

April FinPro Member Update 2020 (Edition 3)

Presidents Message

Good afternoon Members,

First week with no public holidays for a couple of weeks, and I don't know about you, but the 5 days has been full on!

This week we have seen some great data about the COVID-19 curve really starting to flatten and seeing the benefits of our social distancing having a benefit, as well as Government starting to have conversations about how and when some of the constraints will be lifted. Other data from the State Government demonstrated the devastating impact the pandemic will have on our economy.

- Unemployment rate to peak at 11% in the September quarter this year, more than double the current rate.
- Gross State Product to decline 11%.
- Property prices to fall by up to 9% by the end of 2020.

The Government also introduced, and passed legislation yesterday, of which we will be able to digest the detail over the coming days, but has introduced items such as: \$24.5 billion in emergency funding; extending the regional First Home Owners Grant; gives effect to bushfire tax relief measures announced earlier this year; puts in place tenancy reforms; allows planning permits to be displayed and sent electronically, and planning panels to conduct hearings remotely. It also allows for virtual meetings for councils and joint standing committees of the Parliament so they can carry out their work remotely.

Thank you for the fantastic response to our quick survey around budget and year-end audit timelines we distributed this week. This information is invaluable and will allow us to provide some informed feedback to LGV and VAGO as well as to members. We had 73 Councils provide feedback!!! Thank-you! A summary of this information is included further in this update.

Earlier this week we distributed further information on the Local Government Act Implementation to our members. We hope that you found this useful and remind all members to make the EngageVic website one of your most visited sites over the coming months. <https://engage.vic.gov.au/local-government-act-2020>

There is an opportunity on the website to join the LGAct mailing list and we encourage all members to do this to ensure they are kept up to date.

Saturday 25th April will mark ANZAC Day 2020, a significant day as we pause and reflect on the service and sacrifice of all those who have served and are currently serving. ANZAC Day 2020 will not look like the ANZAC Day that so many of us are used to participating in. There will be a Dawn Service, wreaths will be laid, the last post will be played, a minute of silence in memory of the fallen will be observed, but the service community and the public will be asked to stay at home. This does not mean that ANZAC Day is cancelled. It just means that ANZAC Day will be different.

Have a good weekend and remember that no matter how much work you have, there are never enough hours in a day to achieve everything. Accept that, down your tools and switch off for the weekend!!



Bradley

Bradley Thomas - FinPro President
Director Community and Corporate Services – Hepburn Shire

Membership News

We congratulate the following member:

- **Kim Jaensch** on her new role as CFO - Director at Frankston City Council.

If you have any news to share with the FinPro membership please forward this to [Gab](#).

Upcoming FinPro Events - Dates for your diary

FinPro Seminar - Friday 29 May 2020
 TBA – we will run something via the web.

FinPro Conference - Wednesday 21 – Friday 23 October 2020
 RACV Cape Schanck

FinPro Technical Committee News / Updates

Technical updates from the sector

The information that was distributed by LGV to councils was as follows:

BULLETIN: 30/2020

CHANGES TO COUNCIL ELECTORAL STRUCTURES

The Minister for Local Government, the Hon Adem Somyurek MP, today announced details of how and when the new framework on electoral representation will be implemented for all Victorian councils, as result of significant changes to these arrangements introduced in the Local Government Act 2020.

In summary:

Ten councils will change electoral structures for the next general elections scheduled for October 2020. Bayside, Greater Dandenong, Cardinia, Darebin, Kingston, Manningham, Maroondah and Whitehorse councils will change to single-member ward structures. Swan Hill and Mansfield councils will become unsubdivided municipalities.

All councils will have electoral structures compliant with the new electoral representation framework by the 2024 local government general elections.

The Minister has determined that a number of rural councils may be able to be constituted as unsubdivided or uniform multi-member ward municipalities, in addition to the default single-member ward structure which applies to all councils.

The Minister has written to the mayors of the 31 councils which had electoral representation reviews conducted in 2019 and 2020 advising those councils of the outcome of the reviews.

Further details on the implementation of the new electoral representation arrangements can be found on the Local Government Victoria website:

<https://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/our-programs/local-government-act-2020>

Regards

Colin Morrison
Acting Executive Director
Local Government Victoria

General Information

The LGV website provides a host of information: [LGV - COVID19 Information](#)

Local Government Act 2020 – Update

The Local Government Act 2020 has now received Royal Assent and information is available at www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au. This website is the centralised point of information. The website will have links to:

- Important dates;
- Guidance material; and
- Engagement opportunities.

FinPro distributed an update of the Implementation of the Local Government Act 2020 earlier this week – a copy is available on the [FinPro Website](#).

Council Plan

We have received a number of questions about the Council Plan, and if the extension to the Budget adoption (to end of August) also includes the Council Plan. Short answer is no.

You don't have to change the Council Plan at all over the four years if you don't want too. Some Councils do change, some do an annual plan process and some don't change the Council Plan.

The below table provide the options to you:

What Council wants to achieve?	What Council will have to do?	Will Council be compliant?
Adopt Budget, SRP and Council Plan (with changes) by 30 June 2020	<p>Need to ensure complete appropriate s.223 process on the Budget, SRP and Council Plan changes all before 30 June, including adoption by Council and send to minister within 30 days.</p> <p>This will be difficult (but doable) now for Councils that haven't already started.</p>	Fully compliant
Adopt Budget, SRP and Council Plan (with no changes) by 30 June 2020	<p>Need to ensure complete appropriate s.223 on Budget and SRP.</p> <p>Council would need to include a motion that no changes to the Council Plan, all before 30th June.</p>	Fully compliant
Don't want to adopt budget by 30 June (therefore in July or August); and propose <u>no</u> changes to Council Plan.	If want to make no changes to Council Plan, take a simple Council resolution saying no changes to the adopted Council Plan to a Council meeting before 30 June 2020.	Fully compliant
Don't want to adopt budget by 30 June (therefore July or August); and want to make changes to Council Plan.	<p>Two options:</p> <p>1 - Need to ensure complete appropriate s.223 on council plan changes all before 30 June 2020.</p> <p>2 - If can't ensure s.223 process etc. undertaken on Council Plan by 30th June, therefore adopt all in July and August</p>	<p>1 – Fully compliant</p> <p>2 – Budget and the SRP would be fully compliant. However; would breach s.125(7) in relation to Council Plan, and Councils will need to determine 'if' they are ok with that breach given COVID.</p> <p>LGV's position is that we expect and encourage compliance with the Act.</p>

EPA Levy

Per the Government's media release – Wednesday 22 April 2020

"The Government will also defer the planned increase in the landfill levy until 1 January 2021. This is expected to save taxpayers \$33 million across the rest of the calendar year."

Federal Government Funding to Councils.

The following article was included in The Age on Wednesday 22 April.

<https://www.theage.com.au/politics/federal/spending-boost-will-bring-forward-construction-for-local-councils-20200421-p54lts.html>

A new federal stimulus program will fast-track spending on road projects in a bid to save jobs over the next six months, pouring money into proposals from more than 400 local councils.

The Morrison government will use the grants to start new projects or bring forward construction on existing plans to counter the economic damage from the coronavirus crisis.

Local councils are being urged to bring forward infrastructure projects to kick start the economy after the coronavirus pandemic.

But Labor is demanding strict controls on the outlays to avoid a repeat of the "sports rorts" program that triggered a political storm earlier this year after a damning audit report.

Labor is calling on the government to release the guidelines for the new scheme so taxpayers can be sure the money will be spent "fairly" regardless of whether the projects are in marginal or safe electorates.

Infrastructure Minister Michael McCormack said funding decisions would be made "soon" after councils responded to a letter he sent in early March asking all 537 councils to name projects they could bring forward.

"I want to see bulldozers on the ground, I want to see heavy vehicles pushing dirt, and more workers in hi-vis on site," he said.

"We've already got \$100 billion and that's a record amount of money that we're rolling out, so to bring some of that money forward is important. I like what I've received."

Mr McCormack has also asked state and territory governments to nominate projects worth bringing forward, but he said the council proposals could be done more quickly.

"Councils know their communities best, generally, and they're able to deploy work forces quickly, which keeps money flowing through local communities," he said.

"And generally, infrastructure projects driven by local councils employ local people and generally use local procurement – that's the important thing too."

Former Nationals deputy leader and Sports Minister Bridget McKenzie resigned from the frontbench in February after the Australian National Audit Office heavily criticised the government's \$100 million sports funding program.

In that program, Senator McKenzie's office overturned decisions by the independent Sports Australia agency and considered the political contests for federal electorates when making decisions.

Labor local government spokesman Jason Clare backed the new road plan but said it had to be done "fast and fairly" with a transparent process.

"As we emerge from this crisis every dollar will count and every dollar must be well spent," he said.

"After all they have been through Australians just won't cop another program like Sports Rorts."

Mr Clare and Labor infrastructure spokeswoman Catherine King wrote to the Deputy Prime Minister last week asking for the guidelines to be used to approve or reject projects.

"We note this request was not publicly announced and that no guidelines have been released," they wrote.

"We seek assurance that the commonwealth will ensure that this funding is allocated fairly. It should be made available to all councils in all regions, and be consistent with relevant recent recommendations of the Australian National Audit Office."

As with other grant programs, Mr McCormack will be the final decision-maker as the minister, subject to advice from his department.

"Rest assured it will be fair, it will be equitable and it will be well-managed," he told The Sydney Morning Herald and The Age.

"It's not a competitive program as such – it's getting money out the door to get infrastructure built.

"If there's a good project in outback Queensland, if there's a good project in metropolitan Sydney, well, they'll be looked at equally."

Ms King said the government should make sure "no council will miss out" due to any lack of transparency in the process.

FinPro Resource Library

FinPro would like to share information and resources that make life 'easier' for Finance Staff. As such, information such as the following is provided as a resource to FinPro members.

- [COVID-19 Financial Hardship Policy – Example from Moreland CC March 2020](#)
- [Flexible Work Arrangement Guidelines – updated March 2020 \(Maribyrnong CC\)](#)
- [Procedure – Office Ergonomics – 2018 – \(Maribyrnong City Council\)](#)
- [COVID 19 – Council Support Options \(Port Phillip City Council\) March 2020 and also COVID 19 – Council Support Options \(attachment\) Port Phillip City Council\) March 2020](#)
- [COVID-19 Financial Hardship Guidelines – DRAFT – City of Greater Bendigo March 2020](#)
- [Info to Contractor re COVID-19 – Indigo Shire – March 2020](#)
- [Zoom User Guide – Prepared by the City of Great Bendigo March 2020](#)

Thank-you to all who have shared their documents. If you have any other documents to share please send them through to gab.

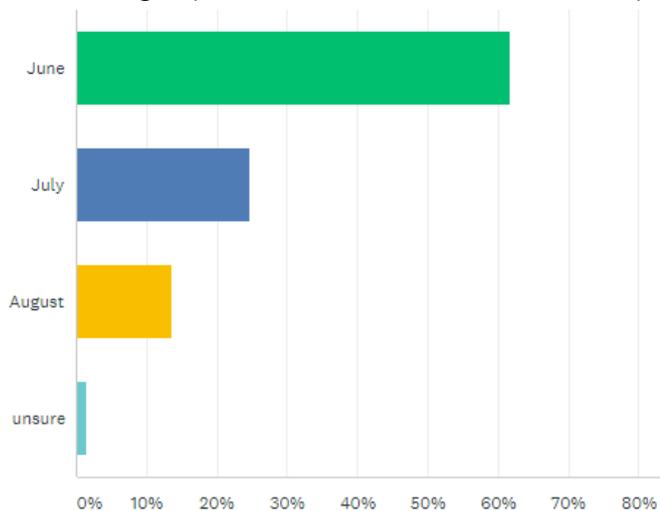
Budget and Year-end Survey

This week (20th April) we undertook a short survey on the proposed 2020/2021 budget, and 2019/2020 year-end timelines of our members to provide some guidance to the sector, and also to our sector partners (LGV and VAGO).

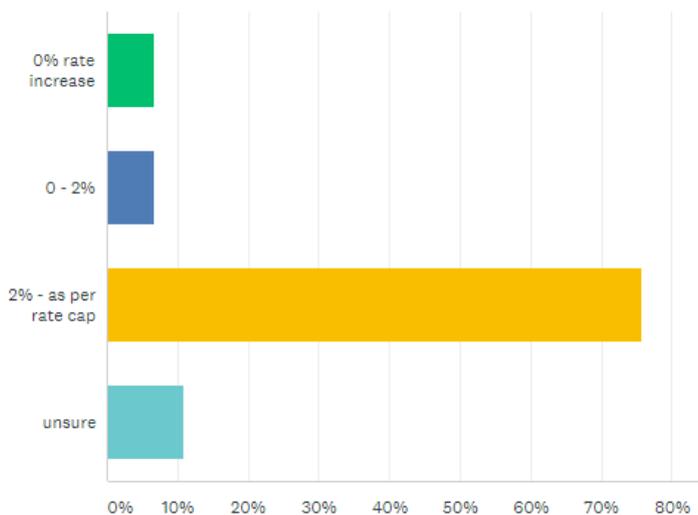
We received a response from 73 (of the 79) Councils, 92% - thank you to everyone, as this gives fantastic insight across the State.

Results of the surveys indicated:

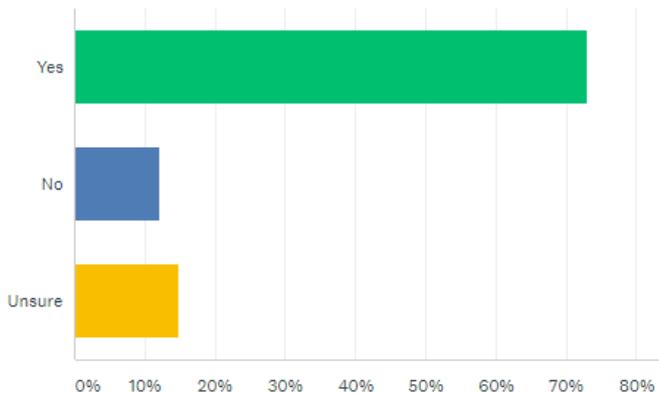
Budget 2020/21 - With the recently announced extension to budget timelines, what month do you expect your budget to be adopted? Demonstrated that 62% of Councils will adopt their budget prior to 30th June, with 38% adopting in July or August.



Rates 2020/21 - What rate increase are you expecting? 76% of Councils are looking at adopting their rate rise per the rate cap (2%).



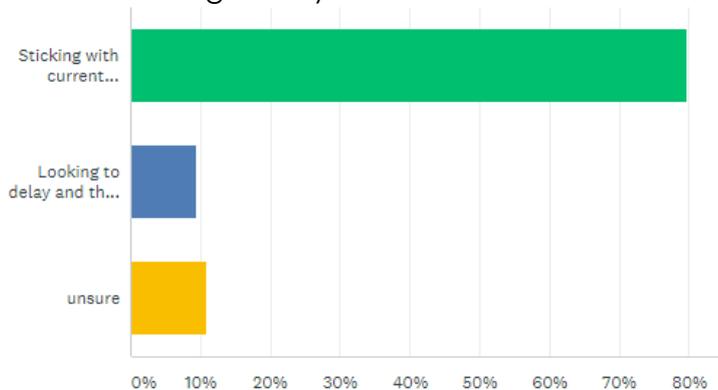
Is your council planning to offer some sort of rebate / financial assistance to ratepayers? 73% are considering some offering.



- Varied across the sector, especially depending on the size of the organisation.
- Mainly offering interest relief, Hardship Guidelines, extension of rate payment, waiving of fees.
- Economic support packages offered by a number of Councils (mainly larger).

With the recently announced extension to annual reporting time-frames, when are you thinking about requesting your year-end audit?

80% are looking to stay with current timeframes.



Do you have any questions about budget time-frames, reporting time-frames or rates? If so, what are they?

A number of questions were raised which FinPro will ensure are responded to in future Member Updates, many of which were included in this week's updates.

Are there any other topics FinPro advocate on your / your councils behalf about? Thank you for the topics and comments.

FinPro Executive will review and include these items in future member updates.

FinPro Professional Development Committee News / Update

Looking after yourself' Webinar Series

Life as we know it has changed for all of us. We can't control this, but we can control how we react and manage in these changed conditions. It is for this reason that we have decided to run a free weekly webinar series for all our members. On Wednesday 1 April 2020 we started a webinar series which is available to all our FinPro members.

In [webinar 1](#), Wayne set the scene and focused on the feeling we all have right now of 'overwhelm'.

In [webinar 2](#), Password: E2^*^iRu – which ran on Wednesday 8 April. Wayne spoke about the importance of finding time for yourself and setting routines. He gave special kudos to one of our members who took the opportunity to go outside and watch / listen to the webinar whilst enjoying the sunshine on a banana-lounge!

[Webinar 3](#) Password: X3+7M5%B – which ran on Wednesday 15 April. In this webinar Wayne spoke about coping with change. A summary is as follows:

- Acknowledge and accept that change is inevitable
- Give yourself and your team the OK to feel and experience all the feelings and emotions they are feeling and that is it OK to feel those feelings and emotions
- Work out a plan for the day / week to give yourself the best opportunity to succeed
- Remember you need to be flexible – give yourself permission to change and adapt on a daily basis
- Communicate with the people you trust as to how you are feeling
- Self-regulate – pay attention to what causes you stress and work to reduce those stress triggers
- Embrace the new normal – there is nothing we can do about it!
- Exercise, diet and sleep are crucial to success

[Webinar 4](#), Password: 0F.0!+Lr was held on Wednesday 22 April at 8pm. This one focused on sleep, nutrition and mindset and how all three interlink for optimal health and wellbeing. Please start it at 3 min 22 seconds!

Wayne also has a podcast series which is available to listen to. For those who enjoy a podcast, this may be a useful tool to include in your weekly program.

[access the podcast series](#)

May 29 2020 Professional Development Day – (online)

Our Executive are commencing discussions on how to run a one-day PD on Friday 29 May – what this would look like and what topics would be relevant to include.

If you have any thoughts on this please feed them through to either [Binda Gokhale](#), Chairperson of the FinPro PD Committee or [Gab](#).

Women's Leadership Development in Local Government

The following information has been provided to us from Women & Leadership Australia.

Scholarships of up to \$5,000 for current and aspiring female leaders

Scholarships of between \$1,000 to \$5,000 are currently available to women working for local government to help support their participation in a range of online career building leadership development programs.

The initiative is providing junior managers through to senior executive women with scholarships to support their growth and development via participation in one of three flagship courses. Participants will benefit from course content such as Elements of a Successful Team, Team Dynamics, Purpose Priorities and Professional Development, Empowering Teams, and Evolving Strategic Change.

Expressions of Interest

Find out more and register your interest by completing the Expression of Interest form here prior to Friday, May 15: <https://www.wla.edu.au/localgovernment.html>

Messages from our Supporters and Partners

Invitation to FinPro Members from the [Commonwealth Bank](#)

Join us for a free webinar: Cyber-security – staying safe online

The current Covid-19 environment has seen a significant increase in the number of people working from home, as well as a move to virtual teaching in schools across the country. Unfortunately, we are also seeing a corresponding rise in cyber-crime, as criminals seek to take advantage of our increased use of online technology.

In this webinar, presented by CommBank's leading cyber security analyst, Adam Smallhorn, we will be providing an overview of the latest online scams, together with simple and practical advice on how you can increase cyber awareness and security across your council, school, not-for-profit or community group.

Details:

Date: Wednesday, 29 April 2020

Time: 1.00pm AEST

To register: click [here](#) or go to <https://edge.mediaerver.com/mmc/p/gxvdrdjk>

As we work to support each other during these unprecedented times, if you know of anyone working in the schools and not-for-profit sectors who you think would benefit from learning more about how to stay safe online, please feel free to on-forward this email.

For any questions please contact Gil Saad, Relationship Executive, Commonwealth Bank at saadg@cba.com.au

Message from Westpac

Partnering technology
with Public Sector expertise.



Westpac Foundation has announced a new \$500,000 partnership with the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR), expanding its Community Grant program in rural, regional and remote areas across Australia.

Westpac Foundation's Community Grant program, established in 2012, provides \$10,000 grants to local organisations creating opportunities through education, training and employment across Australia. Not-for-profit organisations providing support to communities outside a major city are now invited to apply.

In addition to the funding, Community Grant recipients will have access to pro bono support via the Westpac Changemaker program, which includes access to leadership development programs, legal support and financial capability training.

Community organisations based in or providing support to areas outside a major city, as defined by the [2016 ABS Remoteness Index](#), can apply for a Rural Community Grant through the [FRRR application gateway](#) from Wednesday 15 April 2020 – Wednesday 13 May 2020.

Felix Rosman | Head of Public Sector Victoria

Westpac Institutional Bank | Level 7, 150 Collins Street, Melbourne, VIC 3000

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FinPro Yammer Forum

Never has it been more important than now to reach out to other FinPro Members and be a part of the FinPro Yammer Forum. This online discussion platform gives an opportunity for members to raise topics for discussion, ask questions, seek out policies and also find out what is going on in the sector.

If you are not already a member of the forum, please contact FinPro and we can join you up – email gab at gabrielle@finpro.org.au

If you are a member, we encourage you to get online and seek the assistance of your fellow LG Finance Peers.

We are also interested in looking at other formats for an alternative to Yammer for our online FinPro Forum – do you have any other methods you utilize that you would recommend instead of yammer? If so, please let [Gab](#) know.

Regional Finance Groups

Whilst FinPro offers training and networking opportunities for all finance professionals working in the Victorian Local Government sector, our regional groups also provide additional opportunities for training and networking. These are more informal sessions which really benefit from input and support from the Council's in each area. Please get in touch if you think there are issues or opportunities which can be brought up at these groups.

There are 6 regional groups in Victoria, which together, cover all of the state. They are:

- Central Victoria – Contact: [Nathan Morsillo](#), Greater Bendigo City Council
- South West Victoria – Contacts: [John Brockway](#) (Surf Coast Shire) and [Belinda Johnson](#) (Southern Grampians Shire)
- South East Victoria – Contact: [Kim Jaensch](#), Frankston City Council
- Metropolitan – Contact: [Tony Rocca](#), Maroondah City Council
- Western Metropolitan – Contact: [Wei Chen](#), Wyndham City Council
- Northern Metropolitan – Contact: [Tania O'Reilly](#), Banyule City Council

Each of these groups meets at least once per year as well as at the commencement of the FinPro Annual Conference, which this year, will be held at RACV Cape Schanck on Wednesday 21 October 2020.

Job Vacancies

FinPro is happy to place advertisements on our website for any finance related positions our members councils are advertising. To place details of any jobs on our website, please send the following details through to our Executive Officer, [Gab Gordon](#)

- Job Title
- Website link
- Dot points giving main details of the position eg. salary or band and main details
- Contact person for any questions
- Closing Date

FinPro / VAMA History

FinPro (formerly VAMA) has a long history of providing technical updates and networking opportunities for finance professionals working within the sector. Established over 30 years ago, the organisation has grown from a couple of finance managers sitting around a table sharing stories and information, to an organisation with over 550 members from all councils in Victoria.

Our plan over the next 12 months is to put together a history of our organisation. We are keen for any of our members who have any photos, stories or information they feel would be of value to share. If you have anything at all please contact [Gab](#) and let her know.

FinPro Executive Members

President – Bradley Thomas (Hepburn Shire Council)

Executive Officer – Gab Gordon

Vice-President: Chair Technical Committee – Tony Rocca (Maroondah City Council)

Technical Committee members:

- Danny Wain (Monash City Council)
- Kristy Stephens (Bass Coast Shire)
- Liz Rowland (Moreland City Council)
- Mark Montague (Yarra City Council)
- Nathan Morsillo (Greater Bendigo City Council)
- Vishantri Perera (Yarra Ranges Shire Council)

Vice-President: Chair Professional Development committee – Binda Gokhale (Wyndham CC)

Professional Development Committee members:

- Belinda Johnson (Southern Grampians Shire)
- Charles Nganga (Casey City Council)
- John Brockway (Surf Coast Shire) – also leads the FinPro Mentoring Program
- Kim Jaensch (Frankston City Council) – also leads the FinPro Leadership Program

Thank-you to our 2019 Conference sponsors:

Platinum Sponsors -	Commonwealth Bank
Gold Sponsors -	LG Solutions EFTSure
Silver Sponsors -	CT Management Curve Securities Genesis Accounting Inlogik Pty Ltd IT Vision Laminar Capital MAGIQ Software Midstate CreditCollect National Australia Bank Recoveries & Reconstruction TechnologyOne Nelnet International Westpac
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