

City of Rockingham Councillor Matt Whitfield



February 18th 2019

To Whom it may concern.

Please find attached my submission into the Local Government Act Review.

First of all I applaud the Local Government Minister for driving this review, I fully agree that the current local government act is, in many cases, outdated and there is an excellent opportunity to strengthen the act for the benefit of ratepayers, both now and in the future.

I strongly feel that the pendulum has swung too far, away from the elected members and into the hands of Local Government administrations and this needs addressing.

I shall keep my submission short as I appreciate the large amount of correspondence on this matter.

1. Local Government is the perfect place to test online voting and I would urge that the new act include online voting within the provisions. The actual logistics may be a few years away from being resolved, however this new act will be current when those problems are resolved. I do not support local government voting to be compulsory but online voting could substantially increase voter turnout.
2. The way in which Cities and Shires share their rate setting information could be interpreted as mis-leading by some. I feel there is the need to standardize the way in which this information is presented.
3. I believe that the new act should include provisions that all Cities/Shires allow for a public statement time, as well as the existing public question time.
4. Within the local government act it should be enshrined that the CEO or employee of a local government must not knowingly provide false or misleading information to Council. I understand that the Corruption, crime and misconduct act of 2003 generally covers this, however this is no legitimate reason why this cannot be covered in the act specifically.
5. It is my opinion that the Local Government Standards Panel are being swamped with vexatious claims of breaches. It is my opinion that there are personality clashes within Councils where ratepayer's money is spent on sending councillors to the panel. It is my submission that minor or major breaches be sent to the director general, and not the CEO of the local government for determination.
6. The Local government act, in my opinion, should include provisions that allow Councillors to have more councillor engagement meetings. Currently the administration spends their time preparing what information and recommendations will be presented to Council and the Council do not have an informal opportunity to do the same. Namely the councillors are prohibited from meeting informally so that decisions cannot be made. The administration are allowed to do this and Councillors need more opportunities to share their views, points of topic and interest. This needs to be fair.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission.

CR Matt Whitfield