

Serious flaws in local government

Paul Murray exposes some disturbing and all-too common serious flaws in the operations of local government (*Opinion*, 12/12).

Unfortunately for local government, the Department of Local Government and Communities is a somewhat toothless tiger. It is similar to Fuel Watch and its alleged control of fuel prices.

The department sets about creating policies for everything imaginable. But it has no power to do anything when councils or CEOs simply ignore those policies.

The WALGA is an autonomous body whose primary motivations are profits and survival.

It is an enormous growing and unnecessary private bureaucracy and has far too much influence in local government, considering it is supposed to work for local government, not control it.

Take the hypothetical situation — and there are probably real examples — of a local government that has a corrupt CEO protected by a corrupt mayor or president, along with some subservient councillors:

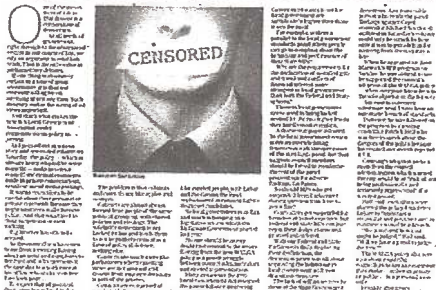
If other elected members on that council want to try to expose the corruption, what are they to do?

They are gagged by policies created by WALGA. They are also thwarted by the department which, if it does take an interest, will take a year or two to investigate — then it has no power to act on any exposed corruption.

In recent times councillors have been criticised by the Crime and Corruption Commission for not questioning activities of CEOs.

But they are prevented by regulations and policies from speaking out. If the State Government wants to have open and accountable local

OPINION Paul Murray Big Brother arrives at council



Murray's column last week.

governments, it must ensure the new Act provides councillors with the ability to speak out and expose corruption.

Further, it must give the local government department the power to prosecute offenders — both staff and councillors.

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