

Andrew Bethell



Minister John Carey  
Western Australian Parliament  
Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries  
Parliament House  
WEST PERTH WA 6005

25 February 2022

Dear Mr Carey

**RE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT REVIEW**

Thank you to you; your Department; and the Government for putting together this review, and proposed changes, into the **Local Government Act (WA) 1995**. Although I deliver, and read, the community newspapers, *The Perth Voice* and *PerthNow (Central)* [formerly Community Newspapers Group's, *Eastern Reporter*], and have nominated as a candidate for the **Inglewood Ward** in both the **2019 and 2021 City of Stirling Elections**, I have a fairly threadbare submission.

I am afraid I have not done this review justice, let alone read the Local Government Act, even the six areas of comment and recommendations, hence a short note rather than detailed submission..

**2019 & 2021 CITY OF STIRLING-INGLEWOOD WARD CANDIDATE**

My knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of a Councillor was enhanced by going through the nomination process and running as a candidate in the 2019 and 2021 Local Government elections. That, together with my prior understanding of the responsibilities of what a local council provides for leads me to the following observations:

**Retain voluntary and postal voting**

That Local Government is apolitical. A councillor represents the issues that arise, whether it be road modifications; traffic speeds, fencing of a local park, etc. These are

issues that are not issues of philosophy or theory, on how an area should be run. [For example I would not support what I see as a usurping of its powers by the Town of Vincent banning smoking other than as required by state law (i.e inside buildings, on public transport)]. Councils are there, in essence, to service the needs of the ratepayers specifically, but also the broader community as a whole. [For example a vegetation policy aimed at increasing the tree canopy in an area benefits everyone, as does say an upgrade to a Leisure Centre].

With this in mind I would prefer the status quo to remain:

- Voluntary elections;
- Postal voting; and
- although it was changed for the City of Stirling 2019 Elections, the election of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor from within the councillors elected. (This system seemed to have given the City of Stirling good representation with former mayor Giulio Italiano, and current mayor, Mark Irwin. Together with Deputies selected who would learn in that role).

### **Proposed change-Two (four-year) limit Mayor-Three term limit councillor**

The one area of change I would like to see would be to have a limit on the number of terms (i.e years) that botha Mayor and Councillor could serve. I would propose:

- Two (four-year) limit for a Mayor and
- Three (four-year) limit for a Councillor.

This, hopefully, would have avoided some of the issues associated with former City of Perth Mayor, Lisa Scaffidi, running again in 2015 after already completing an eight-year term. Whilst this may represent a potential loss of 'corporate knowledge' of projects either underway, or in the pipeline, it would, hopefully lead to more co-operation by others in the sharing of information.

I do understand that this may be difficult in the large (by area), but small (by population), areas of the rural and remote regions of the state, depending on the number of people willing to 'put their hand up', but by giving other people an opportunity, ideally the knowledge and personal skills base would increase.

As I wrote initially I apologise for not giving this submission more thought and effort as there are more practical areas that are relevant to the community.

### **Perth (Towards 3.5 million) Retain J-DAP**

I also see the importance of a Western Australian Planning body like J-DAP (Joint Development Assessment Panel) to be guided by, but not necessarily over-ruled by Local Government. As the population of Perth and surrounds heads to 3 million and beyond (I understand there have been several planning reports to this nature), and as the State Government departments provide services such as the road; transport; power and water utilities, that are instrumental for this increased population need, it is important that they have a very strong say, if necessary over and above that of the local community.

### **Consultation is best**

#### Bus 950 (and 955) replacing Bus route 17, 21, 44 and others

[For example in 2012 Transperth commenced the 950 bus link Morley to the Sir Charles Gardiner Hospital in Nedlands. This rapid-feeder service has been a godsend for me and thousands of other commuters. There was initial regret by some at the loss of the Bus route 44 that ran an infrequent service, but I am sure that ten years on few, if any, regret the missing of Bus route 44].

#### Guildford Road widening

In 2017 the local community rejected the plan to widen Guildford Road against the Main Roads proposal. [I supported the plan however I am sure if I was one of the affected home-owners on Guildford Road whose home would have been demolished I would have reacted differently]. However to the credit of those at Main Roads they made minor adjustments to say the traffic lights timing on Eighth Avenue and Guildford Road, Maylands as well as changed the change between Walk phase for pedestrians and the less volume traffic coming on Eighth Avenue. I still would have supported the Main Roads planning as they have long-term planning in place.

## **Summary**

In summary my submission is:

Keep the existing voting system-voluntary and by postal vote.

Remove direct election of the Mayor;

Limit the terms of service to two (four year) terms for Mayor and three (four year) terms for a Councillor, but not cumulative terms. [Therefore the maximum term someone can serve is limited to three terms (i.e. twelve (12) years)]; and

Retain J-DAP and the powers of State Government Departments over Local Council (with the existing consultation process retained as this usually leads to better overall decisions being made for the existing community but with long-term planning in mind).

Thank you for considering my submission.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Bethell