

## Submission to WALGA on Possible Electoral Reform

### Background

The City of Kalamunda thanks the Western Australian Local Government Association for engaging with the sector on proposals for electoral reform, and providing comprehensive analysis through the discussion paper.

The City of Kalamunda has resolved to provide the following submission based on the questions asked by WALGA.

### Responses

**1. Does your local government support half spill elections every two years or full spill elections every four years?**

The City of Kalamunda supports a full spill every four years.

**2. What are the key considerations informing this view?**

The likelihood of a full spill occurring is unlikely based on analysis of statistics from the eastern state's local governments. approximately half of the council is returned which gives confidence that incoming council can retain critical knowledge which it can share with any new councillors.

Current local government elections occurring every two years could lead to voter fatigue, especially when factoring in both federal and state elections.

Costs are also an important factor and a four yearly spill would likely reduce the cost of elections, resulting in a saving for ratepayers.

A uniform approach with regard to local government voting across Australia is preferred.

**3. If full spill elections every four years were introduced, what transitional arrangements and consequential amendments may be required?**

Key arrangements that would need to be considered include:

- A coordinated induction program immediately following elections, ensuring all new councillors receive comprehensive training at the same time.
- Thorough pre-election training or information sessions so prospective candidates understand the responsibilities before nominating.

**4. Any other comments in relation to half/full spills and four year terms?**

Particularly if a full spill of elected members were to occur, it needs to be noted that new councillors take considerable time to understand the mechanisms, roles and complexities of being a councillor. Often this can take months and for anyone, particularly those without administrative experience, this can be daunting. They rely on staff and particularly experienced councillors to assist during the first few months. The work of councils would be slowed, with the risk of uninformed decisions being made.

**5. Does your local government support compulsory voting or voluntary voting in local government elections?**

Compulsory voting is supported by the City of Kalamunda / voluntary if it remains at two yearly.

**6. If the frequency of local government elections were changed to every 4 years, would your local government support compulsory or voluntary voting?**

Compulsory voting

**7. What are the key considerations informing this view?**

With such a low participation rate in Western Australia for local government elections, it is not considered a true representation of what matters most to electors across the community, especially young adults. It is also considered that voluntary voting has led to many residents becoming apathetic, showing little interest in local government. Compulsory voting would encourage electors to engage with candidates and may also encourage greater focus and interest in local government.

**8. Any other comments in relation to compulsory or voluntary voting?**

There is a concern that politicisation of councils may occur with compulsory voting. This has occurred in other states, where people openly stand as representing political parties and with the need to run and fund a widespread campaign this could well be beyond the financial reach of many in the community, without political party support.

A strength on the current system is that Councils are not overtly political and a diminution of this could possibly result in councils being another tier of government, reflecting political party views, not those of the local community.