

2021-25 MAV STRATEGY

Year One Status Report

Over the last 12 months, we have once again worked closely with our member councils to guide and navigate challenges and ensure councils continue to provide invaluable support, service and leadership to their communities and businesses.

Financial pressures abound for all local governments. Communities have been asking councils to do more, not less, which has been trying in a COVID and rate-capped world. With the Victorian Government setting the 2022/23 rate cap at 1.75 per cent, MAV called for the State Government to objectively review the rate cap and its implications.

In 2021, we continued to work tirelessly to manage the local government response to the pandemic. Between responding to the public health restrictions and then, supporting the implementation of the vaccine program, there was much to do as this extended crisis touched every corner of the state. Along with interpretative advice and advocacy for changes to public health directions and guidance when these were required, we assisted councils to navigate new vaccine requirements as well as occupational health and safety issues for the council workforce and members of the public using council services.

We want the State to consult openly on a range of things, but none more so than planning reform. Considered, community-informed decision making should not be undermined for short term economic outcomes.

Ahead of this year's budget, the MAV called on the State Government to increase funding for council emergency management responsibilities. Unfortunately, there was no increase in funding of this critical role. Another year cannot go by without appropriate funding of a critical key segment of Victoria's emergency management sector. Similarly, unsafe and outdated local roads are putting our communities at risk. We launched a transport advocacy campaign earlier this year in support of these communities.

We are calling on the Federal Government and State Government to increase funding for councils to effectively maintain their asset base and deliver safety upgrades on local roads.

Funding and policy support for councils for climate change adaptation and mitigation remain MAV advocacy priorities, both at the State and Commonwealth levels. Specific asks include coastal climate change adaptation funding, funding for energy efficient major road lighting upgrades and reforms to the planning system to ensure consideration of climate change impacts. We have also continued to represent council interests on circular economy and recycling reforms, including via written submissions on the Victorian Container Deposit Scheme (CDS), the single-use plastic items ban, waste to energy, and e-waste product stewardship.

This year we welcomed further funding for the MAV to continue its role in supporting councils to develop and implement gender equity and family violence primary prevention strategies. We welcomed the co-design of a comprehensive Free from Violence local government guide and the funding of 15 councils to implement the guide. The investment recognises the important role councils can play in primary prevention of family violence and violence against women.










One of the most visible aspects of our policy and advocacy work is our submissions. Lodged to either State or Federal government, they provide critical analysis to inform strategy development and proposed changes to legislation. In this last year, we developed 26 submissions – an increase of three on the previous year – and these were only possible thanks to the input and partnership of our member councils.

This is our first year of reporting on the actions undertaken under the MAV Strategy 2021-25, which identifies six Strategic Outcomes. You will see our deliverables in this document.

Moving forward, the 2022 State Election, following the Federal Election, provides a unique opportunity for local government to come together and ensure the delivery more positive outcomes for councils and communities on these strategic objectives.

It is imperative we make sure the next State Government understands and acts on the needs of communities through their local councils. Our election campaign will outline these opportunities, and we will need the support of councils across the state to ensure our voice is collectively as powerful as possible.

OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

Objective	Initiative	Year One Status	Achievements
1.1 COVID-19 recovery	1.1.2, 2.5.1 Represent councils in the COVID recovery process including on public health and local economy issues		Support for councils throughout the year to assist them minimise the spread of COVID-19. Along with interpretative advice and advocacy for changes to public health directions and guidance when these were required, we assisted councils navigate new vaccine requirements and occupational health and safety issues for the council workforce and members of the public using council services. In partnership with the Department of Health, MAV supported council maternal and child health services assist with the Code Brown crisis in the health system.
1.2 Advocacy to protect councils' financial position	1.3.1 Undertake review of current financial health of Victoria's 79 councils		Collaborated with FinPro to achieve the removal of the proposed mandatory rate exemption for community and state-owned social housing. The success of this campaign demonstrates our advocacy and analysis over many months, the lobbying by council of their local MPs and the articulate voices of the councils most impacted.
1.4 Asset management capacity & capability	1.5.1 Develop sector priorities and MAV plan		Sector priorities have been identified and summarised in a paper shared with councils and state colleagues. The challenges and priorities are central to our transport infrastructure advocacy strategy. The MAV also participated in the LGV asset planning working group which contributed to the development of the LGV Asset Planning Guide, and is currently supporting LGV's Rural Roads Support Program.
2.3 MCH service	2.3.1 Secure new four-year MCH MOU, including unit pricing (1.3.3)		The Maternal and Child Health Memorandum of Understanding has been negotiated, signed and is in place until July 2025. Unlike other years this MCH MOU is a high-level documentation of the principles by which State and local government work in partnership in the direction, planning and delivery of the MCH Service. Disappointingly the May 2022 State Government budget did not include an increase in the MCH unit cost (cost of an hour of MCH service delivery). MAV is working with the State Government on a new contemporary costing methodology to inform the State Government of the unit service cost. The current inadequate funding of the MCH Service will also be a feature of the MAV State Election Platform.
2.6 Emergency management	2.6.1 Participate in the third phase of Department of Jobs, Precincts and Region's Councils and Emergencies project		The MAV participated in the final phase of the DJPR's Councils & Emergencies project, which finished in December 2021. The MAV's strong advocacy in emergency management included working with councils to develop an updated position paper on the role of councils in emergency management, which was endorsed at the June 2022 MAV Board meeting.
	2.6.2 Collaborate with councils to influence and implement State Government reforms flowing from emergency management reviews, including the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements		
	2.6.3 Participate in the development of the Whole-of-Government Bushfire Management Strategy and support council input	 	
3.1 Planning system advocacy	3.1.2 Pursue reforms to planning scheme amendment process		With the State announcing legislative reforms are off the table, we have worked with councils and DELWP to identify non-legislative opportunities for improvement to the planning scheme amendment process. DELWP has developed a work plan which includes actions to be completed pre- and post-election. We continue to advocate for legislative amendments too.













Not yet started



Ongoing



Completed

Objective	Initiative	Year One Status	Achievements
3.2 Building regulation	3.2.1 Advocate for increased role & funding for LG in building regulation		An announcement by the Victorian Government on significant reforms to the building regulatory system is still pending. We continue to advocate for greater regulatory action and leadership by the VBA and improved resourcing for councils.
3.3 Housing needs	3.3.1 Influence development of Local Government housing compact on social and affordable housing		Reversal of the mandatory state-wide rate exemption proposed for state and community-owned social housing. Submitted to a range of federal and state parliamentary inquiries into housing affordability, supply and social housing regulation, and assisted ALGA's input to the Productivity Commission's review of the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement by the Productivity Commission. Employment of a social and affordable housing officer commenced with funding provided by Homes Victoria. A draft local government position statement was developed in consultation with all councils to inform the content of a proposed Compact between state and local government. Our continuing close partnership with the Community Housing Industry Association saw produced a range of support resources developed to assist councils with local agreements to underpin new affordable housing developments.
3.4 Strengthen advocacy and partnerships to influence key investments in freight productivity, first and last mile impediments, transport connectivity and road safety by all levels of government	3.4.1 Develop and implement local roads funding campaign		The MAV worked with councils to design and deliver the first phase of our 'Locals know what locals need' transport advocacy campaign. A resource hub has been added to the MAV Extranet, which includes template campaign materials and a campaign calendar.
	3.4.2 Support Department of Transport (DoT) to engage effectively with local government to deliver Victorian Freight Plan and road safety priorities		To support the delivery of the Victorian Freight Plan, the MAV established a Freight Policy Reference Group, and delivered key projects with DOT, including consultation around the Principal Freight Network and regional intermodal terminals, and a major project on first and last kilometre impediments and opportunities. The MAV also worked closely with DOT and TAC on road safety initiatives, including school crossings, and participated in a series of TAC regional forums for local government.
3.5 Improve the capability of local government to plan, design and deliver walking and riding programs and projects	3.5.1 Hold at least three forums on walking and riding, and share information via an online resource hub		The MAV ran a series of transport webinars focused on topics that support active transport, including movement & place and accessibility. We also partnered with Victoria Walks to deliver the Smart Urban Futures hybrid conference. Active transport is one of the four key themes in the transport advocacy campaign we co-designed with councils over a three-part series of workshops. The MAV continues to update its walking & bike riding online resource hub.
4.2 Waste & recycling reforms	4.2.1 Influence State Government recycling reforms, including kerbside waste and e-waste		Several submissions prepared in consultation with local government, including on the Victorian CDS, e-waste product stewardship and waste to energy. Active participant on CDS Advisory Committee. Regularly meet with and advocate to DELWP and Minister D'Ambrosio.
5.3 Framework for learning and events	5.3.1 Develop MAV Learning & Events Strategy		A MAV Learning & Events Policy is in draft format and the Sponsorship Policy currently under review. The next steps will be the development of a Learning and Events Strategy, which will be informed by the activities of the last 2 years, including online and hybrid events as well as the future needs of our members. A key component will be consideration of an e-learning platform for both internal staff use and member use.
5.4 Delivery of learning and events program	5.4.1 Deliver the agreed events program for 2021-22		In 2021-22, a series of online, in-person and hybrid learning and events activities have been delivered including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Development Program • AICD Company Directors Course • MCH Conference – Oct 2021 & May 2022 • Mayoral Induction – Dec 2021 • Smart Urban Futures Conference – May 2022 • Rural & Regional Planning Conference – June 2022 • MAV Rules Review information sessions & round table discussions • State Council – June 2022 • Many other policy and advocacy forums, meetings, briefings, training sessions
6.1 Modernise the constitution of the MAV	6.1.1 MAV Rules Review		The MAV commenced the review of the MAV Rules which included a comprehensive consultation process with the aim of new Rules being adopted by State Council in September 2022.
6.4 Insurance and procurement services	6.4.1 Complete negotiations with State Government on future structure of LMI insurance		The MAV established and supported the LMI Scheme Reform Working Group, which has analysed the strategic reform options for the LMI scheme. The Working Group provided its report to the MAV Board at its May 2022 meeting.

YEAR IN REVIEW: EXTRAORDINARY CHALLENGES

MCH service surge

One of the most affected services was the Victorian MCH service - one of the key pillars of our preventative health system. A major challenge came in January this year, with the coordinated and system-wide metropolitan Maternal and Child Health (MCH) COVID-19 surge response - in line with the state-wide Code Brown. Some services are still feeling the impacts. We saw an incredible effort across all metropolitan Local Government areas from late January to March. It needs to be acknowledged that rural and regional councils were under pressure at the same time. Thanks to MAV and council staff for their collaboration through this challenging period. It was a difficult decision to prioritise the service delivery towards the youngest and most vulnerable, but it was required.

Social and affordable housing

The collaboration between MAV and FinPro to use publicly available data and information to assess the impact a proposed rate exemption on all social housing owned and operated by the Victorian Government and community housing organisations enabled a timely issues paper to be developed demonstrating the scale and inequity being proposed. The compilation of evidence-based arguments for why those councils with the highest number of social housing dwellings with tenants needing local services should bear the double whammy of loss of rate revenue assisted our public commentary and advocacy. The result was a dramatic back-flip by the Victorian Government. The MAV continues to collaborate with FinPro on a number of projects, including the financial sustainability of councils.

Transition to hybrid learning and events

There has been palpable excitement from participants, relieved at the opportunity to again meet and network face to face at events such as the Smart Urban Futures Conference, which was held last month and the Rural & Regional Planning Conference just this month. We have also now leveraged the benefits of online and hybrid participation so that you can be involved from anywhere and in the past 12 months offered more than 100 events and learning opportunities.

MAV Insurance - moving forward

The MAV tendered for its Liability Mutual insurance (LMI) scheme service provider in 2021-22. The contract provides four services to the Liability Mutual Insurance Scheme – reinsurance broking, claims management, risk management and underwriting and administrative services. To ensure strong probity, the MAV engaged several external consultants to deliver key elements of the program, including PricewaterhouseCoopers to support the development of specifications and evaluation criteria, Crowe provided probity advisor services and Comprara oversaw the procurement process. The process is nearing completion and has provided a range of benefits to MAV and the LMI scheme, including better understanding of the scheme's back-end services, greater transparency in the input resourcing of the service provider functions and price savings.

MAV Procurement - guidance on the Act

Last year, several councils came to MAV Procurement for guidance on the implications of the policy framework that is now required under the Local Government Act 2020. There was concern across the sector about implications for collaborative procurement. As a result, MAV Procurement developed a special guidance note to better inform councils' decision-making process, with input from procurement specialist ArcBlue and the Auditor-General's office. More than also 80 participants attended a webinar that allowed for more detailed information and then, several councils updated their procurement policies. Overall, we are seeing this work leading to a more mature approach to procurement and greater collaboration across the sector.

Further detail will be provided in our Annual Report, which is expected to be completed in late October.

Municipal Association of Victoria
Level 12, 60 Collins Street, Melbourne VIC 3000
GPO Box 4326, Melbourne 3001
Telephone: 03 9667 5555 Fax: 03 9667 5550
Email: inquiries@mav.asn.au Website: www.mav.asn.au