

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

Statement by Minister for Local Government

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Minister for Local Government) [12.07 pm]: Local governments play a vital role in the delivery of services and the creation of engaged and vibrant communities throughout Western Australia. To do this, they require strong and effective elected members and that is why the local government elections, which will be taking place on 21 October, are so important to communities across Western Australia. Encouraging greater voter turnout continues to be a challenge, with around one in four eligible Western Australians voting in the 2015 elections, and only one in five people in suburban areas of Perth making use of their democratic right and responsibility to have their say in decision-making. We must also do more to encourage young people to participate in local government elections. Around 15 per cent of votes cast in 2015 were from people aged 18 to 34 years—less than half the number cast by people aged 65 and over. There have been positive changes, however. In Capel, we saw the youngest councillor elected, Sebastian Schiano, at 18 years of age, which is a fantastic achievement. Also, more women were voted into local government, with women making up just over 35 per cent of councillors elected in 2015, up from 30 per cent in 2013. This is a significant increase and great for local democracy.

The McGowan government is committed to further increasing engagement and diversity in local government elections. Particularly, though, we will be encouraging participation amongst those sections of the community that may be under-represented, including women, Aboriginal people, young people and those from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. We will also be strongly encouraging eligible Western Australians to stand for council and to consider how they can make a real difference in their local communities. Competition breeds excellence, and a greater number of candidates will contribute to a higher standard of community representation and the effective governance that communities deserve.

I am pleased to say that the Department of Local Government and Communities is partnering with the Western Australian Electoral Commission and the Western Australian Local Government Association to increase awareness of the importance of voting in local government elections. It is essential that everyone, regardless of their age, gender or cultural background, has their say. I encourage all members of Parliament to urge their local communities to get informed and involved. Western Australians have until 5.00 pm on Friday, 1 September to enrol to vote, and candidates can nominate themselves for council between 7 and 14 September. More information is available from the website of the Department of Local Government and Communities and the Western Australian Electoral Commission.