

CAMPASPE SHIRE COUNCIL MEDIA RELEASE



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SUBMISSION TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BILL - EXPOSURE DRAFT

Campaspe Shire Council last night ratified a written submission made to the Local Government Bill – Exposure Draft (the Bill).

Mayor Cr Adrian Weston said the Bill seeks to introduce changes to the Local Government Act, an Act which provides the framework for local government operations.

“The Bill forms the final stage of public consultation on the Local Government Act review before it enters parliament for finalisation. Council has provided comment on the Bill through a written submission,” Cr Weston said.

The Bill seeks to:

- provide a better understanding of the role of councils as democratically elected bodies
- encourage Victorians to participate more as candidates, voters and citizens in council activities and contribute to council strategic visions and plans
- drive more autonomous and outcome focused councils
- encourage councils to embrace innovative and collaborative arrangements that increase organisational efficiency and deliver public value for residents
- provide a sound framework for the sector to become more efficient and enterprising in its local governance.

“Council supports the Local Government Bill in principle, however has put forward various points for consideration in its submission,” Cr Weston said.

Council expressed comment on the following points:

- **Electoral Structure** – The Bill recommends streamlining of some wards, to remove the mix of multi-member and single-member wards within the one council. Council stated its concern with this approach given this does not always allow for fair and equitable representation across a large geographic area with different communities of interest. Council recommended retaining the current range of electoral structures to ensure the most appropriate structure can be applied to meet local needs, particularly in rural and regional councils.
- **Acting CEO** – The Bill recommends the appointment of an Acting CEO by council in all instances where the CEO is unable to perform his/her duties. Council’s submission states it would be impractical for a council to appoint an acting CEO each time there is an absence and asks that this provision be revised to reflect making the appointment of an Acting CEO for periods of extended absence, for example greater than 4 or 6 weeks.
- **Community Engagement Policy** – The Bill recommends the application of a community engagement policy and the community engagement principles to the development of all policies. Council’s submission states this application would create an unnecessary burden and be in opposition to councils being efficient and effective in their decision making responsibilities. Council recommends that the application of the community engagement principles be applied to all strategic planning and for council to have the discretion of when they may be applied to any other processes.
- **Public Transparency Policy** – Council raised its opposition to the need to have a Public Transparency Policy that describes how information is to be made public and specify the documents and information that will be publicly available. This is unnecessary duplication of council’s responsibilities under the Freedom of Information Act 1982.

Council recommends the removal of this requirement for a Public Transparency Policy however supports the public transparency principles.

- **Authorised Officers** – The Bill recommends council officers are only able to carry out enforcement within the Local Government Act, excluding all other acts. Council highlighted this would prevent officers fulfilling their duties, such as the Municipal Fire Prevention Officer performing in line with the Country Fire Authority Act 1958. Council requested a review of this provision and the broader implications of authorised officers performing their duties under various pieces of legislation.

“Council strongly supports the development of Good Practice Guidelines to assist councils in meeting their obligations and recommended they be released well in advance to allow council to plan and meet any revised provisions,” Cr Weston said.

To coordinate an interview or seek further information contact:

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