

Shire of Dandaragan – Review of Councillor Representation Discussion Paper

Background

The Shire of Dandaragan has resolved to undertake a review of its Council elected member representation numbers in response to the Local Government Act reforms announced by the Minister for Local Government on 3 July 2022.

The Minister for Local Government's package of reforms aim to strengthen democracy and increase community engagement. The new requirements will be introduced to provide for:

- the introduction of optional preferential voting
- elector Mayors and Presidents for band 1 and 2 local governments
- Councillor numbers based on population
- the removal of wards for band 3 and 4 local governments.

The proposed Local Government reforms will require the Shire of Dandaragan to reduce the number of elected member (Councillor) positions from 9 to between 5 and 7. Legislation to give effect to the changes is expected to be introduced into Parliament in early 2023.

The Shire of Dandaragan has selected to undertake the voluntary pathway to implement the reform requirements associated with the reduction in elected member numbers. To implement the mandatory reduction, the Shire is undertaking this review utilising a process and timeframes aligned to a traditional ward review required by the Local Government Act 1995.

Feedback received through this consultation process will assist the Shire to transition to the new requirements and determine the appropriate total number of elected members, and whether changes should be made over one election cycle or two.

Further information on the reforms is available on the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries website at <https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/local-government/strengthening-local-government/local-government-act-reform>.

Current Situation

Currently the Shire of Dandaragan has 9 Councillors elected to represent the whole of the Shire. The Shire President is elected by the Council. At the 2023 local government elections, 5 current Councillors' terms are due for expiry.

Table: Shire of Dandaragan elector to Councillor ratio - current situation

District	Number of Electors	Number of Councillors	Councillor to Elector Ratio
Total	2,534	9	1:282

The Shire of Dandaragan previously abolished the ward structure in 2009. The last review of wards and representation in the Shire of Dandaragan was undertaken in 2013. As the Minister has announced that wards will be removed for all band 3 and 4 local governments, this discussion paper does address reviewing or reintroducing the ward system.

Local Government Reforms

As outlined in the background section above, to comply with the Minister's proposals, as the Shire of Dandaragan is a band 3 local government, with a population of less than 5,000 people, the Shire's existing no wards system will remain and the number of councillors must be reduced to between five and seven. There are a range of different implementation approaches which are outlined below which Council is seeking community feedback on.

Review and Public Consultation Process

This review process will involve a number of steps:

- The Council resolves to undertake the review.
- Public submission period opens (minimum six weeks).
- Information via this discussion paper provided to the community for review and submissions.
- Public submission period closes.
- The Council considers all submissions and relevant factors and makes a decision.
- The Council submits a report to the Local Government Advisory Board (the Board) for its consideration.
- The Board will review the Council's report and submits a recommendation to the Minister for Local Government (the Minister).

Any changes approved by the Minister will be in place for the next ordinary election where possible.

Role and Remuneration of Elected Members

The role of an elected member is defined in section 2.10 of the Local Government Act 1995 as follows:

- a) represents the interests of all electors, ratepayers and residents of the district;

- b) provides leadership and guidance to the community in the district;
- c) facilitates communication between the community and the council;
- d) participates in the local government's decision-making processes at council and committee meetings; and
- e) performs such other functions as are given to a councillor by this Act or any other written law.

The Shire of Dandaragan currently provides the following allowances to elected members:

Allowances	\$
Shire President's Allowance	\$16,000
Shire President's Meeting Attendance Fee	\$24,720
Deputy Shire President's Allowance	\$4,000
Councillor Meeting Fees	\$15,965
Information Technology, Communications Allowance	\$3,000
Travel and Accommodation Expenses (Budget Provision)	\$2,675

Options to Consider

The Council will consider the following options for reducing elected member numbers and members of the community may suggest others:

Options resulting in 7 Elected Members	
Option 1	Reduce the number of elected members to seven (7) at the 2023 election (3 vacant Councillor positions will be contested).
Option 2	Reduce the number of elected members to seven (7) at the 2023 election with all Council positions to be declared vacant.
Option 3	Reduce the number of elected members to eight (8) at the 2023 election and seven (7) at the 2025 election.
Options resulting in 6 Elected Members	
Option 4	Reduce the number of elected members to six (6) at the 2023 election (2 vacant Councillor positions will be contested).
Option 5	Reduce the number of elected members to six (6) at the 2023 election with all Council positions to be declared vacant.

Options resulting in 7 Elected Members	
Option 6	Reduce the number of elected members to seven (7) at the 2023 election and six (6) at the 2025 election.
Option 7	Reduce the number of elected members to eight (8) at the 2023 election and six (6) at the 2025 election.
Options resulting in 5 Elected Members	
Option 8	Reduce the number of elected members to five (5) at the 2023 election (1 vacant Councillor position will be contested).
Option 9	Reduce the number of elected members to five (5) at the 2023 election with all Council positions to be declared vacant.
Option 10	Reduce the number of elected members to seven (7) at the 2023 election and five (5) at the 2025 election.
Option 11	Reduce the number of elected members to six (6) at the 2023 election and five (5) at the 2025 election.

Public Submissions

Members of the community are invited to make a written submission about any aspect of the representation review and lodge it at:

Shire of Dandaragan

69 Bashford Street

Jurien Bay, WA 6516

Email: council@dandaragan.wa.gov.au

All submissions must be received by 4pm on 16 January 2023.

Thank you for your interest and involvement in this review. Council welcomes your comments on any matters that may assist it to make informed and responsible decisions for the benefit of the people of the Shire of Dandaragan.

Councillor Leslee Holmes

Shire President

Brent Bailey

Chief Executive Officer