

At any one time the Belmont Council is working on a range of projects designed to improve the health & well-being of its residents. Part of this process involves community consultation. It needs an informed and responsive citizenry to do this effectively. Part of our role is to monitor this process and provide feedback.

Latest on Local Government Act Review.

Stage 1 of the Local Government Act (LGA) review in which local governments and communities were invited to have their say has been finalised. New policies were developed around training for councillors & candidates; codes of conduct; CEO recruitment & performance review; and gifts to councillors. An Act covering these was recently passed in Parliament, and can be viewed on following site <https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/localgovernment/strengthening/Pages/LG-Act-Review.aspx>

Stage 2 focused on the Community with the themes of **AGILE** (e.g. Beneficial Enterprises, Rates), **SMART** (e.g. Council meetings) and **INCLUSIVE** (e.g. Community Engagement, Elections).

Submissions for this stage closed on 31 March 2019 and are now being reviewed. These can also be viewed on the above website, together with survey and postcard responses.

Fact Sheets & Discussion Papers are also still available on specific 'Reform areas' of each theme. For example the review raised the

possibility of allowing local governments to form/run businesses as independent corporations, aka '**Beneficial Enterprises**'. The public feedback in this area indicated ... "There is some community concern around privatisation of local government services and financial risk to taxpayers", (p.1, F/Sheet).

Likewise under the SMART theme the topic of Council meetings & procedures was addressed. This looked at, among other things, Public Question Time & duration. One interesting suggestion was a '**Public Statement Time**' ... "As a means of encouraging public engagement and promoting transparency, a period of time allowing members of the public to address council without asking a question could be introduced", (p.7).

I'm sure opinionated ramblings would be most welcome in the chamber!

Also the topic of '**Special Electors' Meetings**' was raised. These are meetings which may be called by a sufficient number of electors to discuss an issue affecting the district, (p.16-17).

'**Access to information for council members**' was another topic for review. "The current legislation provides a mechanism to limit the information that council and committee members have access to – it must pertain to the functions and duties that they are currently undertaking" (p.18-19). It is currently the role of the CEO alone to make this determination.

The City of Belmont's submission for Stage 2 can be viewed on link below <https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/localgovern>

[ment/strengthening/Local%20Governmen%20Act%20Review%20submissions/City%20of%20Belmont.pdf](https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/localgovernmen%20Act%20Review%20submissions/City%20of%20Belmont.pdf)

At a Special Council meeting held on 19 February 2019 Council Officers tabled a report seeking the Council's endorsement of its submission for the LGA review. The councillors voted against the administration's recommendations with respect to increasing the minimum requirement needed to request an Electors' Special Meeting from 100 (or 5% of electors) to 500 (or 5% of electors), whichever is fewer. The councillors argued this increase would restrict residents voicing their collective concerns.

The councillors also voted against the administration's support for amending the LGA to enable the establishment of Beneficial Enterprises.

In the reform area of compulsory voting for council elections (INCLUSIVE) the City of Belmont, & the councillors, took the view that voting should remain voluntary. "The present system of voting in local government is a reflection of a truly democratic process and is seen as a suitable and effective method for grass roots representation. The real test of community interest in local government comes at election time", (Attachment 1, p.50).

If the current system is 'truly democratic' then what are we to make of compulsory voting at State & Federal elections? Rise up all Libertarians! Anyway a missed opportunity for another collective BBQ. All the other states & territories (bar S.A. & Tassie) have compulsory voting in local elections.

Below is the link to the Special Council Meeting.

<http://www.belmont.wa.gov.au/CouncillorPortal/CouncillorMinuteAndMeeting/Minutes%20and%20Agendas%20Document/19%20February%202019%20SCM%20Minutes.pdf>

For a comprehensive critique of the City of Belmont’s LGA submission refer to **BRRAG’s** open letter to all City of Belmont Councillors issued on 18 February 2019. Refer link <http://www.brrag.org.au/Letter%20to%20Council%20re%20Law%20Reform.pdf>

BRRAG also sent a letter on 24 June 2019 to the Upper House requesting it support a motion by the Hon. Simon O’Brien, MLC, for the establishment of a Select Committee to inquire in to the functioning of Local Government in Western Australia, and the scope of the current review. The motion was passed in late June, Refer to link: <http://www.brrag.org.au/upperhouse.html>

Make your voice count! The next Local Government Ordinary Election is scheduled for 19 October 2019, where 4 councillors will be up for re-election. **BRRAG** would like to interview prospective candidates and current councillors that intend running for council in the upcoming elections. Please ring or email **BRRAG** to make arrangements.

AUTO-EROTICA - How much is too much? The City of Belmont has been at pains to point out it has no control over the number of service stations appearing on Great Eastern Highway. A City of Belmont representative says the state government has overridden the City’s objections to Belmont having what

seems to be more petrol stations than other Perth suburbs. If this is the case, one has to question the sincerity of the state government’s commitment to public transport if it is allowing an unmitigated increase of petrol stations. This latest addition to bowser-blowout is less than 50 meters from an existing service station.



The latest addition to City of Belmont’s ‘Gasoline Alley’.

And, to add injury to insult, Redcliffe and Ascot residents lost the use of the bus stop near the corner of Great Eastern Highway and Coolgardie Avenue for over a month while the bus stop has been re-located to make way for the service station driveway. Oh, and the pedestrian “other footpath” detour is a one kilometre walk around the block.



Waiting for the bus stop: one month and counting

Back to an old Chestnut (or Gumnut). “2020 Vision” recently held a “Growing Together

Tour”, the 4th of their urban greening tours or conferences, at Perth’s City Farm. This year’s event was about engaging the community and building support for green space projects.

The “2020 Vision” is a national collaboration of various groups and organisations who are working together to create **20% more** (& better) urban green space **by 2020.** <https://2020vision.com.au/media/41955/2020visionplan.pdf>

The theme of this year’s event addresses what is perceived to be one of the many barriers to achieving the vision, namely ‘community attitudes’. Mmmnn!?!?

In recent times our Council has begun surveying residents as to whether or not they would like a street tree planted on their verge (Normally a resident must initiate the request). The last available survey for winter planting in 2018 indicated that **90% of residents approached** agreed to having a tree planted on their (the council’s) verge. Not a bad response from the punters.

<http://www.belmont.wa.gov.au/CouncillorPortal/CouncillorMinuteAndMeeting/Minutes%20and%20Agendas%20Document/Tabled%20Attachment%203%20-%20Item%2010.3%20refers%20Urban%20Forest%20Strategy%20Update.pdf>

Meanwhile investigation of **mandatory street tree** planting by the Council is occurring now and its inclusion will be considered in the next review of the Council’s ‘Streetscape Policy (BB3)’ in **2020/21**. If all goes well we may see implementation in the following year or two or three. Are they aware of the “2020 Vision” deadline?

Recommended reading:

The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes, Jonathan Rose, Yale University Press, 2001.

Your feedback. If you would like to submit an article that is relevant to the residents of Belmont, or you would like to join our group, refer contact details below.