

Good Governance

Walking the talk about transparency and accountability

When local governments practice good governance, their communities are more connected and engaged, better services are provided, community confidence in council is improved, resources are better used and better outcomes achieved.

Councillors elected to local government come from within the community and have many different interests, priorities, skills, experience and expectations. Good governance is all about ensuring that each local government is able to manage its many complex responsibilities effectively, and in the best interests of its community in ways which are transparent, accountable and just.

Governance is the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented – or not. This gets to the heart of how local governments operate as decision-making bodies and their relationship with the administration that advises Council and implements its decisions. It also includes the ways that local governments engage with their communities in this process.

Good Governance is a feature of local governments where roles are understood, relationships are respectful, leadership is encouraged, communities are engaged, consensus is sought, transparency valued and the values of integrity are modeled at all levels.

Good governance depends on transparency, accountability and equality in ways that are responsive to the needs of people. It is composed of the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups can articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences.

Good governance underpins the Australian democratic system of which local governments form the first level. The essential features of good governance are:

Democratic Foundation - Local governments' legitimacy comes from representing the interests of their local communities.

Law Abiding - Local governments are constituted under an Act of Parliament that places certain obligations of local governments and councillors

Accountable - The authority of a Council as provided for in the Local Government Act comes from the community through its elected representatives sitting as Council.

Corporate Governance - Good corporate governance requires prudent financial management, transparency including adequate auditing and reporting arrangements, and a high standard of budget management to ensure financial sustainability, value for money and the proper management of risks.

Representation - Good governance involves the concept of citizenship with its attendant rights and responsibilities and the concept of a representative body governing on behalf of its electors and in their best interests.

Mandate - A mandate can be drawn from policies presented to the community in the election process, by the development of Community Plans and the engagement of and consultation with citizens.

Policy Development - A local government's Council Plan must make clear the Council's strategic objectives and strategies for achieving those objectives. Each local government must determine its own performance indicators consistent with its community's priorities.

Engagement and Participation - Local governments must seek community understanding and involvement in governance through effective communication with their communities.

Mayor and Councillors articulate the collective aspirations of the community, and provide a source of inspiration for Council staff and the community. The role of Mayor as chair of Council and community leader is crucial to effective relationships with the administration and to good governance.

Culture of respect - Councillors and officers have different but complimentary roles. Good Governance requires that the differences are understood, valued and respected.

Decision Making - Good Governance requires well chaired and well conducted council meetings where all councillors are able to contribute.

Effective Management - A local government's functional responsibilities are carried out through locally agreed organisational arrangements consistent with of the Local Government Act. The chief executive officer is responsible to Council for the effectiveness of those arrangements in achieving Council's goals in accordance with Council's priorities and approved budget.

Efficiency and Assets - Good governance requires that programs and services are conducted efficiently and effectively and that the community's assets are maintained and improved.