



AUSTRALIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

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

Victorian Branch Newsletter – December 2017

From the President:

It is hard to believe that we are at the end of 2017, but it does give us a chance to reflect on the activities ALGWA have been undertaking during the year.

I would like to start by firstly acknowledging the tragic passing of Hon Fiona Richardson, Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence and Minister for Women, on 23 August 2017. I attended Fiona's very sad memorial, which was a celebration of a life well-lived, and about her extraordinary achievements in the family violence space, and supporting gender equality for women in our society. Vale Fiona.



As we mourned the loss of Fiona, the government has announced that the Hon Natalie Hutchins MP will now take on the portfolio of Prevention of Family Violence and Women. Natalie, of course, was the Minister for Local Government, and was a great friend of ALGWA during her time as Minister, so the news to us is both sad and happy. I would like to thank Natalie for her support and commitment to women in local government and gender equity across our sector. We worked closely with Fiona in her portfolios and our relationship with Natalie will most certainly continue.

Minister Marlene Karouiz MP is now the Minister for Local Government; many of us will know her from her time as a former Councillor and Mayor of Darebin Council. We plan to meet with the Minister in the new year to discuss all things for women in local government, and opportunities for ALGWA, particularly in relation to obtain funding to be able to continue with our mentoring program during this term of Council.

Mentoring Program and launch

On 16 March 2017 we had the Hon Natalie Hutchins MP, Minister for Local Government, launch the Mentoring Program at the Melbourne Town Hall.

The Mentoring Program was made possible by a grant from the Victorian Government to establish a mentoring program targeting newly elected women councillors. The grant allowed ALGWA Vic to provide training and ongoing support for the 20 mentors and mentees that have been matched early in this Council term. We engaged experienced consultant Leonie Morgan who brings many years of mentoring experience to the Program to facilitate and provide training and support to women Mentors and Mentees.

The Minister said that she had no doubt new women councillors would get great value out of this program that provides further support to help foster equality across the local government sector.



Members of the Branch, Minister and participants at the launch of the Mentoring Programme.

Annual women's mayor event

On 27 April once again we held our annual Women's Mayor Event in the Federation Room at Parliament House, in partnership with the Victorian Local Governance Association. This is always a wonderful event, and we had Ruth McGowan OAM as our facilitator, to guide the Mayors in some great discussions about their year to date and where to from now. Each year the Mayors leave a message for next year's Mayors. The Hon Natalie Hutchins attended for some informal discussions with the group, as did the Shadow Minister, David Davis.



There are 28 women Mayors for the next 12 months, down from an all-time high of 32. Congratulations to all. We have already commenced planning for the annual Women's Mayor forum in partnership with Gail Cummings at the VLGA, and will be in touch with a date very shortly for busy diaries, as this event is a must-do for the year.

Minister, Shadow Minister and some of the participants.

Annual bursary event

We held our annual Council staff Bursary event on 31 May at the Melbourne Town Hall with our guest speaker, Rebecca McKenzie, CEO of the Glen Eira Council, formerly at Mitchell Shire Council, and President of LGPro. The winner of the award, presented by Rebecca, was Michelle Richards from Moorabool Shire, who won \$1750 to assist with her tertiary studies. Michelle is undertaking a Master of Business Administration Course at Federation University.



Annual General Meeting

Our AGM was held immediately after the Bursary function, and we surprised former President Cr Coral Ross with the announcement that she had been made a Life Member for her services. In presenting the award Helen recounted the extent of Coral's contribution to this organisation:

Coral Ross joined ALGWA early in 2005, was elected Metro Vice President in 2010 and, on the resignation of President Kate Lempriere in August 2011, became co-president with Rural Vice President Jean Wise. She was elected President in 2012, and served for two terms, retiring from the Presidency as required under the Constitution. She is however, still on the Executive, serving as Metro Representative.

As well as her involvement with the Victorian branch, Coral has been the delegate to the National Board, serving as Vice President from 2012 and President from 2015. She was recently re-elected for a second term as National President.

During Coral's six year term on the Executive she has contributed an enormous amount of time and effort in helping to run the organization, as well as handling media enquiries. But she has also shown exceptional leadership, and demonstrated significant abilities in the field of strategic planning.

It was the unanimous decision of the Executive to award Coral a Life Membership of the Australian Local Government Women's Association.



Samantha Dunn, MLC with committee members.



ALGWA Business Plan

Felicity Frederico, our Metro Vice President has been working hard with Swinburne University in Hawthorn and final year students from their business school to provide ALGWA Vic with a Business Plan so as to ensure our sustainability into the future. The program produced 8 teams of 6 participants each, who presented to Felicity and Helen Harris on 27 October. The prize for the students was \$1,200.00 for the winning team and \$600 for the runners up. Thanks to Felicity for all her hard work in organizing the Business Plan, assisted by Coral Ross and Helen Harris for attending the presentation of the awards with Felicity. We will provide the report from Felicity on the Business Plan and the final document and opportunities for implementation in due course.

Indonesian women leadership course with Deakin University

On Wednesday 20 September ALGWA was thrilled to be invited by Dr Rebecca Barlow from Deakin University to participate in their Leadership Course for Indonesian Women. Barbara Abley from our Executive, Mayor Anna Speedie from Wodonga, Cr Emilia Sterjova from Whittlesea and Cr Susan Rennie from Darebin, were the guest panel for the event. We discussed the importance of diversity and inclusion in leadership, how to improve effective leadership skills and influence change and how to strengthen the skills of women leaders to think and act politically (we probably all need a bit of that advice!) It was a great workshop, lots of questions, networking, and fun, topped off by a speech in Indonesian by Emilia Sterjova.

State Conference

The ALGWA State Conference took place at the Lighthouse Theatre in Warrnambool on 13, 14 and 15 October. Warrnambool City Council generously sponsored our conference and the event management. Our other sponsors were Wannon Water, Lady Bay Resort, Warrnambool Art Gallery and WestVic staffing solutions. The conference was well supported by the Mayor of the day, Cr Kylie Gaston, and former Councillor and Mayor Jacinta Ermacora (who retired from Council in 2016), acted as MC. It was Jacinta who had the insight to put a motion at the end of the 2016 Council term, to support Warrnambool submitting their interest in holding the conference, as well as allocating funds to the event. We had some sensational guest speakers and presentations, all supported by Lauren Orero the event coordinator and her helpers.

I was also inspired by the fact that all of the guest speakers were women, excepting the Managing Director of Wannon Water, Andrew Jeffers, and he spoke on the gender equity policies that are being implemented at their organisation. Many other conferences say that they 'find it hard' to find women to present at their conferences, however, we didn't seem to have the same challenges!



Participants at the conference.

VLGA Leading Edge forum

Former Councillor and Mayor Felicity Federico, Metro VP, was part of a panel at the Leading Edge Forum event for the VLGA on Thursday 19 October 2017. Felicity joined a panel with Kelli Underwood, sports commentator, and Angela Pippas, journalist, writer and television and radio presenter. Vicki Ward MP was caught up in parliament and was a last-minute apology.

The topic was Gender Parity in Sport and Community Infrastructure. Felicity provided an insight into gender equality in sport at the local government level particularly in relation to the 'grass ceiling' campaign she instigated during her time at Bayside Council .

Regional branches

We have a number of regional branches throughout Victoria, with the north eastern the most active. We are hoping to arrange more events in 2018 for members in rural and regional Victoria.

As you know, we are a volunteer-run organization, wonderfully supported by our Executive Officer former Councillor and Mayor Helen Harris OAM. Our thanks go to Helen for all her hard work during the year. Thank you to the other members of our Executive — Cr Coral Ross, Felicity Frederico, Barbara Abley, Cr Marg Attley, Jennifer Yang and Cr Wendy Buck.

A special thank you is made to Cr Raylene Carr, not only for coordinating our Bursary arrangements, but for her skill as a photographer. A number of her photographs of various events are on our website: www.algwa.com.au/news

2018 is an election year for our Executive so please consider whether you would like to nominate for a role in ALGWA, and become involved in an organization that has been operating for well over half a century. If you are interested please do not hesitate to give me a call or any of our Executive whose contact details are on our website: www.algwa.com.au.

Thank you, our members, for your extraordinary work during the last 12 months and for some, as new Councillors, the first year of your 4 year term. The time goes very quickly so don't waste a minute as your community needs your support 'always'.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, enjoy your celebrations with family and friends and have safe and happy holidays and see you all in the New Year for another jammed packed year for ALGWA Vic.

Here is a link to my President's report from 2017 which gives further information on some of the things we have been involved with during the year:

<http://www.algwa.com.au/news/post.php?s=2017-06-25-annual-general-meeting-minutes-and-presidents-report>



National President's Report

All women should feel safe at work, free from harassment. For councillors and officers our workplace is the Council and Chamber.

In the wake of Melbourne's Lord Mayor Robert Doyle stepping down while allegations of sexual harassment and assault are investigated, the ALGWA National Board called for a National Code of Conduct with independent procedures. There are different procedures in each State. NSW has an independent panel of law firms to act as arbiter whereas in Victoria complaints are made to the Mayor. I was pleased to address this issue with Victorian President Helen Coleman because as the peak body for women in local government we take the safety of women very seriously and provide support. Here is a link to the media release <http://www.algwa.net.au/news/post.php?s=2017-12-18-media-release-on-councillor-harassment>

I was delighted to attend the recent State conference in Warrnambool as the National ALGWA President. Those that were at the conference will know that I spoke about the State of the Nation – the number of women councillors around the country. There has since been an election in WA, which saw an increase in the number of women elected. Currently, 32.75% of Australian councillors are women. Victoria still leads the country with 38.1%, but WA is now second with 36.21% followed by NT 33%, Qld 32.5%, Tasmania 31%, NSW 29.5% and South Australia 29.34%.

Elections will be held in Tasmania and South Australia next year.

Expect to see some announcements in the UK next year regarding women in local government. Earlier this year the Fawcett Society released a damning report on *Does Local Government Work for Women?* It concluded that local Government was not 'fit for the future' and made a series of recommendations to improve councils. Next year is the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage in the UK, so expect some announcement to coincide with the celebrations.

I look forward to catching up with many of you in June at the annual ALGWA networking breakfast in Canberra as part of the NGA. For those who would like to attend an ALGWA conference interstate, NSW will be holding a conference in Gundagai on March 15–17 and Queensland will also be holding a conference later in the year. The next National ALGWA conference will be in Blacktown, NSW in 2019.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a safe and Happy New Year.

Cr Coral Ross

