



# AUSTRALIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

**Patron: The Governor of Victoria, The Hon Linda Dessau AC**

## **Victorian Branch Newsletter – December 2018**

### **From the President:**

Since becoming President of ALGWA Vic in April, the year has flown and it's true to say that so much of what gets done behind the scenes is incredible. Our planning day in May resulted in a focus towards what we need to do in the next six months. We worked with Swinburne University Business School, and found an intern to help us with our social media. We are now not only on Twitter and Facebook, but Instagram and LinkedIn. We will continue this program in 2019, with a new intern. We also ran branch luncheons hosted by rural councils and wrote numerous submissions. Our Conference in October hosted by Maroondah was a success. We have planned another strategic planning day in late January 2019 and no doubt you will see an events calendar shortly after, for all the wonderful events planned for 2019.



A big thank you to the committee, particularly Helen Harris OAM, for the hours of work that is entailed in running the organization.

I wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and a safe and happy New Year. Rest, renew and reset yourself, ready for 2019.

*Cr Michelle Kleinert*

### **Bursary High Tea**

The City of Melbourne once more hosted our Bursary High Tea in April; we are extremely grateful for their support, as this enables us to put any profit towards funding of the Bursary, now worth \$1,750. Our guest speaker was lawyer and company director Kate Spargo. The event this year was organized by Life Member Pam Robinson OAM, due to the unavoidable absence of Cr Raylene Carr. Pam, as originator of the idea of the Bursary in 1989, was therefore a most fitting person to take over the management, and we thank her sincerely for doing such a splendid job. We also thank the judges, Barbara Abley AM, Cheryl Bromfield, Pam McLeod, Robin Matthews and David Priess, for the time they put into the assessments.

The 2018 winner was Catherine Austin of Corangamite Shire Council, Coordinator of Maternal and Child Health and Immunisation Services. Employed for 25 years in local government, firstly as a Maternal and Child Health Nurse at Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, then in a similar role and additionally as Coordinator Health and Wellbeing with Glenelg Shire Council, Catherine has been since 2015 the Coordinator of maternal and Child Health and Immunisation Services at Corangamite Shire. Catherine's passion is helping women and children experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage in the community. She has developed a

diverse range of models, programs and activities to identify and reduce gaps within service delivery, and links clients at risk into local services to provide a continuum of supported care.

Catherine commenced a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in 2017, her thesis is entitled *The Victorian Universal Maternal & Child Health Service: an effective model of care built on best practice guidelines to engage Aboriginal families*.



From left: Pam Robinson OAM, with committee members Felicity Frederico, Helen Coleman, Helen Harris OAM, Coral Ross, Barbara Abley AM, with winner Catherine Austin in the centre.

Because of the large number of entries, two Special Commendation Awards were given this year. The first was to Sharon Houlihan of Wellington Shire Council. Sharon joined the Wellington Shire Council in 2014. Prior to that she had a career within State Government Departments from 2007 to 2014. It was her desire to work more closely with communities at a local level that saw her make the transition to local government. Sharon's current position is Executive Manager Major Projects, and within what is a challenging position, Sharon has continued her professional development through part time, on-line study towards a Master of Business Administration. Sharon has the ability to take on a diverse range of positions and was in the acting role of General Manager, Community and Culture for a ten-week period in 2017, while also meeting other demands and a range of personal volunteering commitments.

The second commendation was to April Ure of Pyrenees Shire Council. April was quick to learn all the duties in her position as Property Revenue Officer, and within a short time gained promotion. This saw her totally transform the Rates office, with modernisation and digitisation of the workflows, based on a digital-first approach. Now she is training and mentoring the new Assistant Revenue Officer. April is studying for a Bachelor of Business through the University of South Australia.

The Commendation Awards included a certificate and a cheque for \$250.

The 2019 Bursary High Tea will again be hosted by the City of Melbourne.

Please **SAVE THE DATE – 29 May 2019**. A formal Invitation will be distributed closer to the date.



May will be a busy month in 2019, with the ALGWA National Conference being hosted by Blacktown City Council **15–17 May**. More detail can be found on the Council's website:

<https://www.blacktown.nsw.gov.au/Events-and-activities/2019-National-Australian-Local-Government-Womens-Association-Conference>

The AGM was also held in April, and we welcomed two new committee members, Cr Michelle Kleinert as President and Cr Sandra Wilson as Metro Representative.

Deakin University once again hosted a leadership course this year, for Indonesian women. Members Crs Coral Ross, Emelia Sterjova and Steph Amir represented ALGWA, and we thank them for doing so.



'Our voice our vote', organized by the National Council of Women, for female secondary school students, was held once more at Parliament House. ALGWA was represented by members Barbara Abley AM, Cr Cuc Lam and Samantha Dunn MLC.

From left: Dr Deborah Towns with members Cr Cuc Lam, Barbara Abley AM and Samantha Dunn MLC.





### State Conference:

Maroondah City Council kindly hosted our Conference this year, and what a fascinating array of speakers were provided, including Libby Gorr and Jo Stanley. Catherine Dunlop from Maddocks and Georgie Ward from Macquarie Local Government Lawyers provided practical advice on dealing with bullying, sexual harassment and managing difficult behavior, while Rosalie O'Neale from the Office of the Safety Commissioner dealt with the issue of handling

online abuse. A huge thank-you to Dr Susan Rennie from Darebin Council, who stepped in when a speaker was unavailable, and gave a fascinating presentation on the effects of poker machines on local communities, and the ways the effects can be minimized. In all a great conference, and it was a pity that more members could not attend.



President Cr Michelle Kleinert, LG Minister Marlene Kairouz and Maroondah Mayor Cr Nora Lamont.

Organising committee Crs Marijke Graham, Kylie Spears, Michelle Kleinert, Nora Lamont and Tasa Damante with Shadow LG Minister David Morris.



Current and former executive members. From the left: Pam McLeod (LM), Cr Coral Ross (LM), Helen Coleman, Cr Michelle Kleinert, Cr Marg Attley, Pam Robinson OAM (LM), Barbara Abley AM, Helen Harris OAM (LM), Cr Jean Wise OAM (LM), and Cr Sandra Wilson. LM = Life Member.

The 2019 State Conference is to be hosted by Macedon Ranges Council, and will be held from 18 to 20 October 2019, so please **SAVE THE DATE**.



### New Council Member

We give a warm welcome to the Pyrenees Shire Council who have joined us this year. For those who may not have visited the region, it includes wineries, loads of goldfields historical buildings around the Avoca area and some fabulous views. It would be great to see more rural Councils join us in 2019.

### Report from National President



2019 is an important year for women in politics.

December 2019 marks the 100th anniversary of the first woman elected to any tier of Government when Susan Grace Benny was elected to Brighton Council in South Australia. This important milestone will be recognised by an award for Gender Equality as part of the Local Government Awards and is the theme of the National ALGWA conference in May in Blacktown, NSW.

It is pleasing that today we celebrate the highest percentage of women councillors in Australian history, but are still mindful we have a long way to go. Following elections in both Tasmania and South Australia 34.94% of Australian councillors are women. Tasmania has overtaken Victoria with the highest percentage of women councillors with 39.9%, Victoria is second with 38.1%, followed by WA with 36.21% and South Australia moves to fourth spot with 35.4%, followed by the NT 33%, Qld. 32.5% and NSW is now the only State below 30%, with 29.5%

September saw the launch of the Australian Gender Equality Council – a grouping of national women's organisations, including the ALGWA, with a collective voice of over 500,000. Please look at its website <https://www.agec.org.au>

Wishing you all a wonderful and safe festive season and new year and I look forward to catching up with you soon.

*Cr Coral Ross*



### Other activities

Committee member Cr Sandra Wilson is currently working on our submission to the National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in the Australian Workplace, being conducted by the Australian Human Rights Commission. To support ALGWA's submission (Submissions can be made up until 31 January 2019), we are seeking any examples of sexual harassment from Councillors in their role and in their very broad 'workplace' environment, and the adequacy of the current process for responding to complaints (notwithstanding that the proposed new Local Government Act has taken the recommendation to include sexual harassment in Codes of Conduct). All examples will be treated with confidentiality and utmost sensitivity, and should be submitted without names of individuals.

Please send your experience by 31 December, via email to the personal email address of Cr Sandra Wilson marked CONFIDENTIAL to [sandrawilson@fastmail.com.au](mailto:sandrawilson@fastmail.com.au) or call to discuss on 0419 287 117.

In August this year we applied to the Minister of Local Government, Maureen Kairouz, for funding for a number of grants to help with various projects, including an extension of the mentoring scheme and a project to commemorate the centenary of the first Victorian women elected to a Council in 1920, by expanding and updating the details in our publication *The right to vote; the right to stand* onto a specially designed website. We had hoped to hear something positive from the Minister when she formally opened our Conference, so were disappointed when she merely stated that the applications were still being considered. With a new LG Minister now appointed, we will try again.

