



Victorian Local Governance Association



Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA)

Annual Report 2015-2016



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President's report

What a year in Local Government – with a new Act finally revealed in draft form, continued challenges for the sector, rate capping and all of the intrigue and interest that goes with the territory.

For the VLGA, this has meant that we have concentrated the effort on making contact and drawing out from Councillors, and the broader sector, your views and perspectives on just what and how we should be advocating, protecting and leading the agenda on the governance interface between the sector and our communities.

We have represented the thoughts, views and facts derived from direct contact with you – the sector. In terms of these responses we have endeavoured wherever possible to bring all of those voices together and put them forward as a package of concerns and opinions that puts people and communities at the centre of the function of councils.

And as we move into another cycle of elections, council planning, and indeed the life of a new legislative cycle, we are – as an organisation, re-committing and following through on a range of successful legislative and social campaigns, from pokies reform, women in local government, and action on domestic violence, climate change, to economic development and food systems.

We are maintaining and fighting for Councillors' right and interest in preserving and promoting the interests and goals of our residents and communities.

Finally it has been a pleasure to work with the board and the professionals of the organisation over the past two years. With the success of the last year, we are preparing for the exciting, but difficult job of steering the transition from the capable hands of our outgoing CEO, Dr Andrew Hollows and those of an incoming candidate.

To Andrew we offer, on behalf of the sector, the utmost thanks regarding his efforts on rate-capping, the Act review and the Governance By Design Panels. All the best Andrew!

Cr Sebastian Klein
President

Treasurers report

I welcome the opportunity to present the financial statements for the VLGA for the 2015-16 year, my second year in the role of Treasurer.

An income of \$1,436,692 for 2015/16, delivers a 5.4% increase in turnover on last year's figure of \$1,363,521. Our modest profit of \$8,136 sees our retained earnings/members funds increase to \$525,403 at 30 June 2016. Our reserves equate to over 36% of our annual turnover, which is a healthy buffer for a membership organisation.

Our project income for 2015-16 was \$246,491 which enabled the VLGA to deliver four externally-funded projects. Two gambling projects funded by the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, candidate training funded by Local Government Victoria and the GoWomenLG2016 project, which included a component that focused on Diversity.

Our total expenses for the year were \$1,428,556, which included employment expenses of \$738,127.

At 30 June our assets include cash reserves of \$1,303,212, fixed assets of \$73,177 and accounts receivable of \$452,549. Our liabilities include prepaid council memberships for 2016-17 of \$968,170, accounts payable of \$30,283 and staff leave provisions of \$41,332.

My role as Treasurer includes chairing the monthly meetings of the Resource and Finance Sub-Committee (R & FSC), which includes the VLGA's President Cr Sebastian Klein and Board members Beth Ripper, Mimmie Ng and Terry Larkins. I thank them all for their assistance and support.

I would also take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of our Finance Officer, Jan Farrell, and thank her for her diligence and for the support that she provides to the Treasurer, the R & FSC and to the Board.

In closing, I can assure the members that the VLGA is in a strong financial position and well-placed to support our members and their communities into the future.

Cr Lambros Tapinos
Treasurer

Highlight's for the year

The VLGA has been active this year in supporting and representing the interests of its council and community members. You are invited to look at our website www.vlga.org.au or contact our Office for more information.

Advocacy

The local government sector has a strong voice through the VLGA. We advocate respectfully but firmly with government, and work on behalf of members to find fair and practical solutions. This has included advocacy on rate capping, the review of the Local Government Act, cost-shifting, and the urgent need to address the financial sustainability of rural councils and the right of all Victorians to have access to core services regardless where they live across the State.

Awards and Recognition

The VLGA continued to run its quality awards that showcase examples of good practice of Victorian councils and communities. The year saw the CLIMATE Awards co-sponsored with the Australian Youth Climate Coalition (AYCC), the READYS (with the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria), and the Community HART Awards, delivered in partnership with Reconciliation Victoria and Bank Australia. The VLGA also ran the John Jago Good Governance Award.

Deliberative Democracy and community engagement

A commitment to deliberative democracy and other forms of 'deeper' community engagement continues to be a feature of our work. We have an important role in facilitating the sharing of knowledge amongst members, practitioners and policy-makers. The VLGA had the privilege of observing a number of practical examples.

Child Friendly Cities Charter

The VLGA remains a proud supporter and auspice of the Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities network which promotes respect and dignity for children's opinions and participation. With over 12 councils now signed up to the Charter we are seeing a growing recognition that children and young people also need to have voice locally about those decisions that affect them.

Food Governance

In early 2016 the VLGA convened its Food Governance Task Force. The work of the Task Force, hosted in conjunction with the Sustain Network, is to help define the role and the challenges and opportunities for local governments about agriculture and food systems. At its inaugural meeting the Task Force made quick progress in confirming that councils have an active role to play in promoting healthy, local food systems.

Gambling

The VLGA continues to support our members on the issue of problem gambling through the VLGA Local Government Working Group on Gambling (LGWGOG). Cr Sandra Wilson is the Board's representative. The VLGA is also a key participant and Board member of the Alliance for Gambling Reform (AGR), a national collaboration of organisations and key individuals with a shared concern about the harmful and unfair impacts of gambling. Additional funds were obtained during the year from the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation to extend the reach of our shared work to reduce harm from gambling in Victoria.

Governance by Design Panels

The year saw the conclusion of the VLGA's Governance by Design Panels, which provided thought leadership about the future of local governance. The Panel on Metropolitan Governance developed evidence-based policy to address the governance implications of Plan Melbourne. The deliberations of the Panel were timely considering the State Government's intention of reviewing and 'refreshing' Plan Melbourne.

GoWomenLG 2016

This year saw the GoWomenLG2016 project go into action leading up to the 2016 council elections. Based on the principles of the Women's Charter, the VLGA unashamedly seeks greater gender diversity on councils, and to build the numbers and diversity of women candidates. The VLGA worked with councils and community partners across the State (such as ALGWA, Victorian Regional Community Leadership Programs and Women's Health Services) in hosting local workshops. The Project has seen "Your community, country and council" workshops co-sponsored with Oxfam Straight Talk. We wish to acknowledge funding from the State Government that included support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and women from a CALD community.

Leading the Agenda

The year saw the introduction of the VLGA's monthly 'Leading the Agenda' forums. These forums are designed to foster discussion and debate on topical issues. Perhaps controversially, the first guest speaker was Jeff Kennett, former Victorian Premier, who spoke about future challenges for local government. Other speakers have included Tom Elliott (3AW Drive), John Della Bosca (discussing the National Disability Insurance Scheme), Louise Adler, CEO and Publisher of Melbourne University Publishing, and Terry Moran to name a few.

Mayoral Leadership Conference

January 2016 saw another successful Mayoral Leadership Conference. Key presenters and speakers included the Member for Yuroke, Ros Spence, Benson Saulo, Helen Kapalos, Green Spokesperson for Local Government, Samantha Dunn MLC and Shadow Minister for Local Government, the Hon David Davis. The Mayors were given the opportunity to engage in interactive learning and enhance skills and knowledge. The VLGA acknowledges the support provided by AON for this important event.

Media

The VLGA has maintained an active media presence for its members. Local government is often seen as 'fair game' by the popular media which often takes its cues from the State Government. We have proactively engaged with TV, print and radio to ensure that a balanced approach is taken and that the voice of the local government sector is represented.

Pre-election training

Good governance starts with well-informed local community leaders who seek to run for council. The VLGA provided training sessions to prospective candidates across rural and metropolitan Victoria. These interactive sessions provided timely and high-quality training and advice to candidates and councillors. Financial support was provided by the State Government for this important work. In addition, the VLGA worked closely with Brimbank City Council and Wyndham City Council in providing pre-election workshops.

Rainbow Working Group

Starting in 2015, the VLGA Rainbow Working Group continues to meet regularly. The focus of the Group is to help the VLGA provide support and leadership on this issue, enhancing the participation of LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and questioning) people and promoting opportunities for their active representation in community leadership roles including local government. The Board President, Cr Sebastian Klein, is the Board's representative.

Rate capping

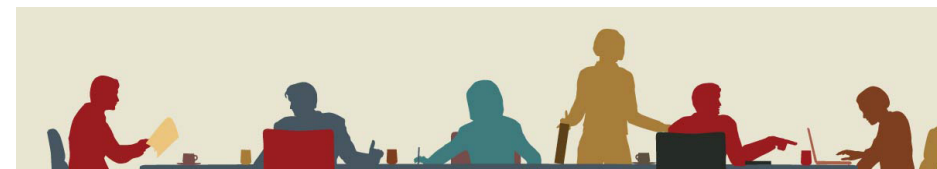
The introduction of rate capping has been a contentious issue for many in the community and local government, and overtime will see increase financial pressure on many councils especially in rural areas. The VLGA has regularly provided advice to the Legislative Council's Inquiry into Rate Capping Policy; participated on the Minister's Fair Go Rates Reference Group; held a number of forums and events on rate capping and worked with members through the VLGA Rates Variation Task Force. The VLGA also worked tirelessly with the nine councils who sought a variation to the rate cap.

Review of the Local Government Act

Following engagement with members, which included a successful workshop with Local Government Victoria for Governance Officers, we provided a detailed response to the State Government's Discussion Paper. The VLGA also developed a proposed scope and structure of a legislative framework – a new Act - for local government that would best meet the needs of local communities and the State as a whole.

Support for councillors

The VLGA was regularly contacted by councillors seeking governance advice and support. This service is confidential and highly valued by members. The VLGA also continued to co-hosted the Good Governance Guide and has provided members update information and advice on amendments to the Local Government Act. The local government sector is best served when councillors, officers and the community are well-informed of their governance roles and responsibilities.



The VLGA Board 2015 - 2016



Cr Sebastian Klein
President
Hepburn Shire Council



Cr Lambros Tapinos
Treasurer
Moreland City Council



Terry Larkins
Community Vice President
Community Member



Cr Marg Attley
Council Vice President
Mansfield Shire Council



Cr Michelle Kleinert
Manningham City Council



Mimmie Ng
Community Member



Beth Ripper
Community Member



Cr John Sipek
Moonee Valley City Council



Cr Sandra Wilson
Hobsons Bay City Council

Vision

Our communities will be inclusive, sustainable and dynamic, characterised by strong leadership and effective local governance.

Mission

We will bring together councillors, community leaders and local governments to build and strengthen their capacity to work together for progressive social change.