



Shelley Hancock
Minister for Local Government

MEDIA RELEASE

Saturday, 30 October 2021

COUNCIL MEETINGS TAKE EXCITING VIRTUAL STEP

New changes introduced this week are set to revolutionise the way NSW council meetings can be run as they open up to an online platform providing more flexibility for all.

Minister for Local Government Shelley Hancock said the innovative updates to the Model Code of Meeting Practice will allow councillors to attend meetings virtually meaning communities can now tap into a much wider talent pool come election day.

“These changes to the Code will modernise best practice and could not come at a better time as candidate nominations for the December 4 elections are still open until midday Tuesday, November 3,” Mrs Hancock said.

“Council’s will now have the option to allow councillors to be present for official meetings by audio-visual link if they can’t attend in person because of illness, disability, caring and work responsibilities or other reasons agreed to by council.”

As well as boosting opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds, Mrs Hancock said the changes allow councils to meet entirely remotely during natural disasters and public health emergencies.

“We have heard loud and clear that councils want this flexibility into the future. It encourages more diversity among councillors and it means critical decisions can still be made during public health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic,” Mrs Hancock said.

“Women represent just 31 per cent of all NSW councillors so we must do all we can to encourage more women to stand for their community,” Mrs Hancock said.

“Council’s play a vital democratic function and it is important councillors are able to deliberate and determine important matters on behalf of their community especially during crises such as COVID-19, bushfires and floods.”

The NSW Government has also strengthened requirements for councils to financially support councillors with carer responsibilities including meeting childcare expenses to allow them to undertake their civic duties.

The new *Model Code of Meeting Practice for Local Councils in NSW* can be found [here](#).

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