



Review of Wards and Representation

August 2022

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Background

A review of wards and representation was last undertaken by the Shire of Augusta Margaret River in 2016/17 which resulted in the current structure of 7 councillors elected from across the district.

The Shire currently has no wards but is now undertaking a further review.

The purpose of this document is not to pre-empt outcomes, but to set out the overall parameters that apply and provide some examples to assist with community input.

Legislative framework

Schedule 2.2 of the *Local Government Act 1995* (the Act) provides that a local government of a district that is not divided into wards may carry out a review as to —

- (a) whether or not the district should be divided into wards; and
- (b) if so —
 - (i) what the ward boundaries should be; and
 - (ii) the number of offices of councillor there should be for each ward

The Act further provides that when undertaking a review of wards and representation, any of the following may be considered:

- Creating new wards in a district already divided into wards;
- Changing the boundaries of a ward;
- Abolishing any or all of the wards into which a district is divided;
- Changing the name of a district or a ward;
- Changing the number of offices of councillor on a council; and
- Specifying or changing the number of offices of councillor for a ward.

Section 2.17 (2) of the Act provides if the method of filling the office of the Shire president is election by the council, the council is to consist of between 6 and 15 councillors.

Factors that must be taken into account

Clause 8 of Schedule 2.2 requires a council to assess options against the following factors:

- Community of interest;
- Physical and topographical features;
- Demographic trends;
- Economic factors; and
- The ratio of councillors to electors in the various wards.

The Local Government Advisory Board (LGAB) assesses reviews of wards and representation undertaken by local governments and makes recommendations to the Minister for Local Government as to whether or not local governments have taken these factors into account, and which can be interpreted as:

Community of interest	Physical and topographic features	Demographic trends	Economic factors	Ratio of Councillors to electors
The term community of interest has a number of elements. These include a sense of community identity and belonging,	These may be natural or man-made features that will vary from area to area. Water features such as rivers and catchment boundaries may	Several measurements of the characteristics of human populations, such as population size, and its distribution by age, sex,	Economic factors can be broadly interpreted to include any factor that reflects the character of economic activities and	The Board considers that the ratio of Councillors to electors is particularly significant - it is expected that each local

Community of interest	Physical and topographic features	Demographic trends	Economic factors	Ratio of Councillors to electors
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 an area as reflected in catchment areas of local schools and sporting teams, or the circulation areas of local newspapers. Neighborhoods, suburbs and towns are important units in the physical, historical and social infrastructure and often generate a feeling of community and belonging.	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.	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.	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.	government will have similar ratios of electors to Councillors across its wards. The Board will not support deviations of more than plus or minus 10% of the average ratio of electors to Councillors between wards.

The LGAB places particular emphasis on an even ratio of electors per councillor where a local government is divided into wards but considers a deviation of plus or minus 10% between wards to be reasonable.

If satisfied that a review has properly taken these factors into consideration, the Board then makes a recommendation to the Minister for Local Government as to whether or not the proposal should be approved. The Minister may accept or reject the Board's recommendation.

Any changes will then usually come into effect at the next Council elections scheduled for October 2023.

The State Government is in the process of amending and updating the Local Government Act 1995. Amongst other things this includes:

- The president for local governments that are the size of the Shire is to be elected through a vote of the electors of the district; and
- It is proposed to limit the number of councillors based on the population of the entire local government, which in the Shire's case would be between 5 to 9 councillors (including the mayor/president).

The precise timing of when the legislation might be made or its exact nature is not yet known but is likely to be in time for the next State wide local government elections due in October 2023.

If these changes proceed and subject to any transitional provisions that might apply, any outcome of this process where the total number of elected members is more than 9 will need to be changed.

Comment

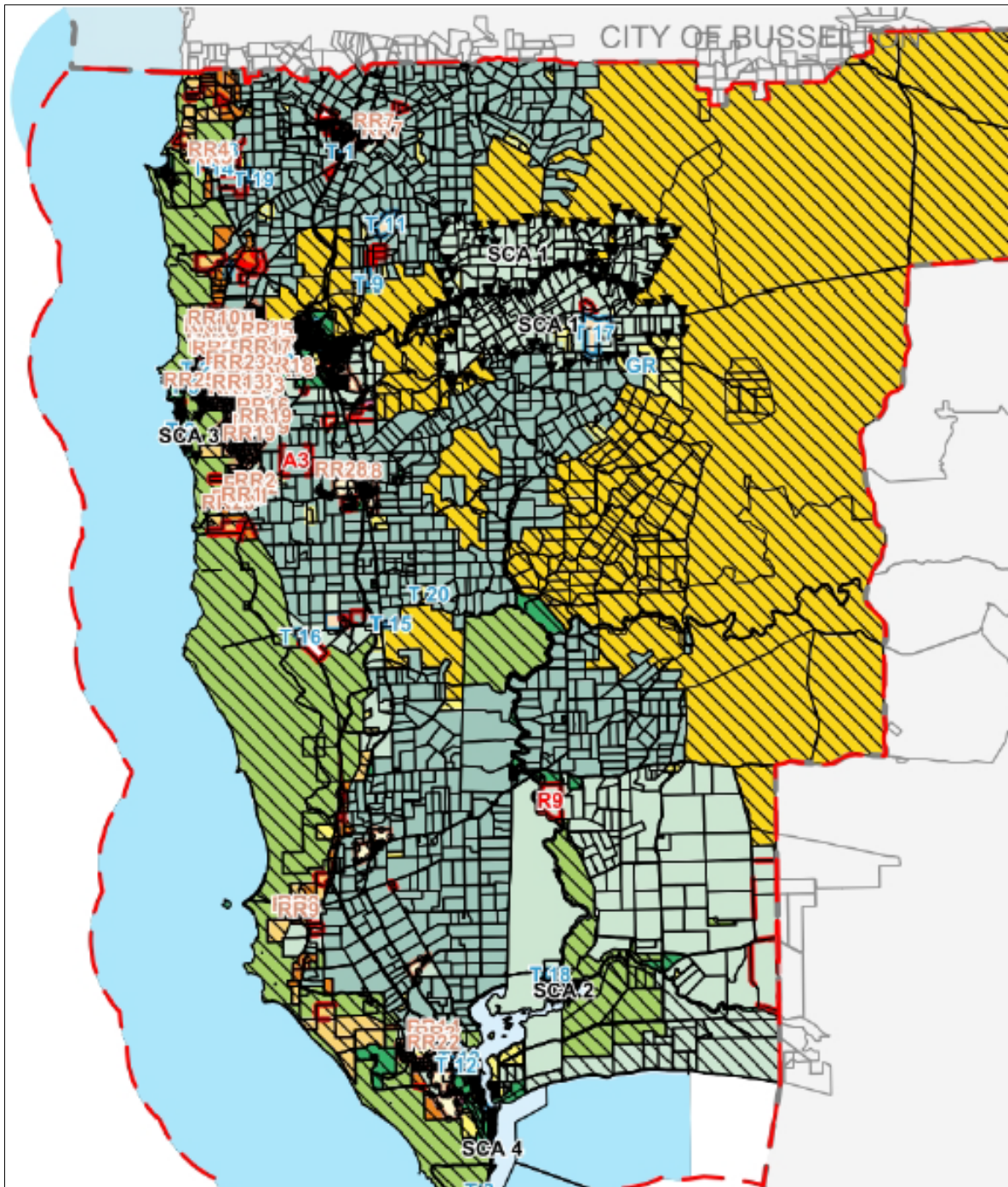
Current representation and application of criteria

The Council of the Shire of Augusta Margaret River presently comprised of 7 councillors elected from the entire district. There are no wards and the Shire President is elected by and from the members of council.

In terms of the factors to be considered when potentially establishing wards, *communities of interest* could be said to exist around:

- The townsites of:
 - Augusta;
 - Cowaramup;
 - Gracetown;
 - Gnarabup;
 - Hamelin Bay
 - Karridale;
 - Karridale Enclave;
 - Kударup;
 - Margaret River;
 - Prevally; and
 - Witchcliffe.
- Viticulture and associated developments;
- Tourism facilities; and
- Farming and agricultural activities.

The *physical and topographical features* of the Shire are diverse. They include large areas of State forest and national parks on the coastal and eastern areas of the Shire, with farming, viticulture and agricultural areas in the central part.



Rivers and waterways include the Blackwood and Margaret Rivers. Arterial and major roads include the Bussell Highway, Caves Road, and the Brockman Highway.

In terms of *demographic trends*, according to the 2016 census the estimated residential population (ERP) of the Shire was 14,258 persons. As at 30 June 2021 the estimated residential population was 17,130. The Shire has therefore experienced growth of around 20.1% in the 5 years to the period to 30 June 2021. The localities of Margaret River and Cowaramup grew the fastest.

Economic factors include agricultural, tourism, forestry and related support industries.

The *ratio of councillors to electors* in wards is given particular significance by the Local Government Advisory Board. It expects that each local government will have similar ratios of electors to councillors across its wards. The Board will not support deviations of more than plus or minus 10% of the average ratio of electors to councillors between wards.

The Shire has no wards at present.

Potential options for change

There are a significant range of outcomes that can be considered. Without pre-empting the outcome of any public comment, this could include:

- Introducing wards;
- Changing the number of Councillors;
- A combination of the above factors; or
- Do nothing.

As noted above the community is currently represented by 7 councillors with the Shire President elected from and by the council.

These points are discussed below.

How many elected members should the Shire have?

Based on estimated elector numbers, the number of electors per councillor using the range allowed in the Act is:

No of Councillors	Electors per Councillor
6	1957
7	1677
8	1468
9	1304
10	1174
11	1067
12	978
13	903
14	839
15	783

Should the Shire be divided into Wards? If so, how many?

It is possible to have no wards or up to 15 wards of one member each. The range of wards and the required number of electors to achieve an even number of electors in each is:

No of wards	Electors per ward	No of wards	Electors per ward
0	11740	9	1304
2	5870	10	1174
3	3913	11	1067
4	2935	12	978
5	2348	13	903
6	1957	14	839
7	1677	15	783
8	1468		

Possible Options

To illustrate the application of the required principles in the Act, the following options have been developed. **Note they are simply to provoke discussion at this point and are not meant to be definitive.**

Note that in the options below:

- The number of councillors shown represent as equal as possible numbers of electors within a deviation of plus or minus 10% of the average as allowed – anything else is highly likely to be rejected;
- Modelling has been done on the basis of electors as at 31 March 2022. It is possible that numbers may change by the time the next scheduled local government elections are held in October 2023;
- Electors are grouped by locality, with the whole of a locality placed in a possible ward. It is possible to use Statistical Areas or some other feature if required; and
- If wards are introduced and there are significant changes in electors and/or population in individual localities or wards in one area relative to the rest, the Board may require another review before the next which will be due in 2031.

Option 1 – No wards

Under this option, the Shire stays 'as is', with no wards.

There are 85 local governments in WA that have no wards. In 2016 local governments across the State were canvassed as to their perception of the advantages and disadvantages of wards vs no wards. Feedback received is summarised below:

Advantages	Disadvantages
○ 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.	○ 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. ○ May lead to significant communities of interest and points of view being unrepresented or for others to dominate.

Advantages	Disadvantages
○ There is balanced representation with each elected member representing the whole community. ○ The election process is much simpler for the community to understand and administer. ○ Promotes the concept of a whole-of-district focus, with Councillors being elected by and concerned for the local government as a whole, rather than parochial interests. ○ Gives residents and ratepayers a choice of Councillors to approach with their concerns. ○ Each voter has the opportunity to express a preference for every candidate for the council election. ○ Councillors can use their speciality skills and knowledge for the benefit of the whole community. ○ Removes the need to periodically (re)define internal ward boundaries.	○ May lead to confusion of responsibilities and duplication of effort on the part of Councillors. ○ Large numbers of candidates might be confusing for voters. ○ May lead to Councillors being relatively inaccessible for residents of parts of the local government area. ○ May be difficult for voters to assess the performance of individual Councillors. ○ In some LGs it may be appropriate to have wards, for example where a local government might have 2 or more distinct population centres

The criteria under the Act for establishing ward boundaries is not applicable - under a 'no wards' option there are none.

There is also no requirement to review ward boundaries in future.

Option 2 – three wards, eight councillors

Under this option, the Shire is split into 3 wards as shown on the map below.

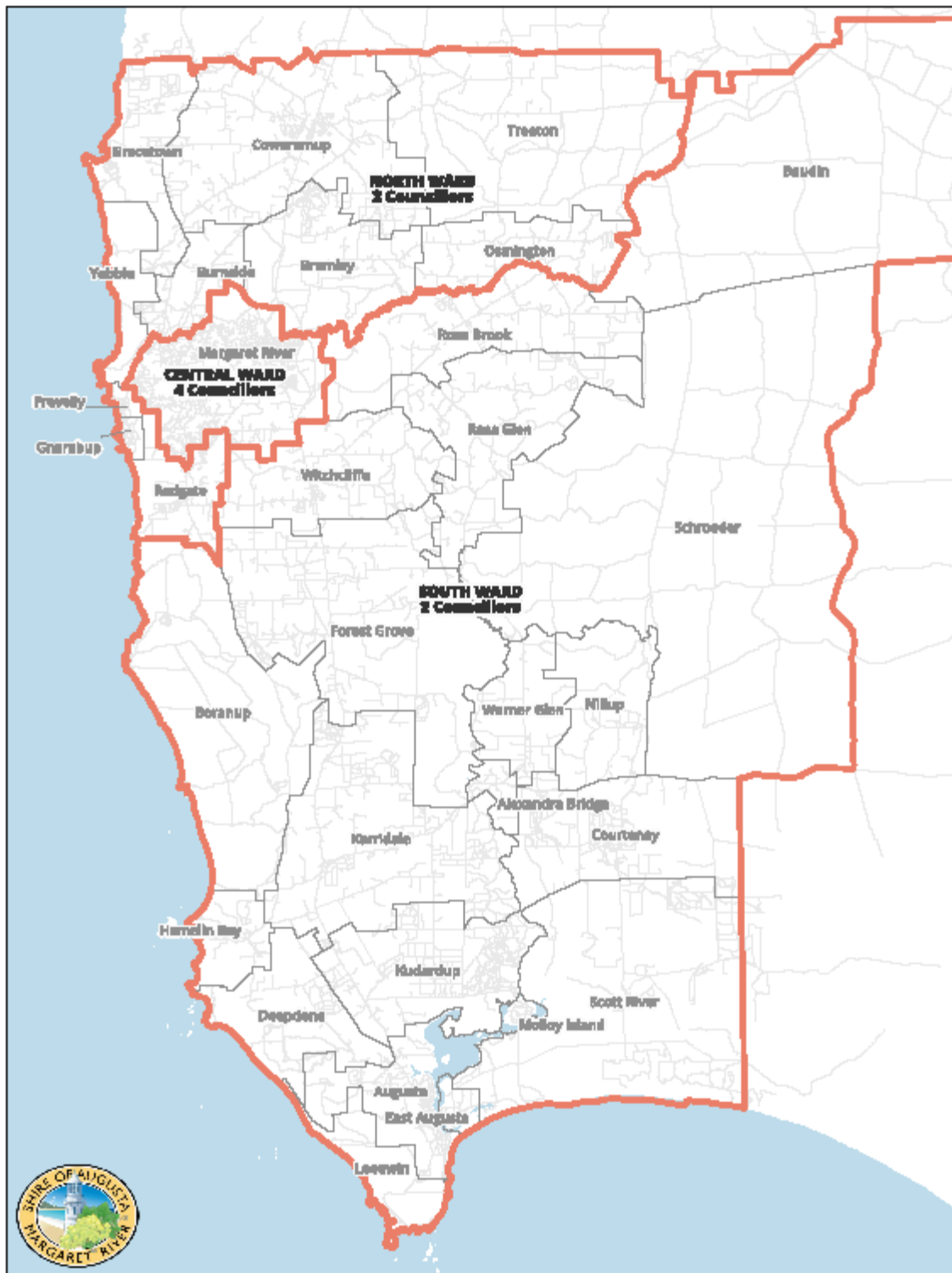
In order to achieve a ratio of electors per councillor that within the deviation from the average that is acceptable it would be necessary to increase the number of councillors to 8.

A summary of this option is:

Ward	No of electors	No of Councillors	Ratio of electors per Councillor	% Deviation from target ratio
North	2836	2	1418	-2.1%
Central	6033	4	1508	4.2%
South	2714	2	1357	-6.3%
Total(s)	11583	8	1448	

A map of the possible boundaries is:

Option 2 – Three Wards, Eight Councillors



In terms of the criteria to be applied under the Act when establishing wards:

Community of interest	Physical and topographic features	Demographic trends	Economic factors	Ratio of Councillors to electors
Communities of interest are grouped together to the extent possible.	Areas of the district with similar features are grouped together to the extent possible.	There is capacity for growth in the proposed North and South wards.	Areas of commercial and industrial development are substantially within the same wards.	Ratios of councillors to electors are within the limits considered reasonable by the LGAB

Option 3 – four wards, eight councillors

Under this option, the Shire is split into 4 wards as shown on the map below.

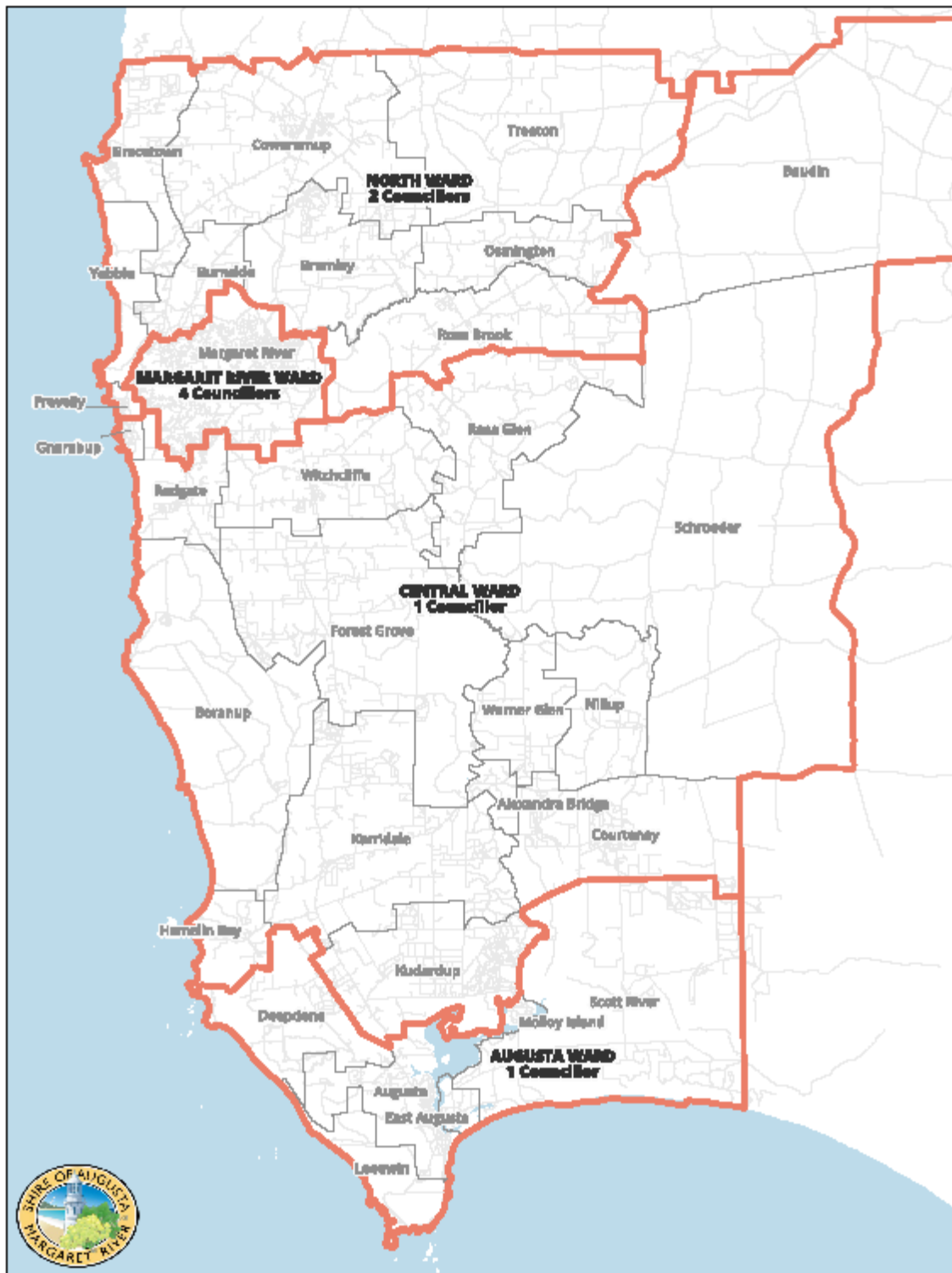
In order to achieve a ratio of electors per councillor that within the deviation from the average that is acceptable it would again be necessary to increase the number of councillors to 8.

A summary of this option is:

Ward	No of electors	No of Councillors	Ratio of electors per Councillor	% Deviation from target ratio
Augusta	1516	1	1516	4.7%
Central	1423	1	1423	-1.7%
Margaret River	6033	4	1508	4.2%
North	2611	2	1306	-9.8%
Total	11583	8	1448	

A map of the possible boundaries is:

Option 3 – Four Wards, Eight Councillors



In terms of the criteria to be applied under the Act when establishing wards:

Community of interest	Physical and topographic features	Demographic trends	Economic factors	Ratio of Councillors to electors
Communities of interest are grouped together to the extent possible.	Areas of the district with similar features are grouped together to the extent possible.	There is capacity for growth in the proposed North ward.	Areas of agricultural, commercial and industrial development are substantially within the same wards.	Ratios of councillors to electors are within the limits considered reasonable by the LGAB

Option 4 – two wards, seven councillors

The Shire is split into two wards, with current number of councillors retained at seven:

Ward	No of electors	No of Councillors	Ratio of electors per Councillor	% Deviation from target ratio
North	8248	5	1650	-0.3%
South	3335	2	1668	0.8%
Total	11583	7	1655	

A map of the possible boundaries is:

Option 4 – Two Wards, Seven Councillors



In terms of the criteria to be applied under the Act when establishing wards:

Community of interest	Physical and topographic features	Demographic trends	Economic factors	Ratio of Councillors to electors
Communities of interest are grouped together to the extent possible.	Areas of the district with similar features are grouped together to the extent possible.	Nil, although if growth patterns continue in the proposed North ward it may be necessary to further adjust boundaries in future.	Areas of Tourism, commercial and industrial development are substantially within the same wards.	Ratios of councillors to electors are within the limits considered reasonable by the LGAB

Option 5 – three wards, nine councillors

Under this option the Shire is three wards, represented by three councillors each (nine in total):

Ward	No of electors	No of Councillors	Ratio of electors per Councillor	% Deviation from target ratio (max plus or minus 10%)
North	3975	3	1325	3.0%
Central	4105	3	1368	6.3%
South	3503	3	1168	-9.3%
Total	11583	9	1287	

A map of the possible boundaries is:

Option 5 – Three Wards, Nine Councillors



In terms of the criteria to be applied under the Act when establishing wards:

Community of interest	Physical and topographic features	Demographic trends	Economic factors	Ratio of Councillors to electors
Communities of interest are grouped together to the extent possible.	Areas of the district with similar features are grouped together to the extent possible. The proposed North and South wards cover significantly larger areas relative to the proposed Central ward.	Nil, although if growth patterns continue in the proposed Central ward it may be necessary to further adjust boundaries in future.	Areas of Tourism, commercial and industrial development are substantially within the same wards.	Ratios of councillors to electors are within the limits considered reasonable by the LGAB

The State Government is in the process of amending and updating the *Local Government Act 1995*. Amongst other things this includes:

- The mayor or president for all band 1 and 2 councils is to be elected through a vote of the electors of the district; and
- It is proposed to limit the number of councillors based on the population of the entire local government. It is proposed that the total number of elected members for local governments with a population of between 5000 and 75,000 be 5 to 9 councillors (including the mayor/president).

The precise timing of when the legislation might be made or its exact nature is not yet known but is likely to be in time for the next State wide local government elections due in October 2023.

If these changes proceed and subject to any transitional provisions that might apply, any outcome of this process where the total number of elected members is more than 9 will need to be changed.

Others

Note that the groupings above are an example of how this could be applied – there are many variations on this theme and members of the community may have other options that fit the criteria for wards in the Act.

Suggestions for ward names are also welcome.

Impact of changes

After undertaking community consultation, the Shire may make a proposal to the Local Government Advisory Board. The effect of proposed changes on existing councillors will depend on the precise proposal put forward.

When offices of councillor are to be redistributed into new wards, or there is a reduction or increase in the number of offices of councillor, the implementation method must give consideration to clauses 1 and 2 of Schedule 4.2 of the Act.

In summary, this provides that as near as practical to half of the total number of councillors are to retire every two years and as near as practical to half of the councillors representing each ward are to retire every two years. It may also be necessary to include in the Governors Order a provision to allocate the existing councillors to wards, which must also be done in accordance with the provisions and intent of the Act.

How to make a Submission

Members of the community are invited to make a written submission about any aspect of this review.

Public meetings to discuss wards and representation will be held on the following dates:

- Tuesday 23 August 2022 at 5pm at the Council Chambers, 66 Allnut Terrace, Augusta
- Wednesday 24 August 2022 at 5pm at the Council Chambers, 41 Wallcliffe Road, Margaret River

Submissions must be received by the Shire by Wednesday 28 September 2022 at 12pm and can be made:

- Online via the Shire's Your Say website yoursay.amrshire.wa.gov.au/councillor-ward-review
- By mail to the CEO, Shire of Augusta Margaret River, PO Box 61 Margaret River WA 6285
- By delivery to the Shire offices at 66 Allnut Terrace, Augusta or 41 Wallcliffe Road, Margaret River