



Ward and Representation Review

November 2022



Background

At the 24 October 2022 Special Council Meeting the Serpentine Jarrahdale Council resolved to undertake a Ward and Representation Review in response to a request from the Minister for Local Government.

The Minister is introducing legislation that will change election processes for local governments across the state. For the Shire, this means that the Shire will have a President elected by Electors rather than Council and will reduce the size of the elected Council by one member to account for the change in election method of the President.

This is because under the reforms for local governments with a population of between 5,000 and 75,000 (which the Shire currently sits), legislative amendments are proposed to be introduced by the State Government that will cap on the number of Councillors at nine, including the President. The Minister has requested local governments to implement the changes proposed voluntarily, prior to the introduction of legislation. This requires a Ward and Representation Review and associated amendments to be conducted through the process enshrined in the *Local Government Act 1995*.

The Minister's timetable requires the following steps to be completed by 14 February 2023:

Event	Date
Publication of the discussion paper via local public notice for a period of 6 weeks and 1 day (minimum) following publication of the meeting minutes	Thursday, 10 November 2022
Close of public notice period	Friday, 23 December 2022
Prepare Council report based on the submissions	Monday, 13 January 2023
Publish agenda for Special Council meeting	Friday, 20 January 2023
Special Council Meeting	Monday, 30 January 2023
Presentation of final report to Local Government Advisory Board	February 2023

Following consideration of submissions from the public notice period, Council will resolve a preferred option for presentation to the Local Government Advisory Board. The Local Government Advisory Board is an independent statutory body that will make a recommendation to the Governor.

Limitations of this Discussion Paper

This Discussion Paper has been prepared in accordance with Council's resolution at the 24 October 2022 Special Council Meeting and the Local Government Advisory Board's Guide for Local Governments on how to conduct a review of wards and representation.

Options to alter the structure of ward boundaries have not been contemplated in this discussion paper but may be proposed by members of the public. This is because a proposal to move the ward boundary requires an analysis of current and future population forecasts, which is not possible within the timeframes to complete changes in time for the 2023 Ordinary Local Government election as set out by the Minister.

Consideration of ward boundaries is a matter that may be considered by Council in a subsequent Ward and Representation Review.

Current situation

Currently, the Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale has nine (9) Councillors elected from three (3) wards:

**Table 1: Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale elector to Councillor ratios
(30 September 2022)**

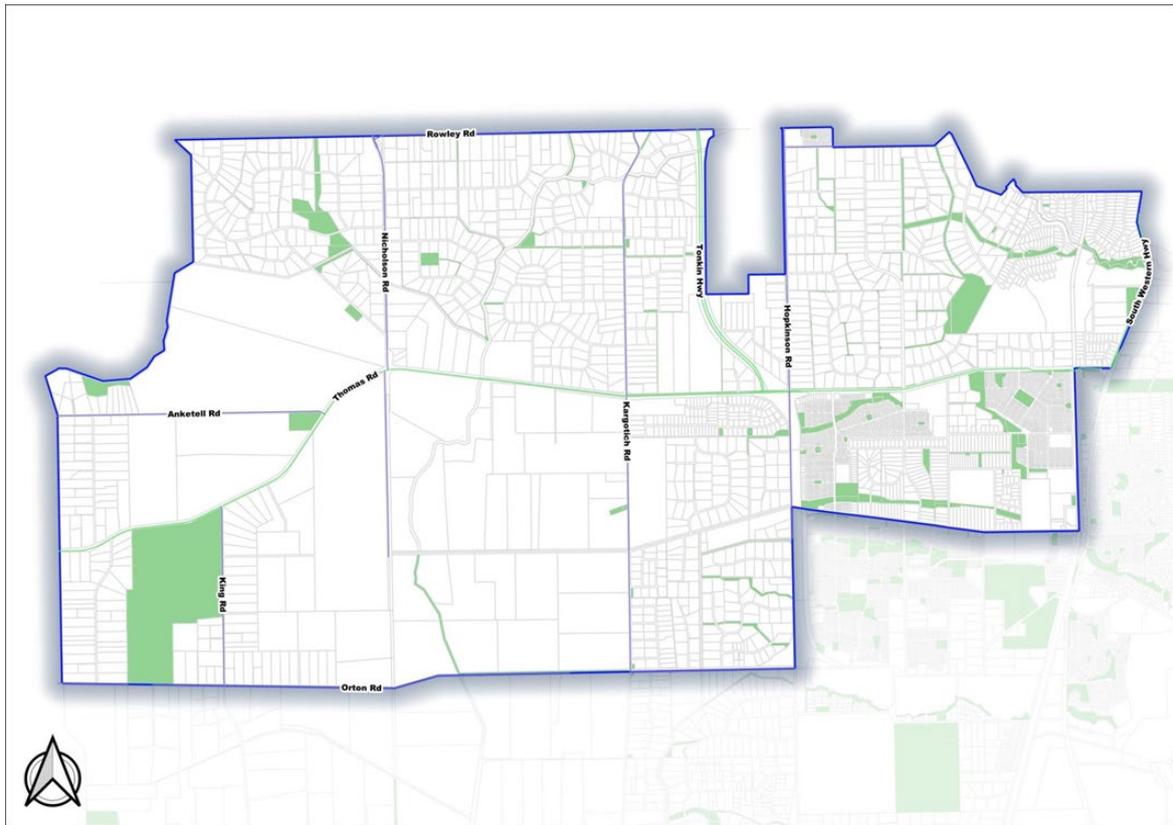
Ward	Number of Electors	Number of Councillors	Councillor/Elector Ratio	% Ratio Deviations ¹
North	7,501	3	1:2500	-5.7%
North West	7,472	3	1:2490	-5.5%
South	6,302	3	1:2100	11.1%

The Australian Bureau of Statistics divides areas into statistical areas known as localities. While the alteration of ward boundaries is not contemplated as an option, the localities within each ward and the number of Electors as of 30 September 2022 (sourced from the Western Australian Electoral Commission Enrolment Statistics Report) is shown for information in the table below:

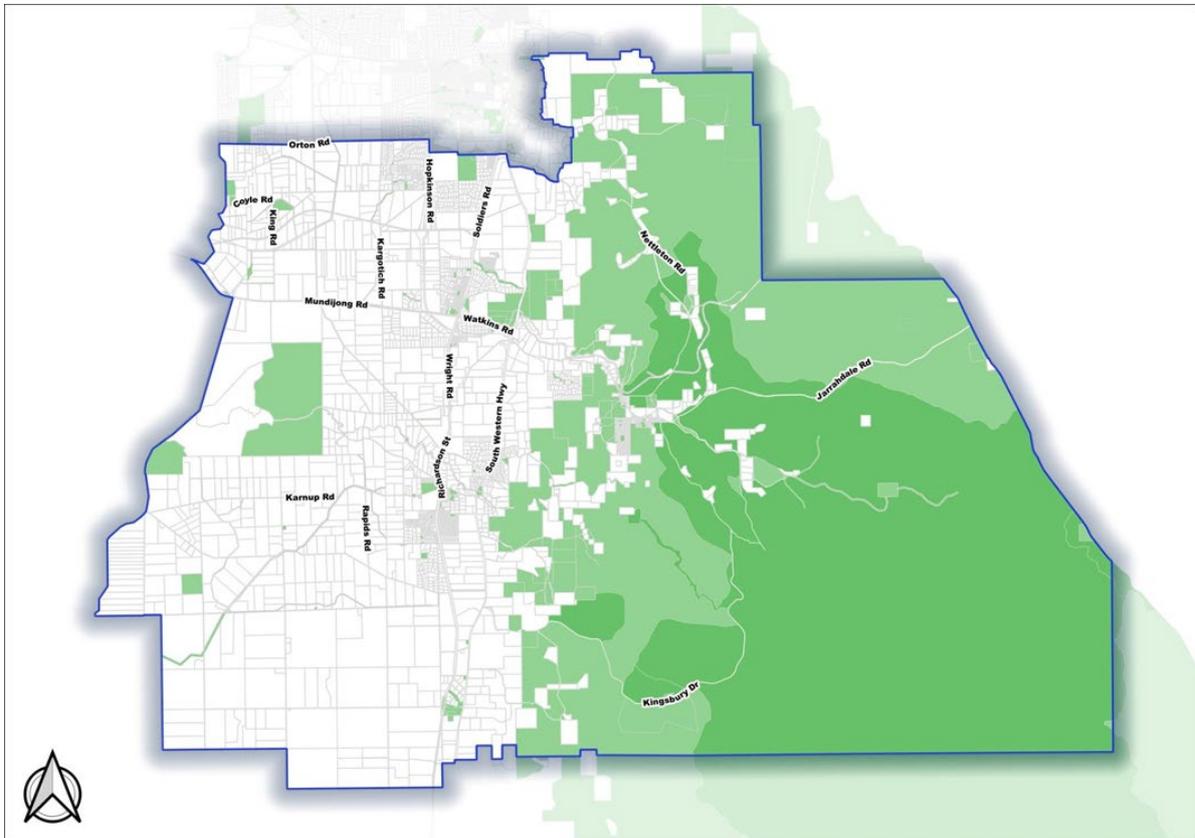
	Sum of Number of Electors
North	7,501
Byford	7,501
North West	7,472
Byford	4,187
Darling Downs	1,258
Forrestdale	1
Oakford	2,026
South	6,302
Byford	4
Cardup	917
Hopeland	266
Jarrahdale	876

¹ The % ratio deviation is calculated by subtracting the Councillor/Elector ratio for a ward from the average Councillor/Elector ratio. The result is then divided by the average Councillor/Elector ratio and multiplied by 100 to give a percentage.

North West Ward



South Ward



Ward and representation in the Shire since 2000

Over time the Shire's ward configuration has evolved. The current ward structure has been in place since a review was conducted in 2018. The 2018 review altered the Shire's ward boundaries and aligned Councillor numbers into their current configuration. Immediately prior to the 2018 ward review, the ward structure was as follows:

Table 2 – 2018 Ward Configuration

Ward	Number of Councillors
North	4
North West	2
Southern	3

The review preceding the 2018 review was conducted in 2011. At the time of the 2011 review the Shire had four wards in place and 10 Councillors, configured as shown in the following table:

Table 3 – 2011 Ward Configuration

Ward	Number of Councillors
Byford	3
Central	3
North West	2
Southern	2

The ward structure in the early 2000s also employed the four ward structure albeit with different proportions of Councillor representation, with reviews conducted in 2000 and 2004.

This history shows that in just over 20 years the structure of ward and representation in the Shire has had considerable change.

Options to consider

The Council has resolved to consider the following options following the decision to move to a President elected by Electors:

- Option 1 – Six Councillors plus Shire President across three wards
- Option 2 – Eight Councillors plus Shire President across three wards
- Option 3 – Six Councillors plus Shire President without wards
- Option 4 – Eight Councillors plus Shire President without wards

Council does not have a recommended position at this time.

In line with the Minister's directions to local governments, only options that are in accordance with the proposed legislation amendments are presented in this discussion paper.

Option 1 and 2 propose reducing the number of Councillors but do not propose amending ward boundaries at this time. Options 3 and 4 propose reducing the Number of Councillors and abolishing wards for the time being.

Council has not considered which Councillor position(s) would be abolished under any of the four options.

Under the *Local Government Act 1995*, when conducting a Ward and Representation Review a local government must consider five factors:

- Community of interest
- Physical and topographic features
- Demographic trends
- Economic factors
- Ratio of Councillors to Electors in the various wards.

The Local Government Advisory Board provides a definition of each of these factors

Community of interest

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. It can also include dependence on the shared facilities in a district as reflected in the catchment areas of local schools and sporting teams, or the circulation areas of local newspapers.

Neighbourhoods, suburbs and towns are important units in the physical, historical and social infrastructure and often generate a feeling of community and belonging.

Physical and topographic features

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. Coastal plain and foothills regions, parks and reserves may be relevant as may other man made features such as railway lines and freeways.

Demographic trends

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.

Economic factors

Economic factors can be broadly interpreted to include any factor that reflects the character of economic activities and resources in the area. 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.

Ratio of Councillors to Electors in the various wards

It is expected that each local government will have similar ratios of Electors to Councillors across the wards of its district.

These factors are considered in the discussion of the each of the options below:

Option 1 – Six Councillors plus Shire President across three wards

Option 1 proposes a reduction of Councillors to six, with the Office of the President elected by electors. Under this option the Shire would have a total of seven elected officials.

Under this model, two Councillors would be elected from each of the wards.

As no amendments to ward boundaries are proposed, the comparative ratio of Electors per Councillor between wards would be unchanged.

Table 2: Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale elector to Councillor ratios with six Councillors across three wards (as of 13 September 2022)

Ward	Number of Electors	Number of Councillors	Councillor/Elector Ratio	% Ratio Deviation ²
North	7,501	2	1:3750	-5.7%
North West	7,472	2	1:3736	-5.3%
South	6,302	2	1:3151	11.1%

The number of votes in the affirmative for an absolute majority decision defined in the Act would be four. This approach could involve savings of approximately \$42,000 annually in Councillor fees and allowances (based on the rates set by Council in 2022) but any savings would be contingent on future Salary and Allowance Tribunal and Council decisions.

Community of interest

As Option 1 does not propose amendments to the ward boundaries there would be no immediate change in relation to communities of interest.

Physical and topographic features

As Option 1 does not propose amendments to the ward boundaries there would be

² The % ratio deviation is calculated by subtracting the Councillor/Elector ratio for a ward from the average Councillor/Elector ratio. The result is then divided by the average Councillor/Elector ratio and multiplied by 100 to give a percentage. A negative result indicates that the ward is comparatively under represented and a positive result indicates that the ward is comparatively over represented.

no immediate change in relation to physical and topographical features.

Demographic trends

The Shire is a high growth local government. In the 12 month period between the 2021 ordinary local government election and September 2022, the number of Electors in the Shire increased by 4.1%. In this period the number of Electors in every ward increased but population growth was the highest in the North Ward where it grew by 6.3%.

The Shire's North and North West Wards are known to feature higher density urban development than the more rural South Ward. In the longer term, population growth in the South Ward will increase more rapidly with the expansion of the Tonkin Highway.

Under this option, adjusting boundaries to manage these population changes would need to be something considered in future ward and representation reviews.

Economic factors

As Option 1 does not propose amendments to the ward boundaries there would be no immediate change in relation to economic factors.

Ratio of Councillors to Electors in the various wards

While the ratio of Councillors to Electors in various wards would be reduced overall, as there are no proposed amendments to the ward boundaries the comparative deviations currently present would not be changed as a result of the proposal. Future changes in population between wards have not been contemplated as a thorough analysis of forecast data has not been possible in the timeframe required.

Option 2 – Eight Councillors plus Shire President across three wards

Option 2 proposes a reduction of Councillors to eight, with the Office of the President elected by Electors. Under this option, the Shire would continue to have a total of nine elected officials.

Under this model, three Councillors would be elected from two of the wards and two Councillors would be elected from the remaining ward.

The number of votes in the affirmative for an absolute majority decision defined in the Act would continue to be four. This approach could involve savings of approximately \$21,000 annually in Councillor fees and allowances (based on the rates set by Council in 2022) but any savings would be contingent on future Salary and Allowance Tribunal and Council decisions.

Option 2 would involve an uneven distribution of Councillors with one of the wards featuring a sizeable deviation in excess of the preferred tolerance level set by the Local Government Advisory Board. Based on the Elector figures from September 2022 the ratios would be as follows:

Option 2a:

Ward	Number of Electors	Number of Councillors	Councillor/Elector Ratio	% Ratio Deviation
North	7,501	2	1:3750	-41.0
North West	7,472	3	1:2490	6.3
South	6,302	3	1:2100	21.0

Option 2b:

Ward	Number of Electors	Number of Councillors	Councillor/Elector Ratio	% Ratio Deviation
North	7,501	3	1:2500	5.9
North West	7,472	2	1:3736	-40.4
South	6,302	3	1:2100	21.0

Option 2c:

Ward	Number of Electors	Number of Councillors	Councillor/Elector Ratio	% Ratio Deviation
North	7,501	3	1:2500	5.9
North West	7,472	3	1:2490	6.3
South	6,302	2	1:3151	-18.4

Due to the relative populations of the North and North West Wards, Options 2a and 2b would exacerbate the comparative ratio deviation with the South Ward. Option 2c would overcorrect the ratio deviation from -18..

Arithmetic dictates that 8 does not divide evenly into three and option 2, without boundary changes, will result in an uneven distribution of Councillors.

Community of interest

As Option 2 does not propose amendments to the ward boundaries there would be no immediate change in relation to communities of interest.

Physical and topographic features

As Option 2 does not propose amendments to the ward boundaries there would be no immediate change in relation to physical and topographical features.

Demographic trends

The Shire is a high growth local government. In the near 12 month period between the 2021 ordinary local government election and September 2022, the number of Electors in the Shire increased by 4.4%. In this period the number of Electors in every ward increased but population growth was the highest in the North Ward where it grew by 6.8%.

The Shire's North and North West Wards are known to feature higher density urban development that the more rural South Ward. In the longer term population growth

in the South Ward will increase more rapidly with the expansion of the Tonkin Highway.

The deviation ratio associated with options 2a and 2b in the short to medium term would likely increase in future years, while in option 2c the over-corrected deviation ratio would likely decrease in the short and medium time. Long term development will alter demographics considerably, but these population changes would need to be something considered in future ward and representation reviews.

Economic factors

As Option 2 does not propose amendments to the ward boundaries there would be no change in relation to economic factors.

Ratio of Councillors to Electors in the various wards.

As noted above, options 2a, 2b and 2c would result in an uneven distribution of Councillors between the wards.

Option 3 – Six Councillors plus Shire President without wards

Option 3 proposes a reduction to six Councillors plus the President, elected by Electors but without wards. This approach would mean that the six Councillor positions as well as the President would be filled through a general election across the entire district.

In general terms, the Local Government Advisory Board describes the advantages and disadvantages of a no ward system as:

The advantages of a no ward system may include:

- *Elected members are elected by the whole community not just a section of it. 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.*
- *The smaller town sites and rural areas have the whole Council working for them.*
- *Members of the community who want to approach an elected member can speak to any elected member.*
- *Social networks and communities of interest are often spread across a local government and elected members can have an overview of these.*
- *Elected members can use their specialty skills and knowledge for the benefit of the whole local government.*
- *There is balanced representation with each elected member representing the whole community.*
- *The election process is much simpler for the community to understand and for the Council to administer.*

The disadvantages of a no ward system may include:

- *Electors may feel that they are not adequately represented if they don't have an affinity with any of the elected members.*

- *Elected members 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.*
- *Elected members 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.*

This approach could involve savings of approximately \$42,000 annually in Councillor fees and allowances (based on the rates set by Council in 2022) but any savings would be contingent on future Salary and Allowance Tribunal and Council decisions.

Community of interest

This approach would negate any benefits or disbenefits associated with the communities of interest derived from the current ward structure. As communities of interest is defined by the Advisory Board as a sense of community identity and belonging which is inherently difficult to quantify, it is not possible to quantify the extent that the change will impact community of interest.

Physical and topographic features

This approach would negate any benefits or disbenefits associated with wards and physical and topographic features. The Shire's current ward structure does not employ physical or topographic features as a major factor in the currency boundary alignment.

Demographic trends

This approach would negate any benefits or disbenefits associated with demographic trends derived from the current ward structure.

Economic factors

This approach would negate any benefits or disbenefits associated with economic factors derived from the current ward structure.

Ratio of Councillors to Electors in the various wards

The ratio of Councillors to Electors would be 1:3537. Comparatively, every Elector would have the same level of representation as every other Elector.

Option 4 – Eight Councillors plus Shire President without wards

Option 4 proposes a reduction to eight councillors plus the President, elected by Electors but without wards.

This approach would mean that the eight Councillor positions as well as the President would be filled through a general election across the entire district.

This approach could involve savings of approximately \$21,000 annually in Councillor fees and allowances (based on the rates set by Council in 2022) but any savings would be contingent on future Salary and Allowance Tribunal and Council decisions.

Community of interest

This approach would negate any benefits or disbenefits associated with the communities of interest derived from the current ward structure. As communities of interest is defined by the Advisory Board as a sense of community identity and belonging which is inherently difficult to quantify, it is not possible to quantify the extent that the change will impact community of interest.

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Demographic trends

This approach would negate any benefits or disbenefits associated with demographic trends derived from the current ward structure.

Economic factors

This approach would negate any benefits or disbenefits associated with economic factors derived from the current ward structure.

Ratio of Councillors to Electors in the various wards

The ratio of Councillors to Electors would be 1:2653. Comparatively, every Elector would have the same level of representation as every other Elector.

Public submissions

Members of the community are invited to make a written submission about any aspect of ward boundaries and representation. The preferred method of providing a submission is via Your Say SJ, the Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale's online engagement hub. Your Say SJ is located at:

<https://www.yoursaysj.sjshire.wa.gov.au/>

Alternatively, submissions may be lodged:

Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale

6 Paterson Street

MUNDIJONG WA 6123

Email: info@sjshire.wa.gov.au

All submissions must be received by 5pm on Friday, 23 December 2022.