

The Hon. Melissa Horne MP
Minister for Local Government
Minister for Ports and Freight
Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation
Minister for Suburban Development
Minister for Fishing and Boating

9 August 2022

Dear Minister,

Local Government Professionals, more commonly known as LGPro, is the peak body representing Local Government's dedicated officers who play a critical role in providing for communities right across Victoria.

We have enjoyed a collaborative, productive relationship with the Victorian Government through Local Government Victoria (LGV) which has benefited not just these officers but the communities we all serve throughout the state. Whether it be through boosting meaningful employment with Victorian Government support or offering tangible assistance to empower women in the sector through the Women Building Surveyor Program, this partnership has yielded positive results to this very day that all parties can be proud of.

We commend you and your office's important examination of issues around culture in Councils, culminating so far in the Local Government Culture Project Insight Report. This work warrants a serious response and action plan, and LGPro is committed to working closely with LGV and the Minister's office to realise the beneficial changes that can be made.

The report rightly identifies leadership capability, support for Councillors, and effective dispute resolution as key issues. The Victorian Government is now in a position to enact positive change in these spaces to make sure our Councils run effectively in the best interests of Victorians, and LGPro would like to help and champion the cause with a focus on solutions. As such, this letter recommends the next steps that would empower such a change.

We recommend coordinating a reform committee with LGV as the lead, including the Local Government peak bodies like MAV and VLGA alongside LGPro. These peak bodies have significantly overlapping interests while representing important but different perspectives that need to be addressed in any reform, from the elected member perspective through to professional officers'. This working group would provide advice to enable the Government to begin legislative reform in a model similar to the Project Control Board that successfully guided the introduction of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

The sector and its peaks do not have the power to make legislative change but, through extensive consultation, LGPro has pinpointed the areas that need addressing and can work with you to inform specific pieces of legislation, from an enforceable code of conduct to clarity around Councillor and Chief Executive Officer roles and responsibilities.

As Minister for Local Government, LGPro would be delighted to support you to make change that improves the integrity and attractiveness of the sector well into the future. On behalf of LGPro, I look forward to working with you to create a positive legacy of improvement in the sector and I am looking forward to discussing this with you at our meeting on 17 August.

Kind regards,



Liana Thompson

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