

Ellis welcomes debate on local government overhaul

HISTORIC changes to the way local government representatives are remunerated and the organisations' financial accountability and transparency are currently before the WA Parliament.

Local Agricultural Region MLC Brian Ellis, who previously served for five years as deputy president of the Shire of Moora, said that he welcomed the opportunity to see positive changes introduced.

"I will be tracking the legislation in the Legislative Council with interest and look forward to my opportunity to contribute to the debate when the bill reaches the Legislative Council," Mr Ellis said.

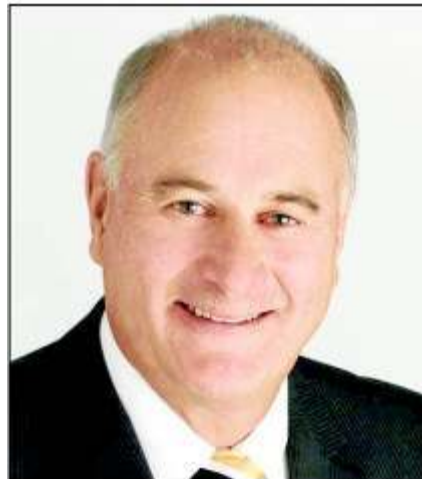
"In the meantime, I would be happy to receive correspondence from any local governments in the Agricultural Region which wish to comment on the bill, so that I can take their views into account."

The objectives of the Local Government Amendment Bill 2011 are to strengthen the ability of local governments to deliver better services to their communities and to address significant governance and public administration issues.

The key amendments provide for improving the standard, performance and calibre of local governments and their elected members by disqualifying members with serious criminal convictions, in parallel with the criminal conviction criteria for WA members of parliament; requiring elected mem-

bers to resign when they are elected to State Parliament to avoid any perceived conflict of interest; enabling the Minister for Local Government to temporarily suspend a local government council for a maximum of six months when there are significant internal issues which are impacting on the council's ability to govern effectively; providing for the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal to determine elected members' fees and allowances; making Salaries and Allowances Tribunal determinations for chief executive remuneration (rather than recommendations) to increase the transparency of chief executive remuneration and improve accountability for ratepayer funds; requiring more prudent investment of public monies on the part of local governments; clarifying the powers of local government to impose service charges for underground power and the ability for rebates to be paid under the Rates and Charges (Rebates and Deferments) Act 1992; and consequential changes to the Salaries and Allowances Act 1975 and Rates and Charges (Rebates and Deferments) Act.

Mr Ellis said that the time he served with the Shire of Moora in other roles such as deputy chair of the Finance Committee and deputy chair of the Management Review Committee also gave him a practical understanding of the issues involved.



Local Agricultural Region MLC
Brian Ellis