



## **Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA)**

### **2025 Election – Board Member**

#### **Candidate List and Profile Statements**

GALLAGHER, Damien.....	2
SCHELLING, John .....	3
MORRIS, Brandi.....	4
KARSLAKE, Jane .....	5
TAYLOR, Martin.....	6
PULFORD, Adam.....	7
DUMARESQ, John.....	8
LENBERG, David.....	9
WILSON, Mikki.....	10
EVANS, Riley .....	11
ZADA, Phillip .....	12
SHAW, Mia .....	13
MILNE, Glenn.....	14
BOGLIS, Connie.....	15
ZHAO, Larry .....	16
HERSEY, Nathan.....	17
ROSS, Collin .....	18
DOWLING, Scott.....	19
DAVENPORT, Andrew.....	20



## **GALLAGHER, Damien**

This is a critical moment for Local Government.

Financial sustainability is a perennial challenge, as are civility in community discourse and the currency of misinformation.

I'll continue to passionately foster a respectful partnership relationship between Local and State Governments, and advance our sector thought leadership. My commitment to Local Government is grounded in values of honesty, integrity, fairness, and transparency, and I am passionate about building inclusive, engaged communities.

My focus will be elevating the VLGA as the leading source of governance advice, professional development, and advocacy for Victorian Councils.

Years of working and volunteering in my community have shaped my commitment to public service. I am an Executive Director of a global Australian technology company, Director of a local community bank, and NFP Director. As current Mayor of Murrindindi Shire Council, with experience as Chair of the Hume Regional Local Government Network, and as a Local Government Mayoral Advisory Panel member, I'm looking forward to offering a fresh perspective to an experienced VLGA Board.

I submit myself for, and I appreciate your consideration of my VLGA Board candidacy.

Vote 1 Damien Gallagher, 0419 017 801

[Back to Candidate List](#)



## **SCHELLING, John**

As Mayor of South Gippsland Shire, I offer extensive leadership experience across local government, community, and the private sector. I am nominating for the VLGA Board to contribute to its important work supporting councils through effective governance, sector advocacy, and strategic capacity building.

I am proudly leading a committed group of Councillors in developing and delivering our new Council Plan and Budget, ensuring alignment with community needs and long-term sustainability. I was appointed one of the Municipal Association of Victoria's five federal election Mayoral Spokespersons to advocate on key priorities affecting our regions and sector. Recently, I joined fellow rural Councillors to oppose the Victorian Government's increases to the new Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund.

I strongly support local government and communities having a direct say on issues that impact them, such as the transition to renewable energy and offshore wind developments in Gippsland, recognising the opportunity to deliver economic and social benefits to regional communities.

Well known across Gippsland through my employment role and extensive community involvement and volunteering with sports, schools, and church groups, I've built strong networks, deep community connections, and have a proven ability to achieve successful outcomes, even in challenging environments.

[Back to Candidate List](#)



## **MORRIS, Brandi**

As a first-term councillor, I am eager to broaden my understanding of effective governance through meaningful, hands-on experience. Joining the VGLA Board presents a unique opportunity to engage with diverse perspectives on what good governance looks like in practice—an opportunity I would deeply value.

While I have not previously served on a board, I bring experience from committee roles, work within not-for-profit organisations, and time spent in state government departments. These experiences have sharpened my understanding of collaborative decision-making and the importance of strong governance frameworks.

I have a genuine interest in growing as both a councillor and a leader. I view this nomination not only as a chance to contribute but also to continue developing the skills and knowledge essential for upholding integrity and professionalism in local government. Governance is a critical pillar of public trust, and I am committed to learning from and contributing to the VGLA's work in supporting councillors to fulfill their roles with confidence and excellence.

Thank you for considering my nomination.

[Back to Candidate List](#)



## **KARSLAKE, Jane**

As a second-term Councillor at City of Glen Eira, I bring over 25 years of experience collaborating with communities and Councils across Victoria in advocacy, community engagement and industrial relations. I have a deep understanding of the challenges facing local government and the critical role Councillors can play in shaping strong, resilient communities.

I am dedicated to strengthening the capacity of Councils to deliver good governance and uphold the highest standards of integrity. Now more than ever, we need strong, ethical leadership to navigate the complex issues facing our sector from climate resilience and policy reform to sector sustainability and recognition of the vital role of local government.

I am passionate about ensuring communities are resilient and enabled; that Councils are responsive to their communities, and our resources managed to improve community well-being and safety, social cohesion, and opportunity.

I bring:

- Proven advocacy and governance experience
- A collaborative leadership style grounded in evidence-based decision-making.
- A commitment to representing the diverse voices of Councillors across Victoria

If elected, I will be a strong and effective voice for you on the VLGA Board, working to support the future success and sustainability of the sector.

[Back to Candidate List](#)



## **TAYLOR, Martin**

As Mayor of the Whittlesea City Council and a dedicated Councillor, I bring a wealth of experience, leadership, and a deep commitment to principled governance. With over three decades of service spanning local government, law, legal practice, policing, military service, and mental health governance, I offer a unique multidisciplinary perspective to the VLGA Board.

I am a Barrister and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Victoria and the High Court of Australia. I hold 26 academic qualifications in law, legal practice, leadership, management, policing and investigations, education, and training and assessment. My service record includes the Victoria Police, RMIT University, Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, Mayor in the Australian army reserve and in private practice with leadership roles in all.

At Whittlesea, I have championed ethical governance, community development, inclusive engagement, and resilient leadership. I actively represent our diverse communities and councillors, advocate strongly on their behalf, and lead vital initiatives that support and uplift our residents.

I believe in collaborative, transparent, and courageous leadership. As a VLGA Board Member, I will contribute with strategic vision, integrity, and a strong advocacy voice for councils and councillors on strengthening good governance, building sector capability, and restoring public trust in local government.

[Back to Candidate List](#)



## **PULFORD, Adam**

Hi, I'm Adam Pulford.

I represent Merri-bek's Warrk-Warrk Ward. I'm currently in my second term and served as Mayor last year.

Over my time on Council, I've seen our role evolve. High living costs have increased community demand for Council services and infrastructure, while at the same time our own sector has faced its own large cost increases.

Government cost-shifting further pressures our budgets and shows no sign of relenting with the proposed changes to planning. The State Government's recent increase to a Council-administered levy also risks straining our relationships with residents.

While each Council shares the above challenges, we operate in our own unique local context. The VLGA provides a chance for us to come together to share lessons and be a strong collective voice for our sector, so we can be thriving local democracies able to meet our diverse communities' needs.

I am an experienced advocate who enjoys working collaboratively. I have over a decade of experience working in human rights, climate and First Nations organisations. I would love your support these elections to bring my skills and experience to the VLGA Board.

Please get in touch to discuss my nomination further or to share your ideas.

Adam

[Back to Candidate List](#)



## **DUMARESQ, John**

I'm nominating myself for the VLGA Board as a second term councillor and current Mayor at Nillumbik Shire Council who's all about putting community at the centre of every decision.

Over my time in local government I've championed integrity, transparency and accountability not just ticking boxes, but having genuine conversations that drive real results. I regularly coach fellow councillors, strongly support capacity building among councillors, and back initiatives that ensure local voices steer our strategies and decisions.

As Mayor, I've faced firsthand the growing complexity and expectations on councils. That's why the VLGA's focus on councillor capability, strategic governance, collaborative partnerships and tackling systemic challenges resonates so strongly with me. I bring a practical, people-first mindset balanced with a strong grasp of legislative and governance frameworks to get things done right.

My track record demonstrates that I don't just talk about good governance—I practice it. I'd be proud to bring this experience and community focus to the VLGA Board, helping councillors across Victoria build the confidence, courage and skills to serve their communities with real impact.

[Back to Candidate List](#)





## **LENBERG, David**

I am honoured to nominate myself for the VLGA Board.

I bring 30 years of business leadership in technology, innovation and customer experience (CX), along with my service as a Councillor in the City of Whittlesea. As the General Manager of an innovation consultancy, I have worked with government, industry, and community to co-design future-focused, inclusive solutions.

I am committed to transparent, participatory, and responsive governance. In council, I lead respectfully, hearing everyone's views and opinions before making my own.

My priorities align strongly with VLGA's mission: empowering councillors, strengthening local democracy, and ensuring community voices drive decision-making. I'm passionate about youth engagement, green spaces and well-designed communities, while building resilient, inclusive economies.

As a VLGA Board member, I bring a strategic and collaborative approach to supporting councillors and councils across Victoria. I am committed to advancing innovation, strengthening leadership capability, and championing diversity, equity, and trust in local governance.

Cr David Lenberg, City of Whittlesea

[Back to Candidate List](#)



## **WILSON, Mikki**

I am seeking appointment to the VLGA Board as I believe my Board, Corporate and Public Sector experience can only improve outcomes for VLGA.

I am a graduate of Company Directors Course and believe this credential also enhances what I bring to the table.

I have sat on three Board/ Board Committees of varying organisations - my area of expertise has been in the risk and audit arena.

I believe that strength in this area of any Board are invaluable and fundamental to any Board's success.

As a newly elected Councilor I bring a fresh perspective, an inquiring mind and lack of jaded views.

I have seen the value that representative bodies deliver to their members and would like to contribute to that of the VLGA.

[Back to Candidate List](#)



## **EVANS, Riley**

Hello my name is Riley Evans I am 26 and have recently been elected to Mitchell Shire Council, I am excited to be involved with the VLGA to dive even deeper into the workings and decision making of councils. I am situated in Victoria's largest growth council in the South Ward where any knowledge I can learn and then bring back would be helpful especially in regards to getting the best outcomes and tighter measures on developers.

[Back to Candidate List](#)



## **ZADA, Phillip**

Representing the Mount Atkinson Ward of Melton City Council, I have dedicated my service to effective advocacy and community-driven outcomes. As Chair of LeadWest, I'm proud that eight of ten key advocacy priorities have been funded since I was elected to the role—demonstrating my ability to build consensus and deliver results. With a PhD in Innovation, I bring a fresh, strategic lens to governance challenges. I value creative thinking, long-term planning, and inclusive leadership. Since 2017, I've worked extensively with the government sector in a private capacity, gaining deep insights into public policy and local government operations. I am passionate about strengthening governance and fostering a healthier, more respectful democratic culture across councils. If elected to the VLGA Board, I will champion initiatives that support councillor development, promote collaboration, and ensure a safer, more supportive environment for all elected representatives. My leadership style is professional, confident, and grounded in service to community. I look forward to contributing my experience and vision to the VLGA Board to advance good governance and deliver better outcomes across Victoria. Please feel free to contact me on 0418999659 or [phillip.zada@melton.vic.gov.au](mailto:phillip.zada@melton.vic.gov.au).

**[Back to Candidate List](#)**



## **SHAW, Mia**

I am nominating for the VLGA Board to contribute my experience, perspective, and commitment to strengthening local government leadership across Victoria. I have proudly served as a Councillor at the City of Wyndham for nearly nine years and am currently in my third term, serving my second term as Mayor.

Leading one of Australia's fastest-growing and most diverse municipalities has given me deep insight into the challenges and opportunities facing local government—particularly in governance, financial management, leadership, growth, community engagement, and policy development, and how these challenges intersect.

I bring to the Board a strong foundation in governance, having graduated from the Australian Institute of Company Directors and currently serving as a Non-Executive Director on another board. These roles have strengthened my focus on ethical leadership, sound decision-making, and the importance of continuous professional development within the sector.

I am passionate about fostering inclusive, transparent, and future-focused governance practices. My lived experience, formal training, and proven leadership equip me to make a meaningful contribution to the VLGA Board and to support its mission of promoting good governance and strong, democratic local government across Victoria.

[Back to Candidate List](#)



## **MILNE, Glenn**

I have been a Mildura Rural City Councillor for the last 20 years, serving as Mayor for seven years and Deputy for two years.

I have Chaired the Rail Freight Alliance, the Murray Group of Councils and have been Council's Rep on the Regional Cities Group, the Local Government Working Group on Gambling and other key groups.

My working experience ranges from Press Photography, Social Work, Youth Housing, Farming, Truck and Crane Driving to Farming.

I am a life Member of Mallee Accommodation and Support and Board Member of Sunraysia Residential Services.

I have a large family, six of my own children as well as two fostered children, three intellectually disabled sons, ten grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

I am a strong supporter of Rural and Regional Councils and believe they are under resourced financially by the State Government and the ratepayers are forced to bear the burden of that under resourcing through unfairly high rates.

I believe I can be a strong voice for country communities and will be able to offer that perspective to the VLGA while also understanding the need for all ratepayers and Councils to have board members who are open and fair in their decision-making processes.

[Back to Candidate List](#)



## **BOGLIS, Connie**

I am proud to nominate for the VLGA Board to contribute my experience in inclusive governance, mental health advocacy, and community leadership.

As a Darebin Councillor, I chair the Active and Healthy Ageing Advisory Committee and work to ensure diverse voices are heard in council decision-making. I bring extensive experience in the mental health sector, including leadership roles with the Wellways Lived Experience Authority and advisory work with various NFP groups and communities.

My service is grounded in compassion and cultural understanding, drawing from decades of community engagement. I am a published children's author focused on emotional literacy and serve as an ambassador for the Australian National Veterans Arts Museum (ANVAM), supporting veterans and carers through the arts.

Awarded the Order of Australia Medal in 2024 for service to the community, I bring integrity, lived experience, and strong networks to the role. I believe in a local government sector that is ethical, inclusive, and trusted. I would be honoured to support the VLGA's vision and strengthen governance across Victoria through connection, accountability, and capacity building.

[Back to Candidate List](#)



## **ZHAO, Larry**

I wish to nominate for the VLGA Board. One of the biggest challenges for any local government peak body, is the ability to represent the diversity of the sector.

As a new Councillor, I believe I can bring a fresh perspective that will encourage the Board to think about different approaches to complex challenges. In particular, I believe I can bring a depth of knowledge and ideas about providing support for Councillors with English as a second language. With the introduction of single councillor wards, it is more important than ever to ensure our multicultural Councillors are equipped and supported to best represent their constituents and that their communities are not disadvantaged due to the Councillor's heritage.

More broadly, my passion for the sector and its important role in the community is what drove me to become a Councillor. I would use my role on the Board to work collaboratively with my colleagues to maintain and lift the performance of the sector at a time when it is under more scrutiny than ever.

[Back to Candidate List](#)





## **HERSEY, Nathan**

I am honoured to nominate for the VLGA Board, to deepen my involvement in shaping the strategic direction of local government in Victoria and to enhance the VLGA's offerings to member councils and Councillors.

I am committed to serving my community and advancing the local government sector, through active advocacy on issues that matter. I bring a bold approach to representation, leveraging my skills in economic development, policy, and public service.

My formal qualifications include a Bachelor of Arts, Diplomas in Business Management and Human Resources Management, and I am a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD).

With nearly a decade of experience with the Federal Government, complemented by practical business and agriculture experience, I am equipped to contribute.

My local government service includes roles as Mayor and twice as Deputy Mayor of South Gippsland. I am currently serving as Chair of One Gippsland, and was previously on the board of the MAV, with a period as the Deputy President non-metro.

With a proven track record in negotiation, legislation, and policy, I am committed to using my expertise, passion, and relationship-building skills to advance VLGA.

I humbly seek your support for election to the VLGA.

[Back to Candidate List](#)



## **ROSS, Collin**

A Council's sustainability is the greatest challenge local government faces today. Ratecapping and reduced funding from State/Federal Governments has put pressure on annual budgets that deliver over 100 services and need infrastructure. Never has the need for a strong independent peak body been so important in the sector. I'm in my 5<sup>th</sup> term and 17yr as a councillor on the Cardinia Shire Council. I have been a strong voice in the past on the VLGA board and understand the workings of the organisation. We need to make sure the VLGA is that strong voice to the different levels of Government. I'll always call out what issues are and possible solutions. Cardinia Shire council is an interface council. (8% in the urban growth boundary, a fire prone area in the Hills area, trainline Village towns and the Bunyip food bowl. We produce most of Melbourne's building sand and 80% Australia's asparagus.) The green wedge surrounds us with continued issues. I deal with all different councils challenges and can relate with most of yours on your council. I'm a good communicator that is easily approachable. I would be a strong voice on the board for you. A vote would be appreciated.

[Back to Candidate List](#)



## **DOWLING, Scott**

To whom it may concern,

I felt compelled to nominate for a board member position with the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA). In 2024, I was elected as a councillor for the City of Casey (Akoonah Ward). My campaign focused on enhancing community connectivity, accessibility, and liveability. As a councillor, I support community groups, volunteers, and sporting clubs, all with the aim of improving services whilst improving and maintaining our community assets.

I like the VLGA agenda because it's about support, collaboration and connecting with councils and councillors alike, to benefit our communities. Collaborating with agencies that affect local government like IBAC and the Victorian Ombudsman assist with addressing important issues.

In addition to my civic responsibilities, I serve as a board member for Connected Libraries, am member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (MAICD) and a licenced real estate agent operating my own company. I have a diploma in finance and mortgage broking which assists my understanding of the limits and appropriate level of debt customers should take on without compromising their financial responsibilities and other commitments.

My hobbies include walking my dog Bear, supporting my football team and swimming.

Yours Sincerely,

Scott Dowling (MAICD)

[Back to Candidate List](#)



## **DAVENPORT, Andrew**

As a Councillor at Whitehorse for the last 12 years, I am passionate about building stronger, more inclusive communities through practical, community-focused governance.

My experience in driving financial sustainability, fostering inclusive community engagement, within a political environment has given me a clear understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by Councillors across Victoria.

If elected, I will champion the delivery of practical professional development opportunities, tailored to the real-world needs of our members. I will work to ensure that VLGA continues to provide trusted governance advice, up-to-date resources to assist Councillors, and a strong advocacy voice on sector-wide issues.

I am passionate about creating more opportunities for peer learning and collaboration, so members can share knowledge, innovate, and collectively address emerging challenges.

I bring a proven ability to collaborate with diverse stakeholders, facilitate constructive discussions on complex issues, and champion innovative solutions-skills that will enhance the VLGA's mission to build Councillor expertise, shape good governance, and partner for sector-wide impact. My experience in leading community groups and advocating for inclusive participation positions me to help the VLGA strengthen its role as a trusted peak body for local government, ensuring our sector remains adaptive, representative, and a model of integrity.

[Back to Candidate List](#)