



A new Local Government Act for WA

Consultation report – Integrated Planning and Reporting

Contents

Introduction	2
How we consulted	2
Responses received	3
Overview.....	3
Breakdown of responses on Integrated Planning and Reporting	3
What we heard	3
Planning.....	4
Reporting.....	5
Integration and Alignment.....	6
Community Engagement	7
Flexibility.....	7
Summary	9
Where to from here	9

Introduction

Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR) is a foundation of modern local government. IPR enables community members and stakeholders to participate in shaping the future of the community and in identifying issues and solutions. IPR is a process designed to:

- Articulate the community's vision, outcomes and priorities;
- Allocate resources to achieve the vision, striking a considered balance between aspirations and affordability; and
- Monitor and report progress.

In addition, IPR aims to encourage local governments to link with and influence planning by others that also impact on community outcomes including regional planning bodies, State and Federal agencies and community organisations.

In 2010, the IPR Framework and Guidelines were introduced in Western Australia with all local governments required to work with their communities to have their first plans in place by 1 July 2013.

Local governments are required to prepare:

- a Strategic Community Plan, a ten-year plan informed by community aspirations; and
- a Corporate Business Plan, which identifies and mobilises resources to deliver community priorities identified in the Strategic Community Plan.

Asset management, workforce and long-term financial plans are prepared to support and inform the local government's needs into the future.

How we consulted

Following the release of discussion papers in September 2018, over 100 workshops, forums and meetings were held with community, local governments and stakeholders. This consultation included 28 community workshops across Western Australia and 'pop-up' stalls in shopping centres and community halls. Multiple workshops were held in all Western Australia's regions.

The workshops provided an opportunity for attendees to discuss topics that were of interest to them. All attendees were also encouraged to provide a submission.

Individual council members, local government staff, peak bodies, community organisations, councils and community were invited to have their say by completing online surveys or providing a written submission.

The objective of the consultation was to seek the views of as many interested people as possible, rather than scientifically sampling the population. As a consequence, responses are from people with a keen interest in local government, either because of their working relationship or because of their experiences with local government (often their own).

Responses received

Overview

A total of 3,151 responses to the review were received. This was made up of surveys on each of the 11 discussion papers released, written submissions and informal 'post card' responses collected during workshops.

For every topic residents/ratepayers provided the largest number of responses.

The gender balance amongst survey responses was reasonably representative (55% male, 45% female), but the sample was skewed heavily towards older age groups. Around 75 per cent of respondents were aged 46 years or over, with nearly half over 55. Less than 12 per cent were aged 35 or under.

Breakdown of responses on Integrated Planning and Reporting

A total of 155 responses addressed the topic of Integrated Planning and Reporting, which included 50 written submissions and 105 survey responses.

The 155 submissions were drawn from private individuals and residents/ratepayers groups (45); local government councils and zones (52); council members (19); local government staff and chief executive officers (27); government agencies (2); peak bodies (2), stakeholders from business and civil society (7) and member of Parliament (1).

What we heard

The following sections provide data on and outlines key messages from the feedback received on the topic of IPR.

A common theme in many submissions was the importance of community engagement. Performance measurement also generated significant discussion from both community members, local governments and peak bodies.

The WA Council of Social Services (WACOSS) noted that a critical issue for local governments is the extent to which inequality of resources at a local government level can perpetuate social and economic inequities for local communities. They also noted that greater consideration needs to be given as how to balance the resource base against the need to ensure that children and families in disadvantaged areas are given greater opportunities and for all local communities to have an equal chance to thrive.

The Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) supported the introduction of legislative requirements for local governments to adopt community engagement policies which would allow them to determine effective strategies for engaging communities at the local level.

The Integrated Planners Network (IPN) WA - Local Government Professionals Australia WA (LG Professionals) provided detailed comments on IPR including:

- High-level legislative requirements for a 'plan for the future' are supported and allow for sufficient flexibility across different sized local governments.

- Opportunities to improve the clarity of guidance material such as the IPR Guidelines and Advisory Standard.
- Strong support for minimum standards to ensure basic compliance with IPR.
- General support for the standardisation of performance measures across local governments which positively inform decision-making and are a true reflection of performance/organisational health.
- Strong support for mandating community engagement requirements but mechanisms need to be flexible given the significant diversity that exists across local government communities.

Overall, IPR was supported by larger and metropolitan local governments which recognised that IPR legislation was in many ways an example of an approach where minimum standards were set in legislation and supported by standards and guidance. However, other feedback suggested there is a need improve understanding of minimum legislative requirements versus the suggestions provided in guidance materials.

Feedback on IPR related closely to the topic of community engagement, and there is a separate consultation report which provides an in-depth analysis of feedback received.

Workshops

Feedback from the workshops on the role of IPR and how local governments should undertake the process varied. A tiered approach for IPR was discussed and was supported by a number of local governments, however there were differing views on how this could be implemented. There was a common view that there was a general lack of understanding of IPR within some local governments and that additional education and resources are required to help support local governments.

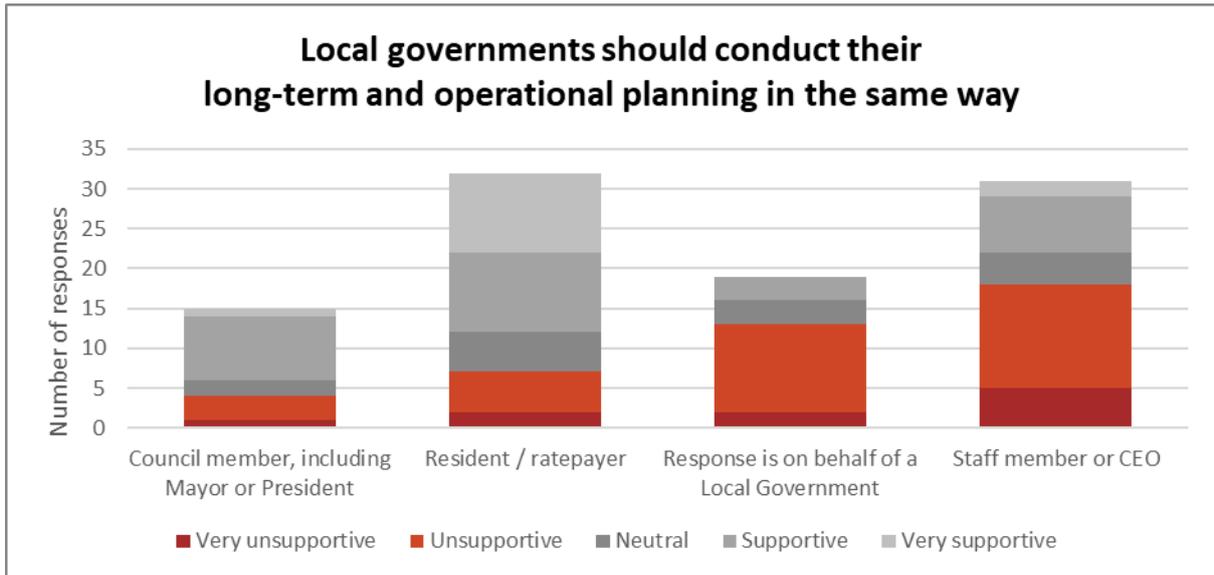
Surveys and written submissions

Planning

IPR is cyclical and normally begins with the development of a Strategic Community Plan. The Strategic Community Plan should be informed by community aspirations and reflects the community's vision, strategic direction, long and medium-term priorities and resourcing implications over a ten-year period.

For IPR to be effective, the plans also need to be understandable and easily communicated. The local governments successfully implementing IPR seem to have straightforward plans appropriate for the size of their organisation which are understood by their whole administration, council and the community.

Most residents (63 per cent) and council members (60 per cent) stated that all local governments should conduct their long term and operational planning in the same way. This view was contrasted by staff (29 per cent) and responses provided on behalf of local government (16 per cent).



Local government staff (65 per cent) and council members (53 per cent) supported smaller local governments having less onerous requirements for how they conduct long-term and operational planning. There was less support from residents (31 per cent) and, interestingly, responses submitted on behalf of local governments (42 per cent).

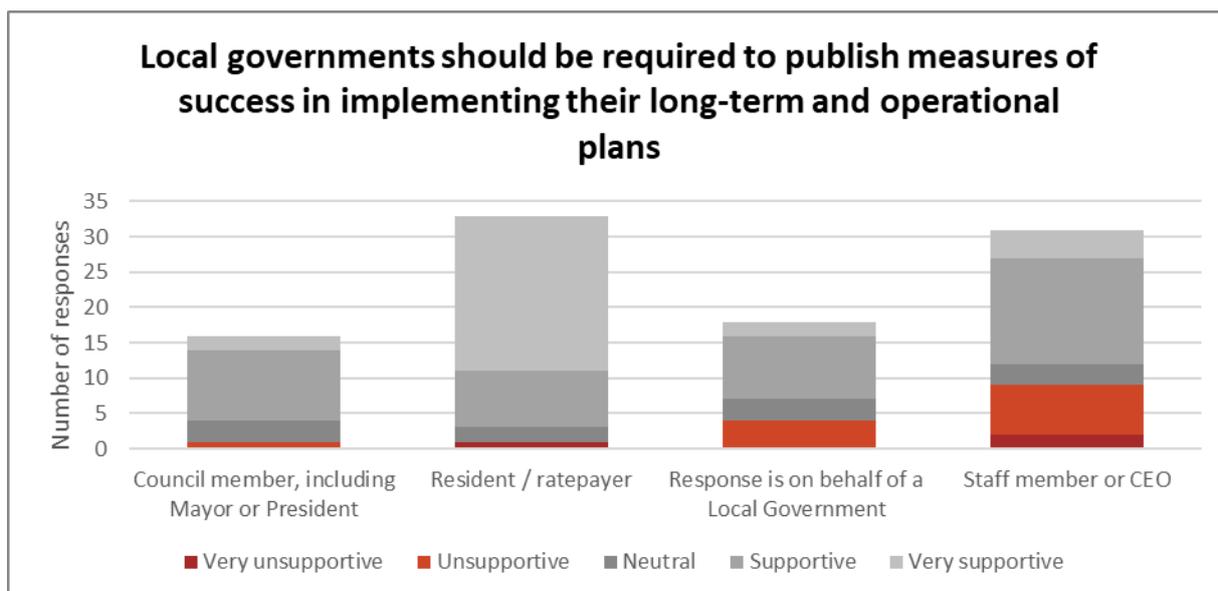
Reporting

IPR provides a structure for local government to report on their progress meeting strategic objectives and community aspirations informed by engagement and achievements.

It is currently open to local governments to design complementary means of reporting progress and outcomes to the community. There are good examples in the sector, including video reports, user friendly newspaper inserts and displays at the local market.

The topic of performance measurement was one of the most discussed themes within the topic of Integrated Planning and Reporting. Some respondents advocated for greater performance measurement and a central repository of key performance indicators that built on MyCouncil, including standardised service performance data.

There was support for local governments being required to publish measures of success. Most support came from residents (91 per cent) but support was also received from most council members (75 per cent), staff (61 per cent) and local governments (61 per cent).



Residents and rate payers strongly supported uniform key performance indicators (85 per cent) and to a lesser degree council members (63 per cent). While less supportive of uniform key performance indicators, approximately half of responses provided on behalf of local governments (53 per cent) did believe it was important that measures of success are broadly comparable across local governments.

Integration and Alignment

The State Government has a number of statutory plans which local governments are required to develop such as Local Health Plans, Disability and Access Plans and Town Planning Schemes. Currently there is no requirement for these plans to be integrated with the IPR documents and each plan has different timeframes for completion and review.

A stronger partnership between the State Government and local government through the development of IPR documents could result in greater consistency between State and local priorities and enhancing the delivery of both State and local policy and programs.

Council members (87 per cent), local government staff (74 per cent) and residents (73 per cent), and local governments (58 per cent) supported the greater use of IPR documents to inform State Government policy and service delivery.

Statutory plans are controlled by different State Government departments, which can make alignment challenging. The survey asked respondents whether all local government plans should be combined under IPR. Residents (73 per cent) were supportive, however, there was less support from local government staff (58 per cent), council members (40 per cent) and responses provided on behalf of local governments (32 per cent).

Likewise, there was some support from residents (67 per cent) and council members (53 per cent) for mandating regional cooperation for IPR planning, and unsurprisingly, less support from staff (35 per cent) or local governments (28 per cent).

This may suggest that while improvements and efficiencies could be gained from aligning local plans, and informing regional planning processes, this could be achieved without further or additional prescription in the new Local Government Act.

Community Engagement

Community consultation and engagement plays a pivotal role in the IPR process. Respondents strongly support a role for the community in the following areas:

- To be actively involved in the development of the Strategic Community Plan (94 per cent)
- To provide feedback to the local government on Draft Strategic Community Plans and Corporate Business Plans (93 per cent)
- To be notified of a local government's plans and reports (for example, publication of these documents on the local government's website) (99 per cent)
- To assess the local government's success in achieving the priorities identified in the Strategic Community Plan (69 per cent).

The current IPR Framework and Guidelines includes a section on community engagement good practice and how local governments can have better collaboration with the community. This flexibility has supported a number of local governments to adopt engagement plans which are responsive to local government's size, location and community demographics.

The survey canvassed a range of options for the introduction of minimum requirements for community engagement in the IPR process:

- **Minimum number or percentage:** Most members of the public (81 per cent) and council members (73 per cent) supported local governments being required to engage a minimum number of people or percentage of people when preparing IPR.
- **Diversity:** Most residents (78 per cent), council members (73 per cent) and staff (58 per cent) supported local governments being required to ensure that community engagement is representative of the community's diverse population.
- **Evidence of engagement:** There was near universal support for local governments being required to demonstrate that the community has been consulted on the completion of draft plans.

Similar to broader local government community engagement practice, consideration will need to be given to balance the need to prescribe minimum standards, maximise community engagement and participation, and allow the flexibility for local governments to adopt practices which work for their communities.

Flexibility

The IPR Framework and Guidelines establish that IPR is not a "one size fits all" model and each local government should use IPR at a scale appropriate to the size and needs of their organisation and community. It is also recognised that local

governments will have different approaches to IPR. The Framework and Guidelines were deliberately written with the flexibility that reflects this.

Some local governments have indicated they would like more guidance and support in the Framework and Guidelines to assist them in the IPR process and ensure consistency across all local governments.

Overall, most respondents did not believe that IPR requirements should differ based on any of the four criteria suggested in the consultation paper:

- population (47 per cent)
- geography (35 per cent)
- location (29 per cent); or
- Salaries and Allowances Tribunal (SAT) band (41 per cent).

The exception was local government staff, most of whom supported differing IPR requirements based on population (76 per cent). This was broadly consistent with the response to the earlier question related to whether smaller local governments should have fewer rules.

Peak bodies and other stakeholders

As noted previously, the Integrated Planners Network WA (IPN) fully supports mandating community engagement requirements but does not support prescribing the mechanisms in which this is undertaken, given the significant diversity that exists across local government communities.

The IPN suggested the introduction of meaningful performance measures will allow for benchmarking across local governments that will facilitate a natural progression towards improvement through peer comparison. The IPN is also an advocate of the Local Government Professional/PwC Australasian Performance Excellence Program for this reason.

The Property Council suggested the only way to measure local government effectiveness is to ensure that all activities undertaken have been appropriately planned and are then monitored and measured against established performance criteria. They supported a centralised and standardised local government reporting framework to be established at State-level (as exists in Victoria) so that outcomes can be measured and relevant action taken in response to any deficiencies.

WACOSS noted there is increasing recognition that shared outcomes are vital to drive a unified vision for the wellbeing of all Western Australians. WACOSS is working in partnership with the State Government in the development of an outcomes framework for use across government and the community services sector. An outcomes framework provides the opportunity to co-design innovative service delivery at population, agency, program and place-based levels.

WACOSS also highlighted alternative community development such as Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), which is based on the idea that communities can drive the community development process themselves by identifying and mobilising existing, but often unrecognised assets.

Summary

An analysis of feedback received through the consultation workshops and submissions has identified the following key themes:

- High-level legislative requirements for a 'plan for the future' are supported and allow for sufficient flexibility across different sized local governments.
- There is strong support for inclusion of community engagement requirements which support local governments to engage effectively with their communities.
- General support for the standardisation of performance measures across local governments which positively inform decision-making and are a true reflection of performance/organisational health.
- There are opportunities to improve the clarity of guidance material such as the IPR Guidelines and Advisory Standard.

Where to from here

Feedback and suggestions received during the consultation period will be used to inform the new Local Government Act.

Consideration will be given to balance the need to prescribe minimum standards for community engagement and allowing the flexibility for local governments to adopt practices which work for their communities.