



Discussion Paper – Local Government Reform – Reduction in Councillor Number

The Minister for Local Government has announced a package of reforms to the *Act*. As part of the reforms to strengthen democracy and increase community engagement, The Minister proposes to review Councillor numbers based on population.

The Shire of Narembeen is undertaking a review of its Councillor numbers and feedback received through this consultation process will assist the shire to transition to the new requirements. As a resident, your input is highly valued, and the Shire is seeking feedback from you on the following options.

- Option 1- Reduce the number of council members to seven at the next election (October 2023)
- Option 2- Reduce the number of Council members to five at the next election (October 2023)
- Other suggestions are welcome.

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

Shire of Narembeen
1 Longhurst Street
NAREMBEEN WA 6369

Or by email at admin@narembeen.wa.gov.au

All submissions must be received by 5pm on 2 December 2022

A full discussion paper has been prepared and can be accessed on the Shire of Narembeen's website at www.narembeen.wa.gov.au. Information on the reform process itself can be located at <https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/local-government/strengthening-local-government/local-government-act-reform>.

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 Narembeen.

Councillor Kellie Mortimore
SHIRE PRESIDENT

David Blurton
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Current situation

Currently, the Shire of Narembeen has 8 Councillors and operates without a ward system. Both Shire President and Deputy Shire President positions are elected by the Council following the swearing-in of Councillors after each election.

The table below shows the historical changes to Councillor numbers and number of electors over time and shows the trend in Councillor to elector ratio numbers since 2009.

Table: Shire of Narembeen elector to councillor ratios - historical

Election year	Number of Electors	Number of Councillors	Councillor to Elector Ratio	Ward system	Election (Y/N)
2023 proposed	512	7	1:73.1	No	?
2021	512	8	1:64	No	Yes
2019	536	8	1:67	No	No*
2017	534	8	1:66.8	No	No
2015	559	8	1:69.9	No	No*
2013	583	8	1:72.9	No	No
2011	612	8	1:76.5	No	No
2009	630	9	1:78.8	Yes - Rural / town ward	No

*indicates an extraordinary election was required to be undertaken due to insufficient nominations.

Review process

The review process involves a number of steps:

- The Council resolves to undertake the review. This was completed at the Ordinary Meeting of Council on 18 October 2022.
- Public submission period opens (minimum six weeks). This will commence on 24 October 2022.
- Information provided to the community for discussion.
- Public submission period closes 2 December 2022.
- The Council considers all submissions and relevant factors and makes a decision at the 13 December 2022 Council meeting.

- The Council submits a report to the Local Government Advisory Board (the Board) for its consideration
- If a change is proposed, the Board 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.

Factors to be considered

When considering changes to representation, Schedule 2.2 of the Act specifies five factors that must be taken into account by a local government as part of the review process:

1. Community of interest
2. Physical and topographic features
3. Demographic trends
4. Economic factors
5. Ratio of councillors to electors in the various wards.

The Board offers the following interpretation of these factors.

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. Demographic trends

Several measurements of the characteristics of human populations, such as population size, and its distribution by age, gender, 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.

4. 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.

5. 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. A balanced representation would be reflected in the ratio deviation being within plus or minus 10% for all wards. The Shire of Narembeen does not operate a ward system, so this does not form part of the review process.

6. Local government reforms

In addition to the legislative factors to be considered, the review also needs to consider the Minister for Local Government's changes to ward structures and representation.

To comply with the Minister's proposals, as the Shire of Narembeen is a band 4 local government, with a population of less than 5,000 people, the number of councillors to be proposed to be reduced to seven at maximum.

Public submissions

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