



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**

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Phase 1: Consultation Paper

8 November 2017

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# 1. Relationships between council and administration

## Introductory questions

- 1) Would you like your submission to remain anonymous?  
No
- 2) Postcode:  
6953
- 3) Who are you submitting on behalf of?  
Yourself
- 4) Local government name:
- 5) Organisation name
- 6) Are you a:  
Other

## Defining the roles of council and administration: Guidance questions

- 7) How should a council's role be defined? What should the definition include?
- 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?
- 11) How do you propose that these are improved?

## Improving relationships between council and administration: Guidance question

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

Separation of powers between the administration and Councillors only works when the guidelines of what is a strategic matter versus what is an administrative matter is clear. No-one ( read the CEO) should be able to determine this distinction as then it is subject to manipulation. The LG Act should enact this distinction.

## 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?
- 14) Do these vary between local governments?
- 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)?
- 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?
- 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?
- 20) Why or why not?

- 21) Should candidates be required to undertake some preliminary training to better understand the role of an elected member?
- 22) Should this be Compulsory?
- 23) Should prior learning or service be recognised in place of completing training for elected members?
- 24) If yes, how would this work?
  
- 25) What period should apply for elected members to complete essential training after their election?

## 2.4 Continuing professional development

### Continuing professional development: Guidance questions

- 26) Should ongoing professional development be undertaken by elected members?
- 27) If so, what form should this take?

### Training: Guidance question

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

I believe there should be an age limit imposed on Councillors. People under say, 26-27, do not have the experience required to be a Councillor.

Continuing professional development should be mandatory for both Councillors and management but needs to be undertaken by an independent body ( NOT WALGA ). WALGA conducts courses on how to speak to the media. I undertook this course and I was taught to not answer the questions asked but to speak about the opinions/points that I wanted to get across!

The Continuing professional development courses should focus on how the Councillor/management need to answer questions truthfully and honestly : not avoid the question.

### 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?
- 30) Please explain.

Standards of behaviour need to be enacted in the LG Act. Therefore the code of conduct will be the same across councils. The writing of the code should not be up to the CEO of the council as he may be biased. eg the CEO writes the code of conduct where Councillors are barred from speaking to a ratepayer unless a member of management is present or receives a transcript of the conversation. Or the raising of an eyebrow in a certain way may lead to a violation of the code of conduct. Some council codes of conduct have incorporated these very strict rules into their codes effectively "gagging" Councillors from doing their jobs.

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?
- 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?

No

36) Is three months adequate?

No

### **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?
- 41) Please explain.

#### **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?
- 43) Why?
- 44) Should this restriction apply to former employees?
- 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?
- 47) Why?

### 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?  
Complaints against Elected Members should be heard by an independent body and not one comprised of elected members.
- 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?

No

69) Why or why not?

complaints should be encouraged : not discouraged. Charging a fee may be considered a discouraging act and flies in the face of freedom of speech.

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?  
84) Why or why not?
- 85) Would your response be the same if the elected member was an office holder in the organisation?

### **Improving the behaviour of elected members: Guidance question**

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

Elected members have to show integrity not just talk about it. eg a councillor declares a conflict of interest and elects to leave the chamber while the agenda item is being discussed. The member sits himself right outside the open chamber door within earshot of the whole discussion. When members of the public seated in the gallery close the door, the CEO orders that the door be re-opened. I don't know how you change the Elected Member's behaviour in this situation. Therefore you must legislate to make it perfectly clear that the Elected Member must not be within earshot of the Council discussion!

Also we have many examples when Elected Members declare financial and proximity conflicts of interest. The Elected Member wants to stay and vote. If the majority of Councillors agree, the Elected Member stays and votes! Again because you can't instil integrity in a person of this calibre, the LG Act needs to be amended to prevent Elected Members participating in the vote on an agenda item in which they have a conflict of interest.

## 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?
- 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?
- 91) If so, how?
- 92) Should other experts be involved in CEO recruitment and selection?
- 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?

- 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?
- 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?
- 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?
- 110) Should certain offences or other criteria exclude a person from being employed in a local government?
- 111) If so, what?

### **Strengthening local government administration: Guidance question**

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

Generally CEOs are paid way more in salary and benefits than they deserve. Some earning more than the WA Premier ( eg City of Melville current CEO : \$370,000/annum+ ). Therefore recruitment and selection of the CEO should be totally in the hands of the Elected Members without any "guidance" by management.

CEO performance reviews, in my experience, are based on qualitative criteria. These are then subject to manipulation by the CEO who wants to show himself in the best light and are often difficult if not impossible for an Elected Member to dispute or query. I would like to see, say, 50% quantitative criteria : 50% qualitative criteria employed in the review process. eg has the CEO kept rate rises below the level of inflation may well be a criterion for a quantitative measure ( and a very relevant one for ratepayers as well ). Hopefully this will ensure that ratepayers make the CEO strive for efficiency and earn his very generous salary.

## 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?

### **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?

129) If not, why?

130) Is the threshold of \$500 appropriate?

131) If no, why?

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

133) Why or why not?

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?

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?

No gifts of any denomination/kind should be allowed to be given to Elected Members nor to the City employees. This simplifies the whole gift system and does away with a lot of administration hence should result in lower costs and lower rates.

## 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 In person only Website only				



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>Website only</p>
Section 5.87	Discretionary disclosures generally
Section 5.82	Gifts (already required to be on the website)
Section 5.83	Disclosure of travel contributions (already required to be on the website)
Elections Regulations 30H	Electoral gifts register
Section 5.98A	Allowance for deputy mayor or deputy president
Section 5.100	Payments for certain committee members
Functions and General Regulations 17	Tenders register
Section 5.94 & Administration	Register of delegations to committees, CEO and employees

Minutes of council, committee and elector meetings
Future plan for the district
Annual Budget
Notice papers and agendas of meetings
Reports tabled at a council or committee meeting
Complaints register (concerning elected members)
Contracts of employment of the CEO and other senior local government employees
Schedule of fees and charges
Proposed local laws
Gazetted Local laws (and other law that has been adopted by the district)
Rates record
Electoral roll

**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?

Audio recording of Council meetings is a given. Video recording would be even better as a lot can be transmitted by body language. These recordings should be freely available to ratepayers and not charged under the FOI Act. This is against democracy.

All minutes of public meetings should be available digitally for the general public to access. Some councils ( eg City of Melville ) have deleted from their website all public meetings held prior to 2012.

## 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?

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	
Diversity data on council membership and employees	
Elected member attendance rates at council meetings	
Elected member representation at external meetings/events	
Gender equity ratios for staff salaries	
Complaints made to the local government and actions taken	
Performance reviews of CEO and senior employees	
Website to provide information on differential rate categories	

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

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?

All councils should declare how much each commercial development has spent on public art. It is an item which can and does run into millions of dollars in WA. I believe many ratepayers would be up in arms if they knew how much was being spent on public art when our footpaths are in dire need of upgrading.

## **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?
- 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.