

Campaigning for the 2020 council elections in Victoria

Guidelines for safe campaigning during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

31 July 2020

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1. Introduction

1.1 Context

The 2020 council general elections are expected to be Victoria's biggest election ever, with more than 4.5 million voters enrolled and more than 2000 candidates expected to contest 290 separate elections.

After considering the advice of Victoria's Chief Health Officer, the Victorian Government has decided these elections will proceed on Saturday, 24 October using postal voting.

1.2 Purpose

Candidates for council general elections will be considering how to safely campaign for election during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. These guidelines aim to help candidates to safely campaign by providing an overview of the restrictions applicable to campaign activities and measures they can take to reduce the risk of transmission.

Restrictions are subject to change and depend on levels of coronavirus transmission. Any campaign activities must comply with directions by the Victorian Chief Health Officer, which are in place at the time.

As at 31 July 2020, the two directions most relevant to campaigners are: Stay at Home directions for metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire and Stay Safe directions for the rest of Victoria. Additionally, people living in the local government areas of Colac Otway, Greater Geelong, Surf Coast, Moorabool, Golden Plains, and the Borough of Queenscliffe will no longer be able to visit people or have visitors at home. These directions are subject to change and these guidelines will be updated accordingly.

Under Stay at Home directions, people can only leave home for four reasons: shopping for food and other essential items, outdoor exercise, medical care and caregiving, and study or work (if study or work is unable to be done from home). Under the Stay Safe directions, people can leave home for any reason but must comply with the directions and any restrictions.

Campaigning for election is a permissible reason to leave home under both the Stay at Home and Stay Safe directions, but should be done in a way that minimises the risk of coronavirus transmission.

The Victorian Electoral Commission has produced its Candidate Handbook for the 2020 council general elections: <https://www.vec.vic.gov.au/CandidatesAndParties/CandidateFormsAndHandbooks.html>. Prospective candidates should make use of this Handbook in addition to this guide.

2. Campaigning during the pandemic

2.1 Campaign activities

All campaigning activities must comply with directions from the Victorian Chief Health Officer.

You should check the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) website to ensure you are clear about directions that apply to your municipality or suburb on each day of your campaign.

For the most up-to-date information, visit www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorias-restriction-levels-covid-19.

Important things to remember before leaving home include:

- If you live in metropolitan Melbourne and the Mitchell Shire you must wear a face covering if you need to leave home; for one the four permitted reasons.
- If you live outside of metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire until 11.59 pm on 2 August 2020, wearing a face covering if you need to leave home is recommended where you cannot maintain 1.5m from others. However, you must wear a face covering if you enter metropolitan Melbourne or Mitchell Shire.
- From 11.59pm on 2 August 2020 face coverings are compulsory for the whole of Victoria.
- If you live in metropolitan Melbourne or Mitchell Shire, there are only four reasons to leave home; Shopping for food or other essential items, To provide care giving, for compassionate reasons or to seek medical treatment, For exercise (applies to outdoor exercise, and with only one other person or members of your household), Work or study, if you cannot work or study from home.
- If you live in the local government areas of Colac Otway, Greater Geelong, Surf Coast, Moorabool, Golden Plains, and the Borough of Queenscliffe you must not visit people or have visitors at home;
- If you are feeling unwell you should stay at home. If you have even mild symptoms of coronavirus you should get tested and stay home until you get your results. For information on where to get tested, see www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/where-get-tested-covid-19.

The table below outlines likely campaign activities and gives advice about how coronavirus directions apply as at 31 July 2020.

Note: Directions from the Victorian Chief Health Officer may change at any time. You must ensure your campaign activities comply with current directions in your area.

Table 1: How Stay at Home and Stay Safe directions apply to campaign activities as at 31 July 2020.

| Campaign activity | Stay at Home directions | | Stay Safe directions | |
|---|-------------------------|---|-----------------------|--|
| | Permissible activity? | Advice on restrictions | Permissible activity? | Advice on restrictions |
| Convening / attending meetings – public places | NO | Public gatherings are restricted. You must not arrange to meet or organise a gathering of more than one other person for a common purpose at a public place. This includes indoor and outdoor public places. | YES | Public gatherings are restricted. The limit on the number of people who may meet in a public place at any one time is 10. Participants should remain 1.5 metres apart from those they don't live with. The restrictions include indoor and outdoor public places. |
| Convening / attending meetings – private residences | NO | Private gatherings are restricted, including in the local government areas of Colac Otway, Greater Geelong, Surf Coast, Moorabool, Golden Plains, and the Borough of Queenscliffe. You must not enter a premises at which you do not ordinarily reside (including the external part of the premises such as the front yard) and must not permit another person to enter the premises at which you ordinarily reside, except in limited circumstances. | YES | Private gatherings are restricted. The number of people who may visit a residential premises (at which they do not ordinarily reside) at any one time is limited to five. |
| Door knocking | NO | Door knocking is not a permitted reason to enter another person's premises. Private gatherings are restricted as per above, including in the local government areas of Colac Otway, Greater Geelong, Surf Coast, Moorabool, Golden Plains, and the Borough of Queenscliffe. | YES | The same rules apply as for private gatherings. All Victorians are required to work from home, unless it is not reasonably practicable to do so. This includes volunteers and other team members who are working on a campaign, such as helping with active outreach to the community through doorknocking. Consideration should be given to whether this active outreach to the community can be done through other means while working from home, for example, telephone calls. |
| Meeting the public, attending community events | NO | Public gatherings are restricted as per above – i.e. you must not convene or attend meetings or community events. There is also a risk that interacting with members of the public in public places such as shopping centres and railway stations would result in a public gathering of more than two people occurring. | YES | Public gatherings are restricted as per above. You should use common sense and consideration when it comes to interacting with people in public places such as shopping centres and railway stations and take safety precautions, including physical distancing. |
| Letterbox drops | YES | This can occur, but you must not enter the person's premises, including in the local government areas of Colac Otway, Greater Geelong, Surf Coast, Moorabool, Golden Plains, and the Borough of Queenscliffe. Hand hygiene must be maintained when handling documents to be given to the public. | YES | This is permitted. Hand hygiene must be maintained when handling documents to be given to the public. |

| Campaign activity | Stay at Home directions | | Stay Safe directions | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|--|-----------------------|--|
| | Permissible activity? | Advice on restrictions | Permissible activity? | Advice on restrictions |
| Handing out leaflets | YES | Public gatherings are restricted as per above. Hand hygiene must be maintained when handling documents to be given to the public. | YES | Public gatherings are restricted as per above. Hand hygiene must be maintained when handling documents to be given to the public. |
| Billboards / posters | YES | If you wish to place billboards or posters on private premises, you must observe the restrictions about private gatherings as per above, including in the local government areas of Colac Otway, Greater Geelong, Surf Coast, Moorabool, Golden Plains, and the Borough of Queenscliffe. | YES | If you wish to place billboards or posters on private premises, you must observe the restrictions about private gatherings as per above. |
| Social media | YES | No restrictions apply. | YES | No restrictions apply. |
| Newspaper ads | YES | No restrictions apply. | YES | No restrictions apply. |
| Radio and TV | YES | Must be conducted from home wherever possible. If conducted in person, you must wear a mask. | YES | Must be conducted from home wherever possible. You should wear a mask if you cannot maintain 1.5 metres distance. |

2.2 How to campaign safely

Carefully plan any campaigning activities to ensure they are undertaken safely. Here are some things consider.

2.2.1 General measures

If you or your campaign team can work from home during the campaign period, you must work from home.

If you or your campaign team cannot work from home, you should consider and encourage flexible working arrangements, including off-peak travel.

If you or any campaign team members are unwell, you must stay home.

Ensure employees or volunteers with symptoms of coronavirus get tested and stay at home until they receive the results.

Consider whether work-related travel by your campaign team is necessary and avoid it where possible.

Plan contingencies for a potential increase of campaign team absences because people are self-isolating, self-quarantining or staying at home because they are unwell.

If using a dedicated workspace, plan what to do if campaign team members arrive unwell at the workspace (e.g. identify an isolation room or separated area).

Display coronavirus education materials in designated work areas. Download and print them from: www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/preventing-infection-workplace-covid-19#resources.

Minimise campaign team member movements between areas and cross-over between shifts.

Provide adequate facilities or products, such as hand sanitiser, to allow campaign team members and others who enter a workspace to maintain good hygiene practices.

Consult health and safety representatives and keep campaign team members informed about actions you are taking.

Socialising among workers has been responsible for some coronavirus transmission, including through carpooling, huddling together at meal breaks, smoking in groups without physical distancing and sharing items such as cigarette lighters and cutlery. Encourage campaign team members to maintain 1.5 metres of distance from other team members at all times and avoid sharing items.

People living in metropolitan Melbourne or Mitchell Shire or travelling to these areas must wear a face covering whenever they leave home, including at work, unless they have a lawful excuse, such as medical grounds, for not doing so. From 11.59 pm on 2 August 2020 this requirement applies to the whole of Victoria.

Employers should ensure employees and volunteers wear a face covering while at work, unless a lawful exception applies.

For further information see Worksafe Victoria www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19 and Department of Health and Human Services guidance for businesses and workplaces at www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/planning-and-responding-coronavirus-covid-19 and www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/preventing-infection-workplace-covid-19.

2.2.2 Slowing the spread of coronavirus

To slow the spread of coronavirus, where any campaign activity requires team members to come together in a workspace:

- provide and promote the use of hand sanitisers, including at building entrances
- increase environmental cleaning, including between changes of team members
- regularly clean high-touch surfaces with disinfectant – at least twice daily – including desks, doors and door handles, keyboards and lifts, including lift buttons and handrails
- ensure adequate supplies of things such as towels and soap bars in change rooms so team members do not share items, and encourage team members to wash their hands after changing
- open windows and adjust air conditioning to improve airflow

- purchase supplies to help limit infection, for example, alcohol-based hand sanitisers and soap.

For more information, see www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/preventing-infection-workplace-covid-19.

2.2.3 Face coverings

From 11.59pm on Wednesday 22 July, new rules for face coverings were introduced in Victoria.

- People living within metropolitan Melbourne or Mitchell Shire or travelling to these areas must wear a face covering whenever they leave home unless a lawful exception applies.
- For more information about face coverings, please visit www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/face-coverings-covid-19.
- Employers should ensure employees and volunteers wear a face covering while at work, unless a lawful exception applies.
- If you are driving on your own in a vehicle for work, you do not need to wear a face covering. When you leave your vehicle or need to interact with others, you should put on a face covering. If you are travelling with others outside your household, including passengers or other people from your work, you must wear a face covering.

From 11.59pm on 2 August this requirement is extended to cover the whole of Victoria.

For a list of the exceptions for not wearing a face covering, for example, if you cannot wear a face covering on medical grounds, visit www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/face-coverings-covid-19.

2.2.4 Education and training for all members of the campaigning team

Ensure you meet the education and training needs of your campaign team to help slow the spread of coronavirus. This may include:

- emphasis on not attending activities if unwell
- wearing a mask when leaving the home and instruction on how to safely put on and remove a mask
- awareness of physical distancing expectations and strategies to achieve them, including any specific campaign practice changes
- hand and cough hygiene
- use of new technologies and systems that enable working from home.

2.2.5 Physical distancing

Use the following measures to promote physical distancing:

- Plan ways to enable physical distancing of at least 1.5 meters to reduce person-to-person contact.
- In an enclosed workspace ensure there is on average no more than one person per four square meters of floor space.
- If possible, designate specific doorways as entry-only and exit-only and aim to keep people walking in the same direction through the workplace.
- Avoid indoor meetings and lunchrooms and encourage online meetings.
- Any workspace used that plans to have areas accessible to the public will also be subject to density quotient and signage requirements and those subject to Stay at Home restrictions will be subject to further specific restrictions. For the most up to date restrictions in place in Victoria see www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorias-restriction-levels-covid-19
- Provide a clearly visible sign showing how many people are allowed in premises used as workspace. For information on signs and signage templates see Business Victoria www.business.vic.gov.au/disputes-disasters-and-succession-planning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-business-support.

2.2.6 Cleaning and disinfection

Any workspace areas and surfaces used by the campaign team must be cleaned and disinfected. Both steps are essential. The first step is cleaning, which means wiping dirt and germs off a surface. You can use common household detergent products for cleaning, they are stocked at supermarkets. Cleaning alone does not kill germs.

The next step is to disinfect the surface. Disinfection means using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. Again, supermarkets stock common household disinfection products. It is important to use products labelled disinfectant and to follow the instructions on the label.

High-touch surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected at least twice daily. More information can be found at www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/cleaning-and-disinfecting-reduce-covid-19-transmission.

2.2.7 Advice for specific campaign activities

The table below explains how to undertake various campaign activities safely during the coronavirus pandemic.

Table 2: Advice about how to safely undertake campaign activities

This table is designed to be read with the table above, detailing what campaign activities are legally allowed under the directions as at 31 July 2020, depending on geographical area.

| Campaign activity | Advice |
|--|--|
| Convening / attending meetings – outdoors (when permitted) | <p>If you are feeling unwell you should stay at home. If you have even mild symptoms of coronavirus you should get tested.</p> <p>Face coverings must be worn when outside your home in Melbourne and Mitchell Shire, or when travelling to these areas. Outside these areas in Victoria until 11.59pm on 2 August, campaign team members are advised to wear a face covering when outside their homes, especially where physical distancing may be difficult to achieve.</p> <p>Face coverings are mandatory for the whole of Victoria from 11.59pm on 2 August 2020.</p> <p>Maintain 1.5 metres of distance from other people at all times to reduce person-to-person contact.</p> <p>Practise good hygiene. Wash and sanitise your hands regularly and cough and sneeze into a tissue or your elbow.</p> <p>Avoid sharing items such as pens.</p> |
| Convening / attending meetings – indoors (when permitted) | <p>If you are feeling unwell you should stay at home. If you have even mild symptoms of coronavirus you should get tested.</p> <p>Indoor meetings should be avoided. Encourage online meetings.</p> <p>Face coverings must be worn when outside your home in Melbourne and Mitchell Shire, or when travelling to these areas. Outside these areas in Victoria, campaign team members are advised to wear a face covering when outside their homes, especially where physical distancing may be difficult to achieve.</p> <p>If indoor meetings are necessary, maintain 1.5 metres of distance from other people at all times to reduce person-to-person contact.</p> <p>There should be on average no more than one person per four square metres of floor space.</p> <p>Practise good hygiene. Wash and sanitise your hands regularly and cough and sneeze into a tissue or your elbow.</p> <p>If possible, designate specific doorways as entry-only and exit-only and aim to keep people walking in the same direction through the meeting space. Provide and promote hand sanitisers, including at meeting entrances.</p> <p>Indoor meeting spaces that have areas accessible to the public will be subject to density restrictions and signage requirements and those subject to Stay at Home restrictions will be subject to further restrictions. Visit Victoria's restriction levels for the most up-to-date restrictions in place in Victoria. Provide a clearly visible sign for members of the public stating how many people are allowed in the premise. For information on signs and signage templates see the Business Victoria website.</p> <p>Open windows and adjust air conditioning to improve airflow.</p> <p>Avoid sharing items such as pens.</p> <p>Consider requesting the first name and a contact phone number of meeting participants, and record the information to enable contact tracing if required. Where meeting organisers keep a record, personal details should be kept securely. Information collected should also include the date and time at which the</p> |

| Campaign activity | Advice |
|---|---|
| | person attended the meeting and, if applicable, the location they visited. Where records are kept, these records should be kept for 28 days and then destroyed. |
| Door knocking (when permitted) | <p>If you are feeling unwell you should stay at home. If you have even mild symptoms of coronavirus you should get tested.</p> <p>Wear a face covering.</p> <p>Maintain 1.5 metres of distance from other people at all times to reduce person-to-person contact.</p> <p>Practise good hygiene. Wash and sanitise your hands regularly and cough and sneeze into a tissue or your elbow.</p> <p>Avoid sharing items such as pens.</p> <p>Avoid touching high-touch surfaces such as door handles.</p> |
| Meeting the public, attending community events (when permitted) | As for convening and attending meetings - outdoors and convening and attending meetings - indoors. |
| Letterbox drops | <p>If you are feeling unwell you should stay at home. If you have even mild symptoms of coronavirus you should get tested.</p> <p>Face coverings must be worn when outside your home in Melbourne and Mitchell Shire, or when travelling to these areas. Outside these areas until 11.59pm on 2 August, campaign team members are advised to wear a face covering when outside their homes, especially where physical distancing may be difficult to achieve.</p> <p>Face coverings are mandatory for the whole of Victoria from 11.59pm on 2 August 2020.</p> <p>Maintain 1.5 metres of distance from other people at all times to reduce person-to-person contact.</p> <p>Practise good hygiene. Wash and sanitise your hands regularly and cough and sneeze into a tissue or your elbow.</p> <p>Where possible, avoid touching high touch surfaces such as letterbox handles.</p> |
| Handing out leaflets | <p>If you are feeling unwell you should stay at home. If you have even mild symptoms of coronavirus you should get tested.</p> <p>Face coverings must be worn when outside your home in Melbourne and Mitchell Shire, or when travelling to these areas. Outside these areas until 11.59pm on 2 August, campaign team members are advised to wear a face covering when outside their homes, especially where physical distancing may be difficult to achieve.</p> <p>Face coverings are mandatory for the whole of Victoria from 11.59pm on 2 August 2020. Maintain 1.5 metres of distance from other people at all times to reduce person-to-person contact.</p> <p>Practise good hygiene. Wash and sanitise your hands regularly and cough and sneeze into a tissue or your elbow.</p> <p>Where possible, avoid touching high touch surfaces such as door handles, railings, lift buttons, etc.</p> |
| Billboards / posters | <p>If you are feeling unwell you should stay at home. If you have even mild symptoms of coronavirus you should get tested.</p> <p>Face coverings must be worn when outside your home in Melbourne and Mitchell Shire, or when travelling to these areas. Outside these areas until 11.59pm on 2 August, campaign team members are advised to wear a face covering when outside their homes, especially where physical distancing may be difficult to achieve.</p> |

| Campaign activity | Advice |
|-------------------|--|
| | <p>Face coverings are mandatory for the whole of Victoria from 11.59pm on 2 August 2020. Maintain 1.5 metres of distance from other people at all times to reduce person-to-person contact.</p> <p>Practise good hygiene. Wash and sanitise your hands regularly and cough and sneeze into a tissue or your elbow.</p> <p>Where possible, avoid touching high touch surfaces such as railings, etc.</p> |
| Social media | This can be practised safely during coronavirus without any further guidance. |
| Newspaper ads | This can be practised safely during coronavirus without any further guidance. |
| Radio and TV | <p>Advertisements can be conducted safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) without any further guidance.</p> <p>Interviews conducted over the phone can be practised safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) without any further guidance.</p> <p>Interviews should be conducted via phone or online where possible to avoid person-to-person contact.</p> <p>Where interviews are conducted face-to-face:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are feeling unwell you should stay at home. If you have even mild symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) then you should get tested; • Face coverings must be worn when outside your home in Melbourne and Mitchell Shire, or when travelling to these areas. Outside these areas until 11.59pm on 2 August, campaign team members are advised to wear a face covering when outside their homes, especially where physical distancing may be difficult to achieve. • Face coverings are mandatory for the whole of Victoria from 11.59pm on 2 August 2020. Maintain 1.5 metres of distance from other people at all times to reduce person-to-person contact; • Practise good hygiene – wash / sanitise your hands regularly and cough and sneeze into a tissue or your elbow; and • Where possible, avoid touching high touch surfaces such as railings, etc. |