



Shire of Menzies

## **Review of Wards and Representation**

The Shire of Menzies currently has two wards and seven councillors. The community is invited to participate in a review of the number of elected members, whether or not the wards should be increased or reduced, and their boundaries.

This will be reviewed against the following characteristics:

- Community of interest;
- Physical and topographical features;
- Demographic trends;
- Economic factors; and
- The ratio of councillors to electors in the various wards.

A discussion paper outlining more about this criteria and current levels of representation can be downloaded from the Shire's website at [www.menzies.wa.gov.au](http://www.menzies.wa.gov.au) or obtained from the Shire offices at 124 Shenton St, Menzies.

Submissions must be received by the Shire by 12 noon Friday 10th January 2020.

Peter Money

Chief Executive Officer





## Review of Wards and Representation

November 2019

## Background

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 of:

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

so that not more than eight years elapse between successive reviews.

The Shire has two wards, being Rural and Town with four elected members from the rural ward, and three from the town ward.

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 a 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 of the Act provides for Councils to be comprised of no less than 6 and no more than 15 elected members including a Mayor or President elected at large. Schedule 2.2 provides for a district to be divided into wards and sets out process to review wards and representation, and clause 8 of that Schedule 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 interprets the factors in the Act in more detail as:

<b>Community of interest</b>	<b>Physical and topographic features</b>	<b>Demographic trends</b>	<b>Economic factors</b>	<b>Ratio of Councillors to electors</b>
The term community of interest has a number of elements.	These may be natural or man-made features that will vary from area to	Several measurements of the characteristics of human	Economic factors can be broadly interpreted to include any	The Board considers that the ratio of Councillors to electors is

<b>Community of interest</b>	<b>Physical and topographic features</b>	<b>Demographic trends</b>	<b>Economic factors</b>	<b>Ratio of Councillors to electors</b>
<p>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>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>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>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>particularly significant - it is expected that each local government will have similar ratios of electors to Councillors across its wards.</p> <p>The Board will not support deviations of more than plus or minus 10% of the average ratio of electors to Councillors between wards.</p>

On receipt of a submission, if satisfied that a review has properly taken these factors into consideration, the Board then makes a recommendation to the Minister for Local Government as to whether or not the proposal should be approved. The Minister may accept or reject the Board’s recommendation, after which any changes come into effect at the next Council elections (currently scheduled for October 2021).

### **Current position**

According to WA Electoral Commission data, as at 30 June 2019 there were 197 electors in the Shire. This results in an average ratio of just under 29 electors per councillor.

The following observations are made in relation to the criteria in the Act when establishing ward boundaries as they apply to the Shire.

#### *Ratio of councillors to electors*

As at 30 June 2019 the ratio of electors per councillor by ward are:

Ward	Electors	Councillors	Ratio of councillors per elector (rounded to nearest whole number)	Percentage (%) deviation from average
Rural	115	4	29	2.16%
Town	82	3	27	-2.88%
Total	197	7	28	

Both ward ratios are within the upper and lower limits considered appropriate by the LGAB.

#### *Community of Interest*

The Shire covers an area of approximately 125,000 Km<sup>2</sup>. Current ward boundaries reflect the Menzies and Kookynie town sites and pastoral surrounds, with the balance being in a rural ward.

#### *Physical and Topographic Features*

There are few physical or topographic features that could realistically be used to determine where ward boundaries could be.

#### *Demographic Trends*

Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data there are few demographic trends that could be relevant to determine ward boundaries. The Shire’s population has increased slightly and the median age reduced slightly over the past 6 years:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Estimated resident population	486	499	510	518	515	521
Median Age - Persons (years)	38.3	37.9	37.6	35.8	35.8	N/A

According to the 2016 census 45.7% of the population of the Shire are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

(See

[https://itt.abs.gov.au/itt/r.jsp?RegionSummary&region=55390&dataset=ABS\\_REGIONAL\\_LGA2018&geoconcept=LGA\\_2018&maplayerid=LGA2018&measure=MEASURE&datasetASGS=ABS\\_REGIONAL\\_ASGS2016&datasetLGA=ABS\\_REGIONAL\\_LGA2018&regionLGA=LGA\\_2018&regionASGS=ASGS\\_2016](https://itt.abs.gov.au/itt/r.jsp?RegionSummary&region=55390&dataset=ABS_REGIONAL_LGA2018&geoconcept=LGA_2018&maplayerid=LGA2018&measure=MEASURE&datasetASGS=ABS_REGIONAL_ASGS2016&datasetLGA=ABS_REGIONAL_LGA2018&regionLGA=LGA_2018&regionASGS=ASGS_2016) for a full statistical profile).

While there are no indicators readily available, it is considered that the Shire's population is unlikely to change significantly in the foreseeable future.

#### *Economic Factors*

The current Ward boundaries do not reflect economic activities, but there is little that could be usefully used to determine possible ward boundaries anyway.

## Possible Options

There are a significant range of outcomes that can be considered when undertaking the review including:

- Changing the number of Councillors;
- Changing the number of Wards (or having no Wards at all);
- Changing Ward boundaries to move electors between Wards; or
- A combination of all of the above.

‘No change’ is also a valid consideration - the present structure complies with the requirements of the Act.

Any changes made as a result of this review could apply until 2026 although the Shire can undertake reviews more frequently.

For discussion purposes only, the following options are put forward for consideration; these are not intended to be all encompassing and are provided simply to provoke discussion.

### *Option 1 – no change*

Under this option, ward boundaries simply remain as they are. Ratios of electors to councillors comply with the requirements of the Act and all other criteria is applied as far as it reasonably can be.

### *Option 2 – no wards*

Under this option, wards are dispensed with altogether.

There are 85 local governments in WA that have no wards. In 2016 local governments across the State were recently canvassed as to their perception of the advantages and disadvantages of wards vs no wards. Feedback received is summarised below:

Advantages of ‘no wards’	Disadvantages of ‘no wards’
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Elected members are elected by the whole community not just a section of it.</li> <li>○ Knowledge and interest in all areas of the Council's affairs would result broadening the views beyond the immediate concerns of those in a ward.</li> <li>○ The smaller town sites and rural areas have the whole Council working for them.</li> <li>○ Members of the community who want to approach an elected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Electors may feel that they are not adequately represented if they don't have an affinity with any of the elected members.</li> <li>○ Elected members living in a certain area may have a greater affinity and understanding of the issues specific to that area.</li> <li>○ There is potential for an interest group to dominate the Council.</li> <li>○ Elected members may feel overwhelmed by having to represent all electors and may not have the</li> </ul>

Advantages of ‘no wards’	Disadvantages of ‘no wards’
<p>member can speak to any elected member.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Social networks and communities of interest are often spread across a local government and elected members can have an overview of these.</li> <li>○ Elected members can use their specialty skills and knowledge for the benefit of the whole local government.</li> <li>○ There is balanced representation with each elected member representing the whole community.</li> <li>○ The election process is much simpler for the community to understand and administer.</li> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ Gives residents and ratepayers a choice of Councillors to approach with their concerns.</li> <li>○ Each voter has the opportunity to express a preference for every candidate for the council election.</li> <li>○ Councillors can use their speciality skills and knowledge for the benefit of the whole community.</li> <li>○ Removes the need to (re)define internal ward boundaries.</li> </ul>	<p>time or opportunity to understand and represent all the issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ It may be more difficult and costly for candidates to be elected if they need to canvass the whole local government area.</li> <li>○ May lead to significant communities of interest and points of view being unrepresented or for others to dominate.</li> <li>○ May lead to confusion of responsibilities and duplication of effort on the part of Councillors.</li> <li>○ Large numbers of candidates might be confusing for voters.</li> <li>○ May lead to Councillors being relatively inaccessible for residents of parts of the local government area.</li> <li>○ May be difficult for voters to assess the performance of individual Councillors.</li> <li>○ In some LGs it may be appropriate to have wards, for example where you might have 2 or more “large” population centres (eg the Shire of Coolgardie has Coolgardie and Kambalda which are roughly equal in size).</li> </ul>

The criteria under the Act for establishing ward boundaries is not applicable - under a ‘no wards’ option there none.

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

*Option 3 – 3 wards or more*

A three ward structure based on the statistical areas of the Shire as used by the ABS that complies with the overriding ratio of councillors per elector of no more than plus or minus 10% could be:

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Ward	Electors	Possible councillors	Ratio of councillors per elector	% deviation
Kookynie	30	1	30	6.60%
Menzies	58	2	29	3.05%
Plumridge Lakes	107	4	27	-3.17%
Ularring*	1			
Yarri*	1			
Totals	197	7	28	0.0

\* Added to Plumridge Lakes statistical area

*Ward names*

The names of the wards may also be considered. The current names are simply ‘town’ and ‘rural’

In 2017, ‘east’ and ‘west’ were considered.

*Number of councillors*

Adjusting the number of councillors under any of the options listed above can also be considered.

Using the allowable upper/lower numbers of councillors provided for in the Act, the number of councillors per elector would be:

No of councillors	Councillors per elector	No of councillors	Councillors per elector
6	33	11	18
7	28	12	16
8	25	13	15
9	22	14	14
10	20	15	13

Outcomes using current wards that comply with the required plus or minus 10% ratio of councillors to electors are:

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	Electors	No of councillors	Ratio of councillors per elector	% deviation
Rural	115	5	23	5.08%
Town	82	4	21	-6.35%
Total	197	9	22	

	Electors	No of councillors	Ratio of councillors per elector	% deviation
Rural	115	6	19	7.02%
Town	82	5	16	-8.43%
Total	197	11	18	

	Electors	No of councillors	Ratio of councillors per elector	% deviation
Rural	115	7	16	8.41%
Town	82	6	14	-9.81%
Total	197	13	15	

## **Making a submission**

Submissions can be made by **dd mm** 2019 to:

Chief Executive Officer

124 Shenton Street (PO Box 4)

Menzies WA 6436

Fax: (08) 9024 2110

Email: [admin@menzies.wa.gov.au](mailto:admin@menzies.wa.gov.au)