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Michael McPhail (Class of 2010)

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EDITORIAL

O'Callaghan should leave new man to get on with the job

Karl O'Callaghan is not doing any favours for his successor as police commissioner. His extraordinary commentary this week about the process of appointing Chris Dawson and how the new commissioner is tackling the job are unprecedented — and unhelpful.

Mr O'Callaghan clearly has strong views on a range of issues relating to his police work and wider social issues. It is not surprising that he is keen to continue having an input on public debate.

Judging by comments from Premier Mark McGowan yesterday, Mr O'Callaghan may feel he has unfinished business as WA's top cop. Mr McGowan said Mr O'Callaghan had expressed interest in a contract extension before the new Government decided to go for a new person in the job.

But Mr O'Callaghan had almost 13 years to make his mark. It is time for someone else to have a go.

Mr Dawson comes to the top job as a highly experienced police officer, including 10 years as a WA deputy commissioner and 3½ years as head of the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission.

It is to be expected that he will have his own ideas about how to do things.

But he needs to be given clear air to do so without ongoing commentary from his predecessor about how he is going in the job and the shortcomings in the process of appointing him.

The *West Australian* revealed yesterday that Mr O'Callaghan referred an internal WA Police report on the Claremont serial killings investigation, which previously sat within Mr Dawson's crime portfolio as deputy commissioner, to the Corruption and Crime Commission about a year ago, and again raised the matter with the Government when the recruitment process was under way.

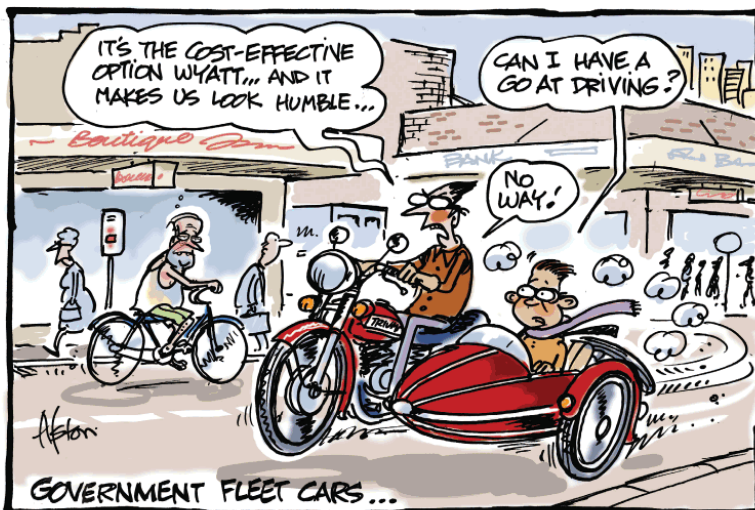
He has also been scathing about perceived political interference in the recruitment process. And he criticised Mr Dawson's move to put on hold the shift to a new style of uniform for WA Police, a process initiated by Mr O'Callaghan.

Mr O'Callaghan proved himself a competent and effective commissioner.

The *West Australian* has welcomed his input and regularly published opinion pieces from him on a range of social issues, most significantly the welfare of children.

He leaves an important legacy as commissioner, broadening the role to one that takes an active position on the underlying causes of crime and the interaction between police work and other social services.

But it is this legacy that Mr O'Callaghan risks undoing with his ill-considered intervention into the affairs of the new commissioner.



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Acrimony undermines local democratic process

Michael McPhail



When I first stood for council it was because I wanted to assist in shaping a future that was more sustainable and equal. I wanted to help make my community an even better place to live. It's what drives most people interested in local government to stand. Most candidates nominate with good intent.

And yet, in this current election season, we are witnessing a bitter and declining standard of civic debate.

Just last week, Georgie Carey was the target of a hate-filled barrage from a 40,000-strong nationalist social media group.

What did Georgie do to deserve these hundreds of abusive messages?

A thoughtful, role-model citizen, Georgie volunteered to serve on the Mosman Park Town Council.

Candidates in this year's local government elections are submitting themselves to a democratic process that is becoming increasingly vitriolic and intimidating for new entrants.

An emerging culture of bullying and intimidation, fuelled by social media, can be seen across WA.

What Georgie experienced is not isolated.

In Stirling and Subiaco, candidates have endured continual defacing and theft of their signs and campaign material. In Belmont, the abuse has gone further, with one candidate



We need to reset the standard for community debate.

receiving an intimidating voicemail message demanding they "pull out of the race" or face "humiliation".

A continuous tirade of "trolling" and disparaging attacks on social media has been unleashed in Melville, Cockburn and Denmark, often from anonymous accounts.

In Fremantle, some candidates and community members have become rabid and acrimonious, peddling untruths with increasing desperation as election day approaches.

When you nominate for local government, you expose yourself: you place your reputation in the hands of others. To some extent that comes with the territory.

However, what should be of concern is the increasingly personal nature of our public debate, the noticeable declining displays of compassion and kindness towards those who seek to represent us and to those who disagree with us.

If this continues, the only people game enough to stand for election will be hardened partisan street-fighters — exactly the sort of thing we don't want. The perverse tragedy is that those most likely to be put off running are exactly the sort of people we all want to see more of.

WA can never have too many

reasonable, thoughtful and caring people in our council chambers.

Perth needs more sensible, open-minded councillors inclined to welcome new ideas and developments if we're to continue maturing as a city.

The good news is that this can be fixed. And it won't require much effort but it does require all of us.

We need to reset the standard for community debate. When you see disrespectful behaviour from candidates and community members, politely call it out.

You may not change their behaviour immediately, but your comments are a positive signal to the thousands of eyeballs that silently watch on.

Politics is all about differences. When we discuss them, recognise the humanity of other people, and that most people are just trying their best.

When you notice the hard work candidates and councillors invest to serve you, recognise it. If you think something can be done better, write them a polite note. Both messages will be appreciated.

If we continue to walk (and scroll) pass intolerant, ill-informed and disrespectful behaviour, that is the standard we accept, and ultimately, that will be the city we become.

However, if we are kinder and more caring towards each other then we will see better candidates seeking to represent us.

WA will become a more prosperous society because of it.

Michael McPhail is the deputy mayor of Fremantle and a candidate in the current election. When he was elected in 2013 he was the youngest councillor in WA