

## Introduction

There are three levels of government conducted within Australia. The Commonwealth Government, State or Territory and Local Governments, coordinate and manage different aspects of policy, planning and administration associated with legislature, regulation and service delivery. Information in this chapter relates to the system of government administered in Victoria at State and Local levels.

## Victorian constitution and government

Victoria has been self-governed since 1851, with its first Parliament formed in 1856. On 1 January 1901, Victoria ceased to be an independent colony and became a State of the newly formed Commonwealth of Australia.

Under the Victorian Constitution, the Parliament of Victoria comprises the Crown (Governor of Victoria), Legislative Council (Upper House) and Legislative Assembly (Lower House). The term of a Parliament is currently three years (minimum), with a mandatory general election required to take place no later than the expiration of the fourth year.

John Landy, former Olympian and now Victoria's 26th Governor, took up his position on 1 January 2001.

The Victorian Government Ministry, comprising the Premier and Ministers, is drawn from both houses of Parliament. The support of a majority of Lower House members is required to form and empower the ministry to govern. Government Ministers assume a range of ministerial and portfolio responsibilities relating to administration and provision of services to the people of Victoria.

The Victorian Government has responsibilities to manage the State's finances; provide a range of services including health and education; and administer responsibilities such as law and order, State-based public utilities and urban, regional and agricultural development. The primary sources of revenue for funding services are derived from Commonwealth government grants and State government taxes.

## The Legislative Assembly

There are currently 88 Legislative Assembly members, each representing the constituents of a single Electoral District. Members are elected for the term of Parliament. The Legislative Assembly or Lower House is also known as the seat of Government. The political party (or group of parliamentarians) who control the majority of support in the Legislative Assembly can form Government.

The State Premier is the leader of the Lower House majority. The official opposition is the largest grouping or political party, which opposes the Government. The Legislative Assembly Presiding Officer is known as the Speaker. The Speaker is responsible for conduct of the Lower House and, along with the Upper House Presiding Officer, represents Parliament on official and ceremonial occasions.

## The Legislative Council

There are 44 members of the Legislative Council representing 22 Electoral Provinces (two Councillors for each province). Legislative Council members are elected for two terms of Parliament. Half the Council members are required to face re-election at any general election. The Legislative Council is often referred to as the 'House of Review', and its primary role is to provide a 'second opinion', or review, of bills and measures proposed by the Lower House. The Legislative Council Presiding Officer is also known as the Council President.

The election of Victoria's 54th Parliament on 18 September 1999 led to a record number of female Member's of Parliament (MPs) being elected. As of October 2000, there are 34 women MPs, with eight holding ministerial portfolios.

### 3.1 PARLIAMENTARIANS

|                      | Members of Parliament |       |      |       | Ministers(a) |       |      |       |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-------|------|-------|--------------|-------|------|-------|
|                      | 1995                  |       | 2000 |       | 1995         |       | 2000 |       |
| Sex                  | no.                   | %     | no.  | %     | no.          | %     | no.  | %     |
| Legislative Assembly |                       |       |      |       |              |       |      |       |
| Male                 | 79                    | 89.8  | 66   | 75.0  | 14           | 87.5  | 9    | 64.3  |
| Female               | 9                     | 10.2  | 22   | 25.0  | 2            | 12.5  | 5    | 35.7  |
| Persons              | 88                    | 100.0 | 88   | 100.0 | 16           | 100.0 | 14   | 100.0 |
| Legislative Council  |                       |       |      |       |              |       |      |       |
| Male                 | 37                    | 84.1  | 32   | 72.7  | 5            | 100.0 | 1    | 25.0  |
| Female               | 7                     | 15.9  | 12   | 27.3  | 0            | 0.0   | 3    | 75.0  |
| Persons              | 44                    | 100.0 | 44   | 100.0 | 5            | 100.0 | 4    | 100.0 |
| Total                |                       |       |      |       |              |       |      |       |
| Male                 | 116                   | 87.9  | 98   | 74.2  | 19           | 90.5  | 10   | 55.5  |
| Female               | 16                    | 12.1  | 34   | 25.8  | 2            | 9.5   | 8    | 44.5  |
| Persons              | 132                   | 100.0 | 132  | 100.0 | 21           | 100.0 | 18   | 100.0 |

(a) A Minister must be a Member of Parliament

Source: Victorian Parliamentary Library.

## Victorian Government Ministry

Following the last State election held on 18 September 1999, the Australian Labor Party, led by the Hon. Steve Bracks, combined their 42 seats with three Independents MPs — Susan Davies, Craig Ingram and Russell Savage, to form a minority government.

The Bracks government later gained two additional seats from by-elections contested for the lower house seats of Burwood and Benalla.

### 3.2 STATE OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES, 7th December 2001

| Political party        | Legislative Assembly | Legislative Council | Total |
|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------|
|                        | no.                  | no.                 | no.   |
| Australian Labor Party | 44                   | 14                  | 58    |
| Liberal Party          | 35                   | 24                  | 59    |
| National Party         | 6                    | 6                   | 12    |
| Independents           | 3                    | —                   | 3     |
| Total                  | 88                   | 44                  | 132   |

Source: Victorian Parliamentary Library.

**Legislative  
Assembly**

The Bracks Ministry, as of February 2002, consists of the following members:

- The Hon. Steve Bracks: Premier,  
Minister for Multicultural Affairs
- The Hon. John Thwaites: Deputy Premier and  
Minister for Health
- The Hon. Peter Batchelor: Minister for Transport and  
Minister for Major Projects
- The Hon. John Brumby: Treasurer,  
Minister for State and Regional Development, and  
Minister for Innovation
- The Hon. Bob Cameron: Minister for Local Government and  
Minister for Work Cover
- The Hon. Christine Campbell: Minister for Senior Victorians and  
Minister for Consumer Affairs
- The Hon. Mary Delahunty: Minister for Arts,  
Minister for Women's Affairs, and  
Minister for Planning
- The Hon. Sherryl Garbutt: Minister for Environment and Conservation
- The Hon. Andre Haermeyer: Minister for Police and Emergency Services,  
Minister for Corrections
- The Hon. Keith Hamilton: Minister for Agriculture,  
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs
- The Hon. Rob Hulls: Attorney-General,  
Minister for Manufacturing Industry,  
Minister for Racing
- The Hon. Lynne Kosky: Minister for Education and Training
- The Hon. John Pandazopoulos: Minister for Gaming,  
Minister for Tourism,  
Minister for Employment,  
Minister Assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs
- The Hon. Bronwyn Pike: Minister for Housing,  
Minister for Community Building,  
Minister for Community Services

**Legislative Council**

- The Hon. Candy Broad: Minister for Energy and Resources,  
Minister for Ports
- The Hon. Monica Gould: Minister for Education Services and  
Minister for Youth Affairs
- The Hon. John Lenders: Minister for Finance and  
Minister for Industrial Relations
- The Hon. Justin Madden: Minister for Sport and Recreation and  
Minister for Commonwealth Games
- The Hon. Marsha Thomson: Minister for Small Business and  
Minister for Information and Communication Technology.

## Parliamentary committees

An important component of the parliamentary process is the work conducted by Parliamentary Committees. Parliament may form committees to examine particular issues of interest to Parliament. Such committees may be either 'standing' committees, which exist for the life of Parliament, or 'select' committees, which exist for the duration of a particular investigation.

Currently, there are seven standing committees, known in Parliament as joint investigatory committees and comprise both government and opposition members from both houses. While investigating particular issues, Parliamentary Committees examine information from many sources, including public submissions. This process of investigation, consultation and debate provides substantial input to the formation of new legislation.

The joint investigatory committees are as follows:

- Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee
- Environment and Natural Resources Committee
- Family and Community Development Committee
- Law Reform Committee
- Public Accounts and Estimates Committee
- Road Safety Committee
- Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee

The Legislative Council has the following select committees:

- Economic Development Committee (established 14 December 1999)
- Select Committee on the Frankston Central Activity District Development (established 17 October 2001)
- Select Committee on the Urban and Regional Lang Corporation Managing Director (established 6 December 2001)

## Victorian government departments and statutory authorities

Victorian government departments and statutory authorities administer legislation, implement government policy, provide policy advice to government and supply goods and services within Victoria. In February 2002, there were nine Victorian government departments. These are:

Department of Premier and Cabinet, including:

Premier; Multicultural Affairs; Arts; Women's Affairs; Community Building; Office of State Administration; Office of the Governor; Chief Parliamentary Counsel; Ombudsman; and Public Employment.

Department of Treasury and Finance, including:

Treasurer; Finance; WorkCover; Office of the Regulator-General; State Revenue Office; Government Superannuation Office; and Victorian Casino and Gaming Authority.

Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development, including:

State and Regional Development; Innovation; Industrial Relations; Manufacturing Industry; Information and Communication Technology; Multimedia; Small Business; and Employment.

Department of Education and Training, including:

Education and Training; Education Services; and Youth Services.

Department of Human Services, including:

Health; Community Services; DisAbility Services; Housing; and Senior Victorians.

Department of Justice, including:

Attorney-General; Police and Emergency Services; Corrections; Consumer Affairs; Equal Opportunity Commission; Legal Policy and Court Services.

Department of Infrastructure, including:

Transport; Major Projects; Planning; Ports; Roads; and Local Government.

Department of Natural Resources and Environment, including:

Environment and Conservation; Energy and Resources; Agriculture; Parks; and Aboriginal Affairs

Department of Tourism, Sport and Commonwealth Games, including:

Tourism; Racing; Sport and Recreation; and Commonwealth Games

## Local government administration

### Structure of Local Government

As at 30 June 2001, there were 78 local government (municipal) districts in Victoria, comprising 33 City Councils (including 4 Greater Cities), 6 Rural Cities, 38 Shires and 1 Borough. These local government areas are governed by elected councils.

There are also several unincorporated areas of Victoria (i.e. not part of a municipality). These include: land within an alpine resort (six alpine resorts have been declared under the Alpine Resorts Act 1983); French Island, situated in Westernport Bay (154 square kilometres); Lady Julia Percy Island, located off Port Fairy (1.3 square kilometres); Bass Strait Islands (3.8 square kilometres); and part of the Gippsland Lakes (309 square kilometres).

### Functions of Council

The functions of a council relate to its role in providing good governance, and equitable and appropriate services for its municipal district. These functions include:

- general public services (waste management; local fire, safety and emergency services; parking and traffic control; animal control; and information services),
- planning and land use control (building control; environmental protection; and plant control),
- infrastructure (construction and maintenance of local roads; bridges; lighting and drainage),
- health, welfare and community services (services for families, aged and other groups in the community; health and food premises' inspection services),
- recreational and cultural services (parks and gardens; libraries and museums; sport, leisure and arts facilities), and economic development, including tourism.

### Setting of Rates and Charges

The Local Government Act 1989 includes provisions whereby the responsible Minister may limit income raised by councils from rates and charges. Since 1998, however, the application of that power has been relaxed. Councils have been provided with guidelines in the form of a broad policy framework to assist them where they wish to consider increases in the amount of income to be raised by rates and charges.

### Performance Management and Reporting System

Victorian councils have agreed to report Victorian Local Government Indicators in their annual reports each year, commencing in 2001–02. The Local Government Division will collate the eleven indicators and publish this information annually. The indicators are grouped under five broad headings — affordability, cost of governance, sustainability, services, infrastructure and governance. The indicators for infrastructure and governance will be available in councils' annual reports for 2002–03.

Work is also continuing to review and refine the 47 comparative "service specific" indicators which councils use for benchmarking purposes. The objective of these indicators is to facilitate an understanding of best practice and encourage benchmarking across like groups of councils.

**Best Value**

The Best Value Principles Legislation requires each council to achieve continuous improvement in the provision of services for its community. A framework has been developed to operationalise Best Value in consultation with the local government sector. Councils are required to set quality and cost standards for each service area, performance outcomes, and to report against improvement targets.

**Asset Management**

Work is underway to ensure that councils develop sound asset management practices, including the preparation of asset management plans to assist them plan for future infrastructure requirements.

**Bibliography****Non-ABS sources**

Victorian Department of Infrastructure, Local Government Division.  
Parliament of Victoria, Library.

