

Your Ref:
Our Ref: OCR222658
Enquiries: [REDACTED]



Email: actreview@dlgsc.wa.gov.au

Department of Local Government Sport and
Cultural Industries

Dear Sir/Madam

Local Government Act 1995 Reform - Submission from the City of Karratha

The Council of the City of Karratha has reviewed the proposed reforms forming part of the current consultation process to the *Local Government Act 1995* on 31 January 2022.

Broadly speaking, the Council agrees to the reforms as existing legislation is somewhat out dated and needs to be more compatible with today's community expectations and technology. Whilst the reforms could go further, most are considered a step in the right direction recognising that there is no one size fits all approach towards managing the affairs of local governments across Western Australia. The proposed changes will not fundamentally reform the sector or rewrite the Act.

The following exceptions to the proposals were noted by Council at its recent meeting:

[2.4] Streaming local laws

This proposal is supported apart from the suggestion that if the review is not completed within 15 years, the existing local law would lapse. Should this event arise, processes would need to be well documented and prescribed to alleviate any confusion in the community with customary and legal practices.

[3.1] Recording and Livestreaming of Council Meetings

The Council has not been supportive of livestreaming when previously debated on the basis that, unlike State and Federal politicians, Councillors do not have any form of 'parliamentary privilege' and livestreaming may stifle debate on contentious matters. As a Tier 1 LGA, the City will also incur setup costs to install and maintain technology that facilitates live streaming and audio recordings. An additional impost will also need to be factored into having resources on standby during meetings to address any system failures as the overwhelming majority of our Council meetings are after usual business hours.

[4.3] Introduction to Preferential Voting

Council favours the 'first past the post' system that is not dependent upon preferences being applied. It is simple and quick to determine an outcome and easy to explain the results. Under a preferential system, the candidate with the highest primary votes is not necessarily elected if preferences of others are distributed and accumulate a higher result.

Council favours the current system of 50% of Councillors being elected every two years providing a level of continuity and opportunity for experienced Councillors to mentor new Councillors.

Council also encourages further consideration be given to exploring electronic voting methods to increase voter participation and provide a more rapid outcome of election results.

[4.4] Public Vote to Elect the Mayor and President

The Council is a Tier 1 LGA and is not supportive of the proposal. Experience suggests that publicly elected mayors do not always have the support of their fellow councillors whereas there is generally greater unity and a better working relationship when the Mayor is elected by their peers.

[4.5] Tiered Limits on the Number of Councillors

The proposal indicates that Council would need to reduce its elected representation based on the population criteria. A reduction in councillor numbers would increase the individual workload on Councillors and potentially impact the representation for smaller towns within the district.

[6.6] Audit Committees

The Council is not supportive of the reforms that mandate the Audit Committee to be chaired by an independent person. The audit committee has access to sensitive financial and risk management information which is not generally made available to the public.

If you have any further queries on this matter, please contact myself on 9186 8631 or by email at henry.eaton@karratha.wa.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Henry Eaton', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Henry Eaton
MANAGER GOVERNANCE AND ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY

7 February 2022