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Submission Local Government Reform
Mitch Sideris

I have participated in a number of community based local government reform workshops held in recent times, as well as a small groups meeting with the Ministers Senior Policy Officers.

I see very little in the proposed reform that aligns with those workshop outcomes.

There are 4 levels of government Federal, State, Local and the much overlooked Regional Councils, all of are a financial burden on taxpayers and ratepayers.

With regard to Local Government in the Perth Peel region, I personally believe, if the Minister and State Government truly are seeking reform, they should sack the lot and merge local Councils, restructure the Regional Councils so that the diminishing role and influence of local government elected members role is recognised.

The role of WALGA, recognised in the McIntyre Inquiry into the City of Joondalup as a closed shop Union, supported by Ratepayer funds, is the untouchable sacred cow and only represents the views of a select group of Councils, with extraordinary power and influence protected by a total lack of transparency and open accountability and transparency.

WALGA legislated power and influence should be withdrawn or at the very least severely curtailed.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Ensure CL 11 e of the Admin regs are not abused by Local Government to deliberately remove Context from a ratepayer question. See attachment

Ensure the FOI Act is robustly supported by local government and not used as a tool to deny ratepayers and the public from engaging in the processes of government

See attachment

I am happy to be interviewed

Below, please find our specific comments on the six themes presented for consideration.

LG REFORM: Theme 1 – Earlier intervention, effective regulation and stronger penalties

Ref.	Proposal	Support	Neutral or N/A	Do NOT Support	COMMENTS	IMPROVEMENTS
1a	The LG Inspector	✓			We support this with a re-direction of staff & resources from DLGSC.	
1b	LG Monitors	✓			<p>IE we are concerned that the LG Inspector and associated executive, researchers and monitors etc could become a large agency that will be requiring significant State Government budget and may be duplicating roles in the State agency.</p> <p>Will there be a 'userfee' for LG Monitors to ensure that councils do not inappropriately use them to provide mediation, governance advice, legal guidance, HR and procurement guidance?</p> <p>Who pays for Proposed Conduct Panel?</p>	Introduction of 'user fee' for certain levels and/quantities of specialist assistance/guidance provided by LG Monitors.
1c	Stronger penalties				For all breaches and using assuend powers and control to effectively deny ratepayer interaction and engagement especially for matters that have been deliberately manipulated by using Confidential Reports that are never publicly released from Confidential For environmental damage.	

1d	Mandatory Training	✓			Include knowledge and understanding of the natural environment, its intrinsic value, its economic value as estimated by the ecosystem services it provides, including the health and wellbeing of residents and what is required to manage it properly.	
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Theme 1: OTHER COMMENTS

LG REFORM: Theme 2 – Reducing red tape, increasing consistency and simplicity

Ref.	Proposal	Support	Neutral or N/A	Do NOT Support	COMMENTS	IMPROVEMENTS
2a	Standardised Meeting Procedures across all Local Governments	✓				
2b	Greater Consistency for Small Business			✗	Do not support without more clarity around what these might be. Big concerns that this could mean reducing what some people incorrectly refer to as 'red tape' that is actually critical assessment processes that protect our natural environment and/or good governance requirements.	

Theme 2: OTHER COMMENTS

LG REFORM: Theme 3 – Great transparency and accountability

Ref.	Proposal	Support	Neutral or N/A	Do NOT Support	COMMENTS	IMPROVEMENTS
3a	Mandatory Recording of Council Meetings	✓			All recording and records made public once the Council decision has been made. Access to how agenda items were discussed, and decisions made is critical for community understanding.	Including recording of deputations and questions.

3b	Guidance for Confidential Meeting	✓			This removes the temptation of some councils to use this 'confidential' facility inappropriately.	
3c	Transparency and Accountability	✓			<p>Greater access and limited denial under FOI All confidential reports in the City of Joonfalup extend forever. Access under FOI are constantly denied or argued as Too Many documents S20 (10 (2)</p> <p>Open Accountable and FULLY Transparent government should be the Pillars of government Transparency and accountability are critical components of good governance.</p>	LGA's need to show how they have used the WAPC Engagement toolkit

Ref.	Proposal	Support	Neutral or N/A	Do NOT Support	COMMENTS	IMPROVEMENTS
					The community (e.g., members of local 'friends of groups' whom are volunteering to care for bushland owned and/or managed by their council) need to be able to understand how decisions are made and what resources, actions and timings are involved.	
3e	Consistent Recording of all Votes	✓			Important that Councillors and Mayors are visibly accountable for how they vote and thus impact on the delivery of services and management across the councils.	

Theme 3: OTHER COMMENTS

Strongly support the good governance and transparency of the introduction of mandatory reporting as **online registers** for:

- Leases
- Community Grants
- Interest Disclosure
- Applicant contributions
- Contracts Register

We also support the mandatory **quarterly updating of these online registers.**

LG REFORM: Theme 4 – Stronger local democracy and community engagement

Ref.	Proposal	Support	Neutral or N/A	Do NOT Support	COMMENTS	IMPROVEMENTS
4f	Community Engagement Charter	✓			<p>The consultation process must mean that people are involved in the decision-making process, not just informed about a decision. Having a clear charter is critical to enabling residents and ratepayers to understand how and when they will be consulted and what the level of community engagement will be as per the International Association of Public Participation’s Spectrum (e.g. Inform; Consult; Involve: Collaborate or Empower). https://iap2.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/2018_IAP2_Spectrum.pdf</p> <p>As you are aware, the local voluntary community conservation contribution via ‘Friends of Groups’ and ‘Urban Landcare Groups’ to the protection and management of local neighbourhood nature is extremely significant. Added to this the development and nurturing of local community provides a key contribution to the wellbeing of the local community.</p> <p>In fact, these natural areas and the local community would suffer, if not for such volunteer efforts. These reforms need to acknowledge this and ensure that such community groups will be given ‘group collaboration status’ and actively included in the management decisions for these important local areas of bushland and wetland.</p>	<p>Proposed developments must be requirement to details how the development aligns with engagement of the community (including those who use and care for the area). Note: Unfortunately community workshops are often misused as vehicles for disseminating the developers plans rather than truly engaging the community for the best environmental, social and cultural outcomes.</p>

Theme 4: OTHER COMMENTS

LG REFORM: Theme 5 – Clearer Roles and Responsibilities

Ref.	Proposal	Support	Neutral or N/A	Do NOT Support	COMMENTS	IMPROVEMENTS
5a	Principles	✓			Support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognition of the unique status of Aboriginal West Australians • guidance for community engagement • guidance for financial management 	How Indigenous guidance has influenced decision making must be acknowledged and documented.

Theme 5: OTHER COMMENTS

Support roles and responsibilities of elected members and senior staff be better defined by law

LG REFORM: Theme 6 – Earlier intervention, effective regulation and stronger penalties

Ref.	Proposal	Support	Neutral or N/A	Do NOT Support	COMMENTS	IMPROVEMENTS
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Theme 6: OTHER COMMENTS

To ensure non-selective reporting, increased understanding and transparency, the reform of *LG Act 3.59* Business Plans need to clearly document:

1. Indigenous cultural values,
2. Environmental values,
3. Social values, as well as
4. economic values.