

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS**

*Statement by Minister for Local Government*

**MR D.R. MICHAEL (Balcatta — Minister for Local Government)** [1.19 pm]: I remind the house of the upcoming local government elections in October. As members know, council elections provide residents and ratepayers across Western Australia with the opportunity to have their say in the future of our local governments. As part of recent reforms, optional preferential voting has been introduced for local government elections, which will give residents the greatest possible say in who they vote for and ensure that the elected council best represents their local community. This year it will be the first time many electors will be able to vote directly for their mayor or president, and the first time many candidates will have the opportunity to be directly elected into those roles. Other changes involve the removal of wards in smaller local governments and council numbers being aligned to the population in the municipality for more equitable and consistent representation.

The Cook government has also introduced a number of reforms to support and bolster diversity in local government. For example, we are introducing parental leave entitlements for council members, and local governments will soon be able to pay education expenses. It is important that our councils reflect the diversity of the people who live within their boundaries and, more widely, the diversity of our state. We need people of all backgrounds, life experiences, skills and talents to put up their hands to serve their communities. Like several other members of this house and the other place, I was elected as a local government councillor. Being on council can be very rewarding. It is an opportunity and experience that is open to practically anyone. With nominations opening this week on Thursday, 31 August and closing next Thursday, 7 September, I encourage anyone who is interested in running for their council to give it go. When ballot papers hit people's letterboxes, or, in some councils, on election day, I urge every Western Australian to have their say.