

FinPro Member Update May 2020 (Edition 4)

Presidents Message

I hope you have all had a good week! Have you been able to watch a few virtual Council Meetings (I know you have...) or has it been some more binge watching on Netflix?

Early in the week we saw the announcement from the Premier that the continuing low numbers of community transmission and the high rates of testing give him the confidence that cafes, restaurants, pubs and other hospitality businesses can begin planning for a phased re-opening from the beginning of June. From 1 June – cafes, restaurants and pubs will be able to reopen their doors to serve meals to up to 20 customers at a time per enclosed space.

I must be honest I have a couple of restaurants and my local pub that I will be looking forward to visiting, but keeping my social distancing in place and being COVID Safe.

Many more budgets were put on display this week, many with rate rises of 2% and others less. We are completing the [attached survey](#) to get a better picture of where all Councils sit with rate rises as well as updated information on budget and reporting timelines. If one person from each council could please complete by COB Tuesday, we will get results out to the sector in next Friday's Member Update.

There has been significant capital investment announced this month by State Government, so we encourage you to ensure your Councils have priority projects in front of State Government to assist with funding of projects to stimulate our economy.

It has been a busy week for FinPro Executives behind the scenes working on implementation of the new Act. This is certainly gearing up and you will see plenty of guidance material issued by LGV in the coming weeks. The section of Financial Planning, including Budget, LTFF are a little while away but over the coming weeks you will see information about: Public Transparency Policy; Councillor Expense Policy; Governance Rules; Audit and Risk Committee and Charter and Delegated Committees and Community Asset Committees.

I'm disappointed that we won't be able to catch up next Friday, which would have been our PD Day in Melbourne 😞 but I'm thrilled that we will be able to provide two presentations from our sector partners (LGV and VAGO) and then please join us for a Q and A on Friday. You may ask questions on the day or email them in in advance (my preference).

Enjoy your weekend.

Cheers, Bradley



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

Upcoming FinPro Events - Dates for your diary

FinPro online seminar

Presentations by LGV and VAGO to be distributed via email link to all members **Wednesday 27 May 2020**. No registration required and free to all members.

Live Q&A on the Local Government Act Implementation and also Year end Accounts and Audit **Friday 29 May 2020 at 10am**

BOOK HERE FOR THE Q&A – Fri 29 May at 10am

Further details included in this Member Update

FinPro Conference

Wednesday 21 – Friday 23 October 2020
RACV Cape Schanck

Membership News

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

FinPro Technical Committee News / Updates

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 recently distributed an [Update of the Implementation of the Local Government Act 2020](#) – a copy is available on the FinPro Website.

Update on the Local Government Rating System Review

The Review Panel submitted its report to the Minister by the due date of 31 March 2020. The report is now with the Minister for consideration of the government response, which can typically take up to six months, and likely to be longer given COVID-19. The Government response and release of the report can be expected towards the end of this calendar year.

Local Government Funding Boost Announcement 22.5.20

Today the Federal Government have made an announcement regarding funding for new infrastructure programs for Local Government:

\$1.8 billion boost for local government

The Federal Liberal and Nationals Government will deliver a \$1.8 billion boost for road and community projects through local governments across Australia.

The package of support will help local councils support jobs and businesses by delivering priority projects focused on infrastructure upgrades and maintenance.

The new \$500 million Local Road and Community Infrastructure Program and the bringing forward of \$1.3 billion of the 2020-21 Financial Assistance Grant payment will also help communities battling the effects of COVID-19.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said local governments were playing a critical role in responding to the impacts of COVID-19.

“Our funding boost will help councils accelerate priority projects that will employ locally and support local business and also stimulating our economy,” the Prime Minister said.

“These projects will cut travel times, make our communities safer and upgrade the facilities we all enjoy while also getting more people into jobs.

“We know this is going to be vital support, particularly for councils that have faced the combined impacts of drought, bushfires and now COVID-19.”

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development Michael McCormack said supporting councils to improve local roads and community infrastructure would have lasting economic and social benefits for communities, particularly those in the regions.

“This package will improve road safety and bolster the resilience of our local road networks, which will get Australians home sooner and safer, no matter where they live,” the Deputy Prime Minister said.

“Projects could include constructing or improving bridges and tunnels, street lighting and heavy vehicle facilities such as rest areas.

“Providing support for social infrastructure projects such as new or upgraded bicycle and walking paths, community facilities, picnic shelters and barbeque facilities at parks, will help communities, especially those in regional and remote areas, stay connected.”

Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government Mark Coulton said investing in infrastructure and jobs was crucial to helping regional communities rebound from COVID-19.

“Our package enables councils to continue their proven track record of partnering with the Coalition Government to deliver opportunities for locals to be employed and businesses to benefit by providing materials and services,” Minister Coulton said.

“The package takes Commonwealth investment in local governments through the Financial Assistance Grant program to \$2.5 billion this financial year, with a further \$1.2 billion being distributed through other programs to deliver infrastructure, and provide relief from drought and bushfires.”

Guidelines for the Local Road and Community Infrastructure Program will be provided directly to local governments by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications.

Allocations under the Financial Assistance Grant and Local Road and Community Infrastructure programs can be found at <https://investment.infrastructure.gov.au/lrci>.

Media Release Reference: https://minister.infrastructure.gov.au/mccormack/media-release/18-billion-boost-local-government?utm_source=miragenews&utm_medium=miragenews&utm_campaign=news

Funding Allocations: <https://investment.infrastructure.gov.au/files/local-roads-community-infrastructure-program/lrci-funding-allocations.pdf>

Fact Sheet: <https://investment.infrastructure.gov.au/files/local-roads-community-infrastructure-program/lrci-program-factsheet.pdf>

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.

Some of the conversations on our yammer forum this week have been around:

- Procurement
- Expenditure delegations
- Dashboard / Management Reports
- FBT Returns

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.

Update from the MAV

The MAV have compiled the following Information Sheet explaining how Victorian councils are supporting their communities during COVID-19.

Victoria's 79 councils are working hard to support their communities through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Alongside their own rapid adjustment to the Victorian Government's Emergency Directions, councils have continued to provide essential services necessary to the health, amenity and safety of their communities.

Support for businesses and communities

Support for businesses

Economic stimulus packages

- Multi-million-dollar support packages for local businesses and communities

Permit approvals

- Prioritising business applications, 9,528 YTD processed, worth \$2.45 billion

Business collaboration and networking

- Brokering contacts between businesses to share staffing and other initiatives

Business liaison

- Establishing Supermarket Liaison Officers to address delivery barriers

Mentoring

- Supporting a Volunteer Business Mentor program

Professional development and training

- Provision of online training resources and free access to online training services

Tendering opportunities

- Alerting local businesses to government purchasing and tendering opportunities

COVID-19 hardship policies

- Business-specific hardship policies introduced

Rent reductions

- Rent relief for council commercial and community tenants and licensees

Support for communities

Assistance for vulnerable people

- Establishing relief packages and expanding eligibility criteria for in-home and other support services

Rates deferral options

- Compassionate waivers and rates deferment due to COVID-19

Relaxed enforcement of parking infringements

- Relaxed enforcement near business areas and free parking to enable people to quickly obtain required items

Rent reductions

- Rent and lease reductions for impacted sporting, community and hospitality venues. Fees waived for winter sports grounds

Information provision

- New signage in public places. Information booths established are supermarkets, GPs, pharmacies and petrol stations

Domestic animal registration flexibility

- Temporary stop to following up unpaid animal registrations

Establishing community networks

- Leading coordination of local community networks with NGOs and volunteers

A small selection of council case studies

Ballarat City Council

- Be Kind campaign bringing people together in spirit and encouraging kindness and support during the unprecedented health crisis

Bayside City Council

- Social connection telephone program established to connect with senior residents

Darebin City Council

- \$11.3 million recovery fund for immediate, short and long-term needs

Glen Eira City Council

- Lending scales to families with babies with special needs to monitor weight at home and reduce risks of vulnerable infant face-to-face exposure

Hobsons Bay City Council

- Offering a youth mental health online counselling service

Hume City Council

- Streaming free at-home group fitness classes through Facebook

Melbourne City Council

- Partnering with Women's Health West to provide face-to-face support for women experiencing or at risk of family violence

Mildura Rural City Council

- Providing library members with up to three hours of free music
- streaming per day

Mornington Peninsula Shire Council

- Established a community network with 800 volunteers willing to provide services to vulnerable members of the community

Murrindindi Shire Council

- Providing short video update each day on local impacts

Nilumbik Shire Council

- Commissioning Art in the Time of COVID-19 for exhibition

Whitehorse City Council

- Engaging theatre and arts audiences with art challenges

Wodonga City Council

- Supporting local retailers with interactive map for residents

Wyndham City Council

- Offering free childcare to families working in health or other essential services

For further information and to view the [fact sheet](#) prepared by the MAV

FinPro Professional Development Committee Update

May Professional Development Day – (online)

The following information was circulated to all members by individual email on 22 May 2020:

COVID-19 has led to changes in the way we all operate. FinPro is no exception. We would normally run a one-day seminar around this time, giving our members both an opportunity to be updated on technical and personal development issues and also the chance to catch up with peers and network.

This year we are unable to operate as 'business as usual', but we are delighted to be able to provide to our members two important updates in a different way which is being provided free of cost.

Part 1: Our speakers will pre-record their presentations and links to these recorded updates will be distributed to all members next **Wednesday 27 May 2020** via email. All members will automatically receive these presentations. **You do not need to register for these.**

Part 2: We will then follow these presentations up with a live Q&A on **Friday 29 May 2020 at 10am.**

You will need to register for this session and can do so using the yellow link below.

[BOOK HERE FOR THE Q&A – Fri 29 May at 10am](#)

The recorded presentation links emailed to members on 27 May 2020 will be provided by:

Update from Local Government Victoria (LGV)



Presented by Hannah Duncan-Jones, Director Policy and Strategy and Director responsible for the Local Government Act 2020 Implementation.

Session Summary: Hannah will provide an update from Local Government Victoria on the various projects and programs, the impacts of COVID-19 and the implementation of the Local Government Act 2020.

Update from the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO)



Presented by Sanchu Chummar, Acting Sector Director, Local Government for the Victorian Auditor-General's Office

Session Summary: Sanchu will provide a general update on the work currently being undertaken by VAGO, as well as cover the following specific topics:

- Increased audit risk we are seeing across government sector from COVID 19 event

- Discussion of the impacts to consider in the preparation of 30 June 2020 Financial Reports (and performance statement) due to COVID 19 and changes in audit approaches in response.
- Timelines on reporting and audit processes (VAGO survey results etc.,)
- Revaluation process impacts
- LG sector Parliamentary report update

The **live Q&A session on Friday 29 May 2020 at 10am** will allow all members to ask and have questions answered they may have about either of the two presentations, or any other issue.

The panellists for the Q&A session will be:

- **Bradley Thomas, President FinPro, Director Corporate & Community at Hepburn Shire and member of the Local Government Act Implementation Project Control Board**
- **Sharon Redmond, Project Manager, Legislation Implementation at LGV, and**
- **Sanchu Chummar, Acting Sector Director Local Government at VAGO.**

Registrations can be made online up to 9.45am, Friday 29 May. To register please follow the yellow link above.

Questions can either be asked via the Q&A function during the session, or emailed prior to the session to gabrielle@finpro.org.au. Members are encouraged to submit questions in advance so we can ensure the panellists are able to answer them during the Q&A.

Some free online PD sessions that might be of interest:

Reimagining the Post-Pandemic Workplace

A long time ago (March 13 2020), two of the FinPro Executive Team, Charles and Gab, attended the WA LGPro Finance Professionals Conference in Perth. One of the final speakers at the conference was a futurist, Gihan Perera. He was an excellent speaker and passionate about the future.

He makes available a number of free podcasts and live sessions – one of particular interest to some at the moment might be:

Reimagining the Post-Pandemic Workplace. The office has only been around for 200 years, and it was essential in the past but isn't now. COVID-19 has created our biggest work-from-home experiment, and that's a good thing for workplaces in the long term. With the acceleration of digital transformation, organisations have the opportunity to change when, where, and how we work -forever.

The podcast goes for 24 minutes.

If you have listened or watched any relevant podcasts / webinars that you think would be beneficial for other FinPro members please email the links through to gab and we will include in future Member Updates.

A message from our sponsor

The **Commonwealth Bank** have recently circulated their second newsletter for 2020:

Articles include:

- Review of the economic performance of Australia's states and territories
- Tips for a stress-free End of Financial Year
- Benefits of using an Expense management System to support procurement processes

If you would like to join the mailing list to receive such newsletters from the CBA you can subscribe using the following link. Alternatively email Gil Saad - Saad, Gilbert, Relationship Executive at the CBA – saadg@cba.com.au



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](#)
- [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](#)

Thank-you to all who have shared their documents. If you have any other documents to share please send them through to [Gab](#).

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

Job Vacancies

FinPro is happy to place advertisements on our website for any finance related positions our members councils are advertising. Please send the following details through to [Gab](#)
 The following position is currently advertised on our website:

- Management Accountant – Permanent Full Time
- Wellington Shire Council
- <https://wellington.applynow.net.au/jobs/WSC2800-management-accountant>
- closes Midnight Sunday 31 May 2020
- For further information please contact Cheryl Hicks – Coordinator Accounting and Payroll – Cherylh@wellington.vic.gov.au

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

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[Nelnet International](#)
Westpac

Sector Partners: VAGO
LGV

Program Partner: Vision Super

Conference App: [Imperium Markets](#)

**IN THE RUSH TO RETURN TO NORMAL, LET'S USE THIS TIME TO CONSIDER
WHICH PARTS OF NORMAL ARE WORTH RUSHING BACK TO.**

(DAVE HOLLIS)

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