

How does the postponement of the elections affect the timing of the IP&R cycle?

The postponement of council elections from 4 September 2021 to 4 December 2021, does not alter the requirement under the Act for councils to review the community strategic plan (CSP) before 30 June 2022 and establish a new delivery program (DP) to cover their principal activities for the 4-year period commencing on 1 July 2022.

Why didn't OLG defer the whole round of IP&R for 12 months?

Due to the previous delay to the elections, the IP&R cycle has already been extended to 5 years. This has meant the four-year delivery program and resourcing strategy has extended to 5 years.

How can we develop a CSP in a short timeframe?

Councils must adopt the CSP by 30 June following the election, however there is no specific requirement to develop a whole new CSP. Following a review of the CSP, councils may endorse the existing CSP, endorse amendments to the existing CSP, or develop and endorse a new CSP. Councils can decide what is appropriate for their circumstance. Councils must ensure that their community has a CSP that covers at a minimum the next 10 years.

A review of the CSP must include the following:

- a report on the progress of implementation and the effectiveness of the community strategic plan as presented to the final meeting of the outgoing council (End of Term Report)
- a review of the information that informed the previously endorsed community strategic plan; and
- a review of the council's community engagement strategy.

How can we engage with our communities during COVID-19?

The level of CSP review will influence the scope, depth and timing of community engagement undertaken to inform the review. Councils may wish to commence their community engagement activities prior to the election.

Councils may need to change the way they engage with their communities during COVID-19 to ensure that social distancing is maintained. Online engagement options should be considered. There are several reputable online community engagement tools that could be used.

When councils are considering on-line engagement, they should be mindful of hard to reach communities and those who may not have access to the technology required to participate in engagement on-line.

Can council adopt the CSP, DP and OP at the same meeting?

Yes, council can endorse the Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program and Operational Plan at the same meeting assuming the requirements for public exhibition have been satisfied.

Do we still have to prepare a 4-year delivery program, even though the council's term is only 2 years and 9 months?

Yes, councils are still required under the Act to prepare a 4-year delivery program.

How does postponement of elections impact the timing of the End of Term report?

In the normal election cycle, the end of term report is presented at the final meeting of an outgoing council, typically August. This year, as the final meeting of council will be later the end of term report may be presented later. In most instances it is likely to be November.

Timing to adopt the CSP is very tight - can we incorporate councillor feedback on the CSP during the exhibition period?

Yes. Councillors can endorse the draft CSP to go on exhibition without adopting it. The CSP must be exhibited for 28 days and councillors may provide feedback on the document during that time and the amendments made where appropriate.

How does the postponement of elections impact the timing of the annual report?

The current requirements are that the report:

- is prepared within five months of the end of the financial year
- outlines the council's achievements in implementing its delivery program.
- in the year of the ordinary election, will also include an outline of achievements in implementing the community strategic plan (End of Term report).
- in the year of the ordinary election must include a report (State of the Environment report) as to the state of the environment in the local government

area in relation to the objectives for the environment established by the community strategic plan.

- must contain the council's audited financial statements and notes and any information required by the Regulation or the Guidelines and
- must be posted on the council's website and provided to the Minister.

In preparing the council annual report this year, councils should be mindful of the requirements for councils to consider, in the 40 days preceding the election, whether their publications could amount to an "electoral matter".

County Councils need to renew / refresh their business activity strategic plan (CSP equivalent) utilising the CSP's from their constituent Councils. How can they do this if councils have not completed their CSP in time?

The time frame for ordinary councils to develop their CSP has not changed due to the delay in the election.

Joint Organisations must adopt a statement of regional priorities - does the timing of the election affect this?

Joint organisations must adopt a statement of strategic regional priorities within 12 months of the elections for their member councils. This requirement does not change.

Where can I get more information?

Contact your Engagement Manager or the Office of Local Government's Council Governance Team on 4428 4100 or olg@olg.nsw.gov.au.