



Review of Wards and Representation

Discussion Paper

October 2022

Background

The Shire of Wickepin has resolved to undertake a review of its councillor representation to comply with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1995 (the Act). Such a review is called the Ward and Representation Review, (Review) even though wards do not apply to the Shire of Wickepin.

On this occasion the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries via the Minister's Office has formally advised council of its requirement to undertake a review of its representation to comply with proposed changes to the *Local Government Act 1995* in 2023. Council formally resolved at its ordinary meeting held on 19th October 2022 to carry out a review of its wards and representation, minute number ????.

Current situation

Currently the Shire of Wickepin has eight (8) councillors and the Minister of Local Government has indicated that under new reform requirements, this would be reduced to seven (7) councillors.

Review Process

The review process involves a number of steps:

- Council resolves to undertake the review;
- Public submission period opens;
- Discussion Paper advertised and placed on Shire website for submissions. Shire undertake other forms of advertising to alert the public to Review.
- Public submission period closes;
- An "Assessment of Public response report is produced containing a recommendation;
- Council considers the report, all submissions and relevant factors and makes a decision;
- Council submits a report to the Local Government Advisory Board (the Board) for its consideration; and
- (If a change is accepted) The Board submits a recommendation to the Minister for Local Government.

If the Minister approves any changes then these will be in place for the next ordinary election in 2023, however this review process needs to be completed by 14th February 2023 in order to meet the requirements of the Ministerial order.

It needs to be clearly stated on the basis of the direction of the Minister, the Shire of Wickepin cannot go through the review process and resolve to remain with the status quo. Council, in consultation with the community, must arrive at a position that complies with the required maximum number of councillors – seven.

In order to achieve this there must be a change made to the existing number of councillors in the Shire of Wickepin.

Factors to be Considered in Review

When considering the changes to representation, Schedule 2.2 of the Act specifies 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; and
5. Ratio of Councillors to Electors in the various wards.

Wickepin Local Government operates without Wards, therefore the elected councillors act on behalf of the whole of the Shire in their capacity to govern. It therefore remains that the community of interest, physical and topographic features, demographic trends, economic factors are applicable to all councillors equally and do not impact on the question of eight (8) down to seven (7) councillors. Even so, a recap of these elements is provided to set the scene in terms of the distances involved and the complexity of community that councillors must engage in order to adequately represent all constituents.

What does impact the question of eight (8) councillors down to seven (7) is the issue of the ratio of councillors to electors. Obviously, reducing one councillor adds to the coverage of all. This is detailed under point 5.

The Local Government Advisory 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 an area as reflected in 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.

Shire of Wickepin Features

Three very strong communities of interest exist in the Shire of Wickepin being;

- Harrismith/Tincurrin
- Wickepin
- Yealering

Each town in the shire is very proud of their heritage, history and planning for the future, which is why the Shire of Wickepin does its level best to ensure that all sectors in the shire receive a fair balance of services and infrastructure improvements. Parochialism in the individual communities of interest in the shire ensures that the Shire of Wickepin is vibrant and will have a strong future.

Detailed hereunder is a list of sporting clubs that currently exist in the Shire of Wickepin. The list demonstrates a very healthy community of interest across the shire, which is a big positive for the district.

SPORTING GROUPS

Harrismith/Tincurrin/Toolibin

- Harrismith – Dudinin Cricket Club
- Harrismith Badminton Club
- Harrismith Golf Club

Wickepin

- Wickepin Central Districts Sports Club
 - Wickepin Golf Club
 - Wickepin Bowling Club
 - Wickepin Tennis Club
- Wickepin Football Club
- Wickepin Netball Club (including juniors)
- Wickepin Cricket Club
- Wickepin Ladies Hockey Club (Including Juniors)
- Wickepin Badminton Club

Yealering

- Yealering Bowling Club
- Yealering Tennis Club
- Yealering Golf Club

Other sporting clubs not located in a townsite

- Toolibin Tennis Club
- Ten Mile Tennis Club
- Wickepin/Yealering/Kulin Junior Cricket Club

2. *Physical and Topographic Features*

These may be natural or man-made features that will vary from area to area. Water features such as creeks and catchment boundaries may be relevant considerations. Other man made features such as railway lines and roads may also be relevant consideration. In reality it may be a combination in order to achieve the correct balance of councillors to electors should a ward system be retained.

Shire of Wickepin Features

The Shire of Wickepin is located in the central regions of the Great Southern area of Western Australia. There is approximately 53,500 hectares of farming land in the shire. Land throughout the shire would be described as reasonably flat with good areas of vegetation found throughout the shire, more so in the western fringes of the shire.

There are four townsites located in the Wickepin Shire;

- Harrismith Population
- Tincurrin Population
- Wickepin Population
- Yealering Population

3. Demographic Trends

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

Shire of Wickepin Features

The population of the Wickepin Shire (as of Census 2021) was estimated to be 749. Breakup was;

	0-14 yrs	15-24yrs	25-44yrs	45-64yrs	65 + yrs	Total
Male	83	28	85	133	59	388
Female	90	24	88	98	61	361
Total	173	52	145	231	120	749

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.

Features of the Shire of Wickepin

The Shire of Wickepin consists of four gazetted townsites in Harrismith, Tincurrin, Wickepin and Yealering. The shire is 1,989 square kilometers in area with a population of approximately 720 residents. There is approximately 53,500 hectares of rateable farming land in the Shire of Wickepin. Detailed hereunder is a summary of schools and businesses supporting the broad acre farming industry throughout the shire which demonstrates a healthy socio economic profile in the Shire of Wickepin.

Education

There are three primary schools in the shire;

Wickepin Primary School – enrolments as at 2022: 65

Yealering Primary School – enrolments as at 2022: 15

Commercial/Industry

There are local shopping facilities in each town catering for most social and economic needs associated with a Wheatbelt community lifestyle such as the Shire of Wickepin;

Mining

Kaolin WA mine

Hospitality

- Wickepin Hotel
- Yealering Hotel
- Wickepin New Agency/Cafe

Grocery & Hardware

- Ewen's Agencies – Wickepin
- Yealering Store - Yealering

Automotive, Engineering, Fabrication, Building

- Wickepin Motors
- Precise Carpentry – Wickepin
- Ryan Duffy Electrical
- Dew's Excavations

Rural Agency & Livestock

- Tincurrin Rural Service
- Elders Wickepin
- Ewen Rural Supplies Wickepin
- Miller Rural Services - Livestock – Wickepin
- Parnell's Tree Nursery
- Ballard Seeds

Agricultural Industry Contractors

- Williamson & Co – Freight
- Fulford Earthmoving Contractors
- Yealering Shearing Services
- Wheatbelt Spreading Services

Farming Enterprises

There is approximately 50 - 70 farming enterprises operating in the Shire of Wickepin. There is a trend resulting in most farming enterprises becoming larger in terms of the land being farmed per enterprise. This in essence is resulting in a population decline in the rural sectors of the shire.

5. Review to Consider

Reduce the Number of Councillors to Seven

Reduce the current number of councillors from eight to seven.

Shire	Number of electors	Number of Councillors	Councillor Elector Ratio	Average
Existing Councillors	489	8	1: 61.	61
New Proposed	489	7	1:69	69

Note: Elector numbers used from the electoral roll as of October 2021.

Public Submissions

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

Shire of Wickepin
PO Box 19
WICKEPIN 6370

Phone: (08) 9888 1005
Fax: (08) 9888 1074

Submissions will also be accepted by email: admin@wickepin.wa.gov.au

All submissions must be received by 4.30pm on Thursday Friday 7th December 2022 and addressed to the Chief Executive Officer.

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 Wickepin.

Cr Julie Russell
Shire President

Mr. Noel Mason
Acting Chief Executive Officer

October 2022