



LOCAL GOVERNMENT
LGPRO
PROFESSIONALS
THE LEADING VOICE

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS VICTORIA

ADVOCACY AGENDA

OCTOBER 2022

This document outlines the position of LGPro Victoria on key issues affecting Victorian Local Government and its professionals.



INTRODUCTION

LGPro is the member association and leading voice for people working in Local Government in Victoria, providing leadership, professional development, and representation in the pursuit of excellence.

Part of LGPro's mission is to advocate for this sector and its professionals, with one of the key pillars of its current strategic plan being to influence decisions affecting Victorian Local Government and the interests of LGPro members through ongoing advocacy.

The following articulates LGPro's position on key issues affecting Victorian Local Government and its professionals. These positions align with LGPro's Strategic Plan and have been informed by ongoing consultation with the sector and its key stakeholders, surveys of the LGPro membership, original research, feedback from events, and feedback from LGPro's Special Interest Groups. The positions have been prioritised for their importance, prominence, and feasibility in actioning as not all issues in such a diverse sector can be practically covered.

This list may be amended on an ongoing basis and LGPro will continue to be responsive to issues as they arise and advocate around these on an ad hoc basis when in the interests of the organisation, its members, and/or the sector more broadly.



CULTURE

Victorian Councillor culture is under increasing scrutiny. Poor behaviour and the resulting risks to health, safety, and the proper functioning of councils and their staff are driving momentum for change. Current measures to address the issue are only partly effective, exacerbating the risk.

LGPro undertook extensive research in response to the State Government's Local Government Culture Review Project which seeks to foster an inclusive, safe, and sustainable culture in local government workplaces. LGPro's submission to the Review reiterated the strong theme of ensuring officers are afforded a safe environment in which to work and operate. Since this submission and subsequent engagements with the sector's executives, the focus on officer safety has only increased. Through surveys of executives, LGPro consistently receives requests to explore issues experienced between elected Councillors and officers and to provide services to support officers in challenging situations.

LGPRO'S POSITION

LGPro calls on State and Federal Governments to financially and legislatively invest in improving the relationships between elected members and council officers for the betterment of staff and community outcomes through:

- Strengthening of legislated code of conduct measures, particularly sanctions for Councillors who repeatedly breach conduct principles
- Extension of powers and resources granted to independent mediation bodies and/or processes
- Greater allocation of financial resources to elected member training
- Mandatory Councillor training/briefing, completed to a set standard (LGPro is agnostic to the training delivery body)
- Local Government Victoria's provision of template policies and procedures on Councillor use of social media
- Sufficient resourcing of the Local Government Inspectorate to be more responsive to complaints.



INCLUSION

LGPro has received strong support for the work that it has taken in advancing gender equity in the sector, but the organisation has received feedback that indicated it lacked appropriate services for various other distinct communities within the Local Government workforce including First Nations, LGBTIQ+, disabled, CALD, and veterans. Since then, the organisation has begun building inclusivity specifically into the design of new services while updating its current offering where practicable.

With inclusivity ingrained in the 2021-26 Strategic Plan, LGPro has begun work toward ameliorating this issue in the sector more broadly, designing anti-racism training and introducing Indigenous Scholarships for its Emerging Leaders Program. It remains an ongoing issue for the sector to overcome.

LGPRO'S POSITION

LGPro calls on State and Federal Governments to fund:

- Training and education for local government staff on cultural inclusion and safety
- Measures that further psychosocial safety in the workplace
- Multiyear support for local governments in implementing the Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategy 2021-26
- A local government employee survey to establish a state-wide benchmark on diversity.



SKILLS

Victorian Local Government's operations and service delivery are suffering from workforce shortages of skilled workers and prolonged job vacancies - an issue only intensified in the regions.

LGPro undertook research into skill shortages for a submission to Jobs Victoria identifying job vacancies and pathways to meet employment shortages in the Victorian Local Government sector, identifying deficits in diverse fields that are essential to servicing the needs of the communities it serves.

These skill shortages, which are similarly being felt in the private sector, are growing. According to a list of further shortages identified by the Federal Department of Education, Skills and Employment, a shortage of skills for a large number of construction roles is looming.

LGPRO'S POSITION

LGPro calls on State and Federal Governments to financially support measures to address the Local Government skills shortage by:

- Continuing the Women Building Surveyor Program
- Committing financial resources to bolstering Environmental Health Officer qualifications for new skilled workers
- Committing the requisite financial resources to run a Local Government graduate program
- Actively promoting Local Government as an employer of choice with the enlisted support of peak bodies, training organisations, and universities
- Sponsoring a promotional campaign on the role of Local Government and its career opportunities.



HOW LGPRO ENGAGES

The following articulates how LGPro pursues its advocacy agenda.

SUBMISSIONS

LGPro responds to formal calls for submissions to other levels of government, their linked agencies, regulatory bodies, and various commissions on issues that affect Local Government with comments, information, or direct recommendations to influence the outcome of the related works. These submissions will often complement those of other Local Government peak bodies, though the perspectives are more often aligned to that of administrative staff and opinion can differ on this basis.

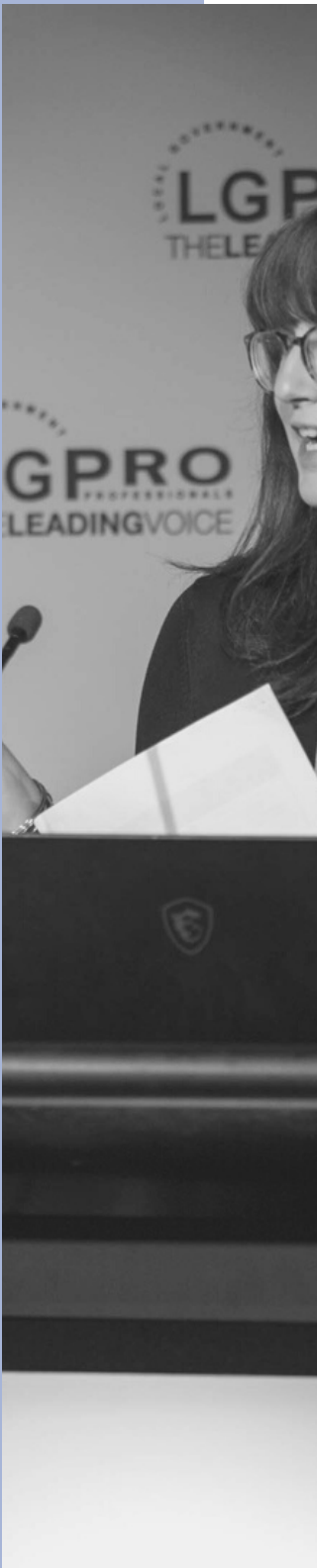
These responses are cognisant of the priorities of the eliciting party and seek to either inform or alter their related work for the benefit of Victorian Local Government.

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND CONSULTATION

Local Government has a dedicated Minister at the State and Federal levels as well as agencies within Departments that oversee Local Government relations. With Local Government covering a broad range of services related to every community member, here are further Ministries with overlapping interests with the sector. As such, LGPro regularly engages with Ministers and officers with portfolio responsibilities linked to the sector through regular and ad hoc meetings and communications. Consultation includes written correspondence, briefings, and meetings.

At the State level, this is underpinned by Local Government on the Victorian State-Local Government Agreement 2014 (VSLGA) which outlines the mutual basis for respectful consultation on issues that affect the sector. At the political level, this may include input into political party election platforms.

This ongoing engagement ensures that the sector's key governmental stakeholders understand the challenges and opportunities for the sector, how they relate to other levels of government, and how these can be best resourced.



AWARENESS / EDUCATION CAMPAIGNS

Particularly in the case of Local Government, those LGPro seeks to influence may be more diffuse than particular decision-makers. Where stakeholders are broader, like in the case of the general community that local governments serve, a wider education campaign may be utilised.

Such public promotions seek to influence perceptions of the sector or to change behaviours related to the sector, and are typically disseminated via traditional media engagement, social media, or direct marketing. These campaigns can also complement existing engagement with other key stakeholders like government, and may also be an exercise in telegraphing LGPro's position on an issue in concert with other engagement.

PARTNERSHIPS

LGPro may partner with its members (like those in LGPro Special Interest Groups) and other organisations (like Local Government peak bodies including MAV and ALGA or LGPro's state-by-state counterparts) to support an issue that overlaps with LGPro interests. Such partnership is particularly useful when an overlap exists but LGPro deems that it is not the appropriate party to directly advocate in relation to the issue, is able to defer to a more knowledgeable stakeholder (in the case of specialist issues), or when resourcing issues make involvement prohibitive.

Such partnerships - particularly in the cases of those with Local Government peak bodies with common interests including MAV and ALGA or LGPro's state-by-state counterparts - may bolster the position of LGPro and the efficacy of its advocacy.

CONTACT LGPRO

As a responsive organisation in a constantly evolving sector and landscape, the above list is subject to change as new issues arise and are prioritised.

To have your voice heard on issues that matter to you, email info@lgpro.com or call (03) 9268 6400.



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