

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