

Ordinary Meeting of Council 20 May 2020

The following statements were submitted prior to the meeting. Submissions made live during the meeting include some variations and can be listened via our live stream webpage:

<http://webcast.portphillip.vic.gov.au/archive.php>

Linda Davison - Item 9.1 Every Child Our Future: Children's Services Policy Implementation Plan

With regard to the recommendation that Council defers the preparation and consideration of a business case by 1-2 years, I note that this is a long period of time for those educators currently working at Council-managed centres to continue in uncertainty of employment.

At the moment, with "fee free" childcare and social distancing restrictions in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, few childcare services are employing additional staff so staffing in all services is remaining fairly stable.

However, with the projected easing of restrictions and the increasing likelihood that childcare centres will recommence charging fees from July this year, that situation is likely to change.

If Council decides to postpone (rather than abandon) the preparation and consideration of a business case, there is a real risk that educators currently working in Council-managed services will choose to seek employment elsewhere – where they feel their work is more valued and secure.

Strong, secure relationships are the foundation of all learning in early childhood and educators in Council-managed services have worked hard to establish and maintain those relationships with children and with families – in some cases, over many years. An extended period of uncertainty of employment due to the postponement of Council's consideration of any options for change is likely to destabilise the workforce in Council-managed centres and therefore undermine the quality of education and care provided to children.

With this in mind, and noting that the recent recognition of childcare as an "essential service" means that Council is now in a much stronger position to defend a national competition policy complaint (should one be lodged), I urge Council to make a decision to abandon, rather than defer, this aspect of Every Child, Our Future; Children's Services Policy

Rhonda Small - Item 9.1 Every Child Our Future: Children's Services Policy Implementation Plan

Tonight, you will consider a recommendation to defer, for between one and two years, any further work on the business case to continue to provide council-run childcare centres or to transition one or more centres to community management. Please do not vote in favour of this recommendation. We all know and accept that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought with it extraordinary challenges for the work of Council requiring diversion of resources to the necessary effort of supporting our community through these very difficult times. With the declaration of childcare as an essential service this critical re-prioritisation of the program of work has been keenly felt in the Children's services area. It is understandable that work on the childcare business case has been delayed, not to mention the enormous additional pressure placed on Council finances by the Federal Government excluding council-run childcare staff from Job Keeper payments. But deferring further work on the business case for at least 12 months and up to two years, would be to prolong uncertainty for Council's

childcare centres, for the staff who work there and for the families who attend. The Review of Children's services began in June 2018 and two years later you are being asked to recommend a delay in decision-making for up to another two years. Please do not kick this decision down the road for the next Council. We have an election on 24 October and you should be resolving this issue before then. You know what the community want. We want you to continue to provide high quality childcare services. Now more than ever we need to support the public provision of our essential services. This is what we have learnt from the current crisis. There will be no market led recovery in childcare. Private centres may well go under as we emerge from the crisis, and we need to do everything we can to ensure the stability of our council run centres. Please vote to stay in the direct service provision of childcare, not for ongoing uncertainty by deferring the decision for 12 months or more.

Nadine Brew - Item 9.1 Every Child Our Future: Children's Services Policy Implementation Plan

Hi, I'm Nadine and I'm a parent to a 3-year-old who attends North St Kilda Children's Centre.

For over 6 months I've been a part of Save Childcare in Port Phillip, a group aiming to demonstrate to our councillors how important it is to keep council-run childcare managed by the City of Port Phillip and maintain the extremely high standard of care it has achieved.

In light of the current health emergency, the importance of our childcare system is clear for all to see. It was named an essential service at all levels of government.

It is clear that this global pandemic is nowhere near its endpoint. We have no idea how long it will last or what the world will look like when it ends. Now is not the time to be making decisions that add to uncertainty for our council childcare services who are absolutely integral to the running of our society, the care of our children and the ability of all people (especially those in frontline work) to be able to do their jobs.

We should be focussed on supporting the most vulnerable in our community, people who were already in need of support and those who now find themselves in need of support. And that is what my child's centre is doing so well currently.

I work at a charity in cancer research. In a few months, my two-year contract expires and like so many others in the world right now, I may find myself without a job.

If our family were deprived of access to quality local childcare it would make things even more difficult to have the ability and flexibility I need to find more work at the hours and the level, I need to maintain my career.

Employees of our childcare centres have gone to work when they didn't know anything about the risks of exposure because that simply wasn't knowledge anyone had. They have gone to work so we could go to work; doctors, police, first responders and nurses.

The least we can do for them, at such a traumatic time, when they are working in an environment where social distancing is almost impossible, is gift them the assurance they will at least enjoy stability and continued employment. Council should not be extending uncertainty by deferring the business case process. It should cease the process altogether and fully support its own centres.

Equally, for those of us who have been taking part in this process, it's been incredibly stressful and emotional – not what anyone needs right now.

Please focus on our community during these stressful times and leave the childcare services to do their job providing high quality education and care for kids.

Hayley Davies - Item 9.1 Every Child Our Future: Children's Services Policy Implementation Plan

My name is Hayley Davies and I work for the Australian Services Union representing Local Government workers. Today I am speaking on behalf of all Early Learning Educators at the City of Port Phillip facing further prolonged employment uncertainty because of this recommendation to defer a decision on the Children's Services business case. Last year, I presented at Council and spoke against a review that appeared to be based on an assumption that City of Port Phillip's Early Learning Services should no longer be provided by Council and that such a transition of services would likely reduce staff conditions and entitlements. In light of the COVID 19 situation, Council should now more than ever be maintaining council run Early Childhood Education. The COVID 19 experience has highlighted the unwavering need for professional Early Childhood Educators and that Local Governments' stability and commitment to their community is important in the mix of early learning services available. Educators at these services have demonstrated an amazing resilience and ability to continue to provide the families of Port Phillip with a safe and secure learning environment during these tumultuous times. The City of Port Phillip should be proud of their excellent educators, rather than creating anxiety for them and families as well as incurring the expense of this business case at this critical time. Council should be focusing on upholding and improving Children's Services and their accessibility to an increasingly precarious workforce. In the best interests of the community the ASU strongly advocate that the review be terminated. We ask that Council vote to stay in the direct service provision of childcare, not for ongoing uncertainty by deferring the decision for 12 months or more.

The following statements were submitted prior to the meeting and a summary of the statements were read out during the meeting by the Coordinator Governance.

Adrian Jackson - Public Question Time

Poker machines have only been permitted in Victoria since near the end of the Joan Kirner government when the state was nearly bankrupt (\$32 billion in debt). Pokies are a social cancer. Currently there are 10 venues who still have them in Port Phillip. Near my home Pubs from Victoria Ave to Fitzroy St don't have any. These hotels are well run, have been modernised and prosper without them. I think greed is the main reason some venues have them as well as poor management. Councillors when will you lobby the state government to rid picturesque Port Phillip of this evil in our pubs that cause so much financial and social harm within Victoria. TAB and lotto small businesses are OK in my view though.

Jane Kearney - Public Question Time

As a self-funded retiree I have changed my budget to fit my depleted 2020 income. Why can't the Council do the same across all departments, without singling out a few, or increasing the 2020 rates?

Brenda Forbarth - Item 9.1 Every Child Our Future: Children's Services Policy Implementation Plan

Since making its decision last year to conduct a "Business Case" as to whether council should continue its direct service provision of child care or transition to community management, a number of changes have occurred that should cause a re-think on this issue. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused the near collapse of many private childcare centres and impacted heavily on the community sector as parents lost jobs and withdrew their children from these services. It was in this context that the Federal Government determined that Childcare was an essential service; essential from a care and education perspective but also as underpinning the national economy. It is now clearer than ever that council's role in directly providing childcare is crucial in supporting our community and in particular those families who are suffering from lost employment and those who have been experiencing long term disadvantage for many reasons. Council services provide the long-term security and stability that families need and which are not always available in other sectors. Delaying the business case exercise for a year or two adds to the uncertainty and instability which has plagued staff and parents since council first embarked on the idea of "getting out of direct service provision". I urge councillors to discontinue its business case investigation not just delay it for another time and for another council to deal with.

The following statement was submitted prior to the meeting and a summary of the statement was read on behalf of the VLGA by the Coordinator Governance.

Victorian Local Government Association (VLGA) – Item 14.2 2020 Membership Review

The VLGA is of course disappointed that this recommendation has been put to council, given the long history that the CoPP has had with the VLGA (which many of council's current and past councillors and officers can attest to) and council's ongoing participation in and access to a number of VLGA activities, programs and services – many of which extend beyond the criteria of 'nice to have' but rather contribute to council's role in the ensuring the health and wellbeing of the municipality's community and provide direct linkages to council's strategic directions and obligations under the Local Government Act 2020.

The VLGA wishes to continue to work with and support the incredible work undertaken by the CoPP on behalf of its community. Particularly now, in these uncertain times, collaboration is most needed with stakeholders working together to support Victorians. The VLGA's life blood is its membership and we value our relationship with the CoPP.

The VLGA has now had an opportunity to review this report and would like to make a few observations.

The VLGA acknowledges that this is a difficult time economically. However, regardless of the economic environment, robust officer reports to inform council decisions should be characterised by referencing factual information presented in an accurate context and balanced manner. The VLGA is disappointed that the report which supports the recommendation to withdraw membership of the VLGA does not appear to be aligned with a number of these principles. Rather, it appears from the VLGA's perspective, that the objective of the report is to focus on a central objective of removing memberships as opposed to providing accurate representation of the respective values of the organisations targeted for removal.

Specifically, within the report presented to council, in addition to the information previously provided to council (attached) but appears not to have been fully incorporated into this report, we make the following observations in regard to the VLGA:

VLGA

It is not accurate to link the VLGA to only one strategic direction --- council's Strategic Direction 6 --- 'Our Commitment to You'.

VLGA advocacy and programs certainly contribute to Direction 1 – 'We Embrace Difference and People Belong' (e.g. the VLGA's Gambling, Gender Equity, LGBTIQ, and Reconciliation programs) and our broader work impacts positively on each of council's strategic directions.

In the past two months, the CoPP nominated for the VLGA's HART Awards and is a current finalist in the 2020 Awards (refer attached). In addition, the CoPP provided a case study and contributed to the VLGA's Rainbow Resource which was published earlier in the year [VLGA Rainbow Resource](#) (refer page 35).

In February, a CoPP Councillor attended the VLGA's Councillor development workshop <https://youtu.be/3VaFq430L-0> and the current CoPP mayor has participated in a number of VLGA programs over the years in regard to gender equality and most recently in our workshop on virtual council meetings <https://youtu.be/V7q19I3nHPE>. Another Councillor is actively engaged in our VRGF funded program.

The CoPP deputy mayor (a former VLGA board member) has also attended a number of our transport and waste forums.

The VLGA has also participated in stakeholder roundtables with the CoPP and other agencies such as Committee for Melbourne and other council members of IMAP. In addition, we advocate regularly with the state government and other agencies on behalf of our members, including the CoPP and the sector more broadly.

The above is certainly not a comprehensive list of the CoPP involvement with the VLGA.

- **The offering of VLGA is distinct from other agencies in the sector.**

It is not accurate to compare the VLGA with the MAV or LGPro. The VLGA's focus is on supporting good governance in local government – that is – effective local government is only robust when the principals of good governance are applied. The VLGA's work supports these principals through the programs and services we offer.

As council, would have observed, VLGA initiatives such as the VLGA Connect interview series <https://www.youtube.com/user/VLGAInc> are agile and respond to a disrupted environment. In addition the guest list (including federal and state ministers, heads of statutory and integrity agencies, mayors, CEOs and subject matter experts across a range of disciplines) provides a powerful indicator of the advocacy and resource reach of the VLGA. The VLGA is respected and we are approached by these stakeholders to provide input into policy direction.

In addition, to support the CoPP's obligations under the Local Government Act 2020, the VLGA is delivering Candidate Workshops virtually in lead up to the 2020 elections and the CoPP are in conversations as we speak with the VLGA about scheduling one or more of these workshops. The VLGA's Local Women Leading Change program is also being delivered virtually and women from the CoPP municipality are participating in the VLGA's workshops. A number of CoPP residents also participated in our face to face workshops prior to COVID---19 restrictions. These workshops are free for VLGA council members and residents.

The VLGA is able to move quickly in advocacy and (as advocacy initiatives are linked to purpose) so gives member councils far greater certainty that related advocacy issues will not be diluted. It is part of the daily business of VLGA to advocate directly and effectively across all levels of government. The VLGA is non---partisan. We engage regularly with senior policy makers, ministers and shadow ministers – at both the state and federal level – on behalf of our members.

LGPro

- **Any comparison with LGPro is not valid as LGPro is the peak body representing council officers and its advocacy has a narrower focus than that of the VLGA, reflecting the views of its membership which is limited to officers.** Both councillors and officers access VLGA services.
- **The report states "Council is a part of other member organisations such as MAV and VLGA who advocate and undertake work in the Local Government space. However, LGPro provides a unique perspective and representation on Local Government advocacy as the executive team is composed of Local Government Officers working on local government matters."**

All of the peak bodies provide 'unique perspectives' --- the report omitted to mention that VLGA is the only peak which has a board that is a unique combination of elected councillors and highly regarded co-opted specialists with extensive experience across all branches of government. This governance model is consistent with the principles of good governance.

- **The report refers to the LGPro executive team as 'composed of Local Government Officers'.** That is in fact a reference to the LGPro board, not the executive team.

In addition, taken from the LGPro website "there is at times confusion in the sector about the difference between council subscription and individual membership of LGPro. If council is an LGPro council subscriber it does not automatically make someone working for that council a member who can attend events at member rates. In fact, council subscription and individual membership (Fellow, Professional and Young Professional) is quite separate and each has different benefits.

Council subscription assists us to undertake work that benefits the sector as a whole such as advocacy, representing the officer perspective to other levels of government, and building sector capacity and capability.

Individual membership is for staff working in Local Government and offers discounts on a range of events and professional development programs, activities and resources. People working in councils cannot use their council's subscription to access member discounts to programs, events and conferences"

- **Much of the commentary around LGPro activities is not relevant to a comparison with the VLGA because officers commit to individual memberships --- it is a membership organisation.** So many of the benefits would be achieved anyway.

For example the Governance Special Interest Group (SIG) will be supporting role out of the Governance Rules under the new LGA 2020. That is because the individuals in the SIG are members.

MAV

- **In regard to the MAV, membership is 2.5 x that of the VLGA --- any 'like for like' comparison is not valid.**

The report does not provide that nuance. The MAV is an extension of the state government, created under the Municipal Associations Act 1901.

The VLGA's governance structure is more aligned with the other state and territory local government associations which are not created under a state act. The VLGA is an incorporated association. The organisation has never had 79 council members, membership has been relatively static over the years and this is because our role is different to that of the MAV – we are compliment to the sector – not a competitor.

For example, the MAV's role is to support the nuts and bolts of the operations of local government and they are funded to do so by the state government – for example, approx. 16

MAV programs are grant funded – in addition they collect membership fees from councils and member councils also pay fee for service for MAV programs and procurement and insurance products.

The CoPP membership fee for the VLGA is \$28k per annum. This amount is probably the equivalent to ¼ of a FTE and this fee clearly covers the value of the activities, programs and advocacy that the CoPP has taken the advantage of over the past twelve months.

- **The report states that “the MAV will be an education resource for candidates in the 2020 Local Government elections – once elected, councillors can access the MAV for induction and ongoing training and development”**

This also applies to the VLGA – our 2020 Candidate workshops and Local Women Leading Change workshops are being delivered, now, virtually, across the state and are being accessed by over 35 councils, including the CoPP. The VLGA also provided councillor induction training and has done so over many years.

- **The report comments on the MAV’s COVID---19 Response.**

“MAV are advocating on processes and procedures that have been impacted by COVID---19 (Council elections, budget timing and virtual meetings)” but the report neglects to mention the work the VLGA has undertaken in response to the pandemic, including our role on the LGV Project Control Board and in coordinating the integrity agencies involvement in the drafting of the virtual meeting guidelines and providing regular – almost daily – virtual conversations with key sector agency leaders to keep our members up to date during this time. Additionally, we are providing our programs virtually in numbers that far outweigh those of the MAV.

The following table is an excellent comparison of the purpose and financial difference between the MAV and VLGA, and also highlights that the MAV currently pays a \$481k annual membership fee to ALGA (refer page 101 of the 2018 MAV Annual Report).

Peak Body	Annual Revenue	Total Current Assets	Combined Annual Revenue*	Combined Total Current Assets**	Staff	Council Members (as at 1 July 2019)	Commenced Operations
MAV	\$18.9m	\$15.7m	\$89.5m	\$163.9m	69 (16+ grant funded)	79	1879
VLGA	\$1.3m	\$2.17m	n/a	n/a	9 (3 grant funded)	45	1994

- Source: MAV Annual Report 2018; MAV Organisational Structure; VLGA Annual Audited Accounts 2018/2019 and VLGA Organisational Structure
- *Combined Annual Revenue – includes MAV’s LGE Health Plan business (\$519K); MAV WorkCare business (\$10m); MAV Insurance business (\$21m).
- **Combined Total Current Assets – includes MAV’s LGE Health Plan business (\$1.6m); MAV WorkCare business (\$82.6m); MAV Insurance business (\$67m).

VLGA Constitution

- **VLGA Governance & Board**

As a current financial member of the VLGA, CoPP councillors are eligible to stand for, and vote in, the VLGA board elections. Nominations are currently open for two (2) vacancies. If

council withdraws its membership for the 2020/2021 year councillors will no longer be able to participate in these elections. The VLGA would welcome and encourage a councillor from CoPP to consider standing in the June elections to strengthen and bring further diversity around the VLGA's board and governance structures and future strategic directions.

- **Required Notice Period under the VLGA Constitution**

The report tabled with council advises council that the required notice period will be provided to organisations.

Under Section 13 of the VLGA Constitution, a council member is required to provide 6 months---notice of resignation. Therefore, should council proceed to withdraw its membership, as the required notice has not been provided, the CoPP is still liable for the full 2020/2021 subscription as the VLGA Constitution does not provide for pro rata membership subscriptions.

On behalf of the VLGA, I would ask that this report be tabled and read at the council meeting this Wednesday.

Kind Regards



Kathryn Arndt

Chief Executive Officer