



# Local Government Officer for the Protection of the Local Environment (OPLE) Pilot Program

EPA Victoria Jo Regel



Environment  
Protection  
Authority Victoria



# Government response to EPA Inquiry

## Significant reform agenda

- Independent inquiry process with broad public consultation – reported in early 2016
- Government response to the EPA Inquiry released on 17 January 2017 with strong support for reform proposals
- \$162.5 million committed over 5 years
- 5 year reform program – with DELWP & EPA, working across Victorian Government, and with business, community and local government stakeholders
- Major overhaul of the Environment Protection Act – opportunity to modernise Victoria's environment protection framework





# Government Response - Rec 18

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- The Government Response: to deliver an EPA that is more responsive to local and regional issues
- \$4.8 million to pilot a network of Local Government Environment Protection Officers.



# Local Government OPLE Pilot

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- The Inquiry found a significant gap in what issues councils can respond to, and what EPA are able to attend
- Recommended a new network of local government environment protection officers to address localised pollution and waste complaints
- Pilot program is an opportunity for the EPA to work more collaboratively with local governments to tackle smaller scale and lower complexity waste and pollution complaints.



# Local Government OPLE Pilot

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- Officers will be EPA employers embedded in councils
- Officers will be appropriately authorized under the EP Act
- Pilot funded for 15 months, for 10-13 councils through an EoI process (closed 9 June)
- Mix of urban, regional and rural councils



# Local issues





# Key elements of program

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- Statewide consistency
- Flexibility of OPLEs to adapt service to their community's needs
- Focus on smaller scale and lower risk issues
- Clear referral pathway to EPA
- Access to relevant compliance and enforcement tools
- Focus on increased education and support for compliance



# OPLE roles and responsibilities

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## OPLEs will:

- Investigate lower risk pollution regulated through EPA legislation, including commercial and industrial sources of noise, odour, dust, waste and litter
- Engage with local stakeholders to improve environmental compliance
- Provide technical assistance to existing council officers (e.g. application of the noise policies, or use of the litter provisions under s.45A of *Environment Protection Act 1970*)
- Take remedial action (e.g. Pollution Abatement Notices)
- Issue Litter Penalty Infringement Notices

## OPLEs will not:

- Apply sanctions – cases will be escalated to EPA for action
- Inspect or investigate council-owned property or operations – these will continued to be actioned by EPA
- Respond to issues currently managed by Council through EHOs or planning officer responsibilities





# Questions

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