



Australian Services Union

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN BRANCH



25 February 2022

Hon. John Carey MLA
Minister for Housing; Lands; Homelessness; Local Government
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Dear Minister,

Local Government Reforms

The ASU welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposed local government reforms, announced on 10 November 2021.

The ASU represents workers throughout Western Australia across a diverse range of industries, including administrative, clerical and customer services; energy and IT; social and community services; and transport. Notably, we have coverage over every worker in local government in Western Australia, and it is our largest division.

The ASU commends the significant work invested by the McGowan Government into reforming the local government industry over the last five years. This large and overdue body of work is welcomed by our members who will benefit from the enhanced protection, transparency, and accountability measures.

The ASU supports all the proposals in the Summary of Proposed Reforms Document. However, we wish to comment on the implementation of proposals under *Theme 1: Early Intervention, Effective Regulation and Stronger Penalties*.

Proposal 1.1 and 1.2 seek to establish a Chief Inspector of Local Government (the **Inspector**), who would be supported by a panel of Local Government Monitors. The Inspector would receive and investigate minor and serious complaints relating to elected members and government CEOs.

It is vital that the level of executive leadership below CEOs (i.e., Directors, Executive Managers, General Managers etc) also fall within the proposed jurisdiction of the Inspector. Executive leadership reports directly to the CEO and they wield significant power and influence in the operations and culture of a local government.

Directors and Executive Managers generally go on to become the next generation of CEOs, particularly in smaller councils therefore, if we are to improve the culture, it would be useful if the Act positively influences the workplace behaviours of those roles.

For the proposed reforms to achieve their goal of increasing effective regulation and improving accountability, it is essential that this layer of management is not excluded from the Inspector's powers.

It may also be useful to consider the terminology used for senior roles to standardise the titles across Western Australian local governments and better reflect the powers and responsibilities of those roles. For instance, a Chief Executive Officer in the corporate world would lead a board. It gives the impression of having ultimate power over the council.

Should you wish for further comment on the ASU's position, please contact me on [REDACTED] or by [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

Wayne Wood
Branch Secretary