

The Greens (WA) 2017 policy

Local Government

The Greens (WA) acknowledge Local Government's valuable role as the third tier of government and in local governance and the representation of local issues and delivery of essential community services. We believe that Federal and State Constitutions should ensure the right of Local Governments to express the will of their constituents.

To continue to meet current community obligations, and to continue to deliver the suite of services it provides into the future, The Greens (WA) believe that Local Government needs to be realistically resourced and re-empowered with respect to local planning, within the context of regional frameworks based on principles of sustainability.

Aims

The Greens (WA) want:

- empowered, transparent, well-resourced, supported and sustainable Local Government Councils
- empowered, engaged and equitably serviced communities
- regional collaboration between Local Governments to further sustainability and resource efficiency where appropriate
- Local Government enabled to increase its revenue sources in keeping with its increased responsibility and community expectation
- Local Government recognised in the Commonwealth Constitution

Measures

The Greens (WA) will initiate and support legislation and actions that:

- require the principles of ecological, social and economic sustainability (which are articulated in the WA Local Government Act) to be the basis of all Local Government policy and practice
- ensure the rights of communities to self-determination as expressed through the poll provisions contained in schedule 2.1 of the Local Government Act 1995
- extend the jurisdiction of the WA Auditor General to oversee local governments in order to provide independent oversight of financial and performance audits
- call for Local Government elections to be based on preferential voting
- support a move away from forced Local Government amalgamations and deletions and towards models of regional collaboration and sustainability
- call for Constitutional recognition for Local Governments, and the financial security and access that this would ensure for the sector
- support reform of the federal/state tax and Commonwealth Grants operation in order to appropriately resource community services and to increase equity across the spheres of government (see also The Greens (WA) [Economics](#) policy)

- acknowledge the value of the services, in particular community based environmental and social services, that Local Governments provide to the community above and beyond their foundation mandate of ‘roads, rates and rubbish’ and which are not currently being provided by any other sphere of government
- ensure that any monies allocated to Local Governments for infrastructure, either through State programs like Royalties for Regions, or Commonwealth programs like Regional Development Authorities or infrastructure funds are:
 - aimed at increasing social and economic capital; allocated on the basis of strict sustainability criteria; and
 - that full ongoing operational costs are provided to avoid the creation of future asset maintenance issues for Local Governments
- increase Local Governments’ ability to raise revenue via its own endeavours and local enterprise
- ensure that State Governments do not hinder Local Governments’ ability to achieve cost efficiency or sustainability
- require State Government facilities to pay rates to the relevant Local Government rather than into general government revenue
- promote the principles of democracy by minimising the use Development Assessment Panels (DAPS) and maximising decision making by elected representatives
- encourage communities to be more involved in local governance and urge Councils to:
 - adopt the precinct concept¹ of direct community participation in Local Government
 - hold public forums prior to an election to inform candidates of the role, requirements and legal processes of Council
 - maintain a regular open dialogues with the community via a range of media, to give equal voice to a range of ideas and to encourage community involvement

The Greens (WA) recognise the importance and responsibilities of Councillors and propose that:

- there be a higher level of financial support for those elected to Council, in recognition of the responsibility they hold for representative decision-making, increase accountability, and to increase the diversity of people who seeking election
- comprehensive and continuous training and development for Councillors to include (but not be limited to) a full understanding of the Local Government Act and governance processes; legal and statutory planning matters; strategic planning; financial planning; communications; and consensus decision-making
- Councillors be made aware of the importance of making decisions that embody bold visions of the community that they wish to see rather than allowing fear to limit their voting
- the Local Government Standards Panel be strongly supported in order to promote ethical behaviour of Councillors and that a two year enforcement period apply to any decision of a Councillor made under a declaration of pecuniary interest

- councils do not adopt Standing Orders that have the effect of silencing dissent
- a common Code of Conduct be adopted across Local Government in Western Australia, and such a Code be consistent with the WA Local Government Rules of Conduct

Glossary

1. **Precinct concept** - Independent community precinct committees directly participate in council business with an opportunity to comment on council agendas, policies, local laws and development applications before these are considered by council.

Local Government policy ratified by The Greens (WA) in 2017