

## **Local Government Professionals (LGPro) speaks up for Yarra City Council CEO**

The President of LGPro, Victoria's member based organisation for officers working in Local Government has today spoken out against social media attacks on Vijaya Vaidyanath, Chief Executive Officer, Yarra City Council.

Rebecca McKenzie, LGPro President, said that 'Mrs Vaidyanath has been unjustly criticised for her role in implementing a decision of the Yarra City Council regarding how they would treat and refer to January 26, otherwise known as Australia Day. The way she has been attacked by social media trolls has gone way beyond reasonable freedom of speech, yet disappointingly there is very little that police or Government have been able to do so far to protect her.'

Under the Local Government Act the CEO has an obligation to provide robust professional advice to the Council without fear or favour, but once a decision is made, the role of the CEO is to work with the organisation to implement it, regardless of their personal view.

'Mrs Vaidyanath is a highly regarded professional and accomplished CEO, and was recently named as one of the State's Top 50 female public sector leaders. The barrage of abuse that she has received on social media in recent days, for appropriately discharging her responsibilities and implementing a decision of her elected Council, is inexcusable.'

The State's 79 Local Government Chief Executives run large complex businesses, with over 120 different services, hundreds if not thousands of staff, and budgets stretching into the hundreds of millions of dollars. They are committed executives, tirelessly working in service to the community.

Ms McKenzie said 'The community often see Local Government as an easy target for criticism, and like any business, I'm not saying that we always get it right. However these deeply personal attacks on gender, race, and ethnicity go too far. Is it any wonder why the sector struggles to attract diverse candidates to CEO roles, when, by merely doing your job, you can be subjected to such vile and derogatory attacks.'

LGPro is calling on the Minister for Local Government and Attorney General to step in and provide greater protection and recourse for Local Government officers from trolling, verbal and physical abuse in the course of their employment.

**Rebecca McKenzie**  
**LGPro President**

5 February 2018