



Media release

The Hon Jeanette Powell MP

Minister for Local Government

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

Wednesday 14 August 2013

First ever review of local council electoral system

The first ever comprehensive review of Victoria's local government electoral system was today announced by Minister for Local Government Jeanette Powell.

Mrs Powell said the aim of the review is to deliver strong and effective local democracy and ensure councils continue to be responsible and accountable to their local communities across Victoria.

"All Victorians should have faith in the system that elects local representatives to govern and make important decisions affecting their communities," Mrs Powell said.

"I have appointed an independent and highly distinguished Local Government Electoral Review Panel that will examine the local government electoral processes, voter participation, integrity and electoral representation.

"The review will also examine ways to increase voter participation by improving community information about candidates and the electoral process," Mrs Powell said.

Mrs Powell said the Victorian Coalition Government is honouring its commitment to review the local government electoral system following concerns raised after last year's council elections.

In 2012, average voter participation was down, whilst the number of complaints made to the Local Government Investigations and Compliance Inspectorate during the election was up.

"I have received a report from the Victorian Electoral Commission about their findings on the electoral process and have sought advice from the Local Government Inspectorate regarding the complaints made at last year's elections," Mrs Powell said.

"I have also sought informal feedback from local government peak bodies, the Municipal Association of Victoria, the Victorian Local Government Association and LGPro on the election process."

Mrs Powell said the review will aim to improve the electoral process, along with people's understanding of it. It may also lead to be changes in the legislation.

"The review will examine the reasons for the lower voter turnout and table processes for dealing quickly with complaints so that they don't impact on the integrity of future elections," Mrs Powell said.

Mrs Powell has appointed well respected electoral expert and former Member of Parliament Petro Georgiou AO to head up the independent Local Government Electoral Review Panel in addition to two members with extensive experience in electoral systems and the local government sector.

The Panel will issue a discussion paper and seek feedback through written submissions and public hearings. It will provide a Stage One report to the Minister in January 2014 dealing with process matters for potential legislative reform.

A Stage Two report will be provided to the Minister dealing with electoral representation in April 2014. Both reports will be tabled in Parliament by the Minister.

Members of the Local Government Electoral Review Panel are:

- Petro Georgiou AO – Chair (former Federal Member for Kooyong and Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters);
- Sally Davis (former manager of the Australian Electoral Commission’s Melbourne Electoral Education Centre and Councillor at Stonnington City Council from 1999 – 2004, serving as Mayor in 2002/03); and
- Anne Murphy OAM (former President of the Municipal Association of Victoria, Mayor of Preston (1998- 1990), and Local Government Commissioner at the Cities of Stonnington and Whittlesea) .

Mr Georgiou highlighted the need for the review to be independent and robust and for it to present options for reform.

“My fellow panel members and I strongly encourage the Victorian community to participate in this vital review to ensure ongoing confidence in our electoral system,” Mr Georgiou said.

Details of the Local Government Electoral Review Terms of Reference are attached in addition to information on each panel member.

Information on the Local Government Electoral Review is available at www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au

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(See Panel member profiles attached)

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTORAL REVIEW – PANEL MEMBERS

Petro Georgiou AO (Chair)

Mr Georgiou served as Federal Member for Kooyong from 1994 to 2010. During that time he held a number of positions on Joint Standing Committees including Chair on the Electoral Matters and Science and Innovation committees.

In 2011, Mr Georgiou was appointed Vice-Chancellor's Professorial Fellow at Monash University, holding a joint appointment with Melbourne University.

Mr Georgiou is also a board member of the State Library of Victoria and the Australia-New Zealand School of Government.

Sally Davis

Ms Davis was Manager of the Australian Electoral Commission's Melbourne Electoral Education Centre and Project Manager in the Federal Election Support Unit from 2005 to 2009.

She was also Councillor at the Stonnington City Council between 1999 and 2004 (serving as Mayor in 2002/03) and Lecturer, Bachelor Communications at RMIT University for five years.

Ms Davis is currently co-director of a consultancy business which provides advice for media and public relations professionals.

Anne Murphy OAM

Ms Murphy was a Commissioner at the Whittlesea and Stonnington City Councils during the local government amalgamations in the mid 1990s.

Prior to that, she was a Councillor and Mayor at the City of Preston between 1987 and 1994.

She currently serves on a number of bodies including MAVIC Professional Indemnity and Fidelity Insurance (Committee member) and KYM Employment Services (Vice-President).

Ms Murphy was President of the Municipal Association Victoria, has been a Director on the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board (MFESB) and Local Authorities Superannuation Board, Executive Member of the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA), State Manager Kidsafe Victoria as well as Sessional Member on Planning Panels Victoria and the Architects Registration Tribunal.