

Local Government Act 2020 – Principles Service Performance



The *Local Government Act 2020* is a principles-based Act, removing unnecessary regulatory and legislative prescription.

Service performance

Victoria's councils deliver infrastructure and services to meet a diverse range of planning, health and community services, economic development, waste and environmental management and emergency service needs. By law, councils are obliged to provide some of these services, but others they choose to provide based on the needs of their communities and the resources available, which can vary considerably.

Therefore, council responsibilities are complex and dynamic, but a number of universal principles can be applied to the planning and decision-making councils undertake in order to provide services to their communities. For example, councils must demonstrate to their communities that they have the right balance between the standard of service they aim for and the cost to ratepayers and residents of achieving these standards.

Delivering cost effective services requires councils to plan effectively, understanding the current and future needs of their communities; identifying the resources available and make informed, rational decisions about how to best allocate their scarce resources.

These decisions need to be transparent; they should engage the views of the community in their development.

There is evidence that innovative and collaborative arrangements deliver tangible benefits for councils. Many have already joined forces on projects like libraries, road building, waste management and rates

administration. These partnerships drive down costs to ratepayers and can raise the quality of services. The new Act sets out a series of new provisions that are intended to remove barriers to cooperation and the development of joint service agreements and assist councils in meeting the service performance principles.

Under the new *Local Government Act 2020* one of the fundamental roles of councils is described "[to] *plan for and ensure the delivery of services, infrastructure and amenity for its municipality, informed by deliberative community engagement.*" The service performance principles (s 106) underpin this overarching principle of the act, but ensuring councils consider equity, accessibility, quality, value and continuous improvement.

What it means

The Act says that a council must plan and deliver services to the municipal community in accordance with these service performance principles:

- services should be provided in an equitable manner and be responsive to the diverse needs of the municipal community;
- services should be accessible to the members of the municipal community for whom the services are intended;
- quality and costs standards for services set by the Council should provide good value to the municipal community;
- a Council should seek to continuously improve service delivery to the municipal community in response to performance monitoring;
- service delivery must include a fair and effective process for considering and responding to complaints about service provision.

Expectation

Councils must apply the service performance principles in planning and delivering services for their communities. These principles, however, do not stand alone they should be applied in conjunction with the other principles within the Act to ensure the community is engaged in service planning and development, decision making is transparent, the priority for services is developed within a council's strategic planning processes and councils deliver sound financial management.

When applying the service performance principles, councils should have regard to the other principles within the Act. For example, when considering service performance a council should also consider financial management, community engagement, public transparency and strategic plans.

© The State of Victoria Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning 2023



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence. You are free to re-use the work under that licence, on the condition that you credit the State of Victoria as author. The licence does not apply to any images, photographs or branding, including the Victorian Coat of Arms, the Victorian Government logo and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) logo. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Disclaimer

This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

Accessibility

If you would like to receive this publication in an alternative format, please telephone the DELWP Customer Service Centre on 136186, email customer.service@delwp.vic.gov.au, or via the National Relay Service on 133 677 www.relayservice.com.au. This document is also available on the internet at www.delwp.vic.gov.au.