



Department of
Local Government, Sport
and Cultural Industries

Local Government Advisory Board

2020-21 Annual Report



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Further information:

Local Government Advisory Board

Annual Report 2020-21

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Chair's Report

Following on from the incredible work that was done by local, state and Commonwealth governments during the first year of the COVID pandemic in 2020, the Local Government Advisory Board (the Board) would like to acknowledge the ongoing efforts of local governments to continue to consolidate and strengthen our West Australian communities in 2021.

As 2021 is a local government election year, the Board has assessed 20 ward and representation reviews – giving individual local governments the opportunity to consider their current (and future) district structures. It also provides the opportunity to make appropriate changes as discussed with their local communities and agreed to by council. Completing these reviews is an effective way of undertaking community engagement and demonstrating appropriate and fair principles of local democracy.

As a result of the reviews, seven local governments resolved to maintain their status quo. The remaining 13 have made changes to either abolish or amend their ward boundaries and/or to decrease councillor numbers. The Minister for Local Government approved all the Board's recommendations that were made in relation to the individual council proposals. The Board would like to acknowledge the work done and to thank those local governments that submitted reviews for consideration. All these changes will be implemented ahead of the October 2021 local government elections.

In recent years, the Board has seen a state-wide trend for local governments to reduce their number of elected members – particularly in smaller districts where the population is less than 5,000. Many local governments have found that having fewer elected members has improved their decision making process. As well, reducing councillor numbers has a positive financial effect – with savings realised in overall councillor attendance fees.

Four positions on the Board become vacant in 2021 – so there may be some renewal in those positions by the time this Annual Report is published after 31 August, when those current terms of appointment come to an end.

On 19 March 2021, the Hon John Carey MLA was sworn in as the new Minister for Local Government, following the state election earlier in the month. The Board would like to congratulate Minister Carey on his appointment – and looks forward to continuing to work cooperatively with him, as has been the case with previous Local Government Ministers.

As always, I express my sincere appreciation to the members and deputies for their contribution to the ongoing operations of the Board. Their depth of knowledge and experience delivers a professional and independent approach to the decision-making process, which ultimately benefits the local government sector. I would particularly like to thank Cr Karen Chappel, who will be leaving the Board in August, after 10 years of commitment and service. Her experience and dedication will be very much missed.

I would also like to thank our executive staff, Julie Knight, Shannon Wood and Julie Craig, who provided great support to the Board in 2020-21. Your assistance helps us to operate in an efficient and effective manner. I look forward to the Board continuing its excellent work this coming year.

Marion Blair OAM

Marion Blair OAM

Chair – Local Government Advisory Board

Role and Function of the Board

The Local Government Advisory Board (the Board) is a statutory body established under section 2.44 of the *Local Government Act 1995* (the Act).

The role of the Board is to consider proposals for changes to district boundaries and wards and representation structures of local governments. These proposals can be initiated by the Minister for Local Government (the Minister), local governments or electors. After the Board has considered a proposal, it makes a recommendation to the Minister about the proposal. The Minister has the option of either accepting or rejecting the recommendation.

The Board can also carry out other inquiries that the Minister may direct.

Minister responsible

Hon. John Carey MLA – Minister for Housing; Local Government

Ministerial Statement of Expectation

The purpose of the Ministerial Statement of Expectation is to provide clarity as to the roles, values and objectives necessary to support an effective relationship between the Minister for Local Government and the Board. The Statement is publicly available on the [Local Government Advisory Board webpage](#)¹ and covers the following topics:

- Good governance
- Ethical behaviour and conflicts of interest
- Performance management
- Appointments
- Government policies and objectives
- Financial management
- Communication

Local Government Advisory Board Statement of Intent

The Board responded to the Minister's Statement of Expectation with a Statement of Intent, which outlines how they will implement the Minister's expectations. This statement is also available on the Board's webpage.

¹ <https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/local-government/local-governments/boards-and-commissions>

The Board's Guiding Principles

The Board's Guiding Principles form the basis for the consideration of any changes to local government boundaries and take into account the eight factors set out in the Act, as detailed below.

1. Community of interests

Community of interests include parts of a district that share common interests, values, characteristics and issues giving rise to a separate sense of identity or community. Factors contributing to a sense of identity or community include shared interest and shared use of community facilities. For example, sporting, leisure and library facilities create a focus for the community.

The use of shopping areas and the location of schools also act to draw people together with similar interests. This can also give an indication about the direction that people travel to access services and facilities. The external boundaries of a local government need to reflect distinct communities of interest wherever possible.

Neighbourhoods, suburbs and towns are important units in the physical, historical and social infrastructure and often generate a feeling of community and belonging. The Board believes that wherever possible, it is inappropriate to divide the units between local governments.

2. Physical and topographic features

Physical and topographic features may be either natural or man-made and will vary from area to area. They may include:

- water features (such as rivers)
- catchment boundaries
- coastal plains and foothills
- parks and reserves
- man-made features (such as railway lines or freeways).

These features can form identifiable boundaries and can also act as barriers to movement between adjoining areas. In many cases, physical and topographic features are appropriate district and ward boundaries. The Board supports local government structures and boundaries that facilitate the integration of human activity and land use.

3. Demographic trends

Local governments should consider the following characteristics when determining the demographics within their locality:

- population size
- population trends
- distribution by age
- gender
- occupation.

Current and projected population factors are also relevant, as well as similarities and differences between areas within the local government.

4. Economic factors

Economic factors can include anything that reflects the range of economic activities and resources in the area including:

- industries within the local area
- distribution of community assets
- infrastructure.

5. History of the area

The history of an area can be a relevant consideration, although the Board believes that in most cases this will not be a primary justification for changing or retaining local governments and local government boundaries. The nature of historical ties between communities is important to understand, irrespective of where the local government boundaries lie.

A community within a local government may have a strong historical identity; alternatively there may be strong historical links between two or more communities in adjacent local governments. It is important to note that historical identity is not lessened if an area does not have its own local government.

6. Transport and communication

The transport and communication linkages between towns and other areas may be a significant barrier to movement and therefore an appropriate boundary between local governments.

The following factors are important in any assessment of local government boundaries:

- port access
- neighbouring towns
- railways
- major roads.

7. Matters affecting the viability of local governments

A local government should have a significant resource base:

- to be able to efficiently and effectively exercise its proper functions and delegated powers and operate facilities and services
- to be flexible and responsive in exercising its functions and powers, and operating its facilities and services
- to employ appropriate professional expertise and skills
- to be capable of embracing micro-economic reform.

Each local government should have a diverse and sufficient rate base to ensure that general purpose grants do not represent the major revenue source.

8. Effective delivery of local government services

A broad range of factors can be relevant to the effective delivery of local government services and these are often directly relevant to those that also affect the viability of local governments. They include:

- the size and geographical spread of the population
- management effectiveness and efficiency
- the availability of staff expertise
- appropriate infrastructure and equipment
- customer satisfaction and feedback.

Membership of the Board

There are five members on the Local Government Advisory Board. The Chair is appointed by the Minister. The Minister also appoints two members from nominations made by the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA), and one member from nominations made by Local Government Professionals Australia (LG Pro) WA. The Board also includes one member who is an officer of the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC).

Four deputy members are also appointed to officiate in the absence of members.

All appointments must be approved by Cabinet on the recommendation of the Minister and then by the Governor in Executive Council.

The current membership of the Board is as follows:

Name	Position	Nominated by	Term ends
Ms Marion Blair	Chair	Minister for Local Government	31 August 2021
Ms Mary Adam	Deputy Chair	DLGSC representative	31 August 2022
Cr Karen Chappel	Member	WALGA	31 August 2021
Cr Russ Fishwick	Member	WALGA	31 August 2022
Mr Anthony Vuleta	Member	LG Pro	31 August 2022
Ms Narrell Lethorn	Deputy to the Deputy Chair	DLGSC representative	31 August 2021
Mayor Dennis Wellington	Deputy to Karen Chappel	WALGA	31 August 2022
Cr Karen Wheatland	Deputy to Russ Fishwick	WALGA	31 August 2021
Ms Helen Sarcich	Deputy to Anthony Vuleta	LG Pro	31 August 2022

Member profiles (as at 31 August 2021)

Ms Marion Blair – Chair

Marion Blair was appointed as Chair of the Board in September 2018. Her term of appointment concludes in August 2021. Marion was previously a councillor with the City of Belmont for 20 years and was Deputy Mayor there for nine years. She was also a councillor with the City of Mandurah for four years. In 2015, Marion was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in the General Division for service to local government, to the community of Perth and to women. Marion is a life member of the Australian Local Government Women's Association of Western Australia.

Ms Mary Adam – Deputy Chair

Mary Adam has been a member and Deputy Chair of the Board since 2013. Her term of appointment concludes in August 2022. Mary currently works with the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries as General Counsel. She is immediate past President of the WA Chapter, and a national director, of the Association of Corporate Counsel Australia and a member of Women Lawyers WA.

Cr Karen Chappel – Member

Karen Chappel has been a member of the Board since 2011. Her term of appointment concludes in August 2021. Karen was a deputy member of the Board until 2015, after which she was appointed as a member. She was elected to the Shire of Morawa in 2005, and has served as President since 2009. Karen is WALGA Deputy President, is a WALGA Life Member and State Councillor and represents local government on various committees. Karen has a Diploma in Local Government (elected member) and is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Cr Russ Fishwick – Member

Russ Fishwick has been a member of the Board since 2016. His term of appointment concludes in August 2022. Russ has more than 40 years' experience as a serving local government officer and previously worked as the Executive Manager of Governance with the Town of Victoria Park. He has also acted in the role as its CEO. Russ is currently a councillor with the City of Joondalup and was first elected in 2006. He is also serving his third term as its Deputy Mayor. Russ was the Chair of the Mindarie Regional Council for 10 years and is a WALGA Life Member and State Councillor.

Mr Anthony Vuleta – Member

Anthony Vuleta has been a member of the Board since 2016. His term of appointment concludes in August 2022. Anthony has been the CEO of the Town of Victoria Park since 2014. He was previously President of the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (WA) and is now a member of that Board. Anthony is also a member of the Burswood Park Board and Local Government Professionals.

Ms Narrell Lethorn – Deputy member to Mary Adam

Narrell Lethorn was appointed as a deputy member to the Board in April 2018. Her term of appointment concludes in August 2021. Narrell currently works with the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries as Director of Local Government Support. She has a Master of Business Administration.

Mayor Dennis Wellington – Deputy member to Karen Chappel

Dennis Wellington was appointed as a deputy member of the Board in September 2018. His term of appointment concludes in August 2021. He has been Mayor of the City of Albany since 2011. Dennis also has board experience with the Great Southern Development Commission, the WALGA Great Southern Zone and the National ANZAC Centre Advisory Group.

Cr Karen Wheatland – Deputy member to Russ Fishwick

Karen Wheatland was appointed as a deputy member of the board in September 2019. Her term of appointment concludes in August 2022. Karen has been a councillor with the City of Melville since 2017, where she is also a member of a number of committees. Karen is currently undertaking her Diploma in Local Government with WALGA.

Ms Helen Sarcich – Deputy member to Anthony Vuleta

Helen Sarcich was appointed as a deputy member of the board in September 2019. Her term of appointment concludes in August 2022. Helen is currently the deputy CEO at the Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale. Helen's experience in local government dates back to 2006 and she has held positions with the Cities of Wanneroo, Rockingham, Kwinana and Fremantle. Helen was previously a councillor with the City of Kalgoorlie Boulder.

The Year in Review – Board Activities 2020-21

District boundary amendment proposals considered by the Board

Under schedule 2.1 of the Act, local governments may make proposals to create, change the boundaries of, or abolish districts.

Proposal to amend the boundaries between the Shire of Quairading and the Shire of Cunderdin

In August 2020, the Board received a joint proposal from the Shires of Quairading and Cunderdin to realign the district boundary between the two shires at the corner of Goldfields Road and Thompson Road, Doodenanning. This change resulted in two lots (800 and 801) being located wholly within the Shire of Cunderdin, and a further lot (802) being located wholly within the Shire of Quairading. Previously the three lots had been bisected by the district boundaries.

Subsequently, approximately 33 ha of the subject land was transferred from the Shire of Quairading to the Shire of Cunderdin, and an equivalent amount of land transferred from the Shire of Cunderdin to the Shire of Quairading.

In September 2020, the Board determined that the proposal was one of a minor nature and therefore not one about which public submissions need be invited. Only a single landholder (who initiated the change) was affected by the proposal.

Following consideration of the proposal, the Board recommended that it be approved by the Minister. Accordingly, in September 2020, the Minister agreed with the Board's recommendation, with the boundary change being finalised and published in the Government Gazette in December 2020.

Proposal to amend the boundaries between the City of Kalamunda and the City of Gosnells (Carried over from 2020-21, expected to be finalised in 2021-22)

In December 2020, the Board received a proposal from the City of Kalamunda to correct two irregularities in the district boundary within the Maddington Kenwick Strategic Employment Area (MKSEA). The proposal would result in two lots currently bisected by the district boundary to be located in one local government district (City of Gosnells). The proposed new boundary will follow established lot boundaries in Logistics Boulevard and Welshpool Road East.

As at August 2021, the boundary change proposal was still under development by the proponent.

It is anticipated that the proposal will be finalised, and then considered by the Board in 2021-22.

In summary, the following district boundary amendment proposals were submitted during 2020-21.

Table 1: District boundary amendments 2020-21

Local Governments	Matter	Gazettal Date
Shire of Quairading/ Shire of Cunderdin	To realign the district boundary near the intersection of Goldfields and Thompson Roads, Doodenanning, comprising Lots 800, 801 and 802. Proposal approved by Minister.	24 December 2020
City of Kalamunda/ City of Gosnells	To locate two lots currently dissected by the district boundary to be located in one local government district (City of Gosnells).	TBC – anticipated for 2021-22

Carried over from 2019-20

There were no boundary change proposals under consideration from 2019-20 that were carried over to 2020-21.

Carried over to 2021-22

It is anticipated that the proposed district boundary amendment for the City of Kalamunda and City of Gosnells proposal that was received in 2020-21, will be finalised in 2021-22.

Ward and representation amendment proposals considered by the Board

Under schedule 2.2 of the Act, local governments with wards are required to conduct ward and representation reviews every eight years.

As 2021 is a local government election year, it is relatively common for councils to undertake ward and representation reviews during this period.

Consequently, there were 20 ward and representation reviews conducted by local governments, and considered by the Board in 2020-21.

The following seven local governments completed a review during 2020-21 and resolved to maintain their existing ward boundaries and levels of representation:

- City of Bayswater
- City of Belmont
- Shire of Broome
- Shire of Denmark
- Shire of Dowerin
- City of Rockingham
- Shire of Trayning

Thirteen other local governments submitted proposals for change as a result of their reviews, as detailed in the table below. Eleven of the reviews were finalised and published in the Government Gazette during 2020-21 and two during 2021-22.

[Proposals recommended to, and approved by the Minister](#)

Table 2: Ward and representation proposals 2020-21

Local Government	Matter	Gazettal Date
City of Armadale	Amend ward boundaries for all seven wards. Councillor numbers to remain unchanged at 14	23 April 2021
Shire of Boyup Brook	Amend ward boundaries for all four wards	18 June 2021
Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes	Abolish all existing wards and maintain councillor numbers at nine	13 April 2021
Shire of Dalwallinu	Reduce councillor numbers from nine to eight	29 September 2020
Shire of Dumbleyung	Abolish all existing wards and reduce councillor numbers from nine to seven	23 April 2021
Town of Esperance	Amend ward boundaries for both existing wards. Councillor numbers remain unchanged at nine - but redistributed	23 April 2021
Shire of Katanning	Reduce councillor numbers from nine to seven	9 April 2021
Shire of Mingenew	Abolish all existing wards and maintain councillor numbers at seven	18 December 2020
Shire of Moora	Reduce councillor numbers from nine to seven and maintain district ward	18 June 2021
Town of Mosman Park	Abolish all existing wards and maintain councillor numbers at six plus the mayor	23 April 2021
City of Subiaco	Reduce councillor numbers from 11 to eight, maintain four wards, but alter their boundaries	2 July 2021

Shire of Wagin	Reduce councillor numbers from 11 to nine and maintain district ward	21 May 2021
City of Wanneroo	Increase ward numbers from three to seven and maintain 14 councillors (two per ward)	2 July 2021

Carried over from 2019-20

There was one ward and representation proposal that was under consideration by the Board in 2019-20 that was subsequently finalised in 2020-21 – the Shire of Dalwallinu, where the councillor numbers were reduced from nine to eight.

Carried over to 2021-22

There were no ward and representation proposals under consideration by the Board in 2020-21 that were carried over to 2021-22.

Governance of the Board

During 2020-21, the Board continued to maintain its governance framework, including any required updates of the guidelines and submission templates for boundary change proposals and ward and representation reviews, which are available on the [Local Government Advisory Board webpage](#).²

The Board meets annually or bi-annually to review its governance principles and documentation and to ensure currency and consistency with Public Sector Commission (PSC) guidelines.

The Board's charter, code of conduct, meeting procedures and communications protocol were reviewed in August 2020, in accordance with the PSC's good governance processes and guidelines.

Other Information

Information required to be reported under section 175ZE of the *Electoral Act 1907* (public agencies to report on certain expenditure) is included in the Annual Report of the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries.

The following DLGSC officers provided executive, research and administrative support to the Board in 2020-21:

Officers:

Ms Julie Knight – Manager, Local Government Executive Support

Mr Shannon Wood – A/Manager, Local Government Executive Support

Ms Julie Craig – Strategy and Research Officer

² <https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/local-government/local-governments/boards-and-commissions>