



Maddocks & Victorian Local Government

Legal support and guidance

The modern Australian law firm



Maddocks

About Maddocks

Maddocks was established in 1885 and has been supporting Victorian councils since the early 1900s. We are an Australian, full-service law firm with 93 partners, more than 300 lawyers, and over 600 staff in total working across our Melbourne, Sydney, and Canberra offices.

We provide premium legal services to governments, corporations and businesses throughout Australia and internationally in over 30 areas of law. We advise clients across the government, built environment, education, healthcare and technology sectors.

We are particularly passionate about partnering with government, with nearly half of our overall firm work being for government clients across all 3 tiers (Commonwealth, State and Local). With such a significant part of our business dedicated to government, we have a large pool of suitably experienced lawyers that service this sector.

Having advised Victorian councils for more than 120 years, our local government practice is one of our primary businesses. Over the past 12 months, we have acted for almost all of Victoria's metropolitan and regional councils, providing advice, advocacy and transactional assistance in areas ranging from administrative law and employment to multi-million dollar property redevelopments.

Our deep knowledge of the sector, along with our longstanding relationships with individual councils and peak bodies, mean that our lawyers have unmatched insight into the workings of local government at a strategic and operational level. Council will also benefit from our broader experience advising state and federal government departments and agencies, as well as private and publicly-listed businesses and corporations.

“

The Maddocks team left a distinct impression of personality and capability
City of Monash

Your help and advice have been incredibly valuable with a significant positive benefit to our people and our community

Moonee Valley City Council

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How we deliver for Council

Our experience means that when a legal issue is identified by Council:

- we are likely to have already considered and dealt with a similar issue for another council
- if so, our lawyers will be immediately familiar with the implications of the issue, thereby reducing or eliminating costs of legal research and helping to ensure a rapid response
- if the issue is novel or unique, our lawyers can draw on the depth and breadth of their knowledge of the law and the operations of local government to provide optimal legal services.

This deep experience means that we are uniquely qualified to identify and advise on legal trends and developments relevant to councils, as well as to address potential risks and concerns faced by councils, including obligations associated with public accountability and corporate governance.



How we support councils: Our services

Councils have access to a large team of lawyers with deep experience and expertise across all areas of law

Commercial

Advice on Councils' collaboration and participation in beneficial enterprises, including formation, governance and administration of corporate entities, tendering and procurement, and the application of competition law to local governments

Dispute Resolution & Litigation

Advice on statutory duties, judicial review, commercial, common law and administrative law disputes, regulatory inquiries, appearing at mediations and other forms of alternative dispute resolution

Intellectual Property & Information Technology

Advice on tender documentation and tender evaluation issues, technology and business process outsourcings, hardware procurement and support, software licensing and support, and IP licence agreements

Community Health & Wellbeing

Advice on managing risks to community and Council safety in response to threats, harassment and offensive behaviour, responding to homelessness, and grants and contracts for public health and community initiatives

Employment & Safety

Advice on industrial relations, including awards and enterprise bargaining, anti-discrimination, workplace investigations, OHS, and employment issues specific to local government including the management of CEO and executive/senior officer employment

Planning & Environment

Strategic and statutory planning advice, representation and advocacy before VCAT, Planning Panels Victoria, and Advisory Committees, Section 173 agreements, and the development approval process from inception to completion

Compliance & Enforcement

Advocacy and advice on building regulations, public health and wellbeing, food, local laws, parking and domestic animals, and the prosecution of serious and high-risk matters on behalf of councils

FOI & Privacy

Advice on the scope of FOI requests and their processing, assisting in reviews and complaints before the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner, and advising on councils' compliance with relevant privacy laws, including drafting and reviewing privacy policies

Rates, Valuations, Compensation

Advice on special rates and charges, compulsory acquisition, interpretation of the *Valuation of Land Act 1960* and related legislation, managing disputes on behalf of councils, and representation at VCAT and the Victorian Supreme Court

Construction & Major Projects

Advice on project procurement methods, identifying legal issues in council projects, contractual risk allocation, risk mitigation and contract administration, and tendering and probity issues

Governance

Advice on interpretation of the *Local Government Act 2020* and other legislation specific to local government, elections, delegations and authorisations, public interest disclosures, and Councillor conduct issues

Real Estate

Advice on procurement processes relating to the sale or lease of public land, leasing and licensing of council and Crown land, major redevelopment projects, creation of easements and covenants, and advice on roads and public highways



How we support councils: Our work on sector-defining matters

Councils can rely on us to help them navigate the legal matters that are currently shaping Victorian local government

Multi-employer bargaining

Councils have recently had unions pushing to expand the reach of multi-employer bargaining into local government. This is a substantial departure from the traditional form of bargaining at the single-enterprise level. We represented Central Goldfields Shire Council at the Fair Work Commission and Federal Court challenges and are currently representing multiple councils in major applications for Single Interest Employer Agreement (SIEA) authorisations impacting local government entities providing early childhood services and in metropolitan Melbourne

Heritage management

Councils play an important role in heritage protection and management, which can be a highly emotive topic for their communities. We represented Darebin City Council at a six-week Standing Advisory Committee hearing on the draft planning controls for the historic Preston Market, successfully securing an amendment to the controls that would protect the historic, aesthetic, technical and social significance of the market

Incivility

Councils must manage public expectation and commentary in the face of heightened community engagement with it and councillors, including increasing incivility on social media. We are advising several councils on how to navigate this growing trend and respond to incivility

Energy transition

Councils have a significant responsibility to respond to localised climate change impacts and reduce emissions. We advised councils on the Victorian Energy Collaboration (VECO); the largest ever emissions reduction project by local government in Australia, and more recently have assisted Merri-bek City Council to drive energy transition with collaborative energy procurement and community battery projects

Councillor inductions

Councils rely on councillors understanding their role and being able to execute it well, and must now ensure its councillors complete continuous professional development under the new regulations. Our partners delivered over 60 councillor inductions across governance, conduct, planning and environment, and OHS following the October 2024 elections, and have developed a dedicated Councillor CPD program to ensure compliance

Psychosocial changes

Councils have a range of duties to reduce and prevent psychosocial hazards at work, with new psychosocial regulations also due to come into effect in late 2025. Councils are frequently facing opposing complaints; that employees feel unsafe because employers are not doing enough to protect them from exposure to protests or to views with which they disagree, and that employees feel unsafe because their employer has not adopted a particular position on a public or political issue. We are working with Councils to help them understand what constitutes a psychosocial hazard as well as their obligations in relation to safety

Urban growth

We are supporting councils on large, complex urban growth projects, including the Sandown Racecourse development; involving the rezoning of land to allow for the construction of 7,500 new dwellings and multiple activity centres, as well as advising on the Suburban Rail Loop East Precinct Planning for six new stations; Cheltenham, Clayton, Monash, Glen Waverley, Burwood and Box Hill, which will support the delivery of 70,000 additional homes in Victoria as well as a range of infrastructure and services. This is a significant part of Victoria's Big Build and one of the biggest planning processes in Melbourne of recent times

Service reviews and exits

Significant reforms in services such as kindergarten and aged care at the Victorian and Commonwealth levels of government respectively have driven a number of service reviews across regional and metropolitan councils. We have been advising councils on their industrial and legal options at all stages of these reviews, starting with the planning stage and then working through the myriad of complications that may arise during the consultation, redeployment and redundancy phases



How we support councils: Our complimentary training offerings

We're committed to delivering a comprehensive program of complimentary training to councils and their officers. These initiatives address the leading issues faced by local government, with the aim of equipping councils with enhanced skills and knowledge to successfully navigate challenges and opportunities. Over FY25, we produced **23 pieces of thought leadership** and delivered **20 online seminars** and **8 in-person events**.

Reach out to us to be added to our invitation lists.

Recent topics



Council meeting
procedures



Psychosocial hazards



Planning reforms



Leasing



The right to
disconnect



Windfall Gains Tax



New Projects
Guidance



Victorian housing
targets



How we support councils: Our paid training offerings

We have created a comprehensive suite of training designed to upskill a wide variety of Council officers and empower them to better undertake work that may otherwise be outsourced to legal providers. Joint training sessions with other councils as a means of sharing the cost can also be facilitated.

Our offering includes, but isn't limited to:

- Commercial, technology, procurement, and IP
- Compliance & Enforcement
- Councillor CPD
- Construction & Major Projects
- Employment, Safety & People
- FOI & Privacy
- Governance
- Planning & Environment
- Real Estate
- Rates & Charges

Please [reach out to us](#) for a copy of our training catalogue.



Some sessions delivered by our Maddocks partners



How we support councils: Our industry partnerships

We recognise that councils need support in different ways. We have longstanding partnerships with the sector’s peak bodies and associations and sponsor a number of conferences and initiatives that create value for councils and their officers.



Conference sponsors



Conference sponsors



Womens Networking Dinner sponsors



Conference sponsors



Conference sponsors



Conference and Award sponsors



Training sponsors





















Conference and Forum sponsors



Training sponsors

Our Victorian Local Government Leaders

We're here to help. Please reach out at any time for any assistance Council may need.

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