



Department of
**Local Government, Sport
and Cultural Industries**



Local Government Act 1995 review
Agile • Smart • Inclusive

Local Government Act 1995 Review

Agile • Smart • Inclusive – Local governments for the future

Phase 1: Consultation Paper

8 November 2017

Name: Alys McKeough

1. Relationships between council and administration

Introductory questions

- 1) Would you like your submission to remain anonymous?

No

- 2) Postcode:

6705

- 3) Who are you submitting on behalf of?

Yourself

- 4) Local government name:

- 5) Organisation name

- 6) Are you a:

Elected member

Defining the roles of council and administration: Guidance questions

- 7) How should a council's role be defined? What should the definition include?

No change

- 8) How should the role of the CEO and administration be defined?

- 9) What other comments would you like to make on the roles of council and administration?

- 10) Are there any areas where the separation of powers is particularly unclear?

No

- 11) How do you propose that these are improved?

N/A

Improving relationships between council and administration: Guidance question

12) Do you have any other suggestions or comments on this topic?

N/A

2. Training

2.1 Competencies required to be an elected member

Elected member competencies: Guidance questions

- 13) What competencies (skills and knowledge) do you think an elected member requires to perform their role?

Knowledge of the separation of powers

An understanding of the Local Government Act and the statutory and compliance requirements local governments need to meet.

- 14) Do these vary between local governments?

Yes

- 15) If so, in what way?

2.2 Funding training

Funding training: Guidance questions

- 16) Who should pay for the costs of training (course fees, travel, other costs)?

A funding pool to assist small remote local governments who have added costs based on locality and have smaller rate bases.

- 17) If councils are required to pay for training, should a training fund be established to reduce the financial impact for small and regional local governments?

Yes

- 18) Should contribution to such a fund be based on local government revenue or some other measure?

Contribution should be made per ratepayer.

Do you have any other suggestions or comments on this topic?

More regional training or online learning.

2.3 Mandatory training

Mandatory training: Guidance questions

- 19) Should elected member training be mandatory?
Yes
- 20) Why or why not?
It is important that councilors have the knowledge to perform their duties.
- 21) Should candidates be required to undertake some preliminary training to better understand the role of an elected member?
Yes
- 22) Should this be Compulsory?
Yes
- 23) Should prior learning or service be recognised in place of completing training for elected members?
Yes
- 24) If yes, how would this work?
The same way RPL works for training certificates not specifically related to a course but more along the lines of work history
- 25) What period should apply for elected members to complete essential training after their election?
1 year

2.4 Continuing professional development

Continuing professional development: Guidance questions

- 26) Should ongoing professional development be undertaken by elected members?
Yes
- 27) If so, what form should this take?
It should not necessarily be compulsory but available for members to increase their knowledge.

Training: Guidance question

28) Do you have any other suggestions or comments on training?

3. The behaviour of elected members

3.1 Current Situation

Codes of conduct: Guidance questions

29) Should standards of conduct/behaviour differ between local governments?

No

30) Please explain.

All local governments should be expected to behave in the same way

Which option do you prefer for codes of conduct and why?

The last option - Codes of conduct are required

The codes will only cover the matters which local governments have a discretion to decide

All other matters are to be addressed in Act and Regulations

Advantage - The legislation will be reorganised to

31) How should a code of conduct be enforced?

A code of conduct should be handled on a local level with the CEO/President and performance managed.

3.2 Regulation of elected member conduct: rules of conduct

Streamlined rules of conduct: Guidance questions

32) Do you support streamlined Rules of Conduct regulations?

Yes

33) Why?

If most rules are captured under the code of conduct this maintains the local government autonomy.

34) If the rules were streamlined, which elements should be retained?

Those outlined in Option1

35) Do you support a reduction in the time frame in which complaints can be made?

Yes

36) Is three months adequate?

Yes

Revised disciplinary framework: Guidance questions

37) Do you support an outcome-based framework for elected members?

38) Why or why not?

39) What specific behaviours should an outcomes based framework target?

3.3 Other matters recommended in the 2015-16 review

Application of the Rules of Conduct: Guidance question

- 40) Should the rules of conduct that govern behaviour of elected members be extended to all candidates in council elections?

Yes

- 41) Please explain.

So it does not affect a persons reputation.

Offence Provisions: Guidance questions

- 42) Should the offence covering improper use of information be extended to former members of council for a period of twelve months?

Yes

- 43) Why?

To maintain the organisations integrity.

- 44) Should this restriction apply to former employees?

Yes

- 45) Please explain?

Confidentiality: Guidance question

- 46) Is it appropriate to require the existence and details of a complaint to remain confidential until the matter is resolved?

Yes

- 47) Why?

So it does not affect a persons reputation.

3.4 Reforms to the Local Government Standards Panel and the means to review alleged breaches of the Rules of Conduct Regulations

Sector conduct review committees: Guidance questions

- 48) What do you see as the benefits and disadvantages of this model?
- 49) What powers should the Conduct Review Committee have?
- 50) In your opinion what matters should go directly to the Standards Panel?
- 51) Who should be able to be a member of a panel: elected members, people with local government experience, independent stakeholders?
- 52) Who should select the members for the pool?
- 53) How many members should there be on the Review Committee?
- 54) Are the proposed actions for the Review Committee appropriate?
- 55) If not, what do you propose?

Review of elected member non-compliance: Guidance questions

- 56) Which of the options for dealing with complaints do you prefer? Why?

- 57) Are there any other options that could be considered?
- 58) Who should be able to request a review of a decision: the person the subject of the complaint, the complainant or both?

3.5 Sanctions and other Standard Panel matters

Mediation: Guidance question

- 59) Do you support the inclusion of mediation as a sanction for the Panel?
- 60) Why or why not?

Prohibition from attending council meetings: Guidance questions

- 61) Do you support the Panel being able to prohibit elected members from attending council meetings?
- 62) Why or why not?

How many meetings should the Panel be able to order the elected member not attend?

- 63) Should the elected member be eligible for sitting fees and allowances in these circumstances?
- 64) Why

Compensation to the local government: Guidance questions

- 65) Do you support the Panel being able to award financial compensation to the local government?
- 66) Why or why not?

67) What should the maximum amount be?

Complaint administrative fee: Guidance questions

68) Do you support this option?

69) Why or why not?

70) Do you believe that a complaint administrative fee would deter complainants from lodging a complaint?

71) Is this appropriate?

72) Would a complaint administrative fee be appropriate for a sector conduct review committee model?

73) Why or why not?

74) What would be an appropriate fee for lodging a complaint?

75) Should the administrative fee be refunded with a finding of minor breach or should it be retained by the Department to offset costs?

76) Why or why not?

Cost recovery to local government: Guidance questions

77) Do you support the cost of the panel proceedings being paid by a member found to be in breach?

78) Why or why not?

Publication of complaints in the annual report: Guidance question

- 79) Do you support the tabling of the decision report at the Ordinary Council Meeting?
- 80) Why or why not?

Tabling decision report at Ordinary Council Meeting: Guidance question

- 81) Do you support this option?
- 82) Why or why not?

3.6 Elected member interests

Elected member interests: Guidance questions

- 83) Should not-for-profit organisation members participate in council decisions affecting that organisation?
Yes
- 84) Why or why not?

This is particularly relevant to small shires where often the all the councilors may be involved in the organisation, without discretion regarding this decisions may not be able to be made.
- 85) Would your response be the same if the elected member was an office holder in the organisation?
Yes

Improving the behaviour of elected members: Guidance question

86) Do you have any other suggestions or comments on this topic?

4. Local government administration

4.1 Recruitment and selection of local government Chief Executive Officers

Recruitment and selection of local government CEOs: Guidance questions

- 87) Would councils benefit from assistance with CEO recruitment and selection?
- No
- 88) Why?
- 89) How could the recruitment and selection of local government CEOs be improved?
- 90) Should the Public Sector Commission be involved in CEO recruitment and selection?
- No
- 91) If so, how?
- 92) Should other experts be involved in CEO recruitment and selection?
- No
- 93) If so, who and how?
- 94) What competencies, attributes and qualifications should a CEO have?
CEOs should be capable of performing the duties as required by the council. With the varying councils in the State and the services they provide we believe this should be up to the council employing the CEO - we do not believe that this can be a one size fits all approach purely because of the diversity in WA.

4.2 Acting Chief Executive Officers

Acting CEOs: Guidance questions

- 95) Should the process of appointing an acting CEO be covered in legislation?

No

- 96) Why or why not?

- 97) If so, who should appoint the CEO when there is a short term temporary vacancy (covering sick or annual leave for example)?

The CEO through standing orders and approval of the council.

- 98) Who should appoint the CEO if there will be vacancy for an extended period (for example, while a recruitment process is to be undertaken)?

Council through recommendation at the council meeting.

4.3 Performance review of local government Chief Executive Officers

Performance review of local government CEOs: Guidance questions

- 99) Who should be involved in CEO performance reviews?

Councillors

- 100) What should the criteria be for reviewing a CEO's performance?

Again given the diversity of the WA this needs to be determined at a local level.

- 101) How often should CEO performance be reviewed?

Yearly

102) Which of the above options do you prefer?

Option 2

103) Why?

104) Is there an alternative model that could be considered?

4.4 Extension or termination of the Chief Executive Officer contract immediately before or following an election

Termination or extension of CEO contract around an election: Guidance questions

105) Would a 'cooling off' period before a council can terminate the CEO following an election assist strengthening productive relationships between council and administration?

Yes

106) What length should such a cooling off period be?

6 months

107) For what period before an election should there be a restriction on a council from extending a CEO contract?

6 months

108) Should there be any exceptions to this?

No

4.5 Public expectations of staff performance

Public expectations of staff performance: Guidance questions

109) Is greater oversight required over local government selection and recruitment of staff?

No

110) Should certain offences or other criteria exclude a person from being employed in a local government?

Yes

111) If so, what?

It should be case by case but if a person has been charged for an offence that relates directly to the job they are likely to perform then the question should be asked if they are appropriate for the position.

Strengthening local government administration: Guidance question

112) Do you have any other suggestions or comments on this topic?

5. Supporting local governments in challenging times

Remedial intervention: Guidance questions

- 113) Should the appointed person be a departmental employee, a local government officer or an external party?
- 114) Why?
- 115) Should the appointed person be able to direct the local government or would their role be restricted to advice and support?
- 116) Please explain.
- 117) Who should pay for the appointed person?
- 118) Why?

Powers of appointed person: Guidance question

- 119) What powers should an appointed person have?

Remedial action process: Guidance questions

- 120) Do you think the proposed approach would improve the provision of good governance in Western Australia?
- 121) Please explain.

122) What issues need to be considered in appointing a person?

**Supporting local governments in challenging times:
Guidance question**

123) Do you have any other suggestions or comments on this topic?

6. Making it easier to move between State and local government employment

Transferability of employees: Guidance questions

124) Should local and State government employees be able to carry over the recognition of service and leave if they move between State and local government?

125)

126) What would be the benefits if local and State government employees could move seamlessly via transfer and secondment?

More options for employees and for recruitment.

Making it easier to move between State and local government employment: Guidance question

127) Do you have any other suggestions or comments on this topic?

7. Gifts

7.1 Simplifying the gift provisions

A new framework for disclosing gifts: Guidance questions

128) Is the new framework for disclosing gifts appropriate?

Yes

129) If not, why?

130) Is the threshold of \$500 appropriate?

Yes

131) If no, why?

132) Should certain gifts – or gifts from particular classes or people – be prohibited?

No

133) Why or why not?

I think that greater transparency is required rather than being more prescriptive - prohibiting items will still not stop people from trying to influence local governments.

134) If yes, what gifts should be prohibited?

Excluding gifts received in a personal capacity: Guidance questions

135) Should gifts received in a personal capacity be exempt from disclosure?

No

136) If yes, how could 'personal capacity' be defined?

137) Should there be any other exemptions from the requirement to disclose a gift over the threshold?

No

138) If so, what should these be? Please justify your proposal.

Gifts: Guidance question

139) Do you have any other suggestions or comments on this topic?

Public figures have to be accountable.

8. Access to information

8.1 Public notices

Public notices: Guidance questions

140) Which general option do you prefer for making local public notices available?

Option 4

Why?

Small local community where email is effective as a means of communication along with printed copies on notice boards.

141) Should the requirements for any notice in the Supplementary Information - Public Notices be changed?

Yes

142) Please list and explain the reasons for the proposed change.

143) Could any of the notices in the Supplementary information be published on alternative websites?

Yes

144) Please provide details

8.2 Information available for public inspection

Information available for public inspection: Guidance questions

145) Using the following table, advise how you think information should be made available:

Provision	Documents	In person only	Website only	Both	Neither
Section 5.53	Annual Report Both Both				
Section 5.75 & 5.76	Primary and Annual returns – for Elected members Includes – sources of income Trusts Debts Property holdings. Interests and positions in corporations. Both				
Section 5.87	Discretionary disclosures generally Both				
Section 5.82	Gifts (already required to be on the website) Both				
Section 5.83	Disclosure of travel contributions (already required to be on the website) Both				
Elections Regulations 30H	Electoral gifts register Both				
Section 5.98A	Allowance for deputy mayor or deputy president				

	Both
Section 5.100	Payments for certain committee members Both
Functions and General Regulations 17	Tenders register Both
Section 5.94 & Administration Regulations 29	Register of delegations to committees, CEO and employees Both
	Minutes of council, committee and elector meetings Both
	Future plan for the district Both
	Annual Budget Both
	Notice papers and agendas of meetings Both
	Reports tabled at a council or committee meeting Both
	Complaints register (concerning elected members) Both

Contracts of
employment of the CEO
and other senior local
government employees

Both

Schedule of fees and
charges

Both

Proposed local laws

Both

Gazetted Local laws
(and other law that has
been adopted by the
district)

Both

Rates record

Both

Electoral roll

Both

Note: There is no intention to amend the current limitations imposed by section 5.95 of the Act which limits the disclosure of certain information.

146) Should the additional information that is available to the public in other jurisdictions be available here?

147) If so which items?

148) How should they be made available: in person, website only or both?

149) Is there additional information that you believe should be made publicly available? Please detail.

- 150) For Local Governments: How often do you receive requests from members of the public to see this information?
- 151) What resources do you estimate are involved in providing access in person (hours of staff time and hourly rate)?

Access to information: Guidance question

- 152) Do you have any other suggestions or comments on this topic?

9. Available information

9.1 Expanding the information provided to the public

Expanding the information provided to the public: Guidance questions

153) Which of these options do you prefer?

Option 1: Status Quo

154) Why?

We are a small council and wish to retain our autonomy.

155) In the table below, please indicate whether you think the information should be made available, and if so, whether this should be required or at the discretion of the local government:

Proposal	Should this be made available: No, optional, required?
Live streaming video of council meetings on local government website	Optional
Diversity data on council membership and employees	Optional
Elected member attendance rates at council meetings	Optional
Elected member representation at external meetings/events	Optional
Gender equity ratios for staff salaries	Optional
Complaints made to the local government and actions taken	Optional
Performance reviews of CEO and senior employees	Optional

Proposal	Should this be made available: No, optional, required?
Website to provide information on differential rate categories	Optional
District maps and ward boundaries	Optional
Adverse findings of the Standards Panel, State Administrative Tribunal or Corruption and Crime Commission.	Optional
Financial and non-financial benefits register	Optional

156) What other information do you think should be made available?

Expanding the information available to the public: Guidance question

157) Do you have any other suggestions or comments on this topic?

Defining red tape: Guidance questions

158) Which regulatory measures within the Act should be removed or amended to reduce the burden on local governments? Please provide detailed analysis with your suggestions.

a) Briefly describe the red tape problem you have identified.

I

b) What is the impact of this problem? Please quantify if possible.

c) What solutions can you suggest to solve this red tape problem?

159) Which regulatory measures within the Act should be removed or amended to reduce the burden on the community? Please provide detailed analysis with your suggestions.

a) Briefly describe the red tape problem you have identified.

b) What is the impact of this problem? Please quantify if possible.

c) What solutions can you suggest to solve this red tape problem?

10.1 Potential red tape reductions

Special majority: Guidance question

160) Should the provisions for a special majority be removed?

Yes

161) Why or why not?

To make all voting uniform across the State.

Senior employees: Guidance questions

- 162) Is it appropriate that council have a role in the appointment, dismissal or performance management of any employees other than the CEO? Why or why not?
- 163) Is it necessary for some employees to be designated as senior employees?
- 164) If so, what criteria should define which employees are senior employees?

Exemption from accounting standard AASB124 - Related party disclosures: Guidance questions

- 165) Are the existing related party disclosure provisions in the Act sufficient without the additional requirements introduced by AASB 124?
- Yes
- 166) Why or why not?
- This is just duplication of information.

Disposal of property: Guidance questions

- 167) The threshold for trade-ins was set originally to \$50,000 in 1996 and raised to \$75,000 in 2015. Should that threshold be raised higher,
- No
- 168) if so how high?
- 169) Should the threshold remain at \$75,000 but with separate exemptions for specific types of equipment, for example plant?

Yes

170) The general \$20,000 threshold was put in place in 1996 and has not been amended. Should the threshold be raised higher than \$20,000?

No

171) If so, what should it be and why?

172) Would raising these thresholds create an unacceptable risk that the items would not be disposed of to achieve the best price for the local government?

Yes

173) Is there an alternative model for managing the disposal of property? Please explain.

Reducing red tape: Guidance question

174) Do you have any other suggestions or comments on this topic?

11.1 Risks and benefits of borrowing

Regional subsidiaries: Guidance questions

- 175) Which option do you prefer?
- 176) Should regional subsidiaries be allowed to borrow money other than from the member councils?
- 177) Why or why not?

- 178) If a regional subsidiary is given the power to borrow directly, what provisions should be put in place to mitigate the risks?

Regional subsidiaries: Guidance question

- 179) Do you have any other suggestions or comments on this topic, including on any other aspect of the *Local Government (Regional Subsidiaries) Regulations 2017*?

Local Government Act review: Guidance question

- 180) You are invited to make comment and put forward suggestions for change on other matters which have not been covered in this paper.