



Department of
**Local Government, Sport
and Cultural Industries**

Local Government Advisory Board

2021-22 Annual Report



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Further information

Local Government Advisory Board

Annual Report 2021-22

Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries

GPO Box 8349, Perth Business Centre WA 6849

Telephone: (08) 6552 7300

Freecall: 1800 634 541 (regional WA callers only)

Email: advisoryboard@dlgsc.wa.gov.au

Website: www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au

Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) – Telephone: 13 14 50

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Chair's report

The Local Government Advisory Board (the Board) would like to acknowledge the ongoing efforts of local governments to continue to consolidate and strengthen our Western Australian communities in 2022. This follows the outstanding work that was done by Local, State and Commonwealth Governments during the first two years of the COVID pandemic in 2020 and 2021.

The Board also recognises the ongoing challenges faced by local governments – which highlight the importance of maintaining the close relationships between them and their communities – as we continue to experience the effects of the pandemic, and other issues that may be associated with cost-of-living increases in Western Australia.

For the sector, the first half of the financial year included the October 2021 local government ordinary elections.

In preparing for the elections, many councils conducted ward and representation reviews to ensure a balanced ratio of councillors to electors, and to ensure that the number of councillors provides reasonable, fair and appropriate representation for the size of their district.

Ahead of the 2021 ordinary elections, the Board assessed 20 individual ward and representation reviews – with the Minister for Local Government approving all of the Board's recommendations. The Board would like to acknowledge and thank those local governments that submitted reviews for consideration.

As a result of the reviews, seven local governments resolved to maintain their status quo. The remaining 13 made changes to either abolish or amend their ward boundaries and/or to decrease councillor numbers.

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. There can also be an associated positive financial effect – an example being savings realised in overall councillor attendance fees.

Since the 2021 ordinary elections, the Board has assessed two further reviews – where any approved changes are anticipated to be implemented ahead of the next local government elections scheduled for 2023.

I would like to acknowledge the continued focus of the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC) in its work relating to local government reform, which is a significant undertaking. Proposed changes to the Local Government Act and Regulations will provide for a stronger, more consistent framework for local governments across Western Australia. The reform proposals have been designed to deliver significant benefits for residents and ratepayers, small business, industry, elected members and professionals working in the sector.

As I was appointed to the position of Board Chair in October 2021, I would like to publicly acknowledge the work of the previous Chair, Ms Marion Blair OAM, whose term finished in August 2021, after three years in the role. Sincere thanks go to Marion for her dedication and commitment to the Board as well as to Cr Karen Chappel, Ms Narrell Lethorn and Mayor Dennis Wellington whose roles as members or deputy members also concluded in 2021. The experience that those from both the local government sector and the DLGSC bring to the Board is always greatly valued.

I would like to express my genuine appreciation to the current Board members and deputies for their contributions and support throughout my first year as the Chair. They always deliver a professional, knowledgeable, energetic and independent approach to the decision making process, which ultimately benefits the local government sector and the community.

I would also like to thank our executive staff, Shannon Wood and Julie Craig, who provided great support to the Board throughout the year. Their deep knowledge, assistance and “can do” attitude helps us to operate in an efficient and effective manner. I look forward to the Board continuing its important work over the coming year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Bull', with a small flourish at the end.

Dan Bull

Chair – Local Government Advisory Board

31 August 2022

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 ward 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 to either accept or reject the recommendation.

The Board can also carry out other inquiries that the Minister may direct, in accordance with the Act.

Minister responsible

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

Ministerial Statement of Expectation

The purpose of the June 2021 Ministerial Statement of Expectation is to provide clarity on the roles, values and objectives necessary to support an effective relationship between the Minister 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 in August 2021, which outlines how the Minister's expectations will be implemented. 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 consider eight factors set out in the Act, as detailed below. Other relevant factors may also be considered by the Board.

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 considers 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 exercise its proper functions and delegated powers and operate facilities and services efficiently and effectively
- 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 Board. The Chair is appointed by the Minister. The Minister also appoints two members from nominations usually made by the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA), and one member from nominations usually made by Local Government Professionals Australia WA (LG Pro). The Board also includes one member who is an officer of the 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	Current term ends
Cr Dan Bull	Chair	Minister for Local Government	31 August 2024
Ms Mary Adam	Deputy Chair	DLGSC representative	31 August 2022
Mr Anthony Vuleta	Member	LG Pro	31 August 2022
Cr Russ Fishwick	Member	WALGA	31 August 2022
Cr Caroline Knight	Member	Minister for Local Government	31 August 2024
Ms Caitlin Marson	Deputy to the Deputy Chair	DLGSC representative	31 August 2024
Ms Helen Sarcich	Deputy to Anthony Vuleta	LG Pro	31 August 2022
Cr Karen Wheatland	Deputy to Russ Fishwick	WALGA	31 August 2022
Cr Jannah Stratford	Deputy to Caroline Knight	Minister for Local Government	31 August 2024

Member profiles (as at 31 August 2022)

Cr Dan Bull – Chair

Dan Bull was appointed as chair of the Board in October 2021. He is presently appointed until August 2024. Dan is currently a councillor at the City of Bayswater – a role he has held since 2015. He was also the City's Mayor from 2017 to 2021. Dan is a member of several internal and external committees, including the Aged Care Governance Committee (of which he is Chair), the Reconciliation Advisory Committee and the Bayswater Childcare Association Inc. Dan graduated from UWA with a Bachelor of Laws and a Bachelor of Arts (Political Science/Music).

Ms Mary Adam – Deputy Chair

Mary Adam has been a member and Deputy Chair of the Board since 2013. She is presently appointed until August 2022. Mary currently works with the DLGSC as General Counsel. She is the 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.

Mr Anthony Vuleta – Member

Anthony Vuleta has been a member of the Board since 2016. He is presently appointed until August 2022. Anthony has been the CEO of the Town of Victoria Park since 2014. He is also a member and the current deputy president of LG Pro. Anthony was previously president of the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (WA) and is now a member of that board. He is also a member of the Burswood Park Board, Australian Institute of Management and Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Cr Russ Fishwick – Member

Russ Fishwick has been a member of the Board since 2016. He is presently appointed until 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. He was also appointed as a Justice of the Peace in 2010 and holds post graduate qualifications in business and management. He is active in surf lifesaving and is a Senior Assessor for Surf Lifesaving WA.

Cr Caroline Knight – Member

Caroline Knight was appointed as a member of the Board in October 2021. She is presently appointed until August 2024. Caroline is currently the Deputy Mayor of the City of Mandurah – a role she has held since 2017. She was a councillor at the City for six years prior to being elected to the position. Caroline is currently Chair of the Peel Harvey Catchment Council and is also Chair of the Mandurah Environmental Advisory Board. She is also a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Caroline was appointed as a Commissioner representing non-metropolitan local government on the West Australian Planning Commission in 2022.

Ms Caitlin Marson – Deputy member to Mary Adam

Caitlin Marson was appointed as a deputy member to the Board in January 2022. She is presently appointed until August 2024. Caitlin currently works as a Principal Strategy Officer at the DLGSC. She has extensive public sector experience, including previous roles at the Department of Communities and the Disability Services Commission.

Ms Helen Sarcich – Deputy member to Anthony Vuleta

Helen Sarcich was appointed as a deputy member of the Board in September 2019. She is presently appointed until 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.

Cr Karen Wheatland – Deputy member to Russ Fishwick

Karen Wheatland was appointed as a deputy member of the Board in September 2019. She is presently appointed until August 2022. Karen has been a councillor with the City of Melville since 2017, where she is also a member of several committees. Karen is currently National Vice President of the Australian Local Government Women's Association.

Cr Jannah Stratford – Deputy member to Caroline Knight

Jannah Stratford was appointed as a deputy member of the Board in October 2021. She is presently appointed until August 2024. Jannah is currently the President of the Shire of Koorda – a role she has held since 2020. She was a councillor at the Shire for two years prior to being elected to the position. Jannah has previously held the position of Chair of the North Eastern Wheatbelt Region of Councils (NEWROC) and is a member of the Eastern Wheatbelt District Health Advisory Committee. She is also involved with several sporting and community clubs in the Shire of Koorda.

The year in review – Board activities 2021-22

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 City of Kalamunda and the City of Gosnells (Carried over from 2020-21, expected to be finalised in 2022-23)

In December 2020, the Board received a proposal from the City of Kalamunda to amend three anomalies in the district boundary within the Maddington Kenwick Strategic Employment Area. The proposal would result in three 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 Welshpool Road East and Courtney Place, Wattle Grove, and Logistics Boulevard, Kenwick.

As at August 2022, the boundary change proposal is still under consideration.

Carried over to 2022-23

The boundary change proposal between the Cities of Kalamunda and Gosnells, as noted above, was under consideration from 2020-21 and is expected to be finalised in 2022-23.

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 2022 is not a local government election year, it is relatively uncommon for councils to undertake reviews during this period.

Consequently, there were only two ward and representation reviews conducted and/or finalised by local governments in 2021-22.

- City of Nedlands

The City conducted a review during 2020-21, and submitted it to the Board in 2021-22, with the resolution to retain its current structure of four wards, 12 councillors plus the popularly elected Mayor.

- City of Joondalup

The City conducted a review and submitted it to the Board in 2021-22, with the resolution to amend the boundaries for all six wards. Councillor numbers will remain unchanged at 12 (two per ward), plus the popularly elected Mayor.

Carried over from 2020-21

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

Carried over to 2022-23

There is one ward and representation proposal under consideration by the Board in 2021-22 that is expected to be finalised and published in the Government Gazette in 2022-23 (City of Joondalup).

Governance of the Board

During 2021-22, 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. These guidelines and templates 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 at a governance workshop held in May 2022, 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 2021-22:

Officers

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

Ms Julie Craig – Strategy and Research Officer, Local Government Executive Support

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