

Councillor Advisory Network

June to November 2019 Report

1. Advocacy and policy

- a) **VALGAP Review:** the VLGA sits on the project steering committee of the Victorian Aboriginal Local Government Action Plan (VALGAP). As the title suggests, the plan articulates the various actions the State and local governments are implementing as part of their respective Aboriginal policies. The Committee has met monthly over the past 6 months to examine the currency of VALGAP and committed to a review of the Plan. See Your Community, Country and Council Project below for further information.
- b) **Rating Review:** The state government has appointed an independent committee reviewing the current rating system for local government. The VLGA has provided the review panel with a submission. We have subsequently appeared before the panel at a public hearing. The panel is in the process of preparing its draft report to the Minister. A final report is due to the Minister by 31 March 2020. Details of the review can be accessed here <https://engage.vic.gov.au/rating-review>
- c) **Red Tape Commissioner:** The Red Tape Commissioner was tasked by the Treasurer and Minister for Planning to “*undertake a review of State and local government processes surrounding building and planning approvals, and early building works infrastructure approvals and to identify opportunities to streamline processes and reduce delays*”. The review has largely been focused at the officer/operational level, involving planning consultants, the building and development industry and regulatory experts. The VLGA was consulted in the initial stages of the review and was also briefed on the initial findings of the review. Details of the review can be found at <https://www.vic.gov.au/planning-and-building-approvals-process-review>
- d) **VAGO consultation:** The Victorian Auditor General’s Office (VAGO) conducts regular reviews of effectiveness of local government operations. The VLGA was consulted in VAGO’s 2020 workplan, which will focus on library services among other things. VAGO did not provide specific details of their 2020 review due to operational restrictions.
- e) **Local Government Bill Reform Directions:** The Minister for local government released a discussion paper on reform directions in local government in June. The paper outlined 6 key areas for reform, in addition to the lapsed 2018 Local Government Bill. VLGA undertook member engagement and consultation regarding the reform directions paper and presented our submission to the Minister by end of July. The VLGA also held preliminary discussions with Local Government Victoria (LGV) on the proposed mandatory candidate training requirement. The

2019 Local Government Bill was formally introduced into Parliament On 13 November. Please refer to attached briefing notes on the selected highlights of the Bill.

- f) **EPA Waste and Recycling Project Steering Group:** As part of the implementation of the new EPA Act by July 2020, the VLGA is a member of the EPA Waste and Recycling Project Steering Group. The group meets bi-monthly and discuss a range of implementation issues regarding the Act. A key feature of the new Act is the general environmental duty (GED), designed to minimize health and environment impact of environmental operations. More information on the new EAP Act can be found here <https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/about-epa/epa-is-changing>
- g) **Parliamentary Inquiry into Waste Management and Recycling:** the VLGA made a submission to the Parliamentary inquiry and gave evidence at the Inquiry Committee hearing on June 24. The Committee has produced an interim report, focusing mainly in the adequacies of various waste management and environmental protection mechanisms. The government is expected to produce a formal response to the interim report in the coming months. Responses from councils and industry stakeholders such as the VLGA is likely to be included in the final report of the Committee. Please refer to the inquiry website for more information <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/954-epc-lc/inquiry-into-recycling-and-waste-management>

2. Member support

- a) **Budget Analysis:** The VLGA provided members with an update to the 2019-2020 State Budget. The analysis provided councils with a brief overview of the budget and highlighted selected areas for councils' attention and interest.
- b) **Local Women Leading Change:** This project is progressing as planned, with good to excellent turnout in our women only information and training events. The VLGA has held a number of these events to date, with venues range from Horsham to East Gippsland, from Geelong to Shepparton. Part two of the project has commenced and will continue in 2020.
- c) **Your Community, Country and Council:** As part of the VALGAP implementation, the VLGA has received a small project funding to raise awareness and encourage participation by Aboriginal Victorians in the 2020 council elections. The VLGA has held meetings to date with various stakeholders including the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations. The project is scheduled to start by end of 2019 and continue throughout 2020.
- d) **Community Engagement and Consultation Master Class:** The VLGA delivered Community Engagement and Consultation Master Class training in August. The training was developed with an experienced consultant and was delivered partly in anticipation of the 2019 Local Government Bill, which was not introduced back then. This workshop can be repeated in 2020.

3. Good governance leadership

- a) **Building Communities Symposium:** The VLGA, in collaboration with the City of Wyndham, hosted a one-day symposium on 5 July 2019. The symposium is titled Building Communities and was well attended by council staff and councillors.

- b) **Leading the Agenda:** The VLGA devoted its October Leading the Agenda for council CEOs and governance staff focusing on governance and election period policy implications for the 2020 council elections. The panel consisted of David Wolf, Chief Municipal Inspector and Bo Li from the VLGA and was moderated by Chris Eddy, former CEO at Hobson’s Bay Council. A similar session for councillors will be held at the February Fast Track Leadership Development Program (see agenda).

- c) **Professor Jay Friedlander Workshop in collaboration with CQU.** The VLGA, in collaboration with Central Queensland University, hosted Professor Jay Friedlander from the College of the Atlantic Maine on November 6. The workshop provided attendees with an insight into aligning their actions with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDG). The workshop was well attended by council staff and councillors.