

FinPro Member Update May 2020 (Edition 5)

Presidents Message

Hi all,

Sorry but Bradley didn't quite get the time to prepare his Message this week – but let's face it – what an awesome job he has been doing. He has been busy working on not only doing his own job as Director Corporate and Community at Hepburn, but also representing FinPro and the sector on the Local Government Act Implementation Project Control Board, as well as a lot more!

He also took on the role this morning as Host of the Q&A Panel for our first ever ON-AIR Q&A – so thank-you Bradley. Thanks too to Sanchu and Sharon for taking part in our Panel. Great work!

We look forward to hearing back from you next week as we all get excited about a LONG WEEKEND!

Enjoy your weekend,

Gab

Gabrielle Gordon
Executive Officer – FinPro



Woohoo

Upcoming FinPro Events - Dates for your diary

FinPro online seminar

Video Presentations & Q&A recording now available:

LGV Update 27 May 2020 (26 minutes) – Hannah Duncan-Jones

VAGO Update 27 May 2020 (37 minutes) – Sanchu Chummar

**Live Q&A Recording – 29 May 2020 Password: 0D%O=?!j
(1 hour) – Bradley Thomas, Sharon Redmond and Sanchu Chummar**

FinPro Conference

Wednesday 21 – Friday 23 October 2020
 RACV Cape Schanck

Membership News

Welcome to new members:

- **Jane Watson**, CFO at Baw Baw Shire Council.
- **Nilmini De Zoysa**, Financial Accountant at Moreland City Council
- **Nusy Magdalena**, Financial Performance Analyst at Melbourne City Council

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.

Rate, Budget and Reporting Survey conducted by FinPro – end May 2020

For the second survey that FinPro undertook, during the COVID19 Pandemic, we received responses from 68 (86%) Councils.

Similar to the first survey, it measured what Council's proposed timing for both budget adoption as well as year-end process. Additionally, it also asked about Councils planned rating approach, in terms of proposed rate increase as well as any rate relief that Councils are considering implementing.

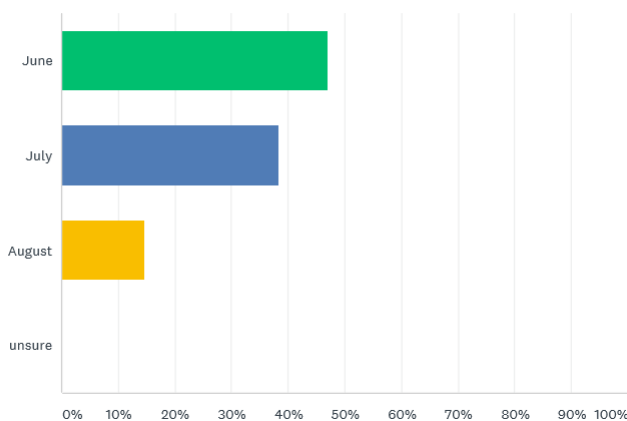
Survey results indicated:

TIMING OF BUDGET ADOPTION & YEAR-END

In relation to proposed budget adoption timeframes, of the Councils that responded, 47% intend to adopt their budget in June (drop of 15% from last survey) and 38% in July with the remaining Council intending to adopt in August. Refer to the chart below:

Proposed Budget Adoption Timeframe:

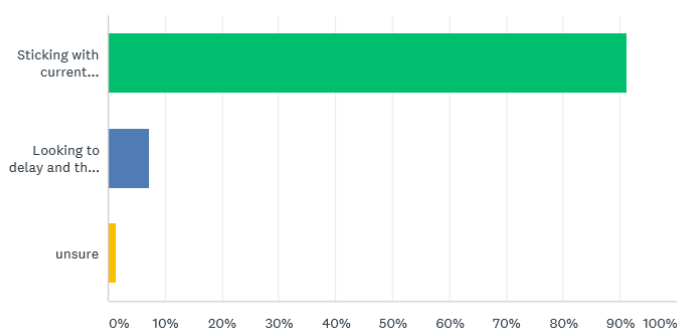
Answered: 68 Skipped: 0



Regarding year end and intended timing to complete year end processes, an overwhelming 91% (62 Councils) responded that they intend to stick with current timeframes, even though an extension has been granted. This is consistent with the previous survey which indicated 80% would stick to current timeframes for year end. Refer to the chart below:

Intending to extend year end to stick to the same timeframes:

Answered: 68 Skipped: 0

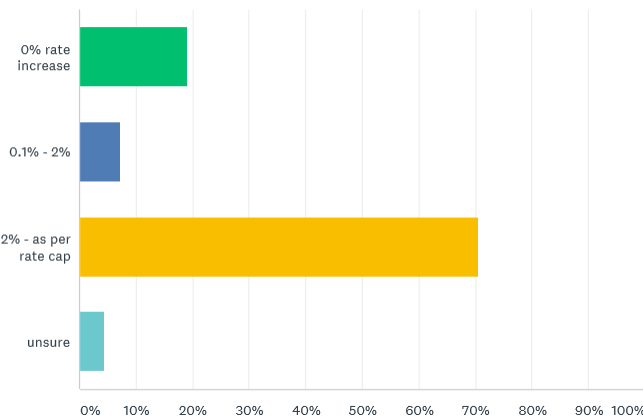


RATING CONSIDERATIONS

Two of the other survey questions related to rate questions. The first one was asking Councils what they intend to rise rates by. Again, a fair majority (71%) indicated they intend to adopt the rate cap for their rating increase. However, surprisingly, another 19% indicated they will adopt a 0% rate increase. Refer to the chart below.

Proposed Rating Increase:

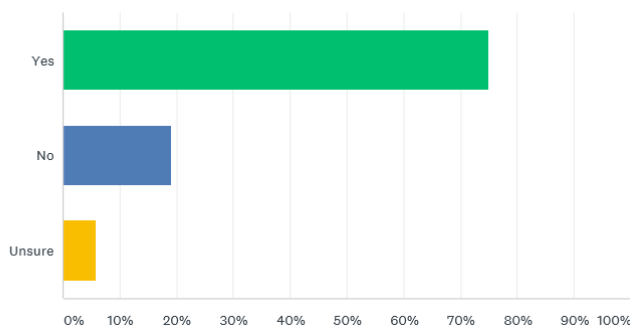
Answered: 68 Skipped: 0



The second rates question was whether Councils were intending to offer a rebate or some form of financial assistance to its ratepayers. Again, a 75% majority indicated they do intend on offering some form of rebate and close to 20% said they were not intending to. Refer below.

Intending on offering a rate rebate or financial assistance:

Answered: 68 Skipped: 0



Responses to both the rates questions were very consistent with the first survey undertaken by FinPro, with over 70% of respondents also indicating in the first survey to a 2% increase and offering some form of rebate or financial relief. Majority of the relief ideas/initiatives indicated:

- Rebates/concessions
- Deferral of payments

- Greater emphasis on hardship provisions
- No interest being charged on overdue rates/fees

A quick note on two other points raised:

- VGC grants and movements have happened every year. In many council's this has been updated in time for the adopted budget. However, a budget is a "point in time" estimate – so a late change doesn't have to mean a budget isn't valid.
- Fees and charges are often part of budget adoption as well. Budget adoption is required before rates notices are issued, but for the general (day to day) fees & charges, a common-sense approach can be taken. We don't believe there's a legislative requirement to have a budget formally adopted to change all (i.e. non-rates/charges) fees on 1 July. If there was a particularly contentious fee or charge being debated by Council – then obviously hold fire on that.

Other Survey Questions:

Do you have any other questions about budget timeframes, reporting timeframes or rates?

Some of the more frequent questions included:

- How are Councils hearing submissions and allowing stakeholders to speak to their submissions?
- When will the rating review be decided on?

Along with a number of other questions, which will be responded to in future Member Updates.

Update from Vision Super

The following update was provided late last week by Vision Super. It was sent to the 'Key Contact' at each council, and is now shared with all FinPro members.

Vision Super have completed their 31 March 2020 review of the LASF DB sub-plan. As at 31 March 2020, the VBI for the sub-plan was 102.1%.

Vision Super have prepared a detailed presentation on how they are managing the Defined Benefit sub-plan, which includes BCA Research's outlook for the Australian economy. The video can be viewed below, or by [clicking here](#).



Update from the Victoria Grant Commission

The following information was distributed to all CEO's on Friday 22 May 2020 from the Victoria Grants Commission. There will have been an attachment to each of these emails sent out providing further information relevant to each council attached.

CIRCULAR 2 – 2020-21 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE GRANTS – BROUGHT FORWARD PAYMENT

The Commonwealth Government has indicated that half of the aggregate financial assistance grant allocations for 2020-21 will be 'brought forward' and paid in the current financial year.

The Victoria Grants Commission has now been advised that the payment of these funds to Victoria is anticipated to be made on Monday 25 May 2020. The relevant funds will then be transferred from the Victorian Government to individual councils as soon as possible after that.

Details of the payment to be made to your Council are attached.

Please note the payment to Victoria represents half of the estimated full year aggregate grants to Victorian councils for 2020-21. While these 'brought forward' payments to individual councils have been determined by the Commonwealth Government, they have been based on the 2019-20 grant allocations.

Your Council's actual grants for 2020-21 therefore remain subject to the final allocation to Victoria and the approval of the Federal Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government.

This will result in adjustments being made to the remaining payments to councils in 2020-21. It is anticipated that advice about the final allocation of the 2020-21 financial assistance grants will be made available to councils in August 2020.

Timing of Remaining 2020-21 Payments

The Commonwealth has not yet provided advice on the timing of the remaining payments for 2020-21.

If you have any queries in relation to the matters raised in this letter please contact Nada Bagaric at the Victoria Grants Commission on email nada.bagaric@delwp.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

John Watson
Chairperson
Victoria Grants Commission

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 and Vendor Panels
- Commonwealth Govt Funding Boost
- 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.

FinPro Professional Development Committee Update

May Professional Development Day – (online)

This week we have been able to provide some 'virtual professional development' to our members, enabling everyone to view and listen to updates from both VAGO and LGV. Thanks to both organisations for providing these to us and for assisting us to provide updated information to everyone.

We were also able to run a Q&A session this morning via ZOOM. This one-hour session was watched by over 125 members at the time and is also available via the recording for anyone else who would like to view it. Links to all are as follows:

[LGV Update 27 May 2020 \(26 minutes\) – Hannah Duncan-Jones](#)

[VAGO Update 27 May 2020 \(37 minutes\) – Sanchu Chummar](#)

[Live Q&A Recording – 29 May 2020 Password: 0D%O=?!j \(1 hour\) – Bradley Thomas, Sharon Redmond and Sanchu Chummar](#)

We hope to be able to run more of these types of 'events' in the future and certainly see a lot of value in being able to run short and sharp Q&A sessions on specific topics. These might be of particular usage whilst we undertake the implementation stages of the Local Government Act 2020.

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.

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

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](#).

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 positions are currently advertised on our website:

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

- **Management Accountant**
- Mitchell Shire Council
- <https://careers.mitchellshire.vic.gov.au/cw/en/job/492624/management-accountant>
- Contact Person: Hannah White – Management Accounting Coordinator (hannah.white@mitchellshire.vic.gov.au)
- Closes 9 June 2020

To Contact FinPro:
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W: www.finpro.org.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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Conference App: [Imperium Markets](#)