

LOCAL GOVERNMENT — DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Statement by Minister for Local Government

MR D.R. MICHAEL (Balcatta — Minister for Local Government) [1.30 pm]: I rise to update the house on the Cook government's work to support diversity and inclusion in local government. As members would be aware, the local government ordinary elections are fast approaching. Council elections, which are held every two years, provide residents and ratepayers across WA with the opportunity to have their say on the future of their local community. This year, more work than ever is being done to support and encourage people across our state to be involved in their local council election. As part of the lead-up to the election, the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries is hosting a series of forum events for anyone who is considering engaging with the upcoming elections.

Last Monday, I attended a forum for young people, held in conjunction with the Youth Affairs Council of WA. Last night, I attended a forum for people living with a disability who might be interested in running for elected office in local government. Next week, I will attend a candidate forum hosted by the Western Australian Local Government Association. The former minister also attended a forum for culturally and linguistically diverse communities earlier this year.

Anyone voting in the upcoming elections will also see many of the Cook government's major reforms—the biggest in 25 years—coming into effect. Optional preferential voting will give residents a greater say in who they vote for, and ensure that the elected council best represents the people of the district. More information will be published about candidates to ensure that voters can carefully consider who they want to represent them.

Other major reforms to bolster diversity in local government are also being progressed including the introduction of parental leave entitlements for council members, local governments soon being able to pay education expenses for council members and, in the next tranche of legislation, amendments to support local governments to pay superannuation to council members.

These reforms will support a wider range of people running for election in local government, and I look forward to seeing a diversity of candidates running for office in October.