

Subject: [New post] Melville needs culture change

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Melville needs culture change

by Your Herald

MELVILLE council needs a cultural change so it can better deal with difficult complaints, a state government inquiry has found.

On Thursday local government minister David Templeman released the findings of the local government department report into the city, which also found a staff oversight led to mayor Russell Aubrey and former CEO Shayne Silcox initiating the purchase of a \$3.8 million property in Kishorn Road without the appropriate council approval.

The report cleared the council of attempting to mask a major land transaction – and therefore public scrutiny – when it purchased an adjoining strata triplex property in Moreau Mews.

There was very little in the report about the council's dabbling in wave parks, with author Ron Murphy saying public submissions were not accepted by the inquiry, while questions on whether Melville had complied with the local government act had been dealt with by the WA Supreme Court.

Recommendations

There were seven recommendations, including undergoing two more governance reviews in the next six months.

The council has also been told to regularly review its public question time policy and engage an "independent" person to review and act on complaints. Senior staff should also get training in complaint management.

"The Mayor and/or the City of Melville failed to respond to requests from individuals or organisations based on the status of the organisation or individual until such time [as] legal advice had been provided to them therefore breaching s5.96 of the LG Act," the report found.

It also recommended procedures be tightened to prevent any further unauthorised land transactions.

There was no evidence of an overly-cosy relationship between the admin and any councillors, only debates that sometimes became "robust".

"When reviewing all the information received, there appears to be a good relationship between council and the administration with clear division between the two, with each aware of their separate roles," it found.

Public question time during council meetings came under a lot of scrutiny, with Mr Murphy finding some organisations were submitting “extreme” lists of questions which were unreasonable for the council to answer.

Overlooked

But the council got a ticking off for not being open and transparent when it changed the rules about question time, while on one occasion Mr Aubrey breached administrative regulations when he discovered a ratepayer’s question that had been overlooked and read it out at the wrong time during the meeting.

In releasing the report, Mr Templeman reiterated his earlier advice for the council and community to treat each other with respect and consideration.

“The recommendations will be the catalyst the city needs to drive cultural change,” Mr Templeman said.

“In particular, the complaints management process needs to be improved to ensure all parties are better informed, have a clearer understanding of their roles and ultimately lead to more positive internal and external interactions.”

by STEVE GRANT

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