

FinPro Member Update – Edition 24, 2021

Good afternoon,

Another week rolls by. Plenty of news included in the following pages.

As always, if we can assist you in any way to make your work life a little easier, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Take care,

Gab

Gabrielle Gordon

Executive Officer, FinPro

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Upcoming events

14 – 17 November 2021 – Leadership Program at Country Place Kalorama (moved from 5 – 8 September 2021)

3 December 2021 – FinPro End of Year Lunch and AGM – Leonda by the Yarra

23 – 25 February 2022 – FinPro Annual Conference at RACV Cape Schanck (moved from 20 – 22 October 2021)

Membership Renewals

FinPro Membership renewal notices will be sent out in the next few weeks.

We have lots of great new ideas for the coming year (our FinPro Year commences on 1 October 2021) including a member portal, member forum and a new look membership where individual members will be able to manage their own subscriptions.

Watch this space for more details

Local Government Act Implementation Update

The new Local Government Act 2020 is the most ambitious reform to the local government sector in over 30 years. The Act will improve local government democracy, accountability, and service delivery for all Victorians. Copies of relevant information is available on the [LGV website](#)

Important Dates in relation to the LG Act:

September 2021

- [2020-21 Annual Report – by 30 September 2021](#)

October 2021

- [Financial Plan – 31 October 2021](#)
- [Council Plan – 31 October 2021](#)
- [Community Vision – 31 October 2021](#)

December 2021

- Chief Executive Officer Employment and Remuneration Policy – 31 December
- Workforce Plan – 31 December
- Recruitment Policy – 31 December
- Staff Code of Conduct – 31 December
- Complaints Policy – 31 December
- Procurement Policy – 31 December

2022

- [Asset Plan – 30 June 2022](#)

Local Government Act 2020 timelines and requirements

The following letter was sent to councils earlier this week and is shared here for member information:

10 September 2021

Dear Colleagues

As implementation of the Local Government Act 2020 nears its conclusion, I would like to acknowledge and celebrate the outstanding work of the sector in delivering a co-designed Integrated Strategic Planning and Reporting Framework, working with Local Government Victoria (LGV) to help us improve the mandatory councillor training and developing conflict of interest guidance and gift policies, amongst many other achievements.

The new Act delivers the most significant reforms for local government in Victoria in over 30 years. It is a principles-based Act that provides a contemporary and accessible legislative framework to meet the current and future needs of the local government sector and the Victorian community.

Of course, these achievements are especially remarkable given that they have occurred against the backdrop of the global coronavirus pandemic.

As we enter the final phase of Act implementation, LGV has been notified that a few councils are struggling to meet the legislated timelines. I am sure that councils will make every effort to meet their obligations, but I understand that this is a remarkably difficult time and I absolutely appreciate the challenges.

Unfortunately, neither LGV nor the Minister for Local Government are able to provide an extension to the deadlines for the policies and plans required under the new Act.

I note that non-compliance does not carry any specific offence, although councils are expected to report any breach to their respective Audit and Risk Committees which are responsible for monitoring compliance of council policies and procedures.

I would also like to emphasise that implementation of the Act is an iterative process. At this initial stage, and considering the current circumstances, minimum compliance with the legislation is sufficient to meet your obligations. Councils can revisit and revise initial foundational policies and plans in accordance with their own needs and principles of continuous improvement.

LGV will also continue to support councils over the coming weeks and months by sharing information and designing support material in collaboration with the sector.

Workforce Plan

One of the key documents required by the Act is a Workforce Plan, which needs to be developed by 31 December 2021. Please keep in mind that the core requirements under the Act are:

- *an organisational chart*
- *projected staffing requirements for the next 4+ years, and*
- *measures to seek to ensure gender equality, diversity, and inclusiveness.*

The plan can be as short or as comprehensive as each council requires.

There is no requirement for the Workforce Plan to be subject to a community engagement process, nor does it need to be formally adopted by council. The only requirement is that CEOs ensure that the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, councillors and members of council staff have access to the plan.

To support councils in the development of foundational Workforce Plans, LGV has collaborated with sector representatives to produce a guide which can be found

here: <https://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/strengthening-councils/sector-guidance-planning-and-reporting>

Support and resources

LGV has a range of supports available for councils. These include:

1. *An engagement platform on [Engage Vic](#) to support your implementation requirements.*
2. *A range of [webinars and events](#) (including recordings) that focus on critical areas of the Act and show examples of excellent sector-led projects.*
3. *Our monthly [Implementation Matters newsletter](#) which you can subscribe to for timely and crucial implementation updates.*
4. *Guidelines, references, [governance resources](#) and examples of best practice to support your implementation.*

Survey

To help LGV better understand the implementation pressures across the sector, we have developed a short survey. I would appreciate if you could spare the time to tell us about the challenges experienced within your council and any ideas for support that would be beneficial for you. The survey can be accessed [here](#) and will take less than 10 minutes to complete.

Take care and please let us know if we can be of any further assistance.

Julie Reid

Executive Director

Local Government Victoria | Local Government and Suburban Development
Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions

ESC – Annual Compliance Information Reminder

Compliance submissions in relation to the rate cap for 2021–22 is due 30 September 2021.

Annual Report Extension

Formal advise has now been received from the Acting Minister for Local Government to the sector extending the due date for Council and Library Corporation 2020/21 Annual **Reports** to 30 November 2021.

The following letter was sent to all Councils earlier this week:

Date: 14 / 09 / 2021

I am writing to advise of my decision to extend the period for Victorian councils and Regional Library Corporations (RLCs) to submit their 2020-21 annual report to the Minister for Local Government.

Under section 133(1)(b) of the Local Government Act 1989 (as it continues to apply under section 329(7) of the Local Government Act 2020), I have approved a two-month extension. This means that councils and RLCs now have until 30 November 2021 to submit their annual report.

The coronavirus pandemic continues to place pressure on resources across all Victorian councils. A number of councils were also significantly impacted by the June extreme weather event in Victoria. The extension provides additional time, if required, for councils to meet their legislative reporting obligations. The associated arrangements for the review, approval and publishing of the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework indicators will be aligned with the extension. The extension also applies to Regional Library Corporations (RLCs) under the relevant provisions of the Local Government Act 1989.

The Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) is currently undertaking the annual financial audits of councils and RLCs. The extension may delay the timing of this work. Councils and RLCs are encouraged to contact their auditors directly to discuss any impacts.

Thank you for the important work you continue to do for communities across Victoria.

The Hon. Mary-Anne Thomas MP - Acting Minister for Local Government

Rate Capping Mechanism Review Announcement

The following information was distributed to councils today and is shared here for member information:

Dear Colleagues

I am pleased to inform you that Local Government Victoria has engaged Grosvenor Performance Group to undertake an independent review of the rate capping mechanism under section 185G of the Local Government Act 1989 (the Act).

Review Scope

The review will consider:

- *whether the mechanism for setting a cap on rates set out in Part 8A of the Act is still appropriate; and*
- *whether Part 8A of the Act is effective or needs to be amended.*

The review will assess all parts of the rate cap framework, with specific reference to:

- *the provision of advice by the Essential Services Commission (ESC) and Government agencies to the Minister for Local Government in the setting of the rate cap (s 185D of the Act).*
- *the use of the base average rate as the basis for applying the rate cap (s 185B of the Act); and*
- *the process by which councils apply to the ESC for a higher cap and a decision is made by the ESC, including the timing, appropriateness of guidance and other communications provided by the ESC as part of the process (s 185E of the Act).*

The review is to make findings on the above and any recommendations as considered appropriate to the Minister for Local Government and the Minister administering the Essential Services Act 2001 (the Assistant Treasurer).

Out of Scope

The review will not consider:

- *The Government's policy of capping local government rate increases in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI).*
- *The quality or merit of previous individual applications by councils to the ESC for a higher cap (both successful and unsuccessful) or a review of any decisions by the ESC with regard to individual applications by councils.*
- *The previous decisions by the Minister for Local Government in setting the rate cap amount.*
- *The matters that were within the scope of the 2019-20 Local Government Rating System Review including:*
 - *current local government rates and charges levied under the Act and other pieces of State legislation.*
 - *the rating system's interaction with the State's taxation, valuation and other systems.*
 - *current rating exemptions and concessions.*
 - *the autonomy of councils to apply the rating system to meet local needs; and*
 - *current exemptions and discounts for local government rates.*

Consultation

The review will include consultation with the local government sector, Victorian Government departments and stakeholders including, but not limited to:

- *the Municipal Association of Victoria, Victorian Local Governance Association, LGPro, FinPro, and Australian Services Union.*
- *the Essential Services Commission; and*
- *Ratepayer groups and individual ratepayers.*

Reporting

Grosvenor has been contracted to produce a final report by 31 October 2021.

The Grosvenor Team is led by Sarika Bhana, Senior Manager, and will be contacting you shortly to provide more information on the consultation with the sector.

Should you require more information about the review, please contact Sarika via email: sarikabhana@grosvenorpg.com.au or mobile: 0431 386 679.

Julie Reid - Executive Director, Local Government Victoria

Access to funding

The following announcement was made by the Minister for Local Government on 6 September and is shared here for member information.

FinPro has some questions around the implementation of this program and will be meeting with TCV and LGV to discuss these. Answers to our questions will be shared with the FinPro membership. If you have any questions at all we welcome you to [email them through to Gab](#) so that they can be raised with TCV and the answers shared with members.

6th Sep 2021

Loans For Councils to Improve Services, Infrastructure

Victorian councils will now have improved access to low-interest loans to support the development of key infrastructure and other projects, to make local communities even better places to live.

Acting Minister for Local Government Mary-Anne Thomas today announced the new Local Council Lending Framework, giving councils access to lower interest rates financed through the Treasury Corporation of Victoria (TCV).

Victoria's strong credit rating means the Victorian Government can borrow and lend money at cheaper rates than those commercially available to councils. Being able to borrow directly from the TCV will help councils to fund general working capital needs as well as project-specific infrastructure.

The Local Government Act 2020 requires councils to disclose total planned new borrowings in their annual budget. Councils will have to meet credit criteria to be approved for a loan, including a credit assessment by the Department of Treasury and Finance. Councils may then apply for loans up to a borrowing limit set by the DTF.

This new framework builds on the Government's Community Infrastructure Loans Scheme, established in 2019-20 to develop or upgrade crucial community facilities, like the Maribyrnong City Council's Town Hall and Community Redevelopment Hub in Footscray, through subsidised interest loans.

The \$30 million Footscray project is supported with a \$10 million loan and will deliver a refurbished Town Hall building and community hub including a park, community meeting and function rooms.

Where this new framework differs is that councils will now be able to access borrowings from TCV for general working capital requirements, in addition to project-specific infrastructure investment purposes.

To find out more, visit the [LGV website](#)

General Information

Adding some fun to your next online staff meeting (or catching up with family and friend online)

Whilst lockdown continues, we continue to connect with work colleagues, family and friends online. Chatting via zoom or facetime works, but sometimes finding a new way to connect, particularly when there is a lack of news because we haven't been able to do anything much, is welcome.

I attended a session about running virtual events earlier this week and the following ideas for ways to add something different to a catch-up caught my eye:

- Trivia - <https://www.quizwitz.com/> very simple to setup and inexpensive.
- Bingo - <https://myfreebingocards.com/> for larger groups you can purchase extra bingo cards
- Escape Room - <https://escape-the-crate.com/backoftrain> one off free game introducing their style of online escape rooms. This one was fun and can be used in breakout rooms in teams or zoom to split everyone into groups.

Hope these are of use, Gab

The latest article from our Corporate Partners, .id (informed decisions)

Australia's population growth almost zero



The ABS have just released a full 12 months of COVID-affected population-growth data. Victoria's population is declining sharply, Queensland is booming.

In today's blog Glenn Capuano, Demographic Consultant to .id provides a [state-by-state analysis](#) of the contributing factors.

Current positions advertised on the [FinPro Website](#)

- **Manager Financial Services**
 - Hepburn Shire Council
 - [Further details](#)
 - Applications close 5pm Monday 4 October 2021

- **Director of Corporate and Community Services**
 - West Wimmera Shire Council
 - [Further details](#)
 - Applications close 24 September 2021

- **Manager Business and Performance**
 - Mansfield Shire Council
 - [Further details](#)
 - Applications close at 5pm on Monday 27 September 2021
 - **Additional note: Mansfield Shire have a secondment opportunity for 6 – 8 weeks in the above role, whilst they recruit for the vacancy. To find out more please contact Kurt Heidecker, General Manager, Community & Corporate Services on 03 5775 8548.**

- **Team Leader Budgeting and Reporting**
 - Kingston City Council
 - [Further details](#)
 - Applications close 11.59pm on Monday 27 September 2021

- **Coordinator Management Accounting Systems**
 - City of Greater Dandenong
 - [Further details](#)
 - Applications close 5pm on Tuesday 21 September 2021

- **Financial Accounting Coordinator**
 - Manningham City Council
 - [Further details](#)
 - Applications close 5pm Monday 27 September 2021

- **Accountant**
 - Hepburn Shire Council
 - [Further details](#)
 - Applications close 5pm, Monday 27 September 2021

- **Coordinator Management Accounting and Systems (temporary full time until Oct 2022)**
 - City of Greater Dandenong
 - [Further details](#)
 - Applications close 5pm Tuesday 21 September 2021

- **Financial Services Accountant – Developer Contribution Plans (DCP)**
 - Maribyrnong City Council
 - [Further details](#)

- Applications close 10pm on Wednesday 29 September 2021
- **Financial Accountant**
 - Casey City Council
 - [Further details](#)
 - Applications close 11.55pm on Monday 20 September 2021
- **Finance Business Partner**
 - Hepburn Shire Council
 - [Further details](#)
 - Applications close 5pm Monday 20 September 2021
- **Coordinator Revenue Services**
 - Yarra City Council
 - [Further details](#)
 - Applications close on Wednesday 29th September 2021
- **Coordinator Financial Accounting Operations**
 - Yarra City Council
 - [Further details](#)
 - Applications close on Thursday 30th September 2021
- **Coordinator Budget and Business Support**
 - Yarra City Council
 - [Further details](#)
 - Applications close on Friday 1st October 2021

FinPro Executive Team 2021

President	Bradley Thomas (Hepburn SC)
Vice-President – Chair Professional Development	Binda Gokhale (Wyndham CC)
PD Committee Members	Alan Wilson (Melbourne CC) Belinda Johnson (Southern Grampians SC) Charles Nganga (Casey CC) Melissa Baker (South Gippsland SC)
Vice-President – Chair Technical	Tony Rocca (Maroondah CC)
Technical Committee Members	Danny Wain (Monash CC) Fiona Rae (Golden Plains SC) Mark Montague (Whittlesea CC) Nathan Morsillo (Greater Bendigo CC) Simone Wickes (Frankston CC) Wei Chen (Yarra CC)
Secretary / Treasurer	Gabrielle Gordon

Thank-you to our 2021 Corporate Partners

- * APV Valuers and Asset Management
- * Commonwealth Bank
- * CT Management
- * .id informed decisions
- * Ibis Information Systems
- * MAGIQ Software
- * LG Solutions
- * Maia Financial
- * New Era Management
- * VOTAR Partners
- * Vision Super
- * Westpac

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