

THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Victoria's 79 councils provide for the peace, order and good government of their municipal area, deliver services and facilities for their community, and manage the resources of the district. Local government must operate in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1989* and has responsibility for implementing diverse programs, policies and regulations set by State and Federal Governments. As councils have to respond to local community needs, they also have powers to set their own regulations and by-laws, and to provide a range of discretionary services.

Local laws developed by councils deal with important community safety, peace and order issues such as public health, management of council property, environment and amenity. Local laws often apply to noise, fire hazards, abandoned vehicles, parking permits, disabled parking, furniture on footpaths, graffiti, burning off, animals in public spaces and nuisance pets.

Victorian councils are responsible for \$91.2 billion of infrastructure including roads, bridges, town halls, recreation and leisure facilities, drains, libraries and parks. They also provide over 100 services for local communities from the cradle to the grave. Every time a person leaves their house they are using services provided by local councils.

SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Each Victorian municipality is different – its community may be young or old, established or still developing, rural or urban, and its population may vary from fewer than 2,900 people to more than 313,500. Each council collects rates from property owners in its municipality to help fund its local community infrastructure and service obligations. Rural council budgets average \$69 million, while metropolitan council budgets average \$201 million.

Road assets: local roads, drains, bridges, foot and bike paths, public street lighting, litter bins, school crossings, bus shelters, parking spaces.

Community assets: libraries, internet services, sporting facilities, community halls, parks and gardens, swimming pools, playgrounds, animal shelters, public toilets, public art, cemeteries.

Community services: public tips, removal of dumped rubbish, youth and family counselling, childcare programs, playgroup, preschools and kindergartens, school holiday programs, immunisations, food safety inspections, planning advice and approvals, street cleaning.

In-home services: Family day care, parenting and baby health advice by maternal and child health nurses, multilingual telephone services, recycling and hard waste collections, home maintenance, delivered meals, gardening services and respite care.

General Public Services	
Emergency prevention and protection	Community disaster/ emergency plans
Animal management and control	Animal shelters, pet registration
Tourism	Visitor Information Centres, marketing plans
Commerce and industry	Local industry networks, incentive programs
Community information	Community directory, websites/ online services, counselling and support groups
Health and Welfare Services	
Aged care programs	Meals on wheels, home care, home maintenance
Maternal and child health services	Health checks, nutrition and parenting advice
Family and children's services	School immunisations, childcare, playgroups, youth services, school holiday programs, aerosol art program
Disability services	Wheelchair access, respite care, personal care
Cultural development	Festivals, public art, theatre productions, art galleries
Public libraries	Book loans, free internet access, reading sessions
Leisure and recreation services	Swimming pools, sports ovals, club facilities
Housing	Housing diversity through planning schemes
Public health services	Food safety inspections, public toilets, tobacco enforcement, pandemic planning
Employment	Community jobs program, traineeships
Migrant and indigenous services	Language aides, multilingual phone lines
Land Use Planning	
Statutory planning	Land use regulation, planning application assessment, zone and overlay controls
Strategic planning	Neighbourhood character, heritage overlays
Planning system reform	Pre-lodgement certification
Built form sustainability	Energy efficient housing, siting and design guidelines
Rural land use management	Agricultural production, economic development strategy
Forestry	Forest regulation enforcement, supervise timber harvest
Native title, Indigenous cultural heritage	Recognition of traditional land owners
Environment	
Waste management	Kerbside recycling, landfills, compost bins, hard waste
Catchment management	Tree planting, protection of water catchments
Stormwater management	Litter traps, flood and litter management
Native vegetation management	Conservation of native vegetation, tree clearance permits
Salinity and water quality	Reticulated sewerage, drainage, water re-use programs
Weed management	Weed/pest control for roadside reserves, weed officers
Sustainability	Solar heating for buildings and pools, walking tracks
Infrastructure and Assets	
Asset maintenance and development	Town halls, buildings
Road and footpath construction and maintenance	Roads, roundabouts, bridges, nature strips, bike paths
Traffic and parking management	Traffic and parking signs, street cleaning, speed humps
Public space maintenance	Parks and gardens, street lighting, cemeteries
Leisure facilities	Recreation and community centres