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| **Form F1016 June 2019** | **Expression of interest application form** |

The following information relates to the expression of interest (EOI) process for councils interested in participating in the Officers for the Protection of the Local Environment (OPLE) pilot expansion.

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# Application process: frequently asked questions (FAQs)

## Who is eligible to apply?

All Victorian local councils as defined by the *Local Government Act 1989*.

## When is the closing time and date for applications?

The EOI application form must be submitted by **5pm on Wednesday 10 July 2019** to OPLEpilot@epa.vic.gov.au.

## If I am not able to submit my application by the due date and time, can I be granted an extension?

No – all EOIs must be lodged by **5pm on Wednesday 10 July 2019**. Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA) may reject any application that is lodged after this deadline.

If an application is late, or EPA is requested to accept an EOI after the closing date, EPA may determine that there are exceptional circumstances beyond the applicant’s control that meant they could not meet the deadline.

Applicants are encouraged to contact EPA if they become aware of circumstances which may result in their inability to lodge by the deadline.

## How will the EOIs be assessed?

EOI applications will be assessed by a panel featuring representatives of EPA, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), and the Municipal Association of Victoria.

EOI applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

* the environmental and public health risks and challenges experienced in the council area
* council’s demonstrated commitment to improving its response to pollution and waste issues arising within its municipality
* the value likely to be derived by the council, its community and businesses from having an OPLE embedded in the council, and how the OPLE would assist in responding to pollution and waste issues
* council’s capacity and capability to actively support an OPLE located in its office
* willingness of the council to actively support the delivery of the OPLE pilot, including reporting, monitoring and evaluation requirements
* location of the council
* prevalence of illegal industrial and chemical waste stockpiling in the municipality.

## Can I partner with another council in my EOI?

Yes – the OPLE pilot has demonstrated that sharing an OPLE between two councils can be an effective and practical solution, subject to workload and travel demands.

The application form allows for councils to nominate to share an OPLE with one other council. Please note that in such circumstances, if both councils are new to the pilot, each partner council is required to lodge an EOI application form. Joint application forms will not be accepted.

OPLEs may also work part time or job share in certain circumstances.

## When will I know the outcome of my application?

You will be notified of the outcome of your application at the end of the selection process. To treat all applicants fairly and equally, it is not possible to provide information about the status of individual applications during the assessment process. The assessment process will be carried out as rapidly as possible.

## Where should I go for further information?

Please email your enquiries to OPLEpilot@epa.vic.gov.au

# OPLE pilot: frequently asked questions (FAQs)

## What is the OPLE role and how does it differ from environmental health officers (EHOs) and other council officers?

OPLEs have a complementary role to that of EHOs, planning and enforcement officers, and other council officers. In some municipalities there may be some overlap, however OPLEs are an additional resource for councils to use to increase their ability to respond to reports and issues relating to waste and pollution.

Responding to issues regarding food health and safety and amenity issues arising from residential premises are strictly the role of EHOs.

OPLEs focus on responding to issues relating to noise, dust and odour from small to medium-size enterprises, and litter and smaller scale illegal dumping. OPLEs also undertake proactive and strategic projects to provide local industry, business and community members with the knowledge and skills they need to help prevent, identify and resolve environmental issues.

OPLEs are EPA authorised officers. As such, they have a range of powers under the *Environment Protection Act 1970* to respond to pollution and waste issues such as powers to investigate, issue pollution abatement notices and clean up notices. OPLEs can also escalate serious offences that they have investigated for consideration of a sanction.

## How does EPA provide support to OPLEs in such variable geographic locations?

Supporting each OPLE is a joint responsibility of EPA and participating local councils, to ensure that they can effectively and efficiently undertake their role. EPA provides:

* training of OPLEs, covering their powers and ensuring they have the necessary technical skills to deal with issues they are likely to encounter in the job, for example, the ability to monitor and assess noise levels
* a process to appoint OPLEs as EPA authorised officers following their training
* guidance, policy and procedures to inform OPLEs of their scope of responsibilities and operating protocols
* technical support and guidance to aid in effective OPLE decision making and discharge of their roles
* a direct line to EPA for queries relating to procedural, technical and enforcement matters
* EPA regional officer support to allow more challenging and complex issues (including issues outside the scope of OPLE responsibilities) to be referred to EPA for response
* regional mentoring of OPLEs by senior EPA authorised officers, with potential for joint inspections
* coordination of a peer learning support group for OPLEs to facilitate shared learnings and expertise
* access to and support in utilising environmental monitoring equipment such as noise meters and sampling equipment
* laboratory facilities and logistical support for sample analysis.

Supporting OPLEs is not EPA’s responsibility alone – participating councils are expected to provide day-to-day management and support to OPLEs, including for their safety and wellbeing. EPA expects that each OPLE will be integrated into existing council teams, through inductions and training, ensuring they have access to necessary council assets and systems.

## What support does EPA provide to councils?

EPA will engage regularly with OPLE councils to ensure they have the systems and processes in place to support their OPLE. EPA will provide guidance on how the OPLE performs their role, while supporting the OPLE to adapt to the unique characteristics of the municipality or municipalities in which their work is focused.

Councils play an important role in contributing to the monitoring and evaluation of the OPLE pilot and will be invited and expected at regular intervals to provide feedback. Councils are expected to work in partnership with EPA to identify improvements for the OPLE pilot and find opportunities to implement these.

## How does EPA ensure consistency across the OPLEs in the network?

The priorities and exact activities undertaken by OPLEs are influenced by the unique local characteristics and needs of the municipality or municipalities which the OPLE is servicing, within the defined parameters of the OPLE pilot.

EPA plays a strong role in supporting consistency across the OPLE network. All OPLEs receive the same level of training, providing them with a common understanding and approach to responding to pollution and waste issues as they arise in their municipality.

EPA monitors OPLEs’ activities through regular reviews of their work conducted against a range of criteria. Where necessary, EPA takes corrective action and provides additional training.

EPA’s review processes, including authorised officer complaints and internal review of remedial notices, apply equally to OPLEs and their work as to any other EPA authorised officer.

## Is the OPLE pilot just about increasing compliance and enforcement activities?

Each OPLE has a role in compliance and enforcement, but this is not their sole focus. Taking proactive action, and preventing pollution incidents from occurring, is far more effective than responding to incidents after they arise. As such, the OPLE role is a mix of compliance and enforcement, education and information dissemination, and proactive investigations.

## How does the OPLE pilot impact business, industry and community?

EPA has invited all sectors – community, business, industry and government – to participate in the monitoring and evaluation of the OPLE pilot. The pilot has demonstrated a high level of satisfaction amongst these sectors when dealing with an OPLE. EPA will continue to seek stakeholder input when evaluating the benefits of the OPLE pilot expansion.

## Why are OPLEs employed by EPA rather than local government?

EPA employs OPLEs to help reduce the administrative responsibilities and associated costs to local government and maximise efficiencies. The OPLE pilot has demonstrated that this arrangement does not in any way restrict OPLEs from effectively addressing pollution and waste issues of importance to local communities.

## What do councils need to provide?

Councils are required to provide both physical resources, such as desk space, a computer (plus access to the internet) and access to fleet vehicles, as well as supporting the OPLE pilot and its evaluation through reporting, monitoring and evaluation processes.

Councils typically allocate approximately ten hours per month to participate in meetings, contribute to monitoring and evaluation reports, and provide general feedback on the pilot.

Managers of OPLEs have a key role to play and should be willing and able to support the OPLE to settle into the team, build connections across council, and participate in training, meetings and discussions with the EPA and other participating councils as the pilot evolves. It is essential that any interested councils commit to supporting their OPLE and engage constructively and collaboratively with EPA.

## Where can I find examples of OPLEs’ work?

A selection of case studies showcasing the work of OPLEs during the pilot can be found at:
[www.epa.vic.gov.au/our-work/programs/ople-pilot/ople-case-studies](https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/our-work/programs/ople-pilot/ople-case-studies)

## What does OPLE pilot expansion mean?

The Victorian Government has committed $3.4 million to continue and expand the OPLE pilot. This funding will allow between four to six new OPLEs to be placed in four to ten additional councils. The number of councils involved in the pilot expansion may exceed the number of new OPLEs, as councils can nominate to share an OPLE with one other council.

The funding recognises EPA’s critical role in preventing harm from pollution and waste and the expanded OPLE pilot will continue to focus on responding to small-scale, lower risk pollution issues in communities such as dust, odour, noise and small-scale illegal dumping. Several additional OPLEs are also expected to be placed in municipalities where there is greater risk of waste stockpiling; an important community issue.

## Is there funding for the OPLE pilot expansion beyond 30 June 2020?

The OPLE pilot is currently funded until 30 June 2020. Any decision to extend the pilot beyond this date will be a decision for the Victorian Government.

## What have been the lessons from the OPLE pilot to date?

Evaluation of the OPLE pilot has shown broad improvements to environment protection capacity and capability in participating council areas, with evidence of improved responses to small-scale pollution.

Relationships between local government and EPA have also improved, in line with increased collaboration and information sharing, and improved access to EPA expertise and capability within participating councils.

There is also evidence of improvements in community perceptions and, crucially, improved industry compliance and preventative pollution management.

## Why is the location of the council important?

The location of the expansion councils is important as EPA would like to leverage existing working relationships between councils and to ensure all OPLEs can work efficiently in their specific council/s.

## Why is the prevalence of illegal industrial and chemical waste stockpiling important?

Minimising the risks of illegal industrial and chemical waste stockpiling has been identified as an important issue for the community. As a result, EPA aims to have several of the new OPLEs placed in municipalities where there is a greater risk of illegal stockpiling of industrial and hazardous waste.

The OPLE pilot will continue to focus on responding to small-scale, lower risk pollution issues in communities such as dust, odour, noise and small-scale illegally dumping. Additionally, OPLEs will be placed to support the early detection of illegal industrial and chemical waste stockpiling, as well as education to duty holders on waste management requirements. The OPLEs will increase the regulatory presence in local communities to reduce the risks of chemical stockpile fires and large illegal storage like those that occurred in West Footscray, Epping and Campbellfield in 2018.

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| **Form F1016 June 2019** |  |

# Expression of interest application form

**Application information**

This application form is for Victorian local councils to express interest to participate in the Officers for the Protection of the Local Environment (OPLE) pilot for the 2019/20 financial year.

**Closing date**

All applications must be submitted by **5pm on Wednesday 10 July 2019** to OPLEpilot@epa.vic.gov.au using this form.

**Eligibility**

All Victorian local councils as defined by the *Local Government Act 1989*.

Please refer to the OPLE program webpage at [www.epa.vic.gov.au/OPLEpilot](http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/our-work/programs/ople-pilot/expanded-ople-pilot) and the FAQs in this document for further information.

**Completing this form**

1. Enter your applicant details.
2. Complete all five selection criteria.
3. Select your preferred ‘willingness to share an OPLE with a nearby council’ option.
4. Sign the declaration.

1. Applicant details

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| Council name |       |
| Council address (physical location) |       |
| Postal address (for correspondence) |       |
| Primary contact name |       |
| Primary contact title |       |
| Primary contact phone number/s |       |
| **Primary contact email** |       |

2. Selection criteria

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| 1. **Briefly describe the current environmental and public health challenges your municipality experiences resulting from pollution and waste.**

Your response should include a description of the types of localised waste and pollution issues encountered in your municipality, and the impacts these have had on community and business. Where possible, please provide statistics regarding:* the number of pollution and waste reports your council receives each year
* the number of pollution and waste reports your council responds to each year
* the prevalence of illegal industrial and chemical waste stockpiling.

(Limit: 500 words) |
| **Response to selection criteria 1:**      |

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| 1. **Demonstrate your council’s commitment to improving liveability and amenity by addressing pollution and waste.**

Your response should include reference to council strategies and policies that address environmental and public health impacts from pollution and/or waste. Where possible, also provide examples where council has demonstrated a proactive approach to managing, reducing or otherwise addressing the impacts of pollution and/or waste. (Limit: 500 words) |
| **Response to selection criteria 2:**      |

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| 1. **Describe how your municipality would benefit from and use an OPLE.**

Given your responses to criteria 1 and 2 above, please describe how an OPLE would enhance existing council services to respond to more persistent, smaller scale, localised waste and pollution issues. (Limit: 500 words) |
| **Response to selection criteria 3:**      |

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| 1. **Describe your council’s capacity and capability to actively support an OPLE located in your council office.**

The success of the OPLE is dependent upon adequate support both from the EPA and the local council. Please describe how your council will actively support an OPLE for the duration of the OPLE pilot. Please confirm that your council will provide access to a fleet vehicle, office facilities (desk and internet) and employee support services. (Limit: 500 words) |
| **Response to selection criteria 4:**      |

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| 1. **Describe how your council will actively support the delivery of the OPLE pilot.**

The success of the OPLE pilot relies upon participating councils actively participating in its monitoring and evaluation. As such, please describe what systems your council has in place to engage actively in these evaluation processes. As described in the expanded OPLE program webpage at [www.epa.vic.gov.au/OPLEpilot](http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/our-work/programs/ople-pilot/expanded-ople-pilot), councils are expected to provide approximately 10 hours per month in-kind support for reporting, monitoring and evaluation of the pilot. (Limit: 500 words) |
| **Response to selection criteria 5:**      |

3. Willingness to share an OPLE with a nearby council

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| **Please note: all new councils applying to share an OPLE are required to lodge an individual Expression of Interest Application Form. Joint application forms will not be accepted.** |
| Select “yes” or “no”:[ ]  Yes, my council is willing to share an OPLE with a nearby council.[ ]  No, my council is not willing to share an OPLE.*You can select “no” and still be considered for the OPLE pilot.* |
| If you selected yes:Have you spoken with a neighbouring council about willingness to share? [ ]  Yes [ ]  NoWhat is the name of the council?      \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

4. Declaration

Please read and complete the following declaration.

I declare that:

* The information contained in this form is true and correct.
* I have read, understood and agree to abide by the roles described at [www.epa.vic.gov.au/OPLEpilot](http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/our-work/programs/ople-pilot/expanded-ople-pilot)
* If and where any personal details of a third party are included, the third party has been made aware of and given their permission for those details to appear in this application.
* I give consent to Environment Protection Authority Victoria to make public the details of this application and funding received, should this application be successful.

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| Signature of Chief Executive Officer |       |

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| Full name |        | **Date** |       |

Submit your completed Expression of Interest application form by

**5pm on Wednesday 10 July 2019** to

OPLEpilot@epa.vic.gov.au

For more information:

[www.epa.vic.gov.au/OPLEpilot](http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/our-work/programs/ople-pilot/expanded-ople-pilot)

1300 372 842 (1300 EPA VIC)

contact@epa.vic.gov.au