



Local Government Reform

Stronger local democracy and community engagement

Election and community engagement reforms are proposed to empower ratepayers to participate in local democracy and decision-making.



T1 Direct Election of the Mayor or President

All electors in large local governments will be able to vote directly for the Mayor or President, giving ratepayers more power to choose the leadership of their council. This reflects a broader trend, with councils such as Stirling and Rockingham already having moved to a public vote for the election of their Mayors.



T1 No Wards for Small Local Governments

Wards in small local governments can cover very limited areas, with small populations. This means that councillors are more likely to be elected unopposed, or with a very small number of votes. In line with a broader trend, it is proposed that wards for all small local governments be abolished.



T1 Preferential Voting

Local government members will be elected by 'optional preferential voting'. Electors can 'vote for one, vote for some, or vote for all' candidates on their ballot paper. This system strikes a balance between encouraging electors to vote, whilst ensuring the result reflects the community's views and preference.



T1 Reforms to Ensure Valid Candidate and Voter Eligibility

Rules for who is eligible to vote or run for council will be tightened, ensuring that only legitimate residents or businesses will be eligible. New laws will prevent candidates from using sham leases in council elections. The basis for why a candidate is eligible to run will also be required to be publicly disclosed.



T1 Consistent Number of Elected Members

To increase consistency, the number of elected members on any council will be set based upon the population within that local government. The Local Government Panel Report recommended a number of elected members as follows:

- population of up to 5,000 – 5, 6 or 7 councillors (including the President)
- population of between 5,000 and 75,000 – 5 to 9 councillors (including the Mayor/President)
- population of above 75,000 – 9 to 15 councillors (including the Mayor)



T1 Community Engagement Charter

Local governments will be required to establish a Charter which sets out how it will engage with ratepayers and the community about the local government's proposed policies, initiatives, and projects. A model Charter will be published to assist local governments who wish to adopt a standard Charter.



T1 Other Amendments

There are also more reforms proposed to further enhance local government democracy and community engagement, including proposed minor changes to the annual meeting and the use of rate payer satisfaction surveys.