

**AUSTRALIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT WOMEN’S ASSOCIATION INC. – VICTORIAN BRANCH.**

**Patron: The Honourable Linda Dessau, AC**

**Governor of Victoria**

**Victorian Report to ALGWA National Board AGM**

**April 2017**

The past year has been extremely busy in Victoria. Our main activities have been Council elections in October; our mentoring program; Mayors forum; bursary award and our conference.

The 2016 year started with our very successful annual conference at Banyule City Council. Thank you for the Board for attending our conference. We were very pleased that you were able to make the trip.

In April we held our female Mayors forum, this year hosted by the City of Melbourne. Again, we held the forum with the VLGA. The forum is held annually half way through the Mayoral term. It was well attended, with more than half of the women Mayors in attendance. The forum gives Mayors the chance to talk about issues, learn from each other, and learn from previous Mayors. The Minister for Local Government Hon Natalie Hutchins attended and we had a surprise visit from the Lord Mayor of Darwin who was attending a meeting at the Town Hall.

In October we held our annual bursary award for a female officer. This year it has increased in value to $1750, as it has been the same amount for more than ten years. The award was announced at an afternoon tea at Parliament House and we also thanked those councillors who were retiring and thanked all councillors for their service to their community.  
  
Victorian Councils went to election in October. In the lead up to the elections ALGWA members spoke at several *GoWomen for Local Government* forums. These were organised by the VLGA and were held around the State. The VLGA received State funding for the program.

At the election a record 2135 candidates stood for the 637 positions.

We are delighted to report that a record 38.1% (or 243) of Victorian councillors are now women – the highest percentage ever elected and means that Victoria now has the highest percentage of women councillors in the country.

All 78 Councils have at least one woman councillor and sixteen have 50% or more women. There was a 14% increase in the number of women elected and at the Mayoral elections a record 32 women were elected Mayor – 40%.

In the 2012 election 34% of those elected were women, which was a five per cent increase from 2008.

Just over half of the 637 men and women elected - 323 - are new to local government and 314 councillors were returned. Among those not returned was ALGWA Victorian President Helen Coleman. Helen had been a councillor for 12 years, Mayor twice and on the MAV Board. She will be missed, but continues as ALGWA President. Melbourne Deputy Lord Mayor Susan Riley was also not returned, although it now seems likely that she will be elected following a resignation. MAV President and ALGA Vice-President Bill McArthur was also not returned. Bill has been a huge supporter of ALGWA and is a White Ribbon Ambassador.

ALGWA Vic Exec member and ALGWA National President Coral Ross was elected Interim MAV President as Bill McArthur was no longer eligible.

Three of the Victorian executive – Metro Vice President Felicity Fredricco and Executive officer Helen Harris retired at the election while Meghan Hopper was not returned. All continue on the executive.

The Victorian branch received a $20,000 grant from the State Government to run a mentoring program. The Victorian Executive awarded the mentoring contract to Leonie Morgan. ALGWA Vic contacted the 123 new female councillors offering them a mentor.

There are 21 women who have volunteered to be mentors and two training sessions have been held. All mentors have been assigned a mentee.

The program was officially launched by the Minister for Local Government, Hon Natalie Hutchins on March 17 at the Melbourne Town Hall.

In December the Victorian Government launched a Gender Equality Strategy. The Victorian branch made a submission in relation to the strategy; one of our requests being ongoing funding for administration, something we have been requesting for many years.

There is one target of particular note

* 50 per cent of women councillors and Mayors by 2025 Also, of interest is that it is intended to re-establish the Rural Women’s Network.

Lastly, we have been very busy in supporting ALGWA Vic Exec member and ALGWA National President Coral Ross. As you know Coral was elected Interim MAV President as Bill McArthur was no longer eligible however her Council decided not to appoint a MAV delegate, despite being a member of the MAV until June 30 2017, and despite being required to do so under the Rules. This meant she could not stand in the MAV Board elections in March.

We wrote a number of media releases, which had some coverage in the *Age,* local media, *LG Focus* and *Government News* and on social media Several members, former office bearers and the previous Minister for LG wrote supporting letters urging the Council to reverse its decision, but they refused.

Darebin City Council, which has a majority of women councillors, voted Cr Ross as its MAV delegate, after being given a copy of legal advice. This would have enabled her to run for President. Unfortunately this was not accepted by the MAV. Darebin appealed to the Supreme Court, with Julian Burnside QC acting Pro bono. Unfortunately the appeal was unsuccessful.

Both Victorian local government peak bodies held elections.

We were delighted that ALGWA executive member Cr Marg Attley was elected President of the VLGA. The VLGA Board now has a majority of women members.

ALGWA member Cr Mary Lailos was elected President of the MAV. Unfortunately the MAV Board has just three women of the 13 members.

Coral Ross, Victorian Delegate March 2017