

Local Government Reform in Western Australia – Ensuring the Future Sustainability of Communities

On Tuesday, October 4, 2005 the Minister for Local Government and Regional Development announced that the Gallop Government had approved the Local Government Advisory Board carrying out a study on structural and electoral reform in local government.

The detailed terms of reference are provided below.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Structural Reform

The report should address the following issues and provide recommendations on:

- The objectives and need for structural reform and an assessment of how structural reform can enhance the future economic, environmental and social sustainability of Western Australian communities.
- Identification of approaches that can be adopted by councils in achieving structural reform, ranging from local government amalgamation through to resource sharing.
- Identification of impediments to structural reform including but not limited to legislation impediments and options to overcome these impediments, which should include but not be limited to legislative changes and provision of financial and non financial support by the State Government.
- The identification of local governments where amalgamations may be the most effective and efficient method of achieving future economic, environmental and social sustainability.
- The identification of local governments where the issues of future economic, social and environmental sustainability are more appropriately addressed by approaches other than amalgamations. In particular, the issue of future sustainability of rural and remote communities should be recognised, as well as the increased costs of governance and coordination of services.
- The procedures and processes (legislative or otherwise) which need to be adopted to facilitate the implementation of the above changes.
- Any other issues that the Board may consider are relevant to structural reform, ranging from amalgamations through to resource sharing.

2. Electoral Reforms

The report should address and provide recommendations on:

- Eligibility to vote
 - Recommendations should address whether non-residents should be able to vote, or whether eligibility should be restricted to those on the State Electoral roll, and whether people based on the number of properties they own be entitled to more than one vote per ward.
- Voting
 - Recommendations should consider the case for retaining the current system of voluntary voting.
- Type of election
 - Recommendations should address whether all local government elections should use the in-person or the postal method, or whether to allow each local government to choose the election method.

- Voting system
 - Recommendations should address whether the current system of ‘first past the post’ voting should be maintained, or whether preferential or proportional representation should be introduced.
- Election of Mayor or President
 - Recommendations should address whether the current discretionary system of election of the Mayor or President should remain, or whether one uniform system be adopted.
- Frequency of ordinary elections
 - Recommendations should address whether the current four-year term is appropriate and if not, what changes should be made, or whether an all-in/all-out system should be adopted.
- Conduct of elections
 - Recommendations should address whether the current methods of conducting elections should be changed.

3. Consultation

During the course of preparing the report, the Local Government Advisory Board should consult with the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) and Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA). In addition, the Board should invite submissions from individual local governments, as well as from the wider community.

4. Reporting Date

The LGAB report should be submitted to the Minister for Local Government and Regional Development no later than 10 February 2006.

It should be noted that the Local Government Advisory Board has been requested to consult with WALGA and the LGMA. The Board is also inviting submissions from individual local governments, as well as from the wider community.

The closing date for submissions is Friday, 23 December 2005. Submissions should be forwarded to:

Local Government Reform in Western Australia – Review Coordinator
 Local Government Advisory Board
 C/o Department of Local Government and Regional Development
 GPO Box R1250
 PERTH WA 6844

Alternatively, you may like to forward your submission by email to reform@dlgrd.wa.gov.au or by facsimile to (08) 9217 1555.

For further information, please do not hesitate to contact Dr Chris Berry on (08) 9217 1417 or Ms Vicky Nazer on (08) 9217 1497.

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