

Submission on LOCAL Government Productivity for 2022.

Firstly this a personal submission on the above subject, by me as an individual and 13 years as an Elected Member of a large Perth Metropolitan Council .

Essentially, it is about the Council that I have spent 13 years at, but there are correlations between most metro councils.

There is today, little Accountability or Transparency in the WA Local Government with regards to its Ratepayers and Community as a whole. Far too many Agenda items are held behind closed doors with the general public completely unaware of any discussion on the item, save to say, the Resolution of Council which is broadly either Yes or No to an officer recommendation. This level of secrecy has been the bane of many an Inquiry into Local Govt, and is presented as a major reason of breakdown in trust between Elected Members and Administrators. Most LG's affected by Inquiries often promise to carry out Inquiry recommendations, particularly Accountability and Transparency provisions which they attempt to do but after maybe 3-4years it seems to quickly slide back to old ways and practices. The current and past Ministers seem to have little concerns for some of the outrageous behavior of some Presidents/Mayors and Administrative Directors. The same can be said of the DLGSC which seems to carry on in the same way, Minister after Minister. This greatly affects the continuity of Production. Most, if not all Councils have LTFP's, but these Plans seem to flounder regularly, based mainly on Unfunded Plans and Strategies put forward by the Administration coming from borrowings out of Reserves without proper process and Resolution of Council, to supposedly be repaid at a later date. Partisan politics is another bugbear in LG, as groups (majority) usually in tandem with the President/Mayor, flex their numerical authority on personal Ward Projects that once again are not on the Budget or fully costed, many are moved from the floor with little time for others to research or Debate.

This has lead in my experience to where the Council in one recent F/Y posted a near \$11million Operational Deficit (read unfunded Plans and Strategies). Currently there is around \$40-60 million dollars on the books and unfunded, some partially. NEW Motions like CCTV in the Public Realm were passed by Council (newly elected members allegedly forming the BLOC) with no costings or Background save a Recommendation of 2018 which related to only Council CCTV infrastructure with passive surveillance.

There many other critical reasons for poor Productivity, like Cronyism in appointing closely associated or mates to positions without suitable qualifications and who all dance to the same tune.

State Auditors seem unable to curtail practices where Accountability or Transparency are paramount. Anything that concerns Auditors are made Confidential and the general public is once again unable to view, except when the Auditors annual report arrives, which not sure if that's on many peoples to do list. I suppose Productivity can be measured by CEO's KPI's but that can 4-5 plus years and a partisan council can quickly knock the wheels off that.

Many Councils exhibit poor leadership, both administratively and civilly, with political jockeying for Grants and Funding, which some say is part of the game, except where it is identified as pork barreling by the Govt of the day and not equitable across the whole of Council. It seems the leafy green areas are best serviced, with most monies going to those social and sporting clubs in those areas, this time Kudos for the Council. The main problem there with productivity aside it seems lower socio clubs seem to struggle to survive others get council grants and funding over and over. This needs a more stringent overview committee of sorts to maintain and renew Facilities equitably, still Productive!

Too many hundreds of thousands of Dollars spent on Climate Change and Multicultural Cultural indigenous and Business. This really is the province of State and Federal governments. Councils can do little about these items because of the costs and the number of people in many Councils whose total Rates are going up exponentially to fund Humanities etc. WA local government is not structured the same as the Eastern Seaboard, we probably have only 10% + of the population, that can't possibly fund this sort of altruism that is promulgated the Administration, The pie gets split into too many slices and therefore nothing gets done fully because then it usually requires recurrent funding, which is always going to come from State or Federal Govts, and as their priorities change, will generally leads to projects faltering because of underservicing. It then befalls the Ratepayer to foot many of these service that seem to have no measurable outcomes. That's not productivity it's more feel good politics with someone else's money. That's easy.

Productivity is the efficiency of production of Goods or services expressed by some measure, and out per unit of input and over a specific period. If this the Maxim or General Principle of productivity then in my own experience of service as an Elected Member, I think that as far as Productivity goes, Local Government is an abject failure.

My experience is that they always raise more Rates than are required of them as a service organization for a Financial Year. Case in question my Administration has over the last 4 years, save the Covid year when Rates were frozen at state Govt direction, has increased rates by way over the Annual CPI .The last 2 years it seems they allocated around \$50million p/a for Capital expenditure, full well knowing and admitting that their ability to only clear or use those funds was estimated at half that sum. Some unused portions of those funds are then returned to specific Reserves as Carryovers for usually Major works budgeted for several F/Years, the bulk being the rest ,being categorized as surplus funds, (Profit in LG speak) these maybe returned to their original allocation or not, then being used to fund something else. Essentially I see this as rate gouging where ratepayers are given the so called shopping list for the year and council only uses half and does not return any benefit to the ratepayer. It actually is ferreted away and the whole sad tale repeats itself the next year. Last year it was considering selling off Land Assets to Balance the budget, this was avoided by once again cutting service expenditure. Such a sordid tale put forward by what many call an incompetent Administration and aided and abetted by a Council basically in lockstep with it. Most budgets are such that they are not easily understood from a public level and even as an Elected Members, even when I and a number of colleagues asked about details of huge Operational expenditure Deficit, how it occurred and the details of it, we were stonewalled. Obviously we were a minority concern.

All in all I personally think there is little or no real Productivity in Local Govt, I'm sure there are exceptions though, that are akin to anything that could be held up to Private enterprise. Unfortunately the skill set and private sector experience does not reside generally in local Govt save having an over reliance on Consultants and then not having qualification to complete projects in a timely manner.

Local Govt seem to be the masters of the False Economy, which is which is aided and abetted by State and Federal funds which some say are pork barreling etc., but whichever way you look at it you will find Councils very rarely are shovel ready in 9 out of 10 cases, and so on and so on. The Council I served up to 2011 was essentially Debt Free, now its Borrowing, Gouging and Services either cut or deleted which has become the new Mantra. Council like mine are pretty much the opposite when it comes to Productivity, pretty much **ineffective** in a timely and Fiscal manner.

Thank You for your Consideration.