



LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT REVIEW ►► DELIVERING FOR THE COMMUNITY

A new Local Government Act for Western Australia: **principal findings**

In 2017 the State Government announced a review of the Local Government Act 1995 — the first significant review since the Act was introduced more than two decades ago.

Between September 2018 and March 2019, the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries held consultation sessions in every region, issued surveys on potential reforms, and invited written submissions.



More than 3,000 survey responses and written submissions were received from community members, ratepayer associations, industry groups, local governments, councillors, and peak bodies.



More than 100 organisations and community groups were consulted including local government staff, peak bodies, multicultural groups, young people, Aboriginal groups and seniors.

What we heard

Respondents had diverse viewpoints about the future direction of financial management, rates, community engagement and elections (just to name a few). However, three key themes have emerged which would help transform local government:

Relationship between the council and administration

The roles of the council and administration are not just enshrined in the current legislative framework, but are built on the relationships between council members, with the CEO, and importantly, with the diverse community that councils represent.



The State Government is introducing best practice reforms to CEO recruitment and performance review, ensuring councils can appoint the best person to serve their communities.

Further work is needed to get the relationship right and ensure communities can have confidence in local government as a whole.



One system, common approach

There was some support for a flexible, principle-based system of local government, with different rules for different local governments. But what we heard in the detailed feedback was that a single system and common approach would provide clarity for businesses, the community and local governments.

This included how council meetings should be conducted, how elections should be run, what land should be rated, and when tenders should be advertised.



Bringing tender thresholds into alignment with the State Government could deliver a simplified, streamlined approach to public procurement in Western Australia, making it easier for small businesses to tender to both levels of government.

Connecting communities and building trust

Local governments are the closest level of government to their communities. An ongoing commitment to transparent and open government is needed to build community trust.



The State Government introduced reforms which recognise the community wants better access to information about their local government - online and open access.

Likewise, as local government operations become increasingly complex, local governments are focused on delivering services as efficiently and effectively as possible. However, the community will always remain at the heart of local government, and a balance is needed between the ethos of public service and the principles of the corporate world.

A new Local Government Act will need a strong foundation in community engagement and participation, which will support local governments to understand and respond to their communities' needs.

Where to now

The Minister for Local Government has announced the formation of an independent panel to progress the development of a new Local Government Act for Western Australia. The panel will be chaired by Mr David Michael MLA, Member for Balcatta.

The **Local Government Review Panel** will consider and recommend high-level direction and guiding principles for the development of a new Local Government Act.

Feedback received during the review of the Local Government Act 1995 will form an invaluable part of the panel's deliberations.

For further information, visit DLGSC's website, www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/lgareview