

**Hundreds of thousands set to be denied their right to vote**

*Victorian state government shortens voter deadline to register for council elections despite hundreds of thousands remaining off council rolls*

**Melbourne, Thursday July 25, 2024,** Small Business Australiahas described the Victorian government’s decision to bring forward the cut-off date to August 07 for voters to register for the October council elections will see hundreds of thousands of non-resident small business and property owners lose their right to vote.

Mr Lang, Executive Director of Small Business Australia said “first, the Victorian government

kicked business and property owners off the roll, now they have passed legislation in the stealth

of night to bring forward the deadline for voter registration to August 07.”

“It would seem that the Victorian government is intent on ensuring as few business and property owners as possible vote in the upcoming council elections.”

The changes to council electoral rolls instigated by the Victorian government removed hundreds of thousands of eligible non-resident business and property owners off the council voting roll – the only way they can now vote is to contact their council directly and register.

This is where Small Business Australia say the problem begins and have for months tracked council management of their business and property owner electoral rolls with Mr Lang describing this process as “utter confusion” stating that “only a handful of councils seem to be in control of their roll.”

Small Business Australia say their research indicates that hundreds of thousands of eligible voters will be left without a say in local communities that they are heavily invested in.

**Concerning data on Council enrolment numbers**

* Around 10% of eligible non-resident business and property owners are currently

registered on ‘Council Rolls’ across Victoria.

* A number of inner city metropolitan councils have reported less than 50 non-resident business/property owners on their council roll – some as low as zero.
* Major inner-city councils such as Merri-Bek and City of Yarra have refused to provide any data at all on enrolments
* One major regional council with tens of thousands of non-resident business and

property owners has only 1527 on their roll– whilst smaller shires are reporting

business and property owning voter registration numbers in single figures.

Mr Lang said that Small Business Australia raised concerns on this issue months ago and that despite the knowledge of mass numbers of voters at threat of being excluded from voting that nothing has changed.

“The Victorian government made it only harder for people to secure their democratic right to vote, whilst councils such as Merri-Bek and Yarra who have plenty of time on their hands to pass motions around international conflicts, nuclear weapons and name changes, have no time to ensure that all ratepayers within their municipality have their right to vote protected.”

Warning of the damage from anti-investment and anti-business policies from Green and Labor dominated councils, Mr Lang says that as the Victorian government has no intention to fix this mess by ensuring that all ratepayers be issued with a ballot, that it is now up to business and property owners to take action to protect their vote.

“Leaving councils with free reign and no threat at the ballot box from anti-business practices will bring nothing but pain to local communities and small business families, which is why we are urging all property and business owners to register to vote with their local council and they can find detail on how to do this by heading to www.councilvoting.com.au.”

**END RELEASE**

*To arrange interviews with Bill Lang, Executive Director of Small Business Australia, independent councillors or impacted business owners please contact Randal Killip from Profile For Media on 0425 714 159 or via email* [*randal@profileformedia.com.au*](mailto:randal@profileformedia.com.au)*.*

**About Councilvoting.com.au**

[Councilvoting.com.au](https://councilvoting.com.au/) has been created by Small Business Australia to assist non-resident business and property owners to protect their right to vote and for further details please head to [councilvoting.com.au](https://councilvoting.com.au/).

**About Small Business Australia**

Small Business Australia’s mission is to build a thriving small business sector that provides

financial security for those working in small businesses, and continues to support vibrant

local communities for all Australians [www.smallbusinessaustralia.org](http://www.smallbusinessaustralia.org).