



2016-2017
ANNUAL REPORT

The VLGA is an independent organisation that supports councils, councillors and communities in good governance





President's Report

It was a great honour, as a woman councillor representing the issues of regional and rural councils, to accept the position of President of the VLGA, following the February board elections.

I acknowledge Councillor Sebastian Klein and his strong leadership of previous boards and the organisation. The elections coincided with the appointment of our new Chief Executive Officer, Kathryn Arndt, who comes with much experience in organisational governance and leadership.

Through this change the excellent work of the VLGA has continued.

The VLGA is an independent sector voice to government, industry and stakeholders providing an opportunity to lobby and advocate on behalf of councils and councillors. We provide opportunities for networking and information exchange between local government and other sectors and a 'seat at the table' to put forward the views of our members.

With many issues facing local government, not the least being rate capping, the review of the Local Government Act and the amendment to the Valuation and Land Tax Bill (which would have a detrimental effect on our rural councils), the VLGA has continued its work in councillor development, including training sessions; the instigation of strong conversations in the Boardroom Lunch Series; having a stronger presence in social media and supporting our membership with governance advice and resources.

It was extremely pleasing to experience the VLGA Leading the Agenda 2017 Series. Every session presented high calibre speakers on pressing and important topics. A highlight for me was the well-attended forum on Integrity Systems in Local Government which set a strong example of how the sector can work together.

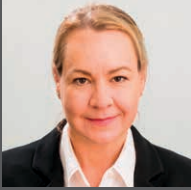
The 2017 Community HART awards, in partnership with Reconciliation Victoria, drew an exceptional number of nominees: councils and community working together with our First Peoples in Treaty. These important recognition awards will continue to expand into the future.

May I thank the members of the Board for their attention to setting this new direction and their commitment to the organisation, and to the staff for their continued work to support the VLGA's voice in our local government community.

I would like to acknowledge The Hon. Natalie Hutchins, our former local government minister, for her involvement with our councils and her work with the VLGA on critical issues and directions for the sector.

Chief Executive Officer Kathryn Arndt is to be commended for her commitment to the organisation since her appointment and her work in increasing the VLGA's involvement and relevance. There are extensive opportunities for the VLGA to respond to the ongoing changes and challenges in our sector.

Cr Marg Attley
President



CEO's Report

It was a great honour to take up the role of Chief Executive Officer at the VLGA in late January 2017. Since its formation in 1994 the organisation has had a strong history of representing and progressing the local government sector's role in working with communities to strengthen democracy at the local level.

I join the VLGA at a time when the organisation is reviewing its work in line with the end of a two-year strategy. In February, I commenced a rigorous and facilitated consultation process to inform the VLGA's strategic directions for 2018-2022. I am pleased to advise that this work is now nearing completion and the VLGA's five-year strategy will be released in late 2017.

In March, the VLGA's Leading the Agenda series was re-invigorated to provide for a moderated Q&A style panel event. We thank our sponsors, the International Institute of Entrepreneurship, Pitcher Partners for their support.

The program hosts eminent speakers in governance and democracy, and the broader context in which local government and communities operate. It provides councillors, council chief executive officers, council officers and community with an opportunity to meet leaders in the sector and participate in discussions about current and emerging trends and initiatives.

Over the past six months and in the context of the review of the VLGA's activities, the organisation has undergone some reform to better align organisational structure with strategic directions. I acknowledge the contribution of all

VLGA staff – those who are no longer with the organisation and those who have recently joined me.

As a small but influential not for profit, the VLGA values the importance of working in partnership with the many stakeholders whose work directly and indirectly impacts the local government sector. We look forward to strengthening our existing partnerships in addition to forming new partnerships to progress our work in 2017-2018 and beyond. We will continue to review the organisation's governance models and organisational systems to ensure that we have contemporary fit for purpose structures in place that will further support and enhance our work.

I am excited about the opportunities before us and our role in moving the VLGA forward to become the 'go to' place for advice and support for councils, councillors and multiple stakeholders for the purpose of creating communities which are inclusive, sustainable and dynamic and are characterised by strong leadership and effective local governance practices which model the principles of integrity and transparency.

I look forward to working with the sector to further increase awareness and understanding of the role of local government and the size, scope and complexity of the business it undertakes.

Kathryn Arndt
CEO

Treasurer's Report

I welcome the opportunity to present the financial statements for the VLGA for the 2016-17 year.

In summary for 2016-17

- income increased by 3.8% to \$1,492,008
- profit increased from \$8,136 to \$31,014
- expenses increased slightly to \$1,460,994 from \$1,428,556 but overall were down as a percentage of income
- retained earnings/members funds increased to \$556,417 from \$525,403

Our project income for 2016-17 was \$261,448.

The VLGA delivered four externally-funded projects. A gambling project funded by the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, candidate training funded by Local Government Victoria and two GoWomenLG projects which included a component that focused on diversity.

I would also take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of the VLGA staff, and thank them for providing an important service to local councils and the Victorian local government sector more broadly.

In closing, 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

Membership

Membership is the lifeblood of the VLGA. We have worked hard not only to retain our existing members, but to also gain new members. The VLGA visited a number of councils including Frankston, Bendigo, Ballarat and Swan Hill to update new and returning councillors on the work of the VLGA and its training and development program.

Policy

The VLGA is involved in discussions with stakeholders on the implementation of key government policies including:

- Essential Services Commission on the implementation of the Fair Go Rates System
- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning on Plan Melbourne Refresh
- Local Government Victoria on the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework
- Local Government Investigations and Compliance Inspectorate on council compliance under the *Local Government Act*
- State Government Gender Equity Strategy (Safe and Strong)
- State Government Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Action Plan

Events & Training

Our networking events continue to attract attendance by councillors and interested community members. Many high profile and engaging panelists presented on a range of contemporary issues affecting local government in our Leading the Agenda 2017 series. Highlights included briefing on the new *Local Government Act* and a presentation by integrity agencies, IBAC, Ombudsman's office and Municipal Inspectorate on local government investigations.

Members also had opportunities to network among their peers at:

- Women Mayors' welcome
- Mayors' weekend
- Delegates dinner
- Boardroom Lunch Series

The VLGA Policy unit continues to inform with a bi monthly '*Good Governance Tips*' paper and the weekly VLGA Discuss roundup of news and media. Social media plays a significant role in disseminating our news, media and resources. Our reach extends through the GoWomen, Now You're a Councillor and VLGA websites.

Training opportunities included a number of good governance workshops, a masterclass session for indigenous women interested in local government candidacy, and workshops in April 2017 for women in Geelong.

Resources produced during the year include updated campaigning resources made available on the website, a short film "*50:50 by 2025*" focused on a range of women local government candidates and fact and data sheets drawn from the 2016 *GoWomenLG* campaign and *Good Governance Tips*.

The year ahead

The year ahead will require the VLGA to perform with agility as it continues to offer members an independent voice in the local government sector; to advocate on members' behalf for fair and equitable outcomes from the state government and to continue to support councils and councillors through events and training. We will continue to be strong in our advocacy and policy, offer strong local government support and good governance leadership.

The VLGA will continue to actively explore and develop partnerships with key stakeholders to strengthen our efforts, support sustainable outcomes and increase value to our members.

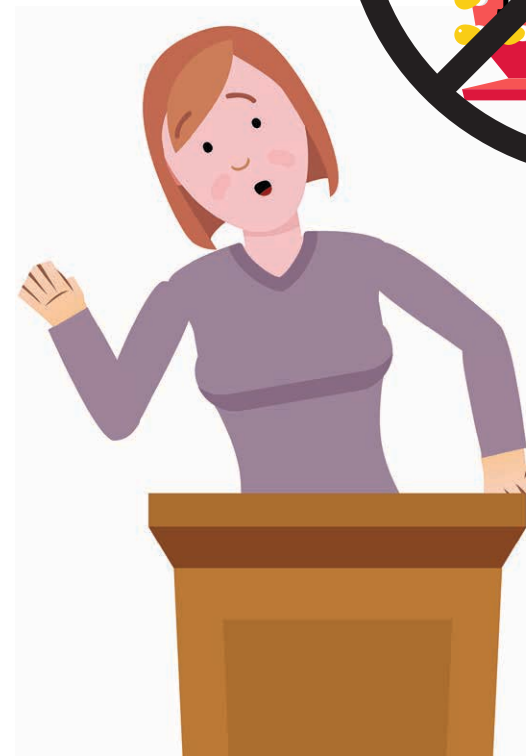
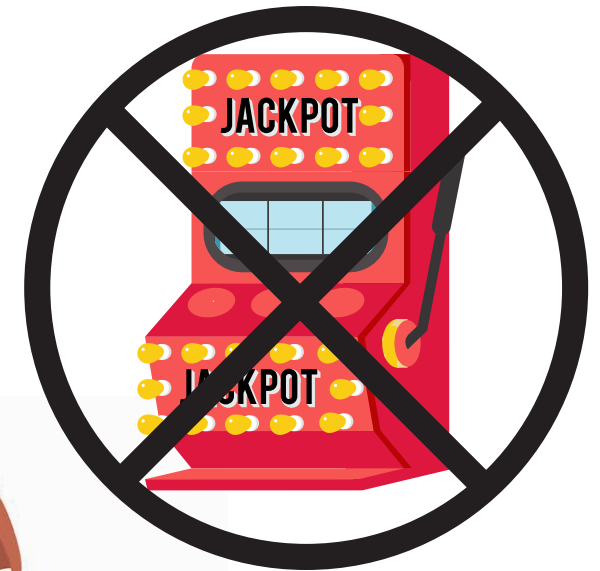
Say No to Gambling Harm

The VLGA Community Solutions project came to an end in June 2017 after 18 months of successful work raising awareness about gambling harm and supporting communities to participate in planning and licensing matters related to EGMs. This project was funded by the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation (VRGF) and focussed on local government as an ideal setting to achieve positive change, it worked specifically in three key areas:

1. Improving local government policy responses to gambling
2. Implementing a workforce awareness strategy and raising the profile of gambling harm as a workforce issue
3. Assisting community members to respond to applications for more EGMs as a way of improving outcomes in planning and licensing processes.

The area of work that showed the most promise was undoubtedly assisting community members to respond to applications.

This area of work was evaluated via document analysis (of decisions), community feedback and participation rates. Strategies were implemented according to different settings. This was the area of work most able to demonstrate outcomes, as opposed to impacts, with one significant application being denied largely as a result of community participation.



This project also resulted in the production of some key resources for councils and communities working in this space. The following resources are available:

1. [A whole of local government approach to gambling harm prevention](#)
2. [Gambling harm as a workplace issue](#)
3. [A guide to developing local government gambling policy](#)
4. [How to run an effective community campaign](#)
5. [Animation – Pokies? Have your say.](#)

The VLGA is very pleased to have received further funding from the VRGF. Our new project - Councillor Champions, Civic Communities - has received two-year funding to June 2019.

Councillor Champions has a new focus on building councillor champions and assisting councillors to demonstrate leadership in this area. Our work with councils over the past 18 months leads us to believe that Councillors, as leaders and decision makers in the community, are in a key position to initiate activities to reduce harm from gambling.

We are also looking forward to assisting communities to participate in planning and licensing matters through the Civic Communities component of our project. This work will facilitate the participation of community members in decision making processes and is seen as a potentially effective way of limiting the expansion of pokies interests in communities.

We recognise and thank the VRGF for their on-going funding to support our work.



GoWomenLG 2016 and Victorian local government elections

The GoWomenLG 2016 Project, co-funded by the Victorian Government and the VLGA, aimed to maintain and build the numbers and diversity of women candidates participating in the 2016 local government elections.

During and following the elections, Victorians achieved increased gender equality through a record number of candidates - up from 662 in 2012 to 725, an increase of 10%. This translated into women councillors elected, up from 215 in 2012 to 243, an increase of 13%. Women now make up 38% of elected councillors.

This great result was achieved through a range of council and community partnerships across the State (including many local governments along with ALGWAVictoria, Regional Community Leadership Programs and Womens Health Services). These agencies joined the VLGA in reaching out to the women of Victoria to invite their participation in local government.

The project delivered a “Your community, country and council” masterclass for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women interested in local government, in partnership with Oxfam Straight Talk, and supported by Darebin City Council.

The Victorian Immigrant and Refugee Coalition joined the VLGA to offer a workshop series to women of migrant and refugee communities.

While there was some impact on the numbers and diversity of women candidates - there is more work to do. There was a small but significant increase in councils where only 1 woman was elected, often a result of few women candidates in some wards and unsubdivided municipalities. Almost 1 in every 5 wards/unsubdivided municipalities had no women standing at all.

The VLGA is working to secure a commitment to continue this work of gender equality and diversity in the lead up to the 2020 elections.



Victorians achieved increased gender equality through a record number of candidates - up from 662 in 2012 to 725, an increase of 10%. This translated in a 13% increase in women councillors elected from 215 in 2012 to 243 in 2016. Women now make up 38% of elected councillors.





ALGWA/VLGA Women Mayors Event 2017

With 32 women mayors in 2016-2017, the annual ALGWA/VLGA Women's Mayors event saw 21 mayors at Parliament House discussing and sharing ideas about powerful partnerships. The Minister for Local Government Natalie Hutchins MP joined the mayors and spoke of her journey into politics and the importance of women in influential positions who bring other women along.

The Minister announced the imminent launch of the Local Government Listen, Learn and Lead Gender Equity Program grants for councils. The event concluded with the mayors' messages to the women mayors of 2017-2018 and was supported by ALGWA member Danielle Green MP.

Womens Charter21

The Victorian Local Government Womens Charter is 21 years old in 2017. Although 69 councils have endorsed the Charter - a great response - the amount of activity to enact the Charter is not known. The VLGA was successful in its application to attract a grant from the Victorian Government's Community Partnerships for Primary Prevention of violence against women. This partnerships program is an initiative of Safe and Strong - Victorian Gender Equality Strategy.

The VLGA's Womens Charter21 Project will work with 34 councils around the state to support and extend their work to achieve gender equity, increase diversity and support women's active citizenship in the 21st year of the Charter.



16 days of activism against gender violence 2016



Every year the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (or White Ribbon Day) falls on 25 November. This is followed by 16 days of activism to prevent gender violence, ending on International Human Rights Day on 10 December. The VLGA again featured its website action suggestions for councillors, with a different action every day of the 16 days.

Rainbow Working Group

Starting in early 2015, the VLGA Rainbow Working Group met regularly culminating in the 'Roads, Rates, Rubbish and Rainbows Tool Kit, which is now with the Minister. The launch of the tool kit is anticipated in the latter half of 2017. The VLGA is keen to encourage diverse local community leaders (including candidates for local government) with a focus on the LGBTIQ community.



Community HART Awards

The 4th annual Community HART Awards (Helping Achieve Reconciliation Together) were delivered in partnership with Reconciliation Victoria (RecVic) and the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) and supported by Bank Australia. Since 2014 we have seen an exciting number of quality nominations, featuring a breadth of initiatives across the state.

Nominations are submitted by Victorian local governments and community groups for initiatives that demonstrate Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people working together, and initiatives that have contributed to reconciliation through relationships, respect and understanding.

The HART Awards is an action item of the Victorian Aboriginal Local Government Action Plan (VALGAP). The VALGAP is a resource for councils to develop and strengthen best practice in engagement, partnership and employment opportunities with their Aboriginal communities.

The 2017 awards ceremony held at the Koorie Heritage Trust was successful with 80 guests attending. The Hon Natalie Hutchins, the then Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Minister for Local Government opened the proceedings and presented the awards.

The awards are a means of celebrating the excellent work that is happening across the state, and a means for inspiring others.



Board Directors 2016-17

President

Cr Sebastian Klein – Hepburn Shire Council

Community Vice President

Terry Larkins – Community Member

Council Vice President

Cr Marg Attley – Mansfield Shire Council

Treasurer

Cr Lambros Tapinos – Moreland City Council

Councillor Director

Cr Michelle Kleinert – Manningham City Council

Cr John Sipek – Moonee Valley City Council

Cr Sandra Wilson – Hobsons Bay City Council

Non Councillor Directors

Beth Ripper

Mimmie Ng



Board Directors 2017

Elected 17 February 2017

President

Cr Marg Attley – Mansfield Shire Council

Council Vice President

Cr Michelle Kleinert – Manningham City Council

Community Vice President

Terry Larkins

Treasurer

Cr Lambros Tapinos – Moreland City Council

Councillor Directors

Cr Sharon Ellis – Whitehorse City Council

Cr Susanne Newton – Darebin City Council

Cr John Sipek – Mooney Valley City Council

Non Councillor Directors

Chelsea Ayling

Rae Kingsbury

The VLGA acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout Victoria and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Owners, their elders past, present and future, and to their cultures.

Victorian Local
Governance Association



Suite G06, 60 Leicester Street
Carlton VIC 3053
03 9349 7999
vlga@vlga.org.au
www.vlga.org.au