



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

Name: Peter Best

# 1. Relationships between council and administration

## Introductory questions

- 1) Would you like your submission to remain anonymous?  
No
- 2) Postcode:  
6156
- 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?

## 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?

What Skills Should a Councillor Have?

Here's my wish list.

MUST HAVE

- Interest in long-term direction of our local community
- Listening skills, prepared to listen more often than to tell
- Emotional intelligence
- Prepared to meet with the community, often
- At least one, and often two or three evenings a week, for meetings
- Able to read and understand a big weekly information pack
- Ability to think strategically about organisational purpose
- Effective decision-making skills (not as easy as it sounds)
- Understand the difference between individual and group decision- making
- Able to define and help build long-term values for self and the City
- Able to imagine and lead in new directions
- Empathy
- Able to discuss widely differing opinions respectfully
- Able to disagree agreeably
- Able to synthesise direction amidst complexity, conflicting values and objectives
- Understand the difference between management and leadership (Councillors have no executive authority at all, by law)
- Interest in a wide range of issues about our City
- Be prepared to assess my own biases and positions

SHOULD HAVE

- Ability to read and interpret financial reports
- Sense of humour
- Collaborative style
- Wide range of contacts and life experience
- An enquiring mind
- Risk assessment skills
- Open to continuous learning

#### GOOD TO HAVE

- Expertise in at least one relevant field, such as architecture, town planning, finance, environment, waste, law, social services, communications, psychology or science.
- Board or Union leadership experience
- Qualifications such as MBA or be an Australian Institute of Company Directors graduate
- Prepared to respond with good grace and respect in all circumstances

More in the box below

- 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)?

State Government

- 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?

Training of Elected Members should be extensive, useful and compulsory. Training should not be provided by WALGA as that training is likely to be more suitable for paid staff rather than for elected members.

## 2.3 Mandatory training

### **Mandatory training: Guidance questions**

19) Should elected member training be mandatory?

Yes

20) Why or why not?

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?

No

24) If yes, how would this work?

25) What period should apply for elected members to complete essential training after their election?

6 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 Board training and regular briefings

### **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.

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

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

31) How should a code of conduct be enforced?

1) By the Mayor

2) Standards Panel

#### 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?
- No
- 36) Is three months adequate?
- No

### **Revised disciplinary framework: Guidance questions**

- 37) Do you support an outcome-based framework for elected members?
- Yes
- 38) Why or why not?
- 39) What specific behaviours should an outcomes based framework target?
- Yes

### 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.

#### **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?

Because the community expects it.

- 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?

### 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?

Standards Panel should have the power and resources to investigate issues. At present they can only read and request submissions from complainants and Councillors, making their role of limited value.

Standards Panel should have the power to insist on training, or to suspend or expel individual elected members where their behaviour significantly diminishes the integrity of their Local Government Authority or inhibits the good functioning of that Authority.

At present the Panel can only suspend the entire Council. There are many situations where one two Councillors seriously transgress the laws and expectations around Local Government but who cannot be disciplined individually.

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?

People with local government experience

52) Who should select the members for the pool?

The Minister

53) How many members should there be on the Review Committee?

Four

- 54) Are the proposed actions for the Review Committee appropriate?
- 55) If not, what do you propose?

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At present the Panel can only suspend the entire Council. There are many situations where one two Councillors seriously transgress the laws and expectations around Local Government but who cannot be disciplined individually.

### **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?  
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?  
Yes

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?

Yes

62) Why or why not?

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

Up to six, or a period up to six months from date of decision

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

No

64) Why

Of course not

### **Compensation to the local government: Guidance questions**

65) Do you support the Panel being able to award financial compensation to the local government?

No

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?

It would disenfranchise poor people

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

Yes

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?

Yes

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?

No

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?

Yes

80) Why or why not?

The public expect transparency

### **Tabling decision report at Ordinary Council Meeting: Guidance question**

81) Do you support this option?

Yes

82) Why or why not?

The public expect transparency

## **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?

Yes, at workshops, not at meetings

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?

Yes

- 88) Why?

Help is sorely needed. Councils are years behind in selection methods and elected members even more so.

- 89) How could the recruitment and selection of local government CEOs be improved?

Use of Consultants in designing the processes

- 90) Should the Public Sector Commission be involved in CEO recruitment and selection?

Yes

- 91) If so, how?

Ensuring integrity

- 92) Should other experts be involved in CEO recruitment and selection?

Yes

- 93) If so, who and how?

Consultants in designing processes

- 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?

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?

## 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?

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?

Direct the local government

116) Please explain.

117) Who should pay for the appointed person?

The Local Authority

118) Why?

### Powers of appointed person: Guidance question

119) What powers should an appointed person have?

As for the person whose role they fill

### Remedial action process: Guidance questions

120) Do you think the proposed approach would improve the provision of good governance in Western Australia?

Yes

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?

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?

Yes

133) Why or why not?

Property developers have a history of corrupting local governments

134) If yes, what gifts should be prohibited?

ALL from this class of person

#### **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?

History tells us that such loophole would be used badly



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.

It's easy, just declare it. Get over yourself.

### **Gifts: Guidance question**

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

## 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 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?

Yes

147) If so which items?

ALL

WA already has a State Open Data Policy, passed three years ago. Isn't it time we respected that policy?

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

Required

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

ALL, right down to vehicle use, Senior Staff credit cards, traffic information, electricity bills and much more.

Proposed Motions of Council should be public at least seven days before a meeting

WA already has a State Open Data Policy, passed three years ago. Isn't it time we respected that policy?

- 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?

1. The use of Motions Without Notice should be kept for only a) genuine emergencies, for example a serious risk to life and/ or property, and b) procedural matters.

I see too many decisions being brought up at the end of meetings, under Other Business, without notice. Decisions are then taken without community consultation, discussion with relevant staff or input from relevant experts. These decisions are often poorly worded and are sometimes contrary to decisions which might have been made had there been useful input. The process on the night for such Motions Without Notice is often one of amendments on- the- fly and chaotic process. Hence there are often unforeseen consequences and community anger.

I propose a mandatory two weeks process, as used in City of South Perth, where a motion is developed in consultation with relevant staff, and a yellow paper with the proposed wording circulated prior to the Council Briefing a week before meeting date. This would allow input from the public, from staff and from elected members. The two week period would allow time for the proposer, and perhaps seconder, to discuss the issue with the Mayor and a range of others in order to get the best possible clarity and acceptability.

2. The use of "Point of Order" should be curtailed in Standing Orders. Such points might be raised perhaps a dozen times a year, rather than ten times an hour as often happens now.

Councillors are increasingly using Points of Order as a debating tactic to prevent those with whom they disagree from speaking. As a result we see issues not fully explored and outcomes reflecting limited points of view.

Again, this increases community frustration and diminishes the public view of Local Government.

3. Elected Members should be advised of any and all notification of Conflict of Interest received by the CEO and/ or the Mayor.

At present we see staff and other people submitting formal notification of interest, fulfilling their requirements under the Act. T

## 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 2: Additional reporting requirement

154) Why?

WA Already has an Open Data Policy. Should we abide by that law committing Local Authorities to an Open Data approach across all areas. This is now standard in the US, UK, Japan and many other countries. The public perception of all levels of government is diminished when we keep information hidden.

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	Required
Diversity data on council membership and employees	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



Proposal	Should this be made available: No, optional, required?
Performance reviews of CEO and senior employees	Required
Website to provide information on differential rate categories	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?

As much as is possible. There is example aplenty to show myriad benefits from open data, often unexpected when the data was released.

### 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?
- 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.