



Late Item 8.8

'Review of Wards and Representation – Public Discussion Paper'

Ordinary Council Meeting

24 August 2022

8.8 Review of Wards and Representation – Public Discussion Paper

File reference	13.5.10		
Report date	17 August 2022		
Applicant/proponent	Shire of Victoria Plains		
Officer disclosure of interest	No interest to disclose		
Previous meeting references	Council Meeting 3 August 2022, item 8.10		
Prepared by	Niel Mitchell, Consultant		
Authorised by	Sean Fletcher, Temporary CEO		
Attachments			
Attachment 1	Page		Draft Public Discussion Paper

PURPOSE

To consider a review of wards and representation.

BACKGROUND

Wards and representation were last reviewed in 2016 and were applicable for the 2017 ordinary local government elections.

At the Council meeting held on 3 August 2022, Council noted that the Temporary CEO initiated a review of wards and representation on 21 June 2022.

COMMENT

Council has since met with the consultant to review the preliminary concepts, and narrowed the 7 presented for discussion to the three options outlined in the attached draft Discussion Paper for Public Comment.

A decision on a proposal to the Local Government Advisory Board is to be made after consideration of public submissions, and is expected to be made at the November 2022 Council Meeting.

At the Briefing Session of 15 August 2022, three options were considered for inclusion in the Discussion Paper –

- Option A – no wards, seven Councillors,
- Option B – two wards, seven Councillors, with three in western ward, and four in an eastern ward,
- Option C – four wards, seven Councillors, with two in the western ward, one in the north eastern ward, and two in each of the central eastern and south eastern wards.

Local public notice of the review and the discussion paper is required, and it is intended that the discussion paper will be advertised –

- mandatory – on the website by 26 August (commencement of the statutory 6 week public comment period)
- three additional methods of local public notice also required and may include – local newspaper, social media, notice boards of all libraries.

Public comment will close on 27 October 2022, providing additional time than the minimum required.

Council's decision regarding the submission to be made to the Local Government Advisory Board, can be made at either the November or December Council meeting.

CONSULTATION

Council Briefing Session, 15 August 2022

Sean Fletcher, Temporary Chief Executive Officer

Julie Craig, Dept of Local Government, Sporting and Cultural Industries

WA Electoral Commission

STATUTORY CONTEXT

Local Government Act 1995 –

- s.2.2 – District may be divided into wards
- s.2.18(3) – the Governor may make an order changing the number of offices of councillor or number within a ward
- Sch.2.2 –
 - cl.6 – Local Government with wards to review periodically, at least every 8 years, and such a review may be required by the LGAB
 - cl.7 – conduct of reviews
 - cl.8 – matters to be considered, including number of office of councillor for the ward
 - cl.9 – local government to make a report to the LGAB, and may propose changes by absolute majority
 - cl.10 – recommendation to Minister by LGAB
 - cl.11 – enquiry by LGAB
 - cl.12 – Minister may accept or reject LGAB recommendation

CORPORATE CONTEXT

Shire of Victoria Plains Strategic Community Plan

Goals of the Community

5. Civic leadership –

to better allocate scarce resources and effectively interact with the community

5.1. Implement measures to improve relationship and communication between Council and community

5.2. Improve elected member performance

5.3. Develop an advocacy and lobbying capacity

5.4. Measures to improve organisational efficiency

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Cost of –

- advertising for public comment
- to be confirmed, preparation of maps (if wards adopted after public comment period)

VOTING REQUIREMENTS

Absolute majority required: No

Officer Recommendation

Moved Cr _____

Seconded Cr _____

That Council –

1. **ENDORSE** for the purposes of public consultation the Discussion Paper as attached to this agenda allowing for three (3) options as follows –
 - (a) no wards, seven (7) Councillors;
 - (b) two (2) wards, seven (7) Councillors in a 3, 4 Councillor arrangement; and
 - (c) four (4) wards , seven (7) Councillors in a 2, 2, 2, 1 arrangement.
2. in accordance with Schedule 2.2 (7)(1) of the *Local Government Act 1995* give local public notice advising –
 - (a) that a review of its ward boundaries and the number of offices of councillor, for each ward is to be carried out; and
 - (b) that submissions may be made to the Shire by 27 October 2022.

For _____ / Against _____



Shire of Victoria Plains

Review of Ward Boundaries and Representation

DRAFT

Discussion Paper for Public Comment

August 2022

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1 BACKGROUND

The Shire of Victoria Plains is undertaking a review of its ward boundaries and representation, due to an imbalance in numbers between the wards. This imbalance is in excess of the ratio variance acceptable to the Local Government Advisory Board.

The purpose of this document is not to pre-empt any community input nor to commit Council to a particular direction at this time, but to –

- outline the overall parameters that apply, and
- provide some examples to assist community input.

This paper does not prevent alternative proposals being put forward by residents, for consideration by Council.

1.1 **Legislative framework**

Schedule 2.2 of the *Local Government Act 1995* (the Act) provides that a local government that has a ward system is required to carry out reviews from time to time so that not more than eight years elapse between successive reviews of –

- (a) its ward boundaries; and
- (b) the number of offices of councillor for each ward.

The last review of wards and representation was undertaken in 2016 and implemented for the 2017 local government elections. However, a further review is necessary.

The Act provides that when undertaking a review of wards and representation any of the following may be considered:

- creating new wards in a district already divided into wards;
- changing the boundaries of a ward;
- abolishing any or all of the wards into which a district is divided;
- changing the name of a district or any ward;
- changing the number of offices of councillor on a council; and
- specifying or changing the number of offices of councillor for a ward.

Section 2.17 (2) of the current Act provides that if the method of filling the office of president is election by the council, the council is to consist of between 6 and 15 councillors.

1.2 **Factors that must be taken into account**

Clause 8 of Schedule 2.2 requires a council to assess options against the following factors:

- community of interest;
- physical and topographical features;
- demographic trends;
- economic factors; and
- the ratio of councillors to electors in the various wards.

The Local Government Advisory Board (LGAB) assesses reviews of wards and representation undertaken by local governments and makes recommendations to the Minister for Local Government as to whether or not local governments have taken these factors into account, and which can be interpreted as –

<p>Community of interest</p>	<p>The term community of interest has a number of elements. These include a sense of community identity and belonging, similarities in the characteristics of the residents of a community and similarities in the economic activities.</p> <p>It can also include dependence on the shared facilities in an area as reflected in catchment areas of local schools and sporting teams, or the circulation areas of local newspapers.</p> <p>Neighborhoods, suburbs and towns are important units in the physical, historical and social infrastructure and often generate a feeling of community and belonging.</p>
<p>Physical and topographic features</p>	<p>These may be natural or man-made features that will vary from area to area. Water features such as rivers and catchment boundaries may be relevant considerations.</p> <p>Coastal plain and foothills regions, parks and reserves may be relevant as may other man made features such as railway lines and freeways.</p>
<p>Demographic trends</p>	<p>Several measurements of the characteristics of human populations, such as population size, and its distribution by age, sex, occupation and location provide important demographic information. Current and projected population characteristics will be relevant as well as similarities and differences between areas within the local government.</p>
<p>Economic factors</p>	<p>Economic factors can be broadly interpreted to include any factor that reflects the character of economic activities and resources in the area.</p> <p>This may include the industries that occur in a local government area (or the release of land for these) and the distribution of community assets and infrastructure such as road networks.</p>
<p>Ratio of councillors to electors</p>	<p>The LGAB considers that the ratio of councillors to electors is particularly significant - it is expected that each local government will have similar ratios of electors to councillors across its wards.</p> <p>The LGAB will not support deviations of more than plus or minus 10% of the average ratio of electors to councillors between wards.</p>

The LGAB places particular emphasis on an even ratio of electors per councillor where a local government is divided into wards but considers a variation of plus or minus 10% between wards to be reasonable.

If satisfied that a review has properly taken these factors into consideration, the LGAB then makes a recommendation to the Minister for Local Government as to whether or not the proposal should be approved, rejected or modified. The Minister may accept or reject LGAB's recommendation.

Any changes will then come into effect at the next Council elections scheduled for October 2023.

2 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM

A reform of the Local Government Act was announced several years ago, with a range of immediate changes to the existing Act. Release of a discussion paper for a new Local Government Act followed in early 2022, with full reform proposals, modifying the original proposal.

A new Local Government Act is proposed due to the scope and range of the reforms. As yet, there is no indication of when the draft the new Act is likely to be released, nor when the new Act might be enacted.

Two aspects of the proposed reforms impact on this discussion paper.

2.1 Representation

Local Government Reforms: Full Reform Proposals ¹

Current provisions –

- The number of councillors (between 5 and 15 councillors) is decided by each local government, reviewed by the Local Government Advisory Board and approved by the Minister.
- The Panel Report recommended electoral reforms to improve representativeness.

Original proposal –

- It is proposed to limit the number of councillors based on the population of the entire local government.
- Some smaller local governments have already been moving to have smaller councils to reduce costs for ratepayers.
- The Local Government Panel Report proposed for a population of:
 - up to 5,000 – five councillors (including the President)
 - between 5,000 and 75,000 – five to nine councillors (including the Mayor/President)
 - above 75,000 – nine to fifteen councillors (including Mayor).

Amended proposal –

- **Change for Smaller Local Governments**

Based on requests from impacted councils, it is proposed to adjust this to allow local governments with a population of up to 5,000 people to decide to have 5, 6 or 7 councillors.

Comment for this discussion paper

There will be no scope to increase the number of elected members, so the choice will be to stay with 7 or reduce to 5 or 6. If to remain at 7, and there is a future wish to reduce in number, it would be a very simple matter if there are no wards, but boundaries would have to be amended if wards remain in place.

The current LG Act specifies a minimum of 6 Councillors where the President is elected by Council.

2.2 Wards

Local Government Reforms: Full Reform Proposals ²

Current provisions –

- A local government can make an application to be divided into wards with councillors elected to those wards.
- Only about 10% of band 3 and 4 local governments currently have wards.

Original proposal –

- It is proposed that the use of wards for councils in bands 3 and 4 is abolished.
- wards increase the complexity of elections, as this requires multiple versions of ballot papers to be prepared for a local government's election.
- In smaller local governments, the population of wards can be very small.

¹ Dept of Local Government, Sporting and Cultural Industries; Local Government Reforms: Full Reform Proposals; 2022. <https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/department/publications/publication/full-reform-proposals>

² Ibid.

- These wards often have councillors elected unopposed or elect a councillor with a very small number of votes. Some local governments have ward councillors elected with less than 50 votes.
- There has been a trend in smaller local governments looking to reduce the use of wards, with only 10 councils in bands 3 and 4 still having wards.

Amended proposal –

- No major changes. Work to develop and refine detail is ongoing. Transitional arrangements are under consideration.

Comment for this discussion paper

It would appear that in the next few years, Council will have little choice but to move to no wards, as the Shire of Victoria Plains is a Band 4 local government.

Given the nature and lead times of State legislation, no indication of timeframe has been able to be obtained.

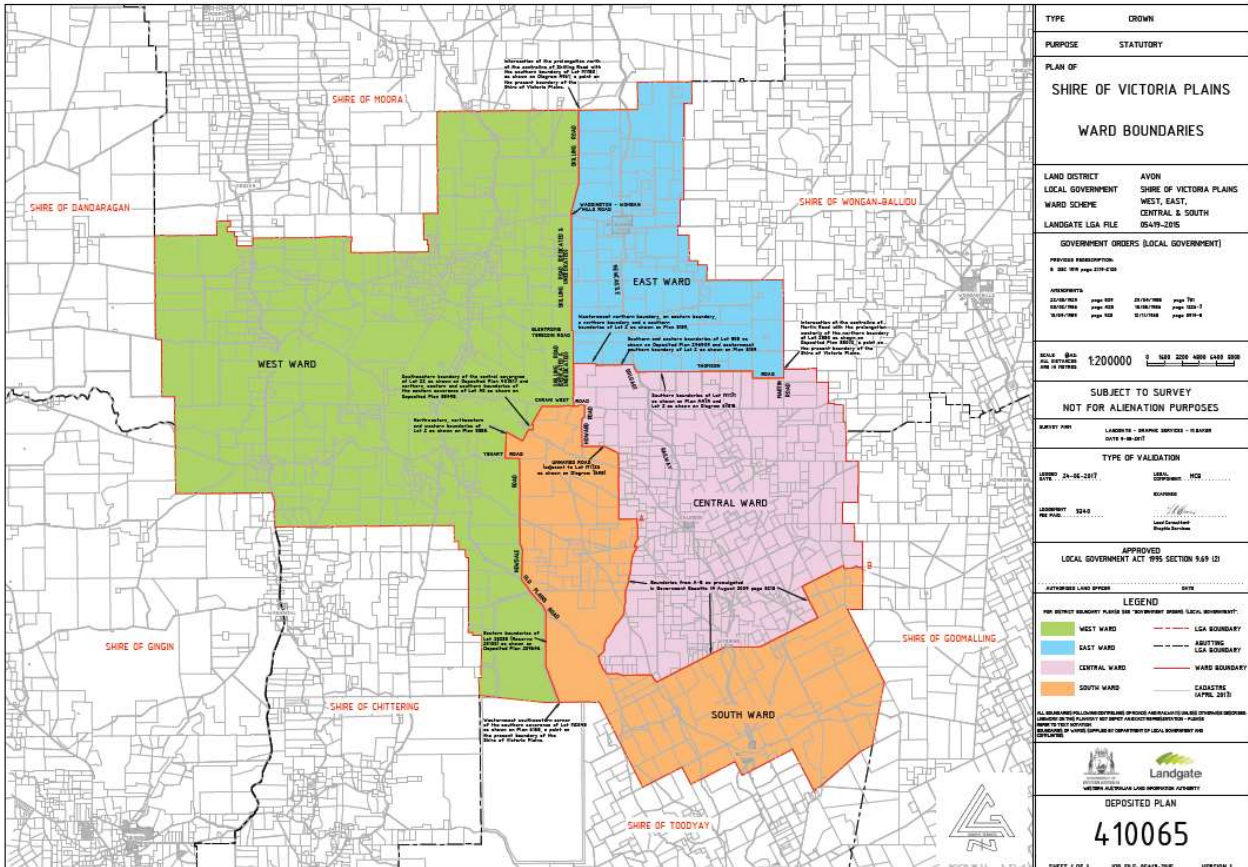
The choice for Council is whether to implement the changes now in anticipation of regulated changes, or to amend the boundaries in order to retain wards as an interim measure.

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3 CURRENT WARDS AND REPRESENTATION

3.1.1 Current wards and boundaries

The Council of the Shire of Victoria Plains is presently comprised of 7 councillors elected from four wards, with 3 having two councillors, and one having a single councillor. The President is elected by and from the members of Council.



3.1.2 General factors

Communities of interest could be said to exist around:

- the western area, with more electors around Mogumber than Gillingarra;
- the central area is principally around the New Norcia locality, with other central localities not having a clear focus;
- the north east around Piawaning and Yerecoin;
- the central east with Calingiri; and
- the south east concentrated on Bolgart.

Physical and topographical features include:

- three arterial and major roads running north-south that split the Shire into 4 parts;
- another significant road from Gt Northern High through Calingiri to Wongan Hills;
- two main rail line lines running north-south, from Gingin to Moora, and from Toodyay to Miling;
- there are no significant water or nature reserves;
- a large reserve comprising part of Bindoon Training Area in the south west corner of the Shire.

Economic factors are principally agricultural, with mining exploration becoming more frequent. Almost all Government services, medical and shopping facilities are accessed in adjoining towns – Moora, Wongan Hills, Toodyay, Gingin, or if prepared to travel a little further, in Midland or Joondalup.

3.1.3 Demographic trends

The Shire's estimated residential population was 802 from the 2021 Census. Population number has dropped by 17% in the past 20 years, while the median age has increased by 23%. There are fewer people, and an aging population.

Year	Estimated population	Median age
2001	966	n/a
2006	903	39
2011	895	41
2016	910	45
2021	802	48

<https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA58540> on 29 July 2022

Prior to the 2016 census, many mesh blocks were part of larger blocks, so direct comparison of population numbers within ABS mesh blocks is possible only from 2016 and 2021 census data. As a sample –

Locality	Estimated population 2016	Estimated population 2021
Gillingarra	41	49
Mogumber	59	58
Piawaning	61	57
Yerecoin	75	67
Calingiri	207	198
Bolgart	152	128

<https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/search-by-area> on 16 August 2022

From this it is clear that recently the trend has been for a stable or slightly increasing population in the western part of the Shire, but a noticeable decrease in the south eastern area.

3.1.4 Elector numbers

The ratio of councillors to electors in the various wards is given particular significance by the LGAB. It expects that each local government will have similar ratios of electors to councillors across its wards. The LGAB will not support variations of more than plus or minus 10% of the average ratio of electors to councillors between wards.

Based on information from the WA Electoral Commission sought on 4 July 2022, and using the LGAB ratio calculation tool –

Ward	No. of electors	No. of councillors	Councillor to elector ratio	% Ratio deviation
West	171	2	86	-8.42%
East	77	1	77	2.36%
Central	164	2	82	-3.99%
South	140	2	70	11.23%
TOTALS	552	7	79	n/a

Deviations in excess of those acceptable to the LGAB are highlighted in red.

While only South Ward is currently in excess of the acceptable variation, West Ward is approaching the limit.

However, as the LG Act permits absentee owners and occupiers from outside the ward or district to apply to vote, these numbers must also be taken into account. Given the small number of resident electors, the additional number revises the ratios significantly.

The absentee owners and occupiers roll is required to be reviewed prior to each election, and the enrolment of the elector is subject to a number of criteria – ownership, occupier, company nominee etc. The last review of the roll was prior to the 2019 election, and was done in detail. Accordingly, although not reviewed for the 2019 election, it is considered that it retains a high degree of validity.

When the 2019 absentee owners and occupiers roll numbers are included –

Ward	No. of electors	No. of councillors	Councillor to elector ratio	% Ratio deviation
West + 20	191	2	96	-15.86%
East + 0	77	1	77	6.59%
Central + 3	167	2	84	-1.3%
South + 2	142	2	71	13.86%
TOTALS	577	7	82	n/a

Deviations in excess of those acceptable to the LGAB are highlighted in red.

The West Ward is under represented, while South Ward is over represented. The other two wards are within the accepted ratio.

In summary –

- West Ward is under represented, and outside the acceptable ratio;
- East Ward is over represented but still within the acceptable ratio;
- Central Ward is close to optimum; and
- South Ward is over represented, and outside the acceptable ratio.

4 POTENTIAL OPTIONS FOR CHANGE

There are a significant range of outcomes that can be considered –

- changing the number of councillors, noting that the Shire already has close to the maximum that will be permitted when the new Local Government Act is enacted;
- changing the number of wards or having no wards at all;
- amending ward boundaries to move electors between wards; or
- a combination of all of the above.

Retention of the status quo ('no change') is not an option. Matters that could be considered when providing feedback are outlined following options.

4.1 Representation

4.1.1 How many elected members should the Shire have?

Based on current elector numbers excluding absentee owners and occupiers, the number of electors per councillor using the range that will be allowed in the new Act is –

No. of councillors	No. of WAEC electors / Cr
5	110
6	92
7	79
8	69
9	61
10	55
11	50
12	46
13	42
14	39
15	37

The current LG Act specifies a minimum number of councillors of 6 and a maximum of 15 Councillors.

Given that the new Act will probably limit the number of councillors to a maximum of 7 for a local government the size of the Shire of Victoria Plains, it does not seem prudent to increase the number, particularly when the number was only reduced in 2017.

Taking both these factors into account, only options for 6 or 7 Councillors have been considered.

4.1.2 Even v. odd number of councillors

A question is often raised that an even number of councillors more frequently results in a tied vote, putting the onus on the President to make a casting vote as required by the LG Act. However, the argument against an even number of councillors is negated if one is absent, or must declare an interest that requires vacating the meeting, creating an odd number Councillors present.

Similarly, if there are an odd number of Councillors, if one is absent, then an even number results and the possibility of a tied vote increases.

It is considered that a more critical issue is that of ensuring an absolute majority in decisions required by the LG Act. An absolute majority is defined by the LG Act as being more than 50%, so 3 out of 6 councillors is not an absolute majority, but 4 is. Four is also an absolute majority of 7, but with 7 councillors 3 can be absent from a vote for whatever reason and the meeting still achieves an absolute majority. Seven councillors therefore enables greater flexibility, but 6 remains an option for Council to consider.

The presumption has been made that there is no wish to reduce to 6 councillors, but an intention to retain 7 councillors.

If there is a wish to reduce to 6, the numbers and mapping will need to be reviewed if wards are to be implemented.

4.2 Wards

4.2.1 Should the Shire be divided into wards? If so, how many?

Presuming there is no wish to increase the number, it is possible to have no wards or up to 7 wards of one Councillor each. The range of wards and required number of electors to achieve an even number of electors excluding absentee owners and occupiers in each is –

No. of wards	Equal No. of WAEC electors / ward
No wards	552
2	276
3	184
4	138
5	110
6	92
7	79

These figures will change if a different number of councillors per ward is acceptable, and will be required if an odd number of councillors is decided on.

4.2.2 Absentee owners and occupiers

The WA Electoral Commission assigns voting right to the ward in which the person is resident. A person resident outside the Shire is therefore not a resident of the Shire, and must enrol to vote as an absentee owner or occupier. The automatic right to vote is dependent upon place of residency, not of land ownership, occupancy.

The LG Act permits absentee owners and occupiers of the Shire or a specific ward, to enrol to vote in the Shire or that ward they are not resident in. Accordingly, a person can live in one ward, own property or be an occupier in multiple other wards, and be able to enrol to vote in each ward.

Each ward election is considered to be a separate election, so the person is not voting multiple times in any election, even though the person may end up being able to have multiple votes in how the Council is made up. In the case of Victoria Plains, a person residing in one ward, but owning or occupying property in each of the other wards, would be able to exercise four votes.

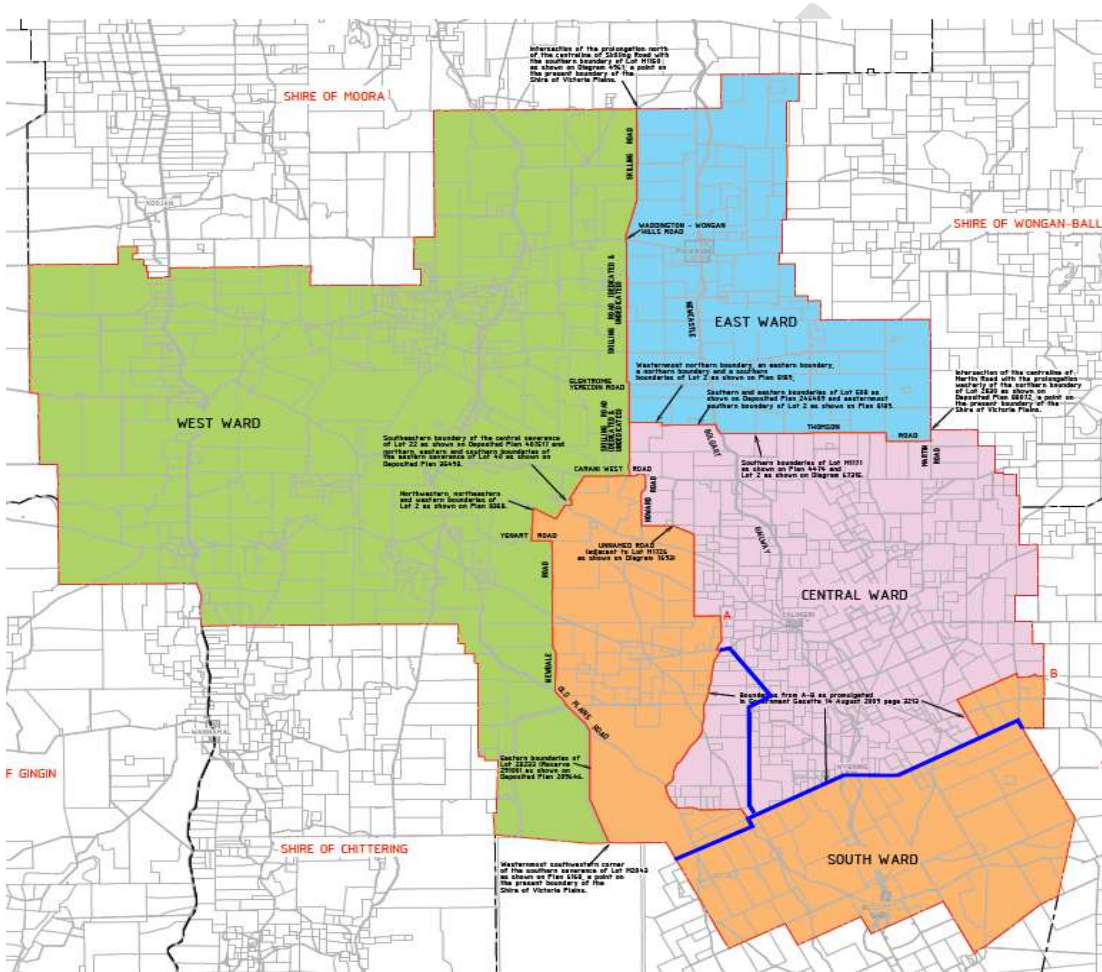
In short, the more wards there are, the greater the opportunity for a person to influence the composition of Council, particularly when dealing with a small number of electors and a less than robust electoral turnout.

4.2.3 What other principles might apply?

Suburb or locality boundaries do not always follow logical lines or are of uniform size. However, given the nature through of much of the district in terms of the number of electors, it may be simpler to group localities the same ward wherever possible.

Overall, it may assist to group whole localities (suburbs) within wards wherever possible. Current ward boundaries follow the ABS mesh blocks, except for the blue lines for Central and South Ward that split Old Plains and Wyening localities –

- part of the Wyening ABS block is in South Ward, while the rest is in Central Ward;
- the major part of Old Plains ABS block is in South Ward, but the balance is in Central Ward.



Again, it may assist to ensure that the whole of each population cell as determined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) are within a ward. The cells vary in size, both by population and area –

- all the ABS mesh blocks are of roughly equal area;
- ABS mesh block number of electors over 18 years of age vary in number from 16 to 257.

Mesh block	Population 18 +
Gillingarra	46
Mogumber	55
Waddington	19
Glentromie	41
New Norcia	50

Yarawindah	20
Old Plains	35
Piawaning	35
Yerecoin	59
Carani	20
Calingiri	257
Wyening	16
Bolgart	106

ABS 2021 Census data, Age by block, retrieved 22 July 2022

Regardless of what ward boundaries are determined, it is certain that there will be discrepancies and awkward fits.

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5 POSSIBLE OPTIONS FOR WARDS

Important notes

Please remember –

1. There are a considerable number of options open. The options provided below are simply to assist discussion. The Council does not have a position on any particular outcome.
2. The number of councillors shown represents as equal as possible numbers of electors within a deviation of plus or minus 10% of the average as allowed by the LGAB.
3. Possible ward names have been assigned on a simple geographic basis. Different names if required can be added later.
4. The thick blue lines represent the possible boundaries for that ward option. Should wards be the preferred option of Council and proposed to the LGAB, these may vary slightly once detailed mapping is carried out by Landgate.
5. The underlying colours in the maps are the existing wards, and are retained so that they can be compared with that ward option.
6. The number of electors includes the absentee owners and occupiers, as required by the LG Act, and is therefore more than the elector numbers provided by the WAEC.

Other than the option for no wards, there are many different possibilities for ward boundaries. In every case, there will be awkward arrangements and inconsistencies for community of interest etc.

5.1 Option A – no wards, 7 councillors

Under this option, wards are dispensed with altogether.

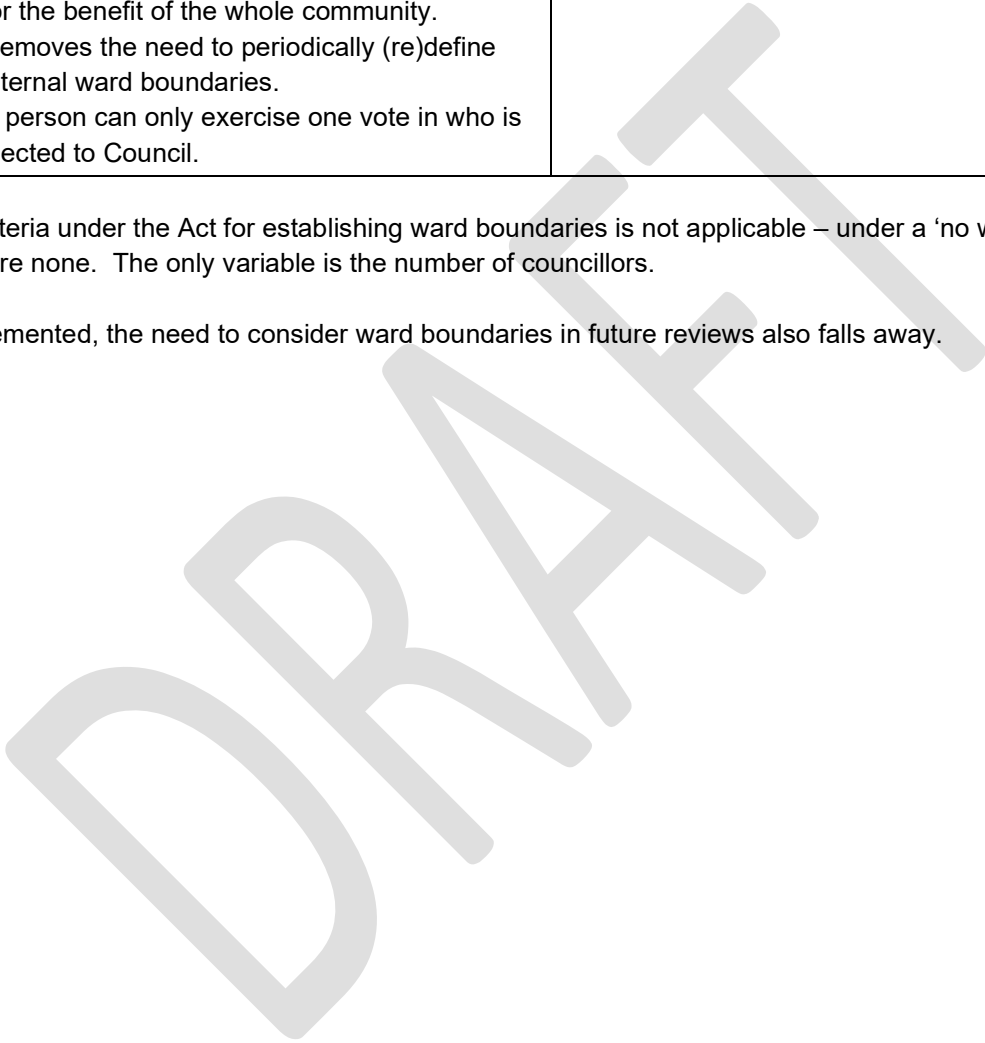
There are 97 local governments in WA that have no wards. Some positives and negatives are –

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Councillors are elected by the whole community not just a section of it. ○ Every Councillor is therefore answerable to every elector. ○ Knowledge and interest in all areas of the local government's affairs would result broadening the views beyond the immediate concerns of those in a ward. ○ The smaller town sites and rural areas have the whole Council working for them. ○ Increased understanding that members of the community who want to approach an elected member can speak to any Councillor. ○ Social networks and communities of interest are often spread across a local government and Councillors can have an overview of these. ○ Councillors can use their skills and knowledge for the benefit of the whole local government. ○ There is balanced representation with each Councillor representing the whole community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Electors may feel that they are not adequately represented if they don't have an affinity with any of the Councillors. ○ Councillors living in a certain area may have a greater affinity and understanding of the issues specific to that area. ○ There is potential for an interest group to dominate the Council. ○ Councillors may feel overwhelmed by having to represent all electors and may not have the time or opportunity to understand and represent all the issues. ○ It may be more difficult and costly for candidates to be elected if they need to canvass the whole local government area. ○ May lead to significant communities of interest and points of view being unrepresented or for others to dominate. ○ May lead to confusion of responsibilities and duplication of effort on the part of councillors. ○ Large numbers of candidates might be confusing for voters.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The election process is much simpler for the community to understand and administer. ○ Promotes the concept of a whole-of-district focus, with councillors being elected by and concerned for the local government as a whole, rather than parochial interests. ○ Gives residents and ratepayers a choice of councillors to approach with their concerns. ○ Each voter has the opportunity to express a preference for every candidate in the election. ○ Councillors can use their skills and knowledge for the benefit of the whole community. ○ Removes the need to periodically (re)define internal ward boundaries. ○ A person can only exercise one vote in who is elected to Council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ May lead to councillors being relatively inaccessible for residents of parts of the local government area. ○ May be difficult for voters to assess the performance of individual councillors. ○ In some local governments it may be appropriate to have wards, for example where a local government might have 2 or more distinct population centres.

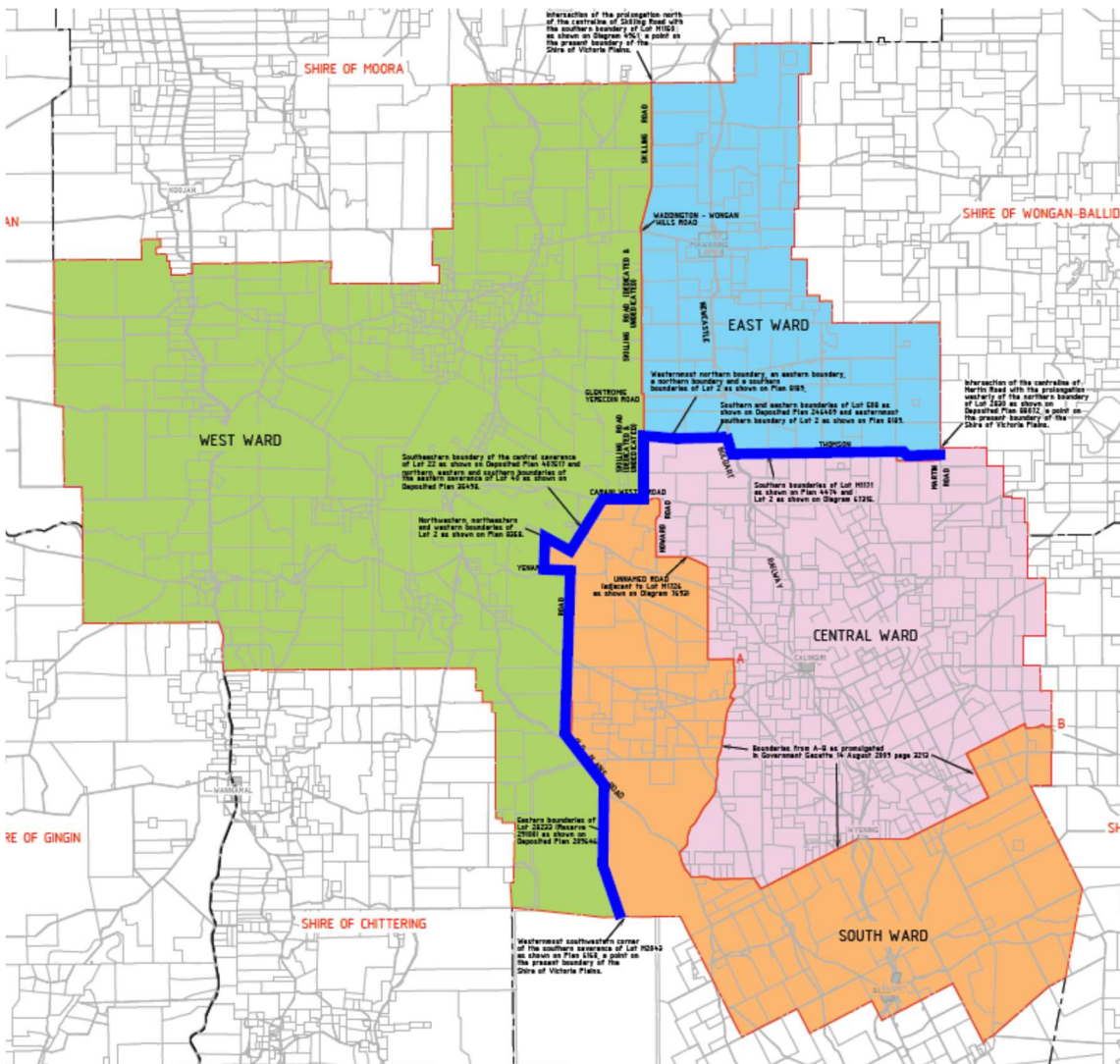
The criteria under the Act for establishing ward boundaries is not applicable – under a ‘no wards’ option there are none. The only variable is the number of councillors.

If implemented, the need to consider ward boundaries in future reviews also falls away.



5.2 Option B – 2 wards, 7 councillors

By using current boundaries, it would be simple to merge the current West Ward and North Ward into one, and the Central and South Wards into a second with 3 councillors and 4 councillors respectively.



Ward	No. of electors	No. of councillors	Councillor to elector ratio	% Ratio deviation
North West	269	3	90	-9.76%
South East	308	4	77	6.10%
TOTALS	577	7	82	n/a

The North West Ward is under represented, and is very close to the acceptable LGAB ratio deviation. A change of just a few electors may change the ratio deviation to in excess of 10%.

The South East Ward is well within the acceptable deviation, and being over represented, there is capacity to accommodate growth in Calingiri and Bolgart townsites. However, this eventuality would be inconsistent with the trends identified in section 3.1.3.

For the longer term, the ward ratios could be improved by shifting part of the Yarawindah locality or the eastern corners of the Glentromie and New Norcia localities to the South East Ward.

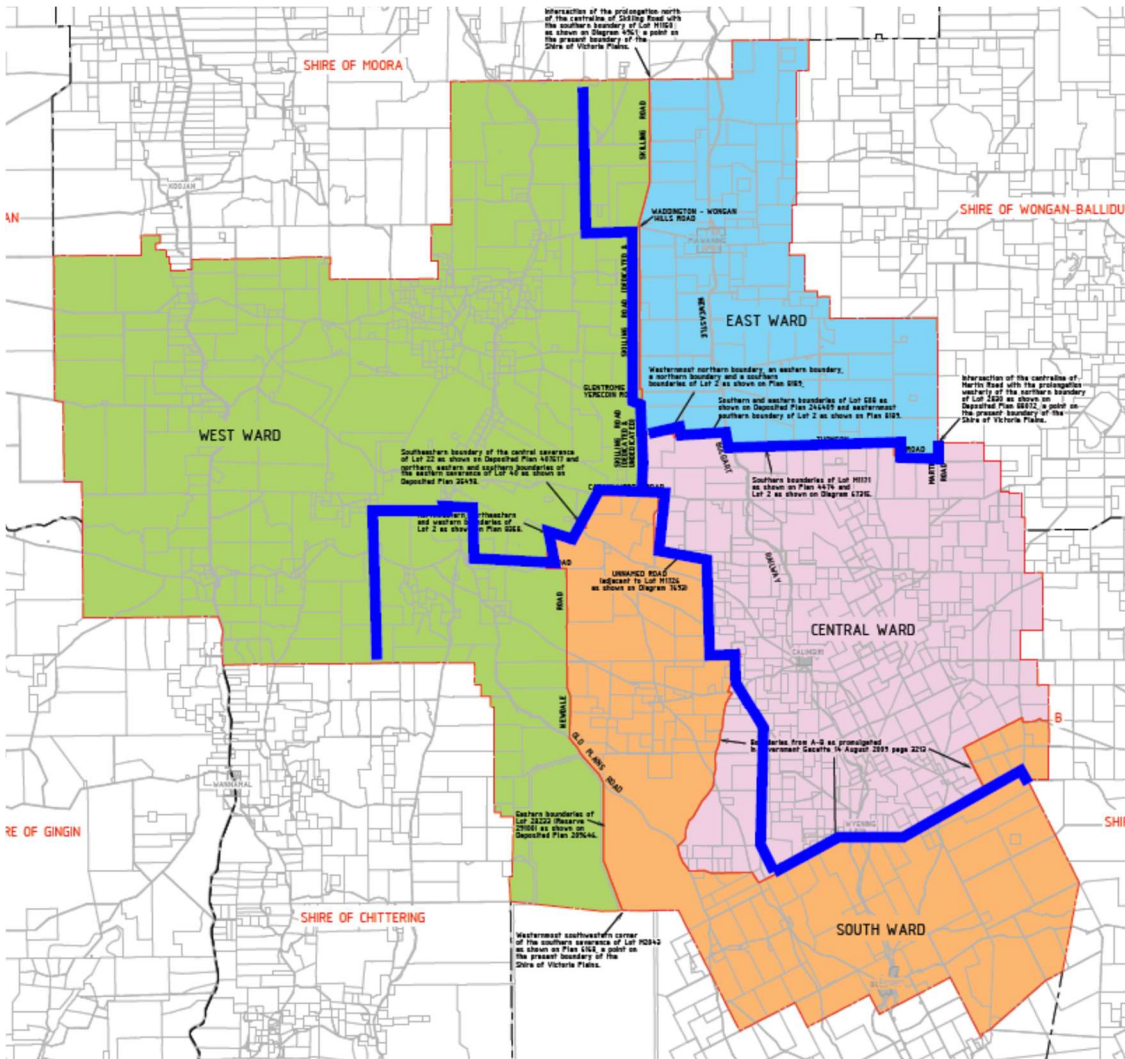
In terms of the criteria to be applied under the LG Act when considering wards –

Community of interest	Community of interest is retained to some degree.
Physical & topographic features	<p>North West Ward is aligned along the Bindoon Moora Road and the Great North Highway, but also the two links from the Highway east to Piawaning and Yerecoin.</p> <p>South East Ward is aligned on the road leading to Toodyay and Northam.</p> <p>No major topographical features have an impact, other than the Bindoon Training Area in the south east corner of the North West Ward.</p>
Demographic trends	<p>As noted in Section 3.1.3, the trend of the past 20 years has been for a 17% reduction in population over 18.</p> <p>This proposal allows for reasonable growth in the South East Ward, but for very little in the North West Ward.</p> <p>However, this would be against the trend for Calingiri and Bolgart, making the ratios worse, rather than improving them</p>
Economic factors	No significant impact.
Ratio of councillors to electors	Would be within the acceptable ratios for the time being, but expected to exceed the ratio for North West Ward by the 2026 census.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Councillors are elected by a larger section of the community. ○ Broadening the views beyond the concerns of those in a smaller ward. ○ Increased but still limited understanding that members of the community who want to approach a Councillor can speak to any of them. ○ Social networks and communities of interest are often spread across the district and Councillors can have an increased overview of these. ○ Promotes the concept of a larger area of focus, with councillors being elected by and concerned for relatively large wards, rather than smaller. ○ Councillors can use their skills and knowledge for the benefit of the whole community. ○ Decreased opportunity for a higher degree of influence on electoral outcome through absentee owner and occupier enrolment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Perception of an imbalance favouring the eastern side of the Shire. ○ Remains a perception that a Councillors primary focus is for the ward from which they are elected. ○ May be more difficult for voters to assess the performance of individual councillors. ○ Perpetuates the influence of the Great Northern Highway as a “great divide”. ○ Potential of a disconnect between the main western localities and the Piawaning and Yerecoin localities

5.3 Option C – 4 wards, 7 councillors

With this option, the Shire remains split into four wards, retaining existing boundaries where possible, but making adjustments to achieve the desired LGAB ratios.



Ward	No. of electors	No. of councillors	Councillor to elector ratio	% Ratio deviation
West	170	2	85	-3.66%
North East	84	1	84	-2.44%
Central East	162	2	81	1.22%
South East	161	2	81	1.22%
TOTALS	577	7	82	n/a

None of the possible wards are significantly over or under represented.

In terms of the criteria to be applied under the LG Act when considering wards –

Community of interest	Community of interest is retained to a sizeable degree. Greater identification with the current wards.
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Physical & topographic features	<p>North West Ward is aligned along the Bindoon Moora Road and generally the Great North Highway.</p> <p>The three eastern wards are aligned on the Toodyay-Dalwalinu route.</p> <p>Large separation of those in the Yarawindah locality, and of Old Plains locality to a lesser degree, from the remainder of the South East Ward.</p>
Demographic trends	<p>As noted in Section 3.1.3, the trend of the past 20 years has been for a 17% reduction in population over 18.</p> <p>If the trend continues, each of the ratios will tend to increase their current plus or minus deviation, but unlikely to be significant by the 2026 census.</p>
Economic factors	No significant impact.
Ratio of councillors to electors	<p>Ratios are well within the deviation considered reasonable by the LGAB.</p> <p>This proposal is unlikely to significantly affect the ratios if the current trends continue.</p>

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Councillors are more clearly identified with a section of the community. ○ Cohesive social networks and communities of interest and Councillors can have a clear view of these. ○ The election process is familiar for community understanding. ○ Easier for voters to assess the performance of individual councillors. ○ Councillors living in a certain area may have a greater affinity and understanding of the issues specific to that area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Perception of an imbalance favouring the eastern side of the Shire. ○ Remains a perception that a Councillors primary focus is for the ward from which they are elected. ○ Tendency to approach only those Councillors representing the elector's ward. ○ Tends to limit broader focus on the whole of Shire. ○ Some influence of the Great Northern Highway as a "great divide" remains. ○ Easier for significant communities of interest and points of view to dominate within a ward. ○ Increased opportunity for a higher degree of influence on electoral outcome through absentee owner and occupier enrolment.

5.4 Other options

The list above is meant to assist with community input and discussion – it is not exhaustive and other suggestions and comments are welcome. There are many variations and members of the community may have other options that fit the criteria for wards in the Act.

These might propose –

- total number of Councillors,
- suggestions for ward names;
- number of wards, if any, and the possible boundaries.

See section 7 for how to make a submission.

6 IMPACT OF CHANGES

6.1 Requirements of the Local Government Act 1995

After undertaking community consultation, the Council must make a proposal to the LGAB. The effect of proposed changes on existing councillors will depend on the precise proposal put forward.

When offices of councillor are to be redistributed into new wards, or there is a reduction or increase in the number of offices of councillor, the implementation method must give consideration to clauses 1 and 2 of Schedule 4.2 of the Act.

In summary, this provides that as near as practical to half of the total number of councillors are to retire every two years and as near as practical to half of the councillors representing each ward are to retire every two years.

It may also be necessary to include in the Governor's Order a provision to allocate the existing councillors to wards, which must also be done in accordance with the provisions and intent of the Act.

6.2 Time frames

Target time frames –

Target date	Action required
August 2022 Council briefing session	Council to review and refine draft discussion paper for public comment
August 2022 Council meeting	Council to approve final discussion paper for public comment
Early September 2022	Notice calling for public comment – minimum period of 6 weeks
Late October 2022	Close of public comment
November 2022 Council meeting	Council to consider submissions and authorise preparation of proposal for submission to the LGAB
December 2022 (31 January 2023 latest)	Submission of proposal to LGAB
February / March 2023	LGAB recommendation to Minister
March 2023	Minister's decision
March to June 2023	Finalise mapping for wards if required Publication of Governor's Order in Government Gazette
July / August 2023	Implementation of new arrangements for 2023 local government election
October 2023	Local government election with new arrangement

7 HOW TO MAKE A SUBMISSION

Members of the community are invited to make a written submission about any aspect of this review.

Submissions must be received by: 5pm on 27 October 2022

Submissions may be forwarded via:

Email: reception@victoriaplains.wa.gov.au

Post PO Box 21, Calingiri 6659

In person: 22 Cavell St, Calingiri 6659

For further information on this discussion paper, please contact –

Sean Fletcher, Temporary CEO at the Shire Office or on 9628 7004.

DRAFT

8 APPENDICES

8.1 Definitions and Acronyms

In this document –

ABS means the Australian Bureau of Statistics;

CEO means the Chief Executive Officer;

Council specifically means the elected members as a group;

DLGSC means the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries;

district means the individual local government area;

LG Act means the *Local Government Act 1995*;

LGAB means the Local Government Advisory Board.

8.2 Comparisons with adjoining local governments

Information from WA Electoral Commission * –

Local government	No. of Ward	No. of Crs	WAEC – No. of electors *	WAEC – No. valid votes	Year	No. vacancies	Assumed No. electors voting	Turnout %
Chittering	None	7	4,159	3,925	2021	3	1,309	34.84%
Dandaragan	None	9	2,534	3,919	2021	5	786	44.16%
Gingin	None	9	4,309	4,216	2021	4	1,059	36.09%
Goomalling *	None	7	681	n/a	2021	3	134	19.67%
Moora	None	7	1,659	2,938	2021	5	591	44.67%
Toodyay	None	8	3,453	Unopposed	2021	4	n/a	n/a
Victoria Plains	4	7	552 total	n/a	2022	n/a	n/a	n/a
			2 wards	unopposed	2021	1 per ward	n/a	n/a
			1 ward 164	113		1	113	68.9%
Wongan Ballidu	None	7	949	1,955	2021	4	489	56.59%

* WAEC – <https://www.elections.wa.gov.au/elections/local/election#/> on 2 August 2022

* Excluding Absentee Owners & Occupiers

* Goomalling ran their own election - <https://www.goomalling.wa.gov.au/your-council/lg-elections.aspx> retrieved on 2 August 2022

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