women who also thought they might become candidates.

"It was so nice to be among like-minded women. Attending this workshop was so important to me, just to know that I could reach out for support and to know there were other women putting up their hands to be leaders in their community."

Alice met Rae Kingsbury at this workshop and Rae went on to be her campaign mentor. This was invaluable support for Alice. "The one thing I would like to tell others is – if you have a mentor that is willing to support you, really make good use of them."

Alice campaigned hard and although she was not elected, she looks back on it as a positive experience both for her and for her community.

"There were some really great spin offs from my campaign. My running for Council made an inroad even if I didn't win. It made Council aware of me and the needs of Indigenous women and men."

"I'm a member of Link Up Victoria which is an organisation that brings families back together. When they found out I was running they asked me how they could help. I had noticed that there weren't Aboriginal flags in the Council chamber and I asked if Link Up could send me some."

"When I got the flags I asked if we could present them at a Council meeting. But instead we had a special event with the Mayor and more than 70 people came along. I was really quite overwhelmed that an idea for an event I'd thought of came to fruition. It was really empowering. It opened the door for other Aboriginal candidates and also to the whole Aboriginal community."

And the links keep building. "The relationship between Council and our Local Indigenous Network improves with every meeting and event. We often have two of our ward Councillors attending our events and there's always a Council officer representative at our meetings taking notes and asking questions."



Since running for Council, Alice says she has become even more determined "to make certain that local Councils throughout Victoria empower Aboriginal members of their communities to become elected Councillors."

So although Alice says she won't run again, she will be there to help others. "If there's someone out there who wants to run, particularly an Indigenous woman, I'll be there for them."

"Only when we can achieve a balanced representation of Aboriginal people working with Council, as Council officers, and elected members of Council can we stop the flow and tide of racism. Lack of knowledge and the lack of willingness to learn aid ignorance and wrongly formed opinions."

— Alice Solomon, Candidate  
Shire of Mitchell elections  
(2008 and 2012)

'I found the whole process really positive. The campaign has shown that the issues I care about are widely felt in the community.'

## What if you are elected?

'The most important skill once you get on to Council is listening. You listen and you learn a lot. After 12 years, including a few as Mayor, I have never stopped learning.'

Once you are elected and after the celebration, it will be time to take stock and to think about the next stage of your life as a Councillor.

There will be formalities occurring within a few hours of the poll

being declared. Start getting to know your colleague Councillors and council staff. Start to think about your priorities for policy action.

Work out some ways to keep checking in with the communities you now represent. Now is a good time to read the article "*Being the councillor you want to be*" on the website [GoWomenLG](#).

## Keeping your cool in testing times

**K**imberley Brown had always had an interest in her local community and often spoke up about local issues, but when people suggested that she run for council, her first thought was "I can't do that; only older retired people or people with political backgrounds or other relevant qualifications ran for Council."

But as more people encouraged her she thought "Why can't I?" and began to do her homework, to find out what was really involved, "I wanted to make sure I could commit to being a Councillor – four years is a long time if you don't enjoy it!"

Kimberly was elected Mayor for the first time in 2014, and has really enjoyed the role. She highlights the importance of keeping cool in testing times as a key strategy to survival over the long haul.

"It is important for Councillors to remain level headed and open minded to different options and possibilities because we are regularly challenged with a wide range of important issues; some of which are very emotive for the community.

Even if you don't feel strongly about an issue, the community might, and you have to represent them. So you have to keep your cool in situations where you might not personally agree."

"I've learnt that being transparent with the community and communicating both ways will help you keep your cool and prevent you from becoming anxious, or seem like you're withholding information. If you feel overwhelmed about something, tell someone you're feeling overwhelmed and there might be others around that can step up and help you out. It's so important to tell people if you feel like you can't manage something so you don't flip your lid!"

This self knowledge and skills are even more useful during Kimberly's year as Mayor in 2015.

Kimberley is particularly supportive of more young people becoming involved in local government and offers the following advice – "I'd encourage anyone that's interested in running for Council to find out more and speak to



their local Councillors and CEOs about the role. It would be great to see some younger people get involved and have more of a voice in local government. Councillors are supposed to represent the community as a whole, but I think you need that wide range of experiences and demographics to be able to provide a good balance of representation."

— Councillor Kimberley Brown,  
Bass Coast Shire Council (2012 –)



Following are a few ideas about what you will need to be aware of in the first weeks.

### *Declaration of Oath of Office*

The first formal occasion is the Declaration of Office which usually occurs at the first meeting of the new council.

You and the other new Councillors will be required to make a formal declaration before the Chief Executive Officer about your willingness to act in the best interest of the people in the municipality and a declaration to abide by the Councillor Code of Conduct. This will be recorded in the official council minutes. You will also take an Oath of Allegiance or Affirmation.

### *Access to information*

You must be given access to the council-held information necessary to allow you to perform your duties and meet your responsibilities.

Many councils run in-service training for new Councillors on how to access information. If such training is not provided, ask for assistance.

### *Code of Conduct and Good Governance*

All councils have to adopt a Councillor Code of Conduct which describes how Councillors must conduct themselves. The Code will help you in the performance of your role as councillor. Check out the [Good Governance Guide website](#) for the essential features of the good governance standard for all councillors.

### *Conflict of interest*

As a candidate, your job is to listen to the community, advocate on issues and positions, and remain open, transparent and honourable.

Once elected, Councillors need to always be aware of the potential for conflict of interest. In their roles as elected members they have been entrusted to govern on behalf of their communities. As such, they must ensure that they do not gain personal benefit from their positions in local government.

If they have personal interests in any of the decisions that they are part of as a government, public body or private enterprise, they must declare their interests and withdraw from the decision-making process. It is recommended to ask for advice if there are any uncertainties.

It is very important for councillors to understand and adhere to the legislative requirements. Conflict of interest requirements apply to council meetings, special committee meetings, audit committees, and Section 223 Committees and Assemblies of Councillors.

Individuals must make their own decisions. Councillors must take individual responsibility for assessing whether they have conflicts of interest in any matter relating to their formal council roles. If the answer is yes, then they must act appropriately. This includes making a proper disclosure and not participating in the relevant decision.

Councillors should seek assistance or advice from other people when they think they may have a conflict of interest. However, Councillors must ultimately assess whether they have a conflict of interest and understand that they, as the individual, are accountable for any decision made regardless of any assistance or advice they may have received.

### *Insurance protection*

Your council will be required to protect you by insuring you against claims in respect of actions taken or not taken while performing your role as a councillor. Insurance will also be provided to cover you in the event that you are injured while performing your duties.

### *More information*

Your council will have a lot more information available to assist you to be an effective councillor.

The MAV and the VLGA offer many opportunities for councillor development.

## From the CEO's desk

**V**ijaya Vaidyanath has been Chief Executive Officer (CEO) at the City of Yarra for the past three years. Prior to that she was CEO at two large councils, Waitakere and Rodney in the Auckland Metropolitan Region in New Zealand. She lives and breathes the gender agenda.

"I can't over emphasize the importance of diversity both with elected members and the administration. Fifty percent of the population are women, and our workplaces and our elected bodies should be reflective of our community. We need this richness around our decision making. I firmly believe we have moved beyond talking about why gender equity is important to how we make gender equity happen."

As CEO, Vijaya is focused on making gender equity a reality and is achieving this by working towards two main goals.

Her first goal involves changing unconscious bias within the City of Yarra and seeking out emerging female leaders. She has put in place a measurable target which will see that within three years women and men will each hold up to fifty percent of positions at all levels throughout the organisation.

Her second goal involves supporting, mentoring and influencing so



women are less conscious of gender being a barrier to their career advancement. She does this in a number of ways such as by actively promoting flexible work arrangements and by encouraging mentoring and sponsorship.

Vijaya says, "I want women to feel empowered and motivated to lean in and become strong leaders." And she believes that having strong leaders, both elected and appointed, makes for good governance.

Strong relationships are also important for good governance and Vijaya emphasizes the importance of proactive communication and mutual trust between elected members and the administration.

"Trust is the basis of a good relationship. Councillors drive the vision with community input, and we deliver on their aspirations. It's

our duty to deliver what the majority of the Councillors want. Respecting each other's territory but trusting what each of us brings to the table is very important."

Vijaya offers the following tips for ensuring a good relationship between Councillors and the CEO:

- Genuinely build trust and confidence – these are very important to a good relationship
- Provide sufficient space to enable people to deliver on their outcomes
- Always relate with honesty, integrity and transparency

Vijaya believes in the importance of promoting diversity in all its aspects. "Whether it's gender, ethnicity, sexual preference or language we have to be mindful of the community that Australia is. We need to reflect in our decision making the many unseen faces and unheard voices."

"For me it is not about satisfying quotas, it's about unleashing potential. We have to be smart, inclusive and clever about the superior outcomes that diversity brings to an organisation. It's about harnessing our diversity. It's not just good practice it makes absolute common sense to encourage and nurture our female leaders."

— Vijaya Vaidyanath, CEO, City of Yarra



## Appendix 1:

# A guide to writing your candidate statement

A candidate statement is a requirement in postal elections only. Preparing a candidate statement can assist in crafting your message. Therefore, it could be useful in any election.

Your statement of up to 150 words should state why you're running and why people should vote for you, and include:

- A brief outline of your policies, proposals, and party affiliations (if any)
- Your reasons for standing for council – make clear what you can contribute to your electorate that other candidates can't
- An overview of your goals if elected
- Personal or community experiences as examples of what you believe in
- Information about connection with your area: how long you've lived there, family history, community or business involvement

Ask people to vote for you on the basis of what you have provided above.

Present and arrange your statement to attract the attention of voters. Using plain English is the aim.

Where possible, mention specific problems that you want to try and address in your area – **BUT DON'T MAKE PROMISES YOU CAN'T KEEP.**

Look at what other candidates are saying and how they are presenting their information. See how you can make yourself and your material different.

Try to persuade voters that your presence on council will ensure their voice is heard.

Emphasise your accessibility and skills and your pride in making your area a great place to live and visit.

Consider paying for some professional photos or arrange for a high quality photo to be taken by a supporter. Smile and make sure voters can clearly see what you look like.

Ensure your authentic voice comes through – say it in a way that really is like you.

Make sure the statement does not contain spelling or production errors. Ask a supporter to proof read it.

Double check and meet the **VEC** requirements about electoral material, including format and word limit for candidate statements in postal voting elections.

Following are examples of possible candidate statements:

### **Example 1: Family and community**

I care about the kind of world we will leave for our children. I believe that local Council is the one level of government that you can influence so I have made the decision to stand as a candidate in Cherry Lake Ward. In the words of Mahatma Ghandi 'you have to be the change you want to see in the world.'

As the mother of two school-aged children, and the daughter of ageing parents, I understand the needs, pressures and pleasures that come with family life. I have been a resident for 18 years, active as community campaigner for public transport, on Sports Club Committees, as School Council member and Council President; represented community on Council Advisory Committees.

In my professional life, I have worked in the fields of equal opportunity, training, policy and community service. I am not a member of any political party.

### **Example 2: Representing local causes**

I am standing as a candidate in the Magpie Ward. Our growing community needs to focus on better delivery of the basics. Properly maintained roads, responsible development of community infrastructure and quality services are my top priorities. We need a Council that embraces change, is responsive and puts the immediate needs of ratepayers first.

Born a local, I returned with my young family 15 years ago. My family has a long tradition of community involvement in the district. As a parent, small business owner, and with a background in education and land management, I am very aware of the diverse needs of our community.

I have been on kindergarten, netball club and school committees, as well as The Valley Landcare Group. I am a graduate of the Community Leadership Program.

If elected as an independent Councillor, I will listen, be accountable and work hard towards achieving the best results for our community.

### **Example 3: The returning Councillor**

To get back to basics, vote 1 Madeline Yeo. As your current Councillor, I have worked tirelessly to make Council represent the real needs of residents. I'll continue attacking unfair rate rises; saving your hard earned money by stricter budgeting and wiser spending. I'll keep attacking inappropriate development and push for tighter planning controls. I'll battle to maximise open space on the proposed Golf Club development. I'll oppose short sighted cash grabs such as selling family parks and placing parking meters around our community.

The city's standards must match the community's expectations by upgrading roads, footpaths, drainage, and sporting and community facilities.

As a mother I'm determined to improve services for local families including kindergartens and public transport upgrades, and implementing a generous pensioner discount. I'm sensible and always approachable. And I have a proven record of listening and working hard with the community for real results.



## Appendix 2: Useful resources

### Getting started

- **GoWomenLG Project**  
This VLGA Project aims to build the numbers and diversity of women candidates in Victorian local government elections and has useful resources and information.
- **MAV candidate information StandForCouncil**
- **VLGA candidate information**
- **The Women's Power Handbook**, Kirner, Joan and Rayner, Moira, (1999) Viking, Penguin Books Australia Ltd. [www.emilyslist.org.au/products-page](http://www.emilyslist.org.au/products-page)

### Learning about local government

- **Municipal Association Victoria MAV:** The MAV is a peak organisation for councils. It provides advocacy, information, resource materials and training programs for councils. It also provides candidate information sessions in the lead-up to council elections.
- **Victorian Local Governance Association VLGA:** The VLGA is a peak body that links local government, councillors and community leaders to collaboratively build and strengthen local governance and democracy. Check out the website for more information.

- Check your own council website for lots of useful information about your community.
- **Good Governance Guide**
- **Now You're A Councillor**

### Elections

- **Victorian Electoral Commission**  
The VEC has lots of good information on elections, including nominations, voting and council boundaries (Search for "Proportional Representation Voting System" and other useful terms)
- **Local Government Victoria**  
Information on legislative arrangements and other matters concerning local government
- **Running Your Own Election**

### Preferential voting

- **Preferential voting explained:** How the preferential voting system works.
- **Preferential voting:** Learn more about preferential voting
- **GoWomenLG**

### Other information

- **LGPro**  
A professional organisation for local government officers and useful for general information about local government issues.

### Councillor working conditions and related issues

The VLGA has some good information. Also see:

- the **MAV website**
- Councillor allowances and expenses  
*Local Government Act (1989) (s 74-75)*
- Council websites for specific municipal policies

### Women in local government

- **Women's Charter**  
The Victorian Local Government Women's Charter is supported by the MAV and the VLGA and Victorian councils.  
VLGA [www.vlga.org.au](http://www.vlga.org.au)  
MAV [www.mav.asn.au](http://www.mav.asn.au)
- **Australian Local Government Women's Association**  
A network for women councillors and other women interested in local government.

**A**ustralian women are under-represented at all levels of government. In Victoria, women make up 34% of all Victorian local government councillors (2012). The constraints for women participating in local governments include institutional, cultural and social barriers that are often difficult to overcome.

This women's participation Kit is one initiative to encourage women to consider standing for councils. It was first developed by a coalition of women's and local government organisations, the Women Participation in Local Government Coalition (WPILGC).

This Kit contains practical advice and information for women standing for election to Victorian local governments, and those who wish to support them. The stories from past and present women Councillors offer useful examples of how individual women have approached becoming a candidate.

The Kit aims to support active women citizens to contribute to making local governments more representative and more responsive to citizens and communities.

'It is not women against men, it is women and men, and not that the world will be a better place if women run it, but that the world will be a better place when women who bring their perspectives, share in running it.'

— **Dame Indira Patel OBE,**  
**National Council of Women Great Britain,**  
**champion of international women's rights**  
**(Melbourne 2002)**