



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: Brent Fleeton

1. Relationships between council and administration

Introductory questions

- 1) Would you like your submission to remain anonymous?
No
- 2) Postcode:
6051
- 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?

Oversees the administration of essential local services which their local community needs, ensures budgets are resourced accordingly, setting the appetite for risk in decision-making, setting culture and the direction of the organisation.
- 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?
Yes
- 11) How do you propose that these are improved?

Too many Councillors seem to want to be in the organisation, and not on Council. They talk too often of very specific problems such as car parking in particular areas, not keeping a broader view. They often spend a lot of time 'directing' officers to do something.

Improving relationships between council and administration: Guidance question

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

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?

Financial reporting, stakeholder management, public speaking, understanding how general public policy processes should run, understanding risk, managing expectations and media management.

- 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)?

Reasonable training and development should be part of the costs of governance included in the annual budget

- 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?

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

2.3 Mandatory training

Mandatory training: Guidance questions

- 19) Should elected member training be mandatory?
- Yes
- 20) Why or why not?
- Because having observed some of my colleagues for the past 2.5 years, it's clear who can read a budget/set of financial documents and who can't. At the very least Councillors should have to be able to prove they can understand basic budgeting etc. and understand the LG Act.
- 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?
- I've studied the AICD course, university learning, experience and can prove basic competencies in the areas listed in this submission. Surely a test can be created to see who needs training and who doesn't.
- 25) What period should apply for elected members to complete essential training after their election?
- 3 months

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?

AICD is an excellent organisation which could easily provide some options here.

Training: Guidance question

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

Concentrate on getting Councillors to understand their role, setting risk appetites and understanding that money doesn't simply appear out of nowhere is a great start.

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.

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

31) How should a code of conduct be enforced?

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?

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

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?

No

38) Why or why not?

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

No

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?

No

- 41) Please explain.

I found it very unfair that I was never able to know who made a complaint about me, even though it was thrown out by the Standards Panel - surely I get to know who has accused me?

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?

- 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?

No

- 47) Why?

I found it very unfair that I was never able to know who made a complaint about me, even though it was thrown out by the Standards Panel - surely I get to know who has accused me?

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?
No
- 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?
No
- 84) Why or why not?
Who would they be accountable to for their decisions?
- 85) Would your response be the same if the elected member was an office holder in the organisation?
No

Improving the behaviour of elected members: Guidance question

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

Elected members are just that, elected. The Department has no firm basis in which to regulate their behaviour or actions. If they break the law, they'll be prosecuted that way. But to try and stop a Councillor from voicing an opinion or acting in a way that may be contrary to the majority goes against the foundations of our democracy.

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?
- Yes
- 88) Why?
- Gaining access to larger talent pools, setting KPIs that mean something, providing confidence in an expensive process.
- 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?
- Further politicises the process.
- 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?

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)?
- 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)?

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?
- 100) What should the criteria be for reviewing a CEO's performance?
- 101) How often should CEO performance be reviewed?
- 102) Which of the above options do you prefer?

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?

No

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

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

3 months

108) Should there be any exceptions to this?

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?

Yes

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

Yes

111) If so, what?

Fraud

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?

Where's the box asking for the costs?

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?

Who gets to determine what 'class' of people are so evil that a Councillor would be so overcome with guilt they'd simply do their bidding should they receive a gift from them?

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?

Yes

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?

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?

Re-inforce it is the responsibility of the Councillor to determine what needs to be declared under the rules and stop allowing them to use "oh but the CEO said it was fine to not...". Keep them 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?
Why?
- 141) Should the requirements for any notice in the Supplementary Information - Public Notices be changed?
- 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?
- 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	<p>Primary and Annual returns – for Elected members</p> <p>Includes – sources of income</p> <p>Trusts</p> <p>Debts</p> <p>Property holdings.</p> <p>Interests and positions in corporations.</p> <p>Both</p>
Section 5.87	<p>Discretionary disclosures generally</p> <p>Both</p>
Section 5.82	<p>Gifts (already required to be on the website)</p> <p>Both</p>
Section 5.83	<p>Disclosure of travel contributions (already required to be on the website)</p> <p>Both</p>
Elections Regulations 30H	<p>Electoral gifts register</p> <p>Both</p>
Section 5.98A	<p>Allowance for deputy mayor or deputy president</p> <p>Both</p>
Section 5.100	<p>Payments for certain committee members</p> <p>Both</p>
Functions and General	<p>Tenders register</p> <p>Both</p>

Regulations 17

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 Website only
	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
Neither
Electoral roll
Neither

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?

Yes

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?

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	Not Required
Diversity data on council membership and employees	Not Required
Elected member attendance rates at council meetings	Required
Elected member representation at external meetings/events	Required
Gender equity ratios for staff salaries	Required
Complaints made to the local government and actions taken	Required
Performance reviews of CEO and senior employees	Required
Website to provide information on differential rate categories	Required

Proposal	Should this be made available: No, optional, required?
District maps and ward boundaries	Required
Adverse findings of the Standards Panel, State Administrative Tribunal or Corruption and Crime Commission.	Required
Financial and non-financial benefits register	Required

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?

161) Why or why not?

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?
- 166) Why or why not?

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,
- 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?
- 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?
- 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?
- 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?

Option 2: Regional subsidiaries are permitted to borrow from Treasury Corporation

176) Should regional subsidiaries be allowed to borrow money other than from the member councils?

Option 2: Regional subsidiaries are permitted to borrow from Treasury Corporation

177) Why or why not?

Only through Treasury

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.