



# WEST AUSTRALIAN RATEPAYERS AND RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED

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## Supplementary Submission to Council

This submission is made in addition to previous information circulated to Elected Members and the CEO on 10 March 2020.

For the sake of clarity I wish to reiterate the following:

- While the request before Council is for a payment to be made to WARRA, the funds are not for WARRA's benefit. Neither WARRA as an entity, nor its Members or Officials will become entitled to or receive any part of the money. Every single dollar may only be spent on costs associated with representing the Community's interests.
- This request for funding is not a double dip. Funds paid to WALGA are for services provided by WALGA to the LGA. WALGA does not represent the Community or provide services to the Community. The funds requested are to enable WARRA to represent the Community and provide services to the Community, this is not a duplication of services or expense.
- While the quantum of the amount sought may be considered large, the reality is that it will not go far in obtaining professional advice, including legal, planning, engineering or environmental opinions. It would also not go far in funding a campaign on any matter that may involve advertising, holding community meetings or rallies where venue and equipment hire and insurance premiums are required.
- WARRA's charter is to represent the Community's interests. Where there is a legitimate concern that a decision is not in the best interest of the Community, then WARRA will act to determine the legitimacy of the concern and find a solution. That is, WARRA will not challenge legitimate and reasonable decisions by State or Local Government. For example, the payment of rates is a legal obligation and WARRA will not support withholding or non-payment or non-compliance with legal obligations, not even as a negotiation technique.
- WARRA's focus is on reducing conflict between LGAs and the community by providing an independent entity that will professionally represent the Community.
- Elected Members are also members of the community, but their authority is being eroded and consequently their ability to adequately protect the Community's interests. The support of a professional and adequately funded Community organisation is vital to combating the erosion.

Signed.....

Clive Ross

## **Item M20/5734 – AGM Motion 4 – Contribution to WARRA**

This deputation is prepared by David Maynier. I am a resident of the City of Melville and a founding member and office bearer of WARRA – the WA Residents and Ratepayers Association Inc.

I note that the City officers treatment of this single item takes up almost 6 pages of tonight's agenda. To respond adequately to these comments in the limited space of 10 minutes is difficult and this deputation may therefore be slightly over this time limit. I shall endeavour to be brief.

### **Background**

To understand the need for WARRA, it is necessary to understand

- How the Local Government Act operates in regulating Local Government
- The role of WALGA and LGPro and how these roles are fulfilled

### **The Local Government Act – LGA**

The Local Government Act is at the core of much of the unrest in LG today. This is because the Act legislates a balance of power that overwhelmingly favours LG administrations over the elected members. One small example – the Standards Panel can and does discipline Elected Members. There is no such provision in any Act to discipline employees. This is left to the CEO and if the CEO is weak or complicit there is no accountability to the Ratepayers who pay the bills and the salaries.

The current review of the LG Act is progressing in three stages. At every stage the changes made, or proposed, have the effect of:-

- reducing transparency and accountability of CEOs and administrations and/or
- increasing control over elected members (but not CEOs or employees) and/or
- giving CEOs and administrations more power or autonomy without accountability

In other words you Elected Members, as the community representatives are being systematically disempowered. An already bad situation is being made worse by the current changes in the LG Act.

It is no coincidence that the LG Act review reference panel had nine WALGA representatives and NO community representation until WARRA requested and was granted a seat on this panel. By this time the die had been cast and WARRA was a lone voice in the wilderness.

It is also no coincidence that despite substantial community opposition in many submissions to certain areas of the proposed "reforms", the community is being ignored and the measures are going ahead.

There is a clear and urgent need for effective community representation to Government at State level.

### **WALGA and LGPro**

WALGA clearly sees WARRA as a threat and has been actively opposing measures such as tonight's motion which serve to help WARRA get off the ground.

WALGA is a large and well funded organisation – Income in excess of \$22m per year, a wage bill of over \$11m, cash and investments of \$10m. WALGA also controls the LG Insurance through LGIS which in turn has income and assets at least as much again.

LGPro is the Local Government Professionals organisation with the undisguised objective of promoting the welfare of its members who are the Local Government bureaucrats. We have no issue with this. LGPro also sits on the WALGA Council which we see as a conflict of interest since WALGA provides employment and Industrial Relations advice to Local Governments.

Neither WALGA nor LGPro have any constitutional role to represent ratepayers.

WALGA and LGPro have a formal agreement with the State Government that is based on principles of *“Partnership”* and *“Reciprocity”*. The agreement makes these two organisations the *“first point of contact”* of the government in any matter affecting LG. There is a clear conflict of interest for DLGSC as the regulator of Local Government in this situation as it can no longer operate at arm’s length.

LGPro expressly represents the interests of its members – the LG employees. WALGA represents the bureaucrats de facto for reasons embedded in its structure and modus operandi (would like to explain but no time here) – so where does the community get represented? The answer is that the community is not represented at government level, and this accounts for much of the imbalance of power referred to earlier. In particular it accounts for the trend to increasing this imbalance through the recent and current LGA amendments.

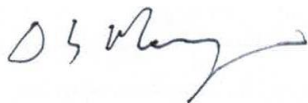
### **Why Contribute to WARRA?**

There is serious need for community representation to balance the overwhelming weight of the unelected bureaucrats in managing ratepayer funds, development approvals, etc. There is a need for elected members to take control of the policy agenda instead of bowing to the administration. We have several glaring examples of this need in the City of Melville right now.

This where WARRA comes in. It will be a long, slow process but it has already begun, and it needs the support of elected members to gather momentum. WARRA is there to provide balance in the LG process, to help restore the authority of Council in setting the direction of the City. It is there to ensure that our bureaucrats are accountable for their management of the ratepayer funds that also pay their salaries, and for the conduct of their officers in respecting the wishes and authority of the electorate. Of course, this invites some resistance from the officers, which you can see in their response to this motion.

The City of Melville is the logical place for this to start. The amount sought is trivial – only a few cents per ratepayer. It balances that small part of ratepayer funds paid to WALGA as fees for membership. Melville is the appropriate Council to provide this leadership. It is the home council of the founders of WARRA. It is also a leader amongst the Local Governments of WA. It is time for the Melville Council to give leadership in the state.

I urge you to support the motion passed at the Electors AGM in February.



David Maynier