Dear Panel,

Thank you for providing FuturePerth with a copy of the Metropolitan Local Government Review Draft Findings (April 2012) and providing us with an opportunity to offer comment.

As stated in our initial submission, our organisation is strongly supportive of the Panel and Ministers efforts to reform local government in Perth – we believe it is essential to the future success of this city. We are pleased to see that the draft findings largely reflect the general sentiment of our original submission. We strongly urge the Panel to recommend a major reduction of local governments in Perth with wholesale reform of their powers and functions.

Please find enclosed our comments in regards to the draft findings. We have responded to a limited number of the key findings where appropriate.

Kind Regards

Sean Morrison
Chairman – OBO the FuturePerth Committee
FuturePerth Inc.

Enc. FuturePerth Metropolitan Local Government Review Draft Findings Comments
Who are we?
FuturePerth is an incorporated association devoted to supporting development and action that enhances the vibrancy and livability of Perth.

We are a pro ‘good-development’ group consisting of professionals and students from a wide range of fields including planning, law, architecture, health and hospitality.

We have been incorporated since early 2007 and operate as a non-profit, non-partisan organisation.

Vision

To provide a voice of progressive thinking to ensure that development in Perth is livable, vibrant, integrated, connected and of a high amenity.

Objectives

To promote the economic and social development of Western Australia and to lend support to similarly minded organisations where appropriate.

To promote the Perth central area as the primary area in the State for entertainment, retail, office, residential and recreational purposes.

To promote density and growth of suburban development nodes.

To promote the investment in and expansion of the public transportation system in Perth and Western Australia and discourage policies which further motor vehicle dependence.

To promote the diversification and growth of metropolitan regional centres.

To promote urban regeneration projects.

To provide a voice for pro-development, progressive and forward thinking individuals and to dispel unfounded arguments by anti-development groups or individuals.

To advocate for the containment of urban sprawl and encourage consolidated development within Perth’s existing urban area.
## Finding + Response

### Finding 2 and 3

The current local government arrangements will not provide the best outcome for the community into the future. The status quo cannot and should not remain.

There is a need for significant change in Perth’s local government, including changes in local government structures, boundaries and governance.

FuturePerth strongly supports these findings.

We believe the current structure of local government is inhibiting growth, restricting development, reducing council leadership capacity, encouraging political apathy and enabling small, vocal interests unfair powers over elected member.

It is essential that the final findings explicate that taking no action is damaging to Perth’s short and long term future.

### Finding 5 and 15

Uncertainty about the future needs to be addressed by prompt and decided government decision making.

It is important to make significant change and create a new structure with robust boundaries to minimise the need for further debate and change in the short to medium term.

It is important that the Panel makes a clear and decisive recommendation of the desired number and proposed boundaries of local governments.

In light of an impending state election, definitive recommendations are needed to avoid the Minister or State Government findings means to avoid taking action on the issue. Similarly, a clear recommendation and outlining of its benefits should hopefully reframe the State Oppositions approach to this process, which has been lukewarm at best.

A number of metropolitan local governments are determined to delay this process as much as possible and are intent on stifling the future of Perth for the sake of their own organisations. This must not be allowed to continue.

Several local government reform reports in recent decades have been ignored; it would be a shame to again waste this opportunity for positive change. Minor boundary realignments or a small reduction in local governments will not suffice.
A sense of place and local identity can be maintained through appropriate governance regardless of the size of a local government

We feel this is a very important finding as this has been used as one of the primary arguments against reform by existing local governments or vocal minorities.

Places are unique due to their history, differing built form and local population – not due to the efforts of unnecessary local governments. An example of this phenomenon is the suburb of Mount Lawley which retains a specific identity despite being split between two councils. An amalgamation of local governments will remove the focus of councils from trivial issues and allow Perth’s villages to evolve more naturally in a manner driven by local stakeholders.

Some functions need to be managed from a metropolitan wide perspective, including waste disposal and treatment, transport and planning. A shift in responsibility to the State Government may be warranted.

It is considered that transport should remain as a State Government function, FuturePerth is not able to comment on this matter in relation to waste.

In terms of planning, high-level, strategic planning should be the responsibility of the State. Local place planning, within the higher level framework should be the responsibility of local governments – with State intervention where necessary. While most planning applications will still be dealt with by local governments, efforts to standardise forms, submission requirements and processes across all local government should be implemented. The idea of a single, State-wide, online development application submission system should be pursued.

The most appropriate options for local government in metropolitan Perth are:

- 10-12 councils centred on strategic activity centres
- five councils based on the central area and sub-regions
- one single metropolitan council

FuturePerth in its original submission advocated for approximately 10 local governments across Perth and Peel, believing this to be most realistic option.

Having given the matter more thought and given the findings, we consider half a dozen metropolitan councils to be more effective. This will mean that Perth will be governed through sub regions and allow for the emergence of resource rich local governments with as high a regional focus as possible. It also encourages large local government bodies to improve operational administrative and financial sustainability whilst encouraging broader community-based social policies. We believe six metropolitan local governments would allow broad strategic planning frameworks and still allow some healthy intra-city competition.

While the single metropolitan council option is appealing, this route is not considered palatable to the State Government, given the significant concentration of the State’s population in Perth. Therefore the option, even if recommend, will not be embraced by
In regards to the 6 metropolitan local governments, FuturePerth believes the current sub-regional boundaries used by the WAPC need some refinement. The sub regional boundaries currently follow local governments boundaries – most of which will soon become redundant. Major geographical features and roads should guide the new boundaries.

It is expected that the new boundaries would result in:

- City of Perth
- City of Joondalup
- City of Midland
- City of Armadale
- City of Rockingham
- City of Mandurah (or Peel).

These new councils would be anchored by major activity centres (in some cases multiple) and have a sufficient diversity of residents due to their geographical size.

Once a new structure is settled, there should be periodic boundary reviews undertaken by an independent body, to ensure the local government structure is optimal for meeting the changing needs of a growing metropolitan region.

A review held every five years by a body such as the Local Government Review Panel is likely to suffice in this regard. It is important that the body be independent to avoid Ministers making political decisions on local government boundaries. In the longer term, it is considered likely that a ‘City of Yanchep’ will need to emerge, however the development of this area means that falling under the jurisdiction of an expanded City of Joondalup would be more appropriate for the foreseeable future.

If the new local government structure for metropolitan Perth comprises more than one local government, a Forum or Council of Perth Mayors should be created, chaired by the Lord Mayor.

This finding reflects a key recommendation in FuturePerth’s original submission, and it is considered a positive method of metropolitan-wide governance.

This body would be similar to the COAG model, where different councils would agree to streamline/standardise certain functions and/or to take coordinated action. To have the best chance of success, a State Government Ministerial representative should also sit on this forum.
| 22 | The potential for council controlled organisations/local government enterprises should be further considered.

Given the proposed increased scale of Perth’s local governments suggested by this review, it is reasonable to expect these new entities will have significantly more resources and capital than existing bodies. There will be resulting opportunities for the new governments to participate in joint ventures, public private partnerships or similar arrangements to achieve the facilitation of major projects or the efficient operation of government business. The current Local Government Act significantly restricts this and therefore as part of the reform process, the ability for local governments to undertake more commercial operations should be granted. |
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| 23 | Amendments to governance arrangements for local government in metropolitan Perth should include the following
- Compulsory voting
- Election of Mayors by community
- Increased remuneration of elected members
- Training for elected members

These matters, particularly increased remuneration of elected members were raised in our original submission. Remuneration needs to be set at a level that is commensurate with income levels for well-qualified professionals in the private sector. This will enable councilors to commit to their role in a full time capacity. This will see the election of more accessible and informed local members.

FuturePerth also supports the direct election of mayors across local governments. This system works effectively in the City of Perth and allows voters to set the strategic direction of their local governments through their electoral choices.

FuturePerth supports the principles behind compulsory voting, however given historic voter apathy in regards to local government; it may be difficult for this idea to be effective. To increase voter participation, it is recommended that local government elections are held on conjunction with State elections. |