

Make your vote really count for your community



COUNCILLOR
LYNNE CRAIGIE
PRESIDENT
WALGA

Communities across Western Australia are hoping the State election in a few weeks will deliver a government that respects their concerns and values their contribution.

It is looming as a tight contest - the ALP are ahead in the polls but the Liberal and Nationals coalition have a significant existing majority.

Whatever the outcome, the next government needs to demonstrate a higher regard for the aspirations of local communities.

Key to this will be the establishment of a partnership agreement between State and Local Government to guide consultation and communication on significant issues.

This will help ensure understanding and acceptance of new initiatives and will provide an additional check that the government hasn't overlooked critical factors.

Securing a partnership agreement forms part of the WALGA election platform - available at walga.asn.au - which was sent to the major political parties last October for response.

The platform also sets out 10 positions including a container deposit scheme, new arrangements for library services, renewal of road funding and legislative protection of the community's democratic rights.

Now with just weeks before the election, only the ALP has responded, supporting the proposals

subject to a budget review to ensure they have the financial capacity to deliver.

Unfortunately the other parties have failed to respond to the request to support local communities or even confirm a commitment to the partnership agreement.

As it stands, Local Government has not had a partnership agreement with government since 2006 - neither the Barnett or Carpenter governments extended that courtesy to the community.

The result has been that communities have had to play "catch up" on the impact of government initiatives and are often faced with trying to make the best of bad decisions.

For example most recently the State Government decided to end vehicle registration concessions for Local Government which could add up to 7 per cent rate increases for some Councils.

If genuine consultation had occurred, Councils would have been able to ensure the government was aware of the impact on households and possibly even help find an alternative saving solution.

This type of situation has been typical of successive State Governments and has to be rectified.

The conflicts and failings resulting from a lack of consultation with communities would be avoided with a partnership agreement with Local Government.

When considering how to vote in the March 11 election, the community should ask their local candidates if they support open consultation and a partnership with Local Government.



WALGA