



VICTORIAN LOCAL GOVERNANCE ASSOCIATION
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Review of the Health Act 1958
A new legislative framework for public health in Victoria

The Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) is one of two peak sector bodies for Victorian Local Government. The VLGA is a peak body for local governments and community that empowers local governments by strengthening their capacity to engage with their communities and advocate on their behalf.

The VLGA, with funding received from the Department of Victorian Communities, Local Government Division, is currently involved in a project called Community & Council Planning. This project will look at the many examples of good community planning and assess how community priorities can be reflected in the key local government decision making structures, such as the Council or City Plan. The project will also explore how these priorities can be measured with reference to the Community Strengthening approach being pursued by State Government agencies and the significant work already carried out by councils in triple bottom line reporting, sustainability frameworks and community well being indicators.

Recent changes to the Local Government Act 1989, section 125, have placed emphasis on municipalities having strategic objectives to understand and measure community priorities. That is, what are the important issues for local communities, how are any changes monitored, how do these relate to community well-being and what is the local government's role to respond to these community priorities?

It is intended that the outcomes from this project will be of practical benefit to councils as they develop new four year Council and City Plans in 2005 and 2006. There are a number of points in this project which are of direct relevance to the review of the Health Act 1958 and these relate to Municipal Public Health Plans.

One of the key issues to emerge for this project is the need to improve the alignment and integration of key strategic plans for Councils, such as the MPHP, with the consultation and reporting requirements for community & council planning processes.

Municipal Public Health Plans are considered to be one of the most important strategic plans for Victorian municipalities. They have been central in promoting the concepts of integrated planning and community wellbeing and have also provided an important mechanism for councils to engage in meaningful partnerships within their communities. The VLGA believes that a stronger emphasis on implementing the MPHP and achieving its outcomes is a logical and welcome next step.

The following comments relate to Section 4.4 of the discussion paper - Municipal public health plans:

- The MPHP should have a focus on achieving community outcomes relating to the health and wellbeing of the community;
- The MPHP should contain and/or refer to a council wide framework that is used to measure and monitor community outcomes. This framework could be used to inform and monitor progress for a Community Plan, the Council/City Plan and other major strategic plans for Councils such as the MPHP and the Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS). The current Vic Health Project on the development of Community Wellbeing Indicators for Victorian Local Government will provide a sound platform to guide this work;
- The proposal to align the MPHP planning cycle with the Council four-year strategic planning cycle would assist in the integration of the MPHP with the Council Plan, improve the process of community engagement by avoiding duplication and fragmentation of effort, and in so doing improve the ability of Councils to place greater emphasis on community outcomes. This proposal is very timely and we believe to have significant support within Victorian Local Government.

We welcome this opportunity to contribute to the review of the Health Act 1958 and in particular to the future role of Municipal Public Health Plans. We believe that the proposals for the future development of Municipal Public Health Plans are positive and in accordance with good governance principles for Victorian Local Government.

Should you have any issues that you would like to discuss in relation to this submission please contact Brendan Carins, Senior Policy Officer, VLGA on ph. 9347 2233 or brendan@vlga.org.au

Yours Sincerely



Andrew Rowe
Chief Executive