



# WORKING WITH STATE GOVERNMENT

In this section, you will find information about working with state government bodies, as well as politicians and State members of Parliament.

## 1. VicRoads

Main roads (or arterial roads) are usually the responsibility of VicRoads, the state government authority. Key things that you should know about VicRoads include:

- VicRoads is generally responsible for the overall management and development of the major arterial component of our road network - which is around 15% of the roads in Victoria.
- If the road you are looking for is included on the [Register of Public Roads](#), then VicRoads is the right point of contact for any issues or concerns. If a road is not listed, it will be the responsibility of another road authority, such as a local council.
- VicRoads has a [Road Management Plan](#) covering all the roads it is responsible for. The plan outlines how VicRoads will provide a safe and efficient road network for all members of the public, including their policies and procedures, priority areas, how often they inspect the road, and what standards they have for the condition of the road.
- VicRoads also has [Pedestrian Priority Actions](#) designed to increase safety and access for pedestrians. These initiatives include development of shopping strip and school zone speed limits, and construction of facilities for pedestrians such as road crossings, kerb extensions and public lighting.
- [Road rules](#) – including rules that apply or relate to pedestrians – can also be found on the VicRoads website.
- VicRoads also encourages the public to provide them with information about hazards, and has a 24-hour contact telephone number (13 11 70).



## 2. TravelSmart

TravelSmart is an initiative of the Victorian Government that aims to reduce people's dependency on cars and encourage them to choose sustainable travel alternatives, such as walking, cycling or catching public transport. TravelSmart has worked with local councils, schools, households, workplaces and organisations to develop and deliver travel plans and other travel behaviour change projects.

The [TravelSmart](#) website details many case studies and initiatives such as grants that are available to address barriers to walking, cycling and public transport use. There's also the [WalkSmart](#) program which encourages people to walk all or part of the way to work, using pedometers to calculate their daily steps.

## 3. Public transport

The state government also runs Victoria's public transport system. As walking combines well with public transport for longer trips, it is worth thinking about whether your group should engage with the public transport providers in your area. Key parties include:

- Melbourne's metropolitan train system is run by [Metro](#).
- Melbourne's tram system is run by [Yarra Trams](#).
- Melbourne's metropolitan buses and local buses in regional areas are run by a variety of providers – check out your local area on [Metlink](#) or [VicLink](#).
- Victoria's regional train system is run by [VLine](#).

Public transport providers might be willing to talk to you about:

- Whether the local bus routes are serving the needs of your local community (tram and train routes are obviously harder to change);
- Location of stops, especially for buses, and to a certain extent, for trams; and
- Service upgrades are planned in your local area.

From time to time, some providers might also be willing to donate money or services to community-based groups – and the more you can demonstrate how working with you will improve passenger numbers on their transport services, the more likely they are to listen!

## 4. Urban planning

The Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) is responsible for land-use planning and environment assessment in Victoria. This includes managing the regulatory framework and providing advice on planning policy, urban design and strategic planning, as well as information on land development and forecasting.

[DPCD](#) promotes collaboration at the local level to achieve better outcomes for all, so if you need advice on DPCD, community building or available grants it has local teams of staff in all areas of Victoria to assist. For useful information about planning processes, see '[Planning: a Short Guide](#)' and '[Using Victoria's Planning System](#)'.

## 5. Your local member of Parliament

Your local Member of Parliament (MP) is the person your neighbourhood has elected to represent you in the Victorian State Parliament. They are likely to have a strong interest in local issues, and will at least want to hear about what you are doing to make your neighbourhood more walk-friendly.

They might also be willing to support you, including:

- Writing a letter of endorsement for your work, which you can then show to other groups or people to increase your credibility.
- Telling you about funding or grants that you might be able to apply for.
- Publicly supporting your work, by appearing at your meetings and events or agreeing to be interviewed by local media.
- Advocating within their own party for changes to policies, funding or laws that would help you.

Your local MP might be a member of the Government, the opposition or a minor party, or they might be an independent. In some ways, Government MPs probably have more power, because they are able to directly influence current government policy. On the other hand, they are likely to be bound by the stated policy of their party – so might not be willing to publicly support you if what you want conflicts with what the government has said they are going to do.

If your MP is in opposition, or is an independent or aligned with a smaller party, they will have less opportunity to directly influence government policy. However, they may have freedom to criticise government – so they might be able to put some pressure on the current government to change its policy or allocate some funding.

Before you get in touch, it's worth doing some research. Find out:

- Which party your local MP belongs to.
- What that party's policy is on the issue you're interested in – such as traffic management, environmental sustainability, or improving community connections.
- What the government is currently doing or funding in your local area – or what they've promised to do and haven't yet started!

You are more likely to be successful in your approach to a local politician if you can:

- Demonstrate that there is broad community support for what you're trying to do, or that it would significantly benefit the community.
- Align your cause with their stated policy.

## 5. Your local member of Parliament (cont.)

To get in touch with your local MP:

- Send an email or letter with some information about your group. Addresses for local members are on the [Victorian Parliament website](#).
- Call his or her electoral office (not parliamentary office) and make an appointment.
- Find out whether there's a 'Community Cabinet' or other meet-the-public type event coming up in your local area, and go along.
- Invite them to one of your meetings or events by phone, letter or email, or putting put together a 'walking tour' of the places that you most want to change, and inviting them to join you.

**#Tip:** Like everyone else, MPS definitely love to hear good news, so if you can, send your MP a letter introducing your group and highlighting some of your successes before you start asking them to help you.

## 6. State government Ministers

State Government Ministers are also called Cabinet Members. Each Cabinet Member or Minister has a portfolio, or area they are responsible for. A list of Victorian Government Ministers can be found on [Victoria Online](#).

Ministers often lead the development of new policy, funding and grants programs, and laws in their portfolio areas, so they're good people to get in touch with.

If you aren't getting the response you want from your local MP, the Minister is often the next place to turn – but they are very busy people, so you may not get an immediate response or commitment.

Before contacting a Minister, you'd do much the same preparation you'd do before contacting a local member – but this time, you'd contact their ministerial office rather than their electoral or parliamentary office. Phone calls are unlikely to be as effective as letters with Ministers.

**#Tip:** It's best to save the really big issues for Ministers – and use letters to communicate. Most Ministers aren't inclined to interfere with public servant's decisions about relatively minor issues, and bombarding them with letters may even result in them taking less notice of you, not more.

## **7. Shadow (state opposition) ministers**

Most Ministers will have a 'shadow' – someone who is responsible for commenting on and analysing Ministerial decisions on behalf of the opposition party.

Again, you'd do similar research to if you were going to contact a local member – but be careful.

As anyone who watches the news on television or reads the paper would know, shadow ministers love to hear from people who think that they aren't been well represented or supported by Government.

So, just as you should be wary about being negative and criticising other people when you're working with the media, giving the opposition information to use against the government might not help you win friends and influence people next time you are looking for help.