

Local Government Strengthened By New Reforms



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Media Release

New reforms to the Local Government Act announced today by the State Government will strengthen the sector and better serve ratepayers in the long term.

In responding to today's announcement of reforms by Local Government Minister John Carey, WALGA President Karen Chappel said the package reflected the changing role and expectations the community held for Local Government.

"Many of the initiatives outlined by Minister Carey today are well supported by the sector and will further improve the accountability and efficiency of local governments across the state," she said.

"We have been seeking modernisation of Local Government legislation for some time and I am pleased to see the Minister has listened to our advocacy."

The introduction of an independent Local Government Inspector would give ratepayers confidence that all Local Governments were serving their communities responsibly and would result in a faster and less costly process in resolving complaints.

Cr Chappel said reducing unnecessary red-tape across a range of areas of Local Government responsibility would be beneficial for ratepayers in all communities.

She said successful advocacy from WALGA had ensured Local Governments with populations less than 5000 had a cap of seven, not five councillors.

A more flexible approach to enable resource sharing between local governments was also welcomed.

The introduction of *optional* preferential voting has demonstrated the Minister's commitment to listen to feedback from the Local Government sector.

Other major reforms successfully advocated by WALGA include:

- Greater clarity of roles and responsibilities of Elected Members and Chief Executive Officers
- Tiered compliance approach to financial reporting requirements according to size and scale of Local Governments including model financial statements.
- Simplification of strategic planning processes and community engagement models
- The proposal to require audit committees to have a majority of independent members has not been progressed
- Greater flexibility in the establishment of regional subsidiaries
- Retention of current election cycle for Elected Members.

Work on the detailed design of the legislation is now underway and Cr Chappel welcomed the Minister's commitment for WALGA's ongoing participation on the Act Review working group.

Ends

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