

FinPro Member Update May 2020

Presidents Message

Good afternoon Members,

I just wanted to say a massive thank you!!!!

You continue to complete pivotal roles for our community under increasing stress. You are embracing working from home, ensuring the Council Budgets continue to be developed, that small business invoices are processed, ratepayer hardship applications are assessed, employees paid on time, all while you have personal and family circumstances to deal with.

The FinPro Executive has been most disappointed by media coverage over the last couple of days, not just calling on 0.0% rate increases but suggesting that Councils and Council Officers are not doing enough to support of communities – this is simply untrue!!

Please continue to fight the good fight! And delivering for our communities.

We know that many of you will be getting pressure to consider a 0.0% rate rise and although ultimately this is a decision for individual Councils, we are strong in our belief that 0.0% rate rises are not the best way for Councils to respond to COVID-19, especially given the cumulative impact and therefore the impact this will have on Councils long term financial sustainability. Targeted financial relief, and direct investment will provide greater support to the parts of our community that require it the most.

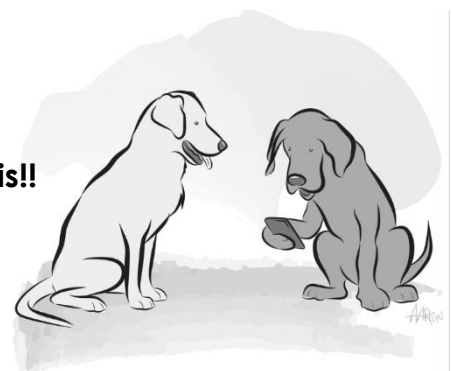
Our Executive met this week and discussed a number of items, in particular are our regular Professional Days and Annual Conference. Our PD day planned for late May will be delivered differently, in an online manner with more information available next week but will include an update on the LG Act, year-end audit and an economy post COVID outlook. Our Annual Conference is planned for 21-23 October at RACV Cape Schanck, we are still committed to holding the conference then. We will however, review in late June taking into account health authorities and government advice and will advise members of any changes, but for now make sure your calendar is booked to attend! It will be great to see you in person, not on ZOOM.



Bradley

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

Wondering whether some of your dog's days look like this!!



"I've got a busy day of Zoom meetings to interrupt."

Membership News

We welcome the following members back:

- **Stephen Byrns** as Senior Accountant at Towong Shire Council.

We congratulate the following members on their new roles:

- **Mark McMillan** has been appointed to the role of Manager Financial Services at Mildura Rural City Council
- **Romi Fernando** has been appointed to the role of Financial Accountant at Cardinia Shire.
- **Ange Marshall** has been appointed to the role of Manager Finance and Corporate Performance at the City of Kingston.

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, possibly smaller sessions over a number of days.

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

FinPro Technical Committee News / Updates

Technical updates from the sector

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 last week – a copy is available on the FinPro Website.

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

BULLETIN: 33/2020

Planning Matters and Conduct of Council Meetings

The *COVID-19 Omnibus (Emergency Measures) Act 2020*, passed by Victorian Parliament on 23 April 2020, includes changes to the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the *Local Government Act 2020* which affects council responsibilities for planning matters and the conduct of council meetings.

From a planning perspective, these changes are intended to ensure the Victorian planning process can maintain its usual pace, despite the closure of many council offices and current physical distancing restrictions on meetings and hearings.

Planning documents that previously required to be physically available to view at council offices are now only required to be available for online inspection. This includes copies of planning scheme amendments and submissions, and planning permit applications and objections.

In relation to council meetings, the *Local Government Act 2020* will enable councils to hold virtual meetings rather than councillors having to attend in person. The new Part 12 amendments to the *Local Government Act 2020* allows councillors and members of delegated committees, special committees, and governing bodies of regional libraries, to participate in meetings remotely by electronic means of communication. The change is effective from 1 May 2020 and ends on 1 November 2020.

Further guidance is being developed to assist councils in implementing the new virtual meeting requirements and will be available shortly.

This temporary change will enable councils to make decisions on important matters that cannot, or had not, been delegated to officers, this may include adopting a budget or a planning scheme amendment.

Colin Morrison
Acting Executive Director, Local Government Victoria

BULLETIN: 33/2020

Ministerial good Practice Guidelines MGPG-1: Virtual Meetings

Bulletin 33/2020 detailed that the *COVID-19 Omnibus (Emergency Measures) Act 2020* included changes to the *Local Government Act 2020* to enable councils to meet virtually.

A Ministerial Good Practice Guideline MGPG-1: Virtual Meetings, has been approved by the Minister for Local Government and is available on the Local Government Victoria website at: <https://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/our-programs/local-government-act-2020>

The change enables councils to meet virtually from 1 May to 1 November 2020.

Colin Morrison
Acting Executive Director, Local Government Victoria

Update from VAGO

VAGO released the following report today in relation to the [Managing Development Contributions](#).

Budget and Year-end Survey

Last week we asked all councils to complete a survey around Budget and year-end.

Our Update on Friday 24 April provided the [survey responses](#). Further to that information we are able to provide some answers to the questions:

Member Questions	Response from FinPro Executive
With delay to State Govt budget to October 2020, will council have updated fire services property levy rates available at time of raising the rates?	FinPro is seeking an update from the SRO, but we believe so.
Seeking clarity from LGV re materiality threshold or other criteria that will require a Revised Budget to be Prepared under LGA versus just a reforecast	<p>Per s.128(1) of LGA 1989 A <u>Council</u> must prepare a revised budget if circumstances arise which cause a material change in the budget and which affects the financial operations and position of the <u>Council</u>.</p> <p>It will be expected that a more liberal definition of 'materiality' will be applied for this year's budget. FinPro is working with LGV on some guidance to be included in proposed and/or adopted budgets.</p> <p>There is some guidance for overall materiality (for accounts) which can be found in individual Council's VAGO Audit Strategy.</p>
Implications of adopting the budget post 30 June 2020 on raising rates or other fees and charges.	<p>With the extension of the deadline for the adoption of your annual budget (if utilised by Councils), please remember that you cannot raise rate notices and send them until the budget has been adopted. A reminder to also ensure you meet legislative timeframes about notices being out at least 14 days before instalments being due. We do not anticipate any changes to the instalment dates.</p> <p>The disclosure of fees and charges to be levied for various goods and services provided during the year is optional and is not required by legislation. It is however common practice for councils to include such a schedule in the budget.</p>

Does the Council Plan still need to be adopted by 30 June 2020?	Refer to table on page 4 of our previous update . –
Rates hardship policy - could we have acceptance guidelines or at least be consistent across Councils in our approach?	Various Councils have provided their Hardship Policies and we have included on our website
There is a severe impact on Councils ability to develop a 10-year Long Term Financial Plan, and 4-year budgets as required under for the new Local Government Act.	FinPro are working closely with LGV on the implementation of the new Act and will ensure that we have working groups of FinPro members working on the templates and guidance materials to assist with the development of these strategies.
Is there any impact on ESC or VGC reporting requirements?	Limited changes are expected. FinPro has touched base with both and will update members as information comes to hand.
How does the extension of budget timeframes impact on delivery of services and projects, until the budget is adopted?	<p>We confirm that although a Council may not have an adopted budget in place until July or August, that it can still undertake operations and projects. Council has a moral obligation to continue to operate; however, a common-sense approach needs to occur. For example, it would be appropriate to continue standard operations, but not appropriate to enter into a significant capital works contract for a once-off capital work item that needs to be included in the budget.</p> <p>Please also be mindful of the caretaker period leading up to the election which may limit a council's ability to approve a major contract.</p>
Any update on 2020 Council Elections.	<p>The timing of Council Elections is under consideration by the Minister, and at this stage, a further update is expected in May 2020.</p> <p>FinPro would not expect delays to the 2020 Council Elections.</p>
Will a Defined Benefits Superannuation Call occur?	<p>Vision Super continue to provide regular updates</p> <p>The results of the 31 March 2020 VBI calculations will be circulated for approval by the Vision Super Board and then communicated to employers in early May 2020, after which time we will have greater understanding of the likelihood of a call.</p>

Any known impact on the Grants Commission funding?	<p>The timing of the Financial Assistance Grants is currently being confirmed with the Federal Government. In particular, we are seeking any opportunities to bring the funding forward to assist Councils in cashflow management, and we are confident this will occur.</p> <p>We do not expect a significant change to the aggregate funding pool at this stage</p>
Financial assistance from State and Federal Governments is a priority.	FinPro understands this and continues to raise with our Partners.
Will the new Act implementation be delayed?	<p>FinPro have been speaking to LGV about this and they appreciate that the implementation of the new Act at the same time as the dynamic environment that coronavirus (COVID-19) presents will have resource implications on councils. This is front of mind in their plans for implementation with the sector, and FinPro will continue to monitor the situation.</p> <p>Updates on the implementation plan will be provided over the coming weeks and months; however, at this stage the current implementation timeframes that are planned will be implemented.</p> <p>LGA council implementation timeline</p>

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](#).

FinPro Professional Development Committee News / Update

Planned May 29 2020 Professional Development Day – (online)

Our Executive have started 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.

With the vast majority of our members now working from home, running a 'day seminar', even with breaks, is not ideal. We have therefore decided to instead isolate the 4 major topics members are keen to hear about and then run sessions over a number of weeks to cover these off. The sessions will be run online and run for about 45 – 60 minutes each, depending on the topic.

The key issues we believe need to be covered are:

- Update and Implementation of the Local Government Act 2020
- General update from LGV
- Update and focus from VAGO for the year end audit process
- Economic Update / Discussion

Others could be:

- Business continuity plans – looking forward
- Managing teams remotely

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

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.

Messages from our Supporters and Partners

From the [Commonwealth Bank](#)

Hi All,

Over the past few months, the Global Economic & Markets Research team have been working on developing their first ever podcast. The podcast provides a new way for our clients to access high-quality and thought-leading macroeconomic content in a timely and self-serve manner. I'm pleased to say that we have two episodes up, and are now available for listening & downloading.

The latest episode

The last two weeks has continued to see unprecedented action from central banks and governments around the world to slow the transmission of COVID-19. These are having a direct economic impact we are seeing in high frequency economic data. The third stimulus announcement by the Australian government should help limit the rise in unemployment. We analyse the package, what it means for the economy and the budget bottom line and check in on the RBA's quantitative easing program.

How can you listen?

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We encourage you follow us on iTunes for further updates. Click below or search 'CommBank Global Economic Update' in iTunes.



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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 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

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 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:

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Sector Partners: VAGO
LGV

Program Partner: Vision Super

Conference App: [Imperium Markets](#)

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