



Local Government Reform

Public consultation on proposals

The State Government is continuing to progress major reforms to the system of local government in Western Australia.

In November 2021, the Minister for Local Government announced a package of reform proposals. These proposals were based on a significant volume of previous work, including reviews and investigations, public consultation, Parliamentary inquiries and reports to government.

Following the Minister's announcement, a public consultation period was held, which closed at the end of February 2022. Through this process, more than 200 submissions were received. The submissions indicated broad support for most of the reforms, with significant feedback received on the proposals. Accordingly, some changes and clarifications have been made to the proposed reforms, including:



Number of Councillors in Smaller Local Governments

Smaller local governments (with a population of less than 5,000 people) may have 5-7 councillors. This was increased from the limit of five councillors proposed in the Local Government Review Panel Report.



Parental and Medical Leave

The Act will be amended to provide elected members with parental and medical leave entitlements in response to submissions received concerned that women are disadvantaged when taking parental leave while serving Council.



Councils can Decide whether to Pay Superannuation for Elected Councillors

Councils will be able to decide whether to pay superannuation, as an additional allowance. This is similar to the model introduced in New South Wales last year. Councils may decide to pay superannuation to attract and retain greater diversity among elected members.



Audit Committees

Audit Committees will be required to have an independent person perform the role of Committee Chairperson, but the proposal to require Committees have a majority of independent members will not be progressed. This change has been made as it is expected to be difficult to recruit independent members. Councils will be able to decide to provide sitting fees to independent members.

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Optional Preferential Voting

Optional Preferential Voting will be introduced. In Optional Preferential Voting, voters have the choice to number as many candidates as they wish on the ballot paper. Electors may also vote for only a single candidate, if they wish to. This gives voters the greatest degree of choice when electing candidates to their local council. This is a fairer system, and is similar to State and Federal elections. Councils will also be able to fill unexpected vacancies with the next highest-polling candidate for that position in the most recent election, if one is available.

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Other Minor Changes

Work to further develop and refine individual reforms is continuing, including further reduction of red tape and measures to improve transparency. Public submissions are continuing to inform how the proposals will be developed, and further feedback is welcome.