



AUSTRALIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

ALGWA Vic will continue to support women through the October election and beyond.

Australian Local Government Women's Association Victoria (ALGWA Vic) is disappointed Council elections will go ahead in 2020 as our feedback is female candidates will be significantly disadvantaged.

ALGWA is committed to supporting women councillors and candidates through these difficult times and the forthcoming election, will continue to provide our mentoring program and is looking forward to working with the State Government and peak bodies.

The Minister for Local Government Hon. Adem Somyurek announced on May 15 that the October 2020 elections will proceed.

ALGWA Vic wrote to the Minister in April asking for the election to be deferred following a survey of female councillors and council officers. Women in local government cited potential health risks and feared the gender parity would be unachievable due to restrictions and potential challenges on public campaigning.

Added to this is the disproportionate economic impact of Covid-19 on women who often work in service industries and many run small businesses, which have been hit hard by the pandemic. The financial impost of mounting a campaign has been exacerbated for many women.

“We expect there will be a reduction in the number of women who will

stand in the October elections due to the impacts of the pandemic on women's lives, and the ongoing uncertainty of COVID-19 risk," said ALGWA Vic President Cr Kylie Spears.

"While we are pleased to see the inclusion of \$50k invested to encourage women to run for Council, we believe the funding needs to increase – as we now have a very tight timeframe. We look forward to working with the Minister on the ministerial guidelines to support and encourage candidates.

We need to equip candidates with the tools to cut through what can be incredibly toxic and biased online campaign platforms, which are often abusive and harmful to women."

Currently 38% or 240 councillors out of 648 are women. To reach parity data shows we need to encourage an extra 600 women to stand.

"We call on the State Government to work with peak bodies in any way possible to support free and fair elections at this difficult time for all candidates, but especially women. Let's not slide backwards on reaching gender equality at the 2020 local government elections," added Cr Spears.

For further information, contact Cr. Kylie Spears, President ALGWA Vic on 0436 003 660