

16/03/18

Local Government Act Review Secretariat
C/O Local Government Victoria
PO Box 500
Melbourne VIC 3002
via local.government@delwp.vic.gov.au



Dear Secretariat,

The Victorian Gay & Lesbian Rights Lobby (**VGLRL**) provides the following submission to the Local Government Act Review.

The VGLRL is a community based advocacy group that works towards equality, social justice and advancing human rights for lesbian, gay, queer, bisexual and same sex attracted Victorians. We work constructively, cooperatively and respectfully with transgender, bisexual, intersex and other organisations that support our organisation's mission and vision.

This submission addresses the proposed overarching governance principles in clause 8 of the Exposure Draft Bill.

We do hope that you will have the opportunity to take into account the issues raised in this submission. We would be pleased to make ourselves available to the Project Team at any stage to discuss the matters therein.

Yours sincerely,

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Local Government Act Review

1. The current law

The purpose, objectives, roles, functions and powers of a Council are currently set out in Part 1A of the *Local Government Act*, the ‘Local Government Charter.’

Relevantly, the role of a Council includes “advocating in the interests of the local community to other communities and governments.”¹

2. The proposed Bill

The Exposure Draft Bill proposes to replace the Local Government Charter with the overarching governance principles.

These principles include achieving outcomes for the local community,² promoting social sustainability in the local area,³ seeking collaboration with other governments,⁴ and taking into account state and national plans and policies in strategic planning and decision making.⁵

However, there is no specific mention of advocating in the interests of the local community to other governments.

3. Why advocacy is an important role of local councils

During the recent debate on marriage equality in Australia councils across Australia and Victoria in particular passed motions to encourage the Federal Government to support changes to the Marriage Act and fund the Safe Schools program.

Issues such as these do matter to the local community and local councils can respond by advocating on these issues to other governments. Local governments are in a position, given their closeness to the community, to listen to the community and advocate in the community’s interests to other governments.

Advocacy on these issues has provided a positive message to LGBTI people in the local community.

¹ *Local Government Act 1989* s 3D(2)(d).

² Local Government Bill cl 8(2)(b).

³ Local Government Bill cl 8(2)(c).

⁴ Local Government Bill cl 8(2)(f).

⁵ Local Government Bill cl 8(2)(h).

4. Recommendation

It is important that specific reference to advocating in the interests of the local community to other governments be retained in the Draft Exposure Bill.

We propose that an additional sub-section be inserted in cl 8(2) of the Bill as follows:

“x. advocating in the interests of the municipal community to other communities and Governments is to be encouraged.”