

The cover features a photograph of a modern staircase with wooden steps and a glass railing, set against a red wall. This image is partially obscured by large, overlapping geometric shapes in shades of red, orange, and teal. The text 'VLGA' is prominently displayed in a large, bold, grey sans-serif font, centered horizontally. Below it, the text '2020-2021' and 'ANNUAL REPORT' are written in a smaller, bold, black sans-serif font, also centered.

VLGA

2020-2021
ANNUAL REPORT

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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.

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VICTORIAN LOCAL GOVERNANCE ASSOCIATION

THE VLGA STORY

The Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) is an independent governance organisation supporting councils and councillors in achieving the highest standards of governance on behalf of their communities.

The VLGA's overriding value is to strengthen and support good governance in local government that will enable, promote and facilitate trust and confidence in the sector.

The VLGA provides opportunities for councillor networking, professional development and information exchange and actively engages with key policymakers and broader stakeholders to inform, influence and lead the conversations that determine the priorities for the local government sector and support good governance at the local level.

VALUE PROPOSITION

The VLGA creates value in the following ways.

- We marshal thought leadership for the sector across a wide variety of topics;
- We present high calibre panels of professionals, agency leaders and senior bureaucrats and Ministers in areas relevant to the sector;
- We facilitate highly relevant discussions on complex issues which are readily accessible to all;
- We are agile and adapt our service offering to meet the needs of our member organisations;
- We advocate and represent the position of local government to other levels of government;
- We are engaged (and sought after) as a peak body - the independent local government governance organisation - to participate in forums, think tanks, advisory committees convened by government, academic institutions and other lead agencies;
- We provide resources, information, professional development and education and undertake projects and events that support good governance and leadership;
- We deliver funded programs which meet the strategic priorities of the government of the day;
- We advocate for participation in local democracy that is inclusive and represents the diversity of the community and deliver programs that build the capacity of candidates and councillors.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It is with great pleasure that I present to you the VLGA's 20/21 Annual Report in my capacity as President. I deliver this report to you on behalf of the VLGA's former President, Cr Lambros Tapinos and the VLGA board.

I am pleased to report to you – our valued members – that the VLGA has worked closely with the local government sector over the past twelve months to not only support them during the most challenging of times, but to also provide education and support in the principles of good governance. Much like last year, most of our programs were provided virtually. However, the impact of COVID-19 saw the VLGA respond quickly and reinvigorate our program delivery to support the sector during this testing time.

In particular, the VLGA delivered **98 candidate information workshops** leading into the 2020 local government elections and **38 councillor induction sessions** following the elections - working with **19 councils** to tailor each induction session to the needs of the council. These sessions were delivered in partnership with Hunt & Hunt lawyers and Justitia.

We were unfortunately unable to deliver our signature **Leading the Agenda** face to face events due to COVID, but we did, however, manage to deliver our annual FastTrack Councillor Development Program in March face to face - so it was precisely one year to the day that we were able to meet in person. Opened by the Minister Local Government, the Hon Shaun Leane, with a robust Q&A session, the day was a great success. With three expert panels and finishing the day with some inspirational and comic relief with the Melbourne Playback Theatre.

The **VLGA Connect** program continued to broadcast to our screens and comprised a series of interviews with prominent people in the sector and beyond. We heard from Commissioners, federal and state ministers, integrity and policy agencies and experts from varying fields. The series has proved to be well received, with both the video and the podcast uptake exceeding expectations. The series was created to continue to support our membership and the broader community during COVID-19.

At the end of the financial year, we had presented **187 episodes** with Chris Eddy at the helm. Among the many highlights is the weekly governance update with Chris Eddy and Steve Cooper.

The VLGA partnered with LGiU Australia and LGPro Vic to present live a number of live **Global Local Government CEO & Executive Panel** discussions over Zoom with participants joining us from Australia, the UK and Ireland.

The VLGA continued to support and work collaboratively with a range of stakeholders, including our long-time HART Awards partners Reconciliation Victoria and the Child Friendly Cities and Communities network.

I want to acknowledge my board colleagues and thank them for their support in yet another year that was interrupted. Of course, as President, my work has been enhanced by the stewardship of Chief Executive Officer Kathryn Arndt.

To the staff, thank you for your support of the organisation at a difficult time still working from home. I know it has had its challenges and I thank you for your ongoing commitment.

I would like to wish the organisation well and welcome our new board members and look forward to supporting everyone from the sidelines.

Cr Denise Massoud
VLGA President



Cr Lambros Tapinos
Former VLGA President



CEO & OPERATIONAL REPORT

I have been honoured over the past twelve months – and in the challenging times of COVID – to serve as CEO of the VLGA, the recognised peak independent governance organisation supporting the local government sector. During this challenging time the VLGA has continued to provide opportunities for councillor networking, professional development and information exchange while actively engaging with key policymakers and broader stakeholders to inform, influence and lead the conversations that determine the priorities for the local government sector in Victoria. Clearly consistent with the role of VLGA to support good governance at the local level.

The VLGA's five-year strategic plan, 2017-2022, continued to guide the organisation's work. As we move toward the end of this plan, the VLGA is set to embark on the journey of planning beyond 2022 and we look forward to engaging with all of our stakeholders – including our members – to inform the development of the VLGA's 2022 – 2027 strategic objectives.

The VLGA's Value Proposition will guide the next strategic plan. The VLGA's overriding value is to strengthen and support good governance in local government that will enable, promote and facilitate trust and confidence in the sector. Our work supports councils and councillors in achieving the highest standards of governance on behalf of their communities.

Kathryn Arndt
Chief Executive Officer



PROGRAM DELIVERY

Candidate Information Sessions

Through our programs, the VLGA has supported and assisted elected representatives to do their job well, and in this - an election year, we supported both sitting councillors and those from the community wishing to run in the 2020 October elections. Our Candidate Information Sessions began in March 2020 - before the COVID lockdown - and continued virtually up until the October elections. At the end of the financial year, we had presented to 41 councils and delivered over 98 sessions - including 31 Local Women Leading Change workshops particularly tailored to support and encourage women to stand for election.

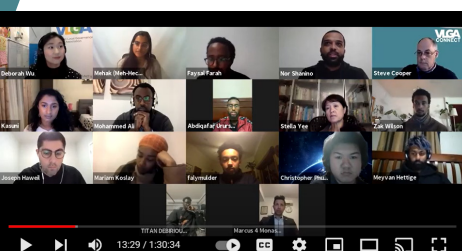
More than 800 women experienced the VLGA's Local Women Leading Change programs and 63 of the 271 women elected had participated in this program. Of those elected participants, around 80% did not have prior councillor experience.

YCCC Program

Funding from Local Government Victoria assisted the VLGA to focus on delivering for our Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Victorians with the program Your Community, Country & Council, produced for the VLGA by Charles Pakana. The program aimed to encourage First Nations peoples to run for and vote in the October 2020 local government elections. I am pleased to report that this program will continue into the next financial year with a view to future election cycles.

'A Seat at the Table'

This was a series of live panel discussions delivered by the VLGA in partnership with the Scanlon Foundation, leading into the October elections. This program aimed to encourage Victorians from emerging and migrant communities to consider running for local government.



Councillor Induction

Following the elections the VLGA worked with many councils to deliver 38 councillor induction sessions – induction programs were tailored to meet the specific needs of each council. These sessions were delivered in partnership with Hunt & Hunt lawyers, Justitia Lawyers and Little Rocket Marketing. Topics covered included good governance, roles and accountabilities of councillors, probity and integrity, diversity and inclusion and media and social media.



COUNCIL/COUNCILLOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FastTrack

As part of the VLGA's commitment to good governance, training and information sharing, we presented the annual Mayor & Councillor *2021 FastTrack Leadership Program* in March 2021. The event looked at a councillor's development within the crucial first year of the council term.



We provided participants with several expert panels to answer their questions. The Minister, the Hon Shaun Leane, commenced the day with an open Q&A on implementing the *Local Government Act 2020* and his observations of the sector. The three expert panels then discussed the dynamics of new councils coming together, the upcoming phase in the strategic planning cycle, and effective decision-making models.



Council Professional Development Prospectus

The VLGA launched its Council Professional Development [prospectus](#) which outlines a number of the professional development programs available to support the needs of the sector.



GEN VIC Conference

I had the great pleasure of representing the VLGA at the GEN VIC “Defining Equity” Conference on a panel with Victoria’s Gender Equality Commissioner – Dr Nicki Vincent, the CEO of Women’s Health in the Southeast – Kit McMahon, and Brynhildur Heiðar-og Ómarsdóttir, Secretary General, Icelandic Women’s Rights Association (IWRA).

Representation

Representing the local government sector is at the heart of what we do and the VLGA continued to give councils a voice through regular meetings with key government departments, the Minister for Local Government, portfolio ministers, and advisors and represented our members on several external committees, including;

- Local Government Act 2020 Implementation
 - Project Control Board
- Local Government Performance Reporting Framework (LGPRF) Steering Committee
- Gender Equality Advisory Committee
- Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Action Plan
 - First Implementation Partnership Group
- EPA Waste and Recycling Industry Reference Group
- Environmental Sustainability Commissioners Reference Group
- Welcoming Cities Advisory Committee

The VLGA also made numerous submissions to government, including but not limited to:

- Review of Operation of the *National Emergency Declaration Act 2020*.
- Inquiry into the Education and Prevention Functions of Victoria’s Integrity Agencies, September 2020
- Inquiry into the Use of Social Media in Elections



Local Government Working Group on Gambling (LGWGOG)

The VLGA's VRGF funded program "Building Council & Community Capacity" continued throughout the year, with the VLGA providing guidance to a number of councils responding to poker machine applications in their municipalities.

The VLGA's LGWGOG quarterly meetings were delivered via Zoom. In September, just prior to the October elections, the VLGA facilitated a small working group to work on engaging local government candidates and new councillors in gambling harm minimisation. This led to a popular candidate session on gambling harm minimisation in local communities, which 50 people attended.

The VLGA also held a virtual session focused on including strategies to address gambling harm in Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing plans which was attended by 25 councillors.

Libraries After Dark

The VLGA supports the delivery of the highly valued Libraries After Dark program – along with Moreland City Council and with funding from the VRGF. During the year the program provided its final round of funding to Mildura Library, Carrum Downs Library and various libraries in Brimbank City Council. Libraries After Dark now operates in every corner of the state, from Portland to Mildura, Bairnsdale to Shepparton. Over 20 libraries now run Libraries After Dark.

The Libraries After Dark team has been working on a project capturing Libraries After Dark on film. Short videos will be released in the next year exploring all facets of the program and can be used as a resource for libraries, councils and all interested in the project for years to come.





HART Awards (Helping Achieve Reconciliation Together)

The 8th Annual HART Awards were delivered in partnership between the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) and Reconciliation Victoria with support from Bank Australia and Local Government Victoria (LGV). The HART Awards are an initiative of the VLGA to promote reconciliation initiatives across Victoria and to encourage and inspire community groups and local government councils to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The HART Awards is listed as an action item of the Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Action Plan 2020 (VALGAP), developed by LGV. The inclusion of the HART Awards in the VALGAP signifies the vital role the Awards play in reconciliation in local government. The VALGAP is a resource for councils to develop and increase employment opportunities, strengthen engagement and enhance partnerships with their First Nations communities.

Each year has seen an exciting number of quality nominations featuring a breadth of initiatives from across the state. Nominations are submitted by Victorian local councils, community groups and schools and early years for initiatives that demonstrate Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people working together and showcasing initiatives that have contributed to reconciliation by building relationships and showing respect and understanding and demonstrating a commitment to self-determination.

Given the number of nominations received in the Community category, the judges decided to implement two new awards as a Special Acknowledgment for Champions of Reconciliation.

Due to COVID restrictions, the Awards were moved to a virtual ceremony for the second year running. The flexibility of moving online was matched by the innovation and creativity of the finalists, many of whom delivered their nominated projects during the height of the pandemic in 2020.

We were pleased to have still the opportunity to celebrate our fantastic finalists, with over 130 people attending via Zoom and over 260,000 people listening in via 3KnD.

The quality and breadth of the nominations continue to amaze each year - they give hope that the grassroots push for Reconciliation in the community, local government and schools will grow and inspire action on achieving self-determination.

VLGA Connect

The VLGA continued to deliver its signature VLGA Connect program – in video and podcast form. Over [230 episodes](#) have been delivered to date.

The VLGA Connect series commenced at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic to provide the sector with a way to stay connected in an online environment, and to share crucial information from sector leaders at a time of great uncertainty and challenge.

It has since become a highly valued source of interviews and discussion for people within and beyond the local government sector in Victoria. Regular participants include Federal and State ministers, public sector leaders, Mayors and Council CEOs.

The VLGA Connect family includes:

- The weekly Governance Update with Chris Eddy and Steve Cooper
- Newsroom with VLGA Chief Executive Officer, Kathryn Arndt
- Conversations with thought leaders, decision makers and public sector leaders
- Live Panel Forums on key topics of importance and relevance to the sector
- Global Forums, in partnership with the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) Australia

I would like to acknowledge and thank Chris Eddy for hosting the VLGA Connect series on behalf of the VLGA. I would also like to acknowledge and thank our most valued production director and editor – John Lloyd Fillingham – or JLF.

LG News RoundUp

And speaking of Chris, the VLGA was proud to support the LG News Roundup podcast which was launched during the year. The 'Local Government News Roundup' is produced and presented by Chris Eddy, a local government and media veteran of 40 years. Featuring news and interviews from around the local government sector, the program is released twice-weekly and includes Victorian, interstate and international roundup segments.



The **VLGA Governance Hotline** was just another service that was well used by councillors and officers from member councils throughout the year seeking confidential support on due process, tactics for communication and implications of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Membership is the lifeblood of the VLGA. We undertake an active engagement process with our members and key stakeholders. We have worked hard not only to retain our existing members but also to gain new members. We currently have 47 council members and 3 Associate members: Aspire Pty Ltd, Hunt & Hunt Lawyers and West Gippsland Libraries. With several individual memberships and life members.

The VLGA in this financial year had six core staff members and two grant-funded staff members.

I would like to acknowledge our partner organisations:

- Child Friendly Cities and Communities (CFCC)
- LGiU Global
- Gender Equity Victoria (GEN VIC)
- Pitcher Partners
- Reconciliation Victoria
- Justitia Lawyers
- Hunt & Hunt Lawyers
- Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation (VRGF)
- Victorian State Government

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge outgoing President, Cr Lambros Tapinos, and thank him for his support over his time as President and a board member. Thank you for your contribution to the VLGA. To the board, I would like to thank each of you for your guidance, input, and support.

Finally, I would like to recognise and acknowledge the contribution of all VLGA staff and thank them for their resilience, agility, professionalism and support over the past twelve months, especially in the challenging time of 'lock down' and working from home; your continued support during this time sees me extremely grateful.

To our members and supporters, thank you, it has been a challenging year for many of you, and I hope you have enjoyed our online engagement and support. We look forward to an even brighter 2022.

TREASURER'S REPORT

In a difficult year, when face to face presentation of programs and services to members has been curtailed by COVID lockdowns, the VLGA pivoted to deliver a full suite of services to its members via electronic platforms.

The VLGA Connect program launched in early 2020 has grown and the VLGA is presenting regular weekly forums and the addition of a new joint program with LGiU has extended the VLGA's offerings, providing a global network of knowledge in the sector.

The VLGA also provided candidate and induction training pre and post the 2020 Victorian local government elections and continued to offer tailored council professional development programs including, but not limited to, topics such as Code of Conduct and Local Women Leading Change.

These results and extensive program activity have all been delivered by a VLGA staff team working from home and dealing with living in a pandemic.

The year end result reflects the increased investment of moving online and the reduced overheads as we continue to look for new premises. The decision to not continue our lease at the start of lockdowns has resulted in a significant saving, one that will be utilised in this coming financial year as it is reinvested into the development of more systems and member program offerings.

Congratulations to the VLGA staff on a great year end result in difficult circumstances.

In summary:

- Operating Income for the year increased by 9.1% to \$1,519,526 due largely to the federal government Covid-19 pandemic subsidy received of \$100,000; and the
- The Net Profit was \$376,569 profit – due to reduced overheads and the government subsidy mentioned above.
- The VLGA's council membership subscriptions cover the costs associated with the extensive representation to, and engagement with, government and other stakeholders that the VLGA undertakes on behalf of the local government sector, in addition to underwriting the costs of program delivery for member councils.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge Cr Susanne Newton who was Acting Treasurer for the majority of the 20/21 period.

Andrew Sloman
Treasurer



DIRECTORS' REPORT

Your board members submit the financial accounts of the Victorian Local Governance Association for the financial year ended 30 June 2021.

The names of board members during the year and/or at the date of this report are:

- Cr Lambros Tapinos
- Cr Susanne Newton
- Cr Collin Ross
- Ms Louise Hill
- Mr Andrew Sloman
- Cr Grace La Vella
- Cr Marg Attley OAM
- Ms Joanna Hayter AO (resigned 25 August 2020)
- Cr Denise Massoud
- Cr Josh Fergeus (commenced 1 July 2021)
- Cr Steve Holland (commenced 1 July 2021)

The names of independent committee members during the year and/or at the date of this report are:

- Leanne Mulcahy
- Mark Davies

PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES

The principal activities of the association during the financial year were to provide advocacy and support to members of the association.

SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

No significant change in the nature of these activities occurred during the year.

OPERATING RESULT

The profit from ordinary activities amounted to:

Year ended 30 June 2021

\$376,569

Year ended 30 June 2020

\$203,194



2020-21 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

	Board Meetings (7)		Governance & Risk Committee Meetings (4)	
	Eligible to Attend	Attended	Eligible to Attend	Attended
Board Members				
Cr Lambros Tapinos (President)	7	7	4	4
Ms Louise Hill (Vice President)	7	7	4	4
Cr Susanne Newton (Acting Treasurer)	7	6	4	4
Cr Collin Ross	7	7	4	3
Mr Andrew Sloman (appointed Nov 2020)	4	4	n/a	1*
Cr Denise Massoud	7	7	n/a	3*
Cr Grace La Vella (appointed 1 Jan 2021)	3	3	n/a	n/a
Ms Joanna Hayter (resigned 25 Aug 2020)	1	1	1	1
Cr Marg Attley (resigned 23 Oct 2020)	3	3	n/a	n/a
Independent Committee Members				
Ms Leanne Mulcahy	n/a	n/a	4	4
Mr Mark Davies	n/a	n/a	4	4
* Attendance as an observer				


Sitting Fees

Sitting fees apply for board member attendance at board and sub-committee meetings.

President	\$557
Board Members	\$426
Governance & Risk Committee	\$426

COUNCIL MEMBERS





For more information,
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