

Local Government in Western Australia



139
Local
governments



27
Cities



45,000 to 50,000 staff



2.5m
Square
kilometres



104
Shires



Elected council
members (including a
mayor or president)



8
Towns



An administration led
by a Chief Executive
Officer (CEO)

What makes local government unique?

- ✓ Close-knit communities and overlapping relationships (friends, family, clubs)
- ✓ Active stakeholders and community pressures
- ✓ High-discretion roles (planning, rangers, finance, procurement)
- ✓ Limited resources and small teams
- ✓ Councillor/staff role separation challenges

Why this creates vulnerability to serious misconduct

Local governments become more susceptible because:

- ✗ Conflicts of interest are common in all communities and can be amplified in small LGAs
- ✗ Improper influence can occur – councillors or community members pushing for “favours”
- ✗ Confidential information is easily misused – everyone knows someone who wants “inside info”
- ✗ Weak internal controls can lead to increased exposure to fraud and misuse of resources
- ✗ Late financial reporting and audit delays can be red flags of broader governance issues

The serious misconduct risks you need to know about



Procurement and contracting:

Major risk areas can include: capital works, maintenance contracts, IT and professional services



Conflicts of interest: declared, undeclared, unmanaged:

Personal relationships affecting decisions and disclosure



Misuse of confidential information:

Unauthorised access/ disclosure of rates data, other personal data, development information, complaints, tender information



Abuse of role or position by senior officers:

Decision-making power or control is vested in one role or individual/ over-reliance on single individual/ role, limited internal challenge, limited understanding of governance boundaries



Fraud and financial misconduct:

Misappropriation or embezzlement of council funds/ assets, irregular/ unauthorised expenditure (including purchasing card misuse), and weak financial controls, audit, or oversight arrangements



Gifts, benefits and local favouritism:

In small communities, even small gifts/ token gestures can create obligations or expectations

What Types Of Matters Has The Commission Seen?

“Trusted assistant” cases:



A long-serving or
trusted staff member
is given excessive
autonomy



Controls are bypassed
“because they are
trusted”



Financial or
administrative abuse
goes undetected
for years

Inadequate internal responses to suspected misconduct

- Attempts to minimise or manage issues internally
- Lack of confidentiality controls for reporting persons
- Inadequate or delayed investigations
- Failure to manage/ mitigate risk during investigations
- Failure to notify the Commission

**Failure to act internally on known risks
is a serious governance failing**

Procurement manipulation and kickback schemes

- Pre-determined tender outcomes
- Contractors bribing or incentivising officials
- Third-parties seeking access to confidential information
- Use of intermediaries or “trusted assistants”
- Scope creep benefitting favoured suppliers

**These matters often involve collusion
rather than isolated rogue behaviour**



CEO misconduct

- ✗ Misuse of public funds
- ✗ Fraudulent financial practices
- ✗ Manipulation of recruitment and remuneration
- ✗ Conflicted procurement decisions
- ✗ Abuse of trust



Councillor conduct and governance failures

- ✗ Inadequate due diligence in CEO recruitment process
- ✗ Participation in conflicted decisions
- ✗ Improper pressure on staff
- ✗ Failure to understand governance vs operational roles
- ✗ Attempts to influence procurement or personnel decisions

Taking Action Against Serious Misconduct

Why you should care

Because serious misconduct affects:



Your Job

Being involved – even accidentally – can put your employment at risk.



Your Shire

Misconduct breaks trust, divides the community, and draws media or CCC attention.



Your Community

Misconduct leads to wasted money, poorer services, and stalled projects.



Your Colleagues

It causes stress, conflict, and unnecessary blame.



Your Integrity

You deserve a safe, ethical workplace where decisions are fair.

What to look out for

- ✗ Requests for “special treatment” or shortcuts
- ✗ Councillors directing staff
- ✗ Colleagues repeatedly accessing systems they don’t need
- ✗ Favouritism in procurement or recruitment
- ✗ Missing documentation or unexplained delays
- ✗ Gifts or benefits that create obligations
- ✗ Confidential information circulating in the community

We’re here to help

As part of our mission, we help local governments to:

- ✓ better understand their fraud and corruption risks,
- ✓ further strengthen their integrity frameworks,
- ✓ be aware of their reporting obligations under s28 of the *Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003* and
- ✓ to feel comfortable in contacting the Commission to discuss any matters or concerns.

If something doesn’t feel right, or you’re unsure what to do, then contact the Commission at the earliest opportunity.

What you can do



Set clear boundaries:

If someone pressures you, you can say: “I’m required to follow the proper process. I can’t make exceptions.”



Protect confidential information:

Only access information necessary for your work — and never share it externally.



Declare conflicts early:

Even if it feels small, declare it.



Follow procedures:

Ensure your actions are reasonable and appropriate.



Ask if unsure:

Your supervisor, manager, governance officer, or HR officer can help you navigate tricky situations.



Report issues early:

Early reporting prevents escalation. You also have the option of reporting anonymously to the Commission.



Contact Us

Report suspected serious misconduct through our online form:
ccc.wa.gov.au/make-a-report.
You can remain anonymous.

For all other queries, call **1800 803 186** to leave a message and a Commission officer will return your call.