

C. Legislative context

Frameworks

Under the *Constitution of Queensland 2001*, there must be a system of local government in Queensland that is made up of councils. Local governments (councils) are elected bodies that have the power to make local laws suitable to the needs and resources of the areas they represent.

The councils' legislative framework is the *Local Government Act 2009* (the Act) and the Local Government Regulation 2012 (the regulation).

The purpose of the Act is to specify the nature and extent of councils' responsibilities and powers. It requires the system of local government to be accountable, effective, efficient, and sustainable.

The regulation requires each council to prepare, by 31 October:

- general purpose financial statements
- a current year financial sustainability statement
- a long-term financial sustainability statement.

Only the general purpose financial statements and the current year financial sustainability statement are subject to audit.

Brisbane City Council has the *City of Brisbane Act 2010* and City of Brisbane Regulation 2012. This regulation imposes the same financial reporting time frames and financial reporting requirements on Brisbane City Council as other councils have.

Each council must release its annual report within one month of the audit opinion date. The Minister for Local Government may grant an extension to the deadline where extraordinary circumstances exist.

The current year financial sustainability statement includes the following 6 measures of financial sustainability:

- the *operating surplus ratio*, which indicates the extent to which operating revenues cover operating expenses
- the *operating cash ratio*, which indicates council's ability to cover its operational expenses and increase its cash from its core operations
- the *unrestricted cash expense cover ratio*, which indicates how much money a council has available for its regular expenses and unexpected financial needs
- the *asset sustainability ratio*, which approximates the extent to which a council is replacing its assets as they reach the end of their useful lives
- the *asset consumption ratio*, which indicates how much of a council's infrastructure assets has been used compared to what it would cost to build new assets with the same benefit to the community
- the *leverage ratio*, which indicates how easily a council can repay its debts.

Accountability requirements

The Act requires councils to establish financial management systems to identify and manage financial risks, including risks to reliable and timely reporting. The performance of financial management systems requires regular review.



Queensland local government financial statements

These financial statements are used by a broad range of parties, including parliamentarians, taxpayers, employees, and users of government services. For the statements to be useful, the information reported must be relevant and accurate.

The Auditor-General's audit opinion on these financial statements assures users they are accurate and in accordance with relevant legislative requirements.

We express an *unmodified opinion* when the financial statements are prepared in accordance with the relevant legislative requirements and Australian accounting standards. We *modify* our audit opinion when financial statements do not comply with the relevant legislative requirements and Australian accounting standards and are not accurate and reliable.

There are 3 types of modified opinions:

- qualified opinion – the financial statements as a whole comply with relevant accounting standards and legislative requirements, with the exceptions noted in the opinion
- adverse opinion – the financial statements as a whole do not comply with relevant accounting standards and legislative requirements
- disclaimer of opinion – the auditor is unable to express an opinion as to whether the financial statements comply with relevant accounting standards and legislative requirements.

Sometimes we include an *emphasis of matter* in our audit reports to highlight an issue that will help users better understand the financial statements. It does not change the audit opinion.

