



LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT REVIEW ►► DELIVERING FOR THE COMMUNITY

A new Local Government Act for Western Australia: **smart**

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

Smart topics focused on a commitment to transparent and open government, supporting local governments to understand, and respond to, their communities' needs.

Key opportunities which emerged in the feedback include:

Council meetings

Council meetings are the mechanism by which a council makes decisions and provide an important opportunity for council members to hear directly from their communities.



The State Government introduced reforms in July 2019 including universal training for councillors to ensure they have the right skills to represent their communities' interests.

Streamlining meeting procedures across local government could maximise opportunities for the community to engage and participate in local democracy.



Local governments are already trialling innovative ways to further involve their communities such as livestreaming and incorporating public statement time into their council meetings.



Local laws

The Local Government Act enables local governments to make local laws for the good government of their districts, and can cover areas such as parking, public places and council and committee meetings. Further work will be undertaken to identify solutions which will simplify and streamline local law-making processes.



Local governments have the ability to tailor local laws to suit their local communities, however, there are opportunities to harmonise and provide greater consistency for the community and businesses.

Dealing with issues and complaints

The current Local Government Act recognises that sometimes things don't go right and provides various ways for the State Government to respond to complaints and regulate the conduct of local government officers and council members.



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.

The options available to support local governments are currently limited and can escalate to direct interventions such as suspending a council, installing a commissioner or dismissing the council.



Further work will be undertaken to look at options for appointing an external person to work with local governments to improve governance and resolve problems.

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