



Discussion Paper Review of Wards and Representation

September 2020

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Background

The City of Armadale is undertaking a review of its ward system and representation. The purpose of this document is not to pre-empt or guide any community input, 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 that has a ward system is required to carry out reviews of:

- (a) its ward boundaries; and
- (b) the number of offices of councillor for each ward from time to time so that not more than eight years elapse between successive reviews.

The last full review by the City was undertaken in 2017 however due to rapid population growth a further review is necessary.

The Act 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 mayor 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	These may be natural or man-made features that will vary from area to area. Water features	Several measurements of the characteristics of human populations, such as population	Economic factors can be broadly interpreted to include any factor that reflects the character of	The Board considers that the ratio of Councillors to electors is particularly



Community of interest	Physical and topographic features	Demographic trends	Economic factors	Ratio of Councillors to electors
<p>community identity and belonging, similarities in the characteristics of the residents of a community and similarities in the economic activities.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Neighborhoods, suburbs and towns are important units in the physical, historical and social infrastructure and often generate a feeling of community and belonging.</p>	<p>such as rivers and catchment boundaries may be relevant considerations.</p> <p>Coastal plain and foothills regions, parks and reserves may be relevant as may other man made features such as railway lines and freeways.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>economic activities and resources in the area.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>significant - it is expected that each local government will have similar ratios of electors to Councillors across its wards.</p> <p>The Board will not support deviations of more than plus or minus 10% of the average ratio of electors to Councillors between wards.</p>

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.

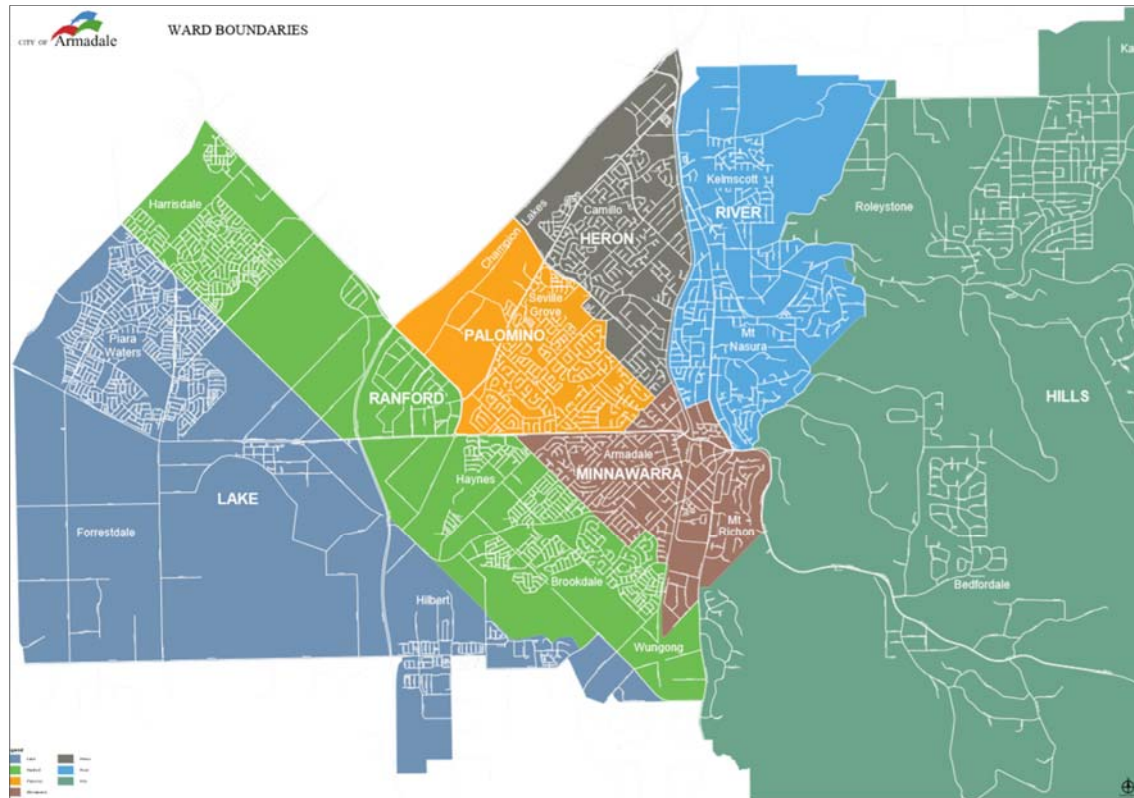
Should the Minister accept the recommendation then any changes will come into effect at the next Council elections scheduled for October 2021.



Current levels of representation and application of criteria

The Council of the City of Armadale is presently comprised of 14 councillors elected from seven wards, with two councillors each. The Mayor is elected by and from the members of council.

Current wards and boundaries are:



Communities of interest could be said to exist around:

- The hills area (although arguably community of interest for Karragullen, is different to that of Bedforddale);
- Established areas like 'old' Armadale and Kelmscott;
- Lifestyle/ smallholdings in the Forrestdale area and surrounds; and
- Relatively new developments in the north west of the district such as Piara Waters and Harrisdale.

Physical and topographical features include:

- Arterial and major roads such as the Albany, Brookton and South West Highways, the controlled access Tonkin Highway;
- The Perth to Bunbury rail line;
- Other major roads like Armadale and Ranford Rds;
- Water features such as the Canning and Wungong Rivers, Forrestdale Lake and Champion Lake; and
- The Darling range and regional parks in the eastern part of the City.



In terms of demographic trends, the City's estimated residential population was 90,797 at 30 June 2019 and is expected to grow to 141,000 by 2036. Approximately 30,000 people are expected to move into the residential areas of Haynes, Hilbert, Harrisdale and Piara Waters between 2016 and 2036.

Economic factors include activity associated with the Forrestdale and Kelmscott industrial areas, and regional shopping areas in Armadale and Kelmscott. The Armadale City Centre is a designated Strategic Metropolitan Activity Centre, and there is a minor State Government presence in Armadale (Police, Justice and some branches of state agencies).

The ratio of councillors to electors in the various wards is given particular significance by the LGAB. 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.

There are deviations between wards at present. The ratio of electors to councillors at the City of Armadale using WA Electoral Commission statistics as at April 2020 are:

Ward	Electors	Councillors	Ratio of electors per councillor	% ratio deviation
Heron	6,797	2	3,399	13.42%
Hills	7,561	2	3,781	3.69%
Lake	9,263	2	4,632	-18.00%
Minnawarra	7,157	2	3,579	8.83%
Palomino	7,732	2	3,866	1.51%
Ranford	8,799	2	4,400	-12.09%
River	7,643	2	3,822	2.64%
Totals	54,952	14	3,925	0.00%

In summary:

- Heron and Minnawarra wards are over represented;
- Lake and Ranford Wards are under represented;
- Hills, Palomino and River wards are close to the average.



Potential options for change

There are a significant range of outcomes that can be considered:

- Changing the number of Councillors, noting that the City already has close to the maximum allowed in the present legislation (up to 15 are permitted under s2.7(2) of the Act where the Mayor is elected by and from the members of council);
- Changing the number of Wards or having no Wards at all;
- Changing Ward boundaries to move electors between Wards; or
- A combination of all of the above.

Retention of the status quo ('no change') is not an option. Matters that could be considered when providing feedback are listed below.

- How many elected members should the City have?
Based on current elector numbers, the number of electors per councillor using the range allowed in the Act is:

Number of councillors	Electors/councillor
6	9,143
7	7,836
8	6,857
9	6,095
10	5,486
11	4,987
12	4,571
13	4,220
14	3,925
15	3,657

- Should the City 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 required number of electors to achieve an even number of electors in each is:

Wards	Electors per ward
0	54,855
2	27,428
3	18,285
4	13,714
5	10,971
6	9,143
7	7,836
8	6,857

Wards	Electors per ward
9	6,095
10	5,486
11	4,987
12	4,571
13	4,220
14	3,918
15	3,657



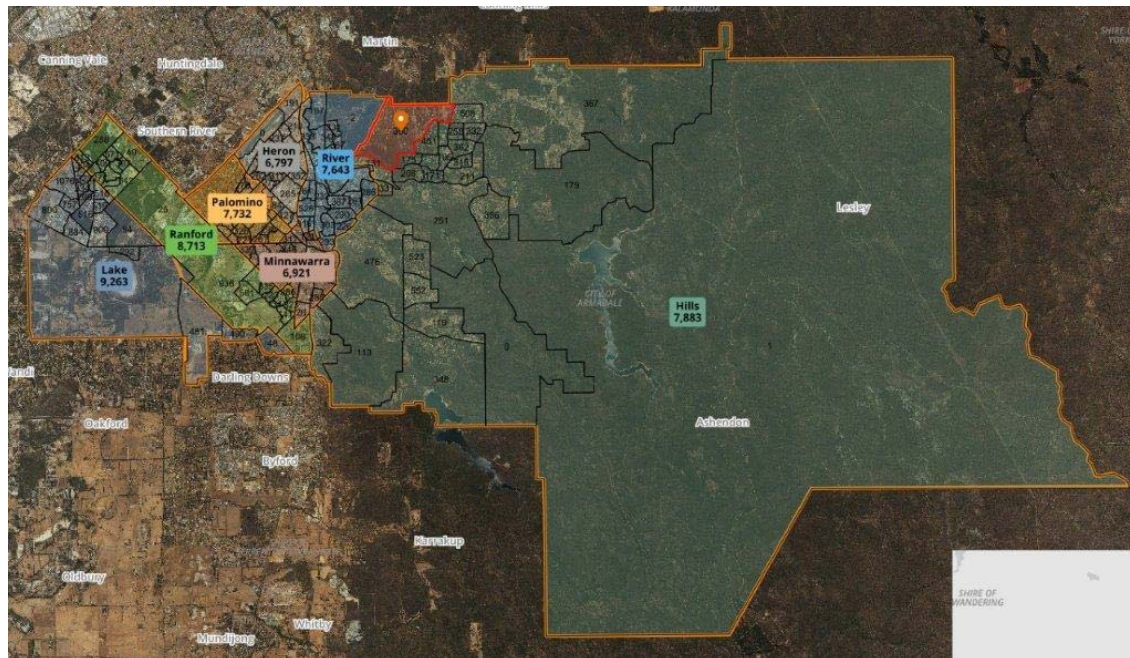
- What other principles might apply?

Overall, it may assist to group whole localities (suburbs) within wards wherever possible. Electors in a number of localities within the City are split between wards:

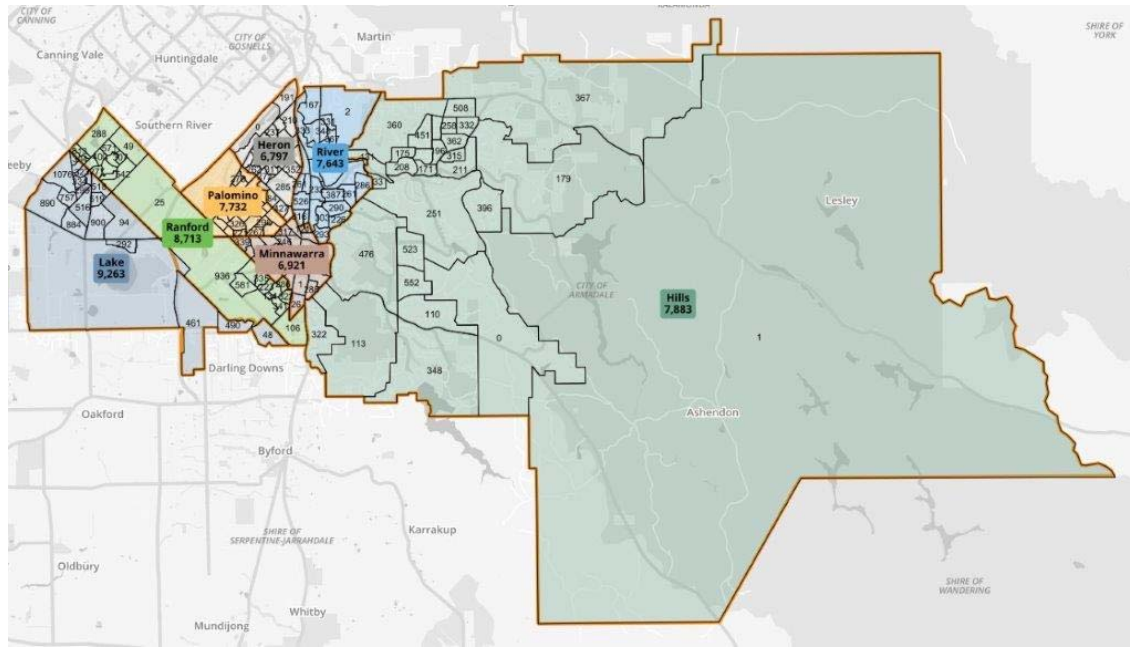
- The suburb of Armadale is split between Heron (654 electors), Minnawarra (5,690), Palomino (1,247), Ranford (286) and River (1044) wards;
- Champion Lakes is split between Heron (653) and Palomino wards (183);
- Forrestdale is split between Lake (702) and Ranford (25) wards;
- Hilbert is split between Lake (951) and Ranford (987) wards;
- Kelmscott is split between Heron (2,411), Hills (164) and River (4502) wards;
- Mt Richon is split between Hills (236) and Minnawarra (1231) wards;
- Seville Grove is split between Heron (206) and Palomino (6302) wards; and
- Wungong is split between Hills (86), Lake (48) and Ranford (106) wards.

Suburb or locality boundaries do not always follow logical lines or are of uniform size. However given the nature though of much of the district in terms of the number of electors, it may be simpler to group localities the same ward wherever possible.

Here is an overlay of ABS cells by aerial photograph:



And by Statistical Area only:



Possible Options

There are a considerable number of options open. Note that the options provided below are simply to assist discussion. The City does not have a position on any particular outcome.

In addition:

- 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 by the LGAB; and
- Possible ward names have been assigned on a simple geographic basis. Different names if required can be added later.

Option 1 – No wards

Under this option, wards are dispensed with altogether.

There are 85 local governments in WA that have no wards. Some positives and negatives are:

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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. ○ 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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. ○ 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



Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<p>might have 2 or more distinct population centres.</p>

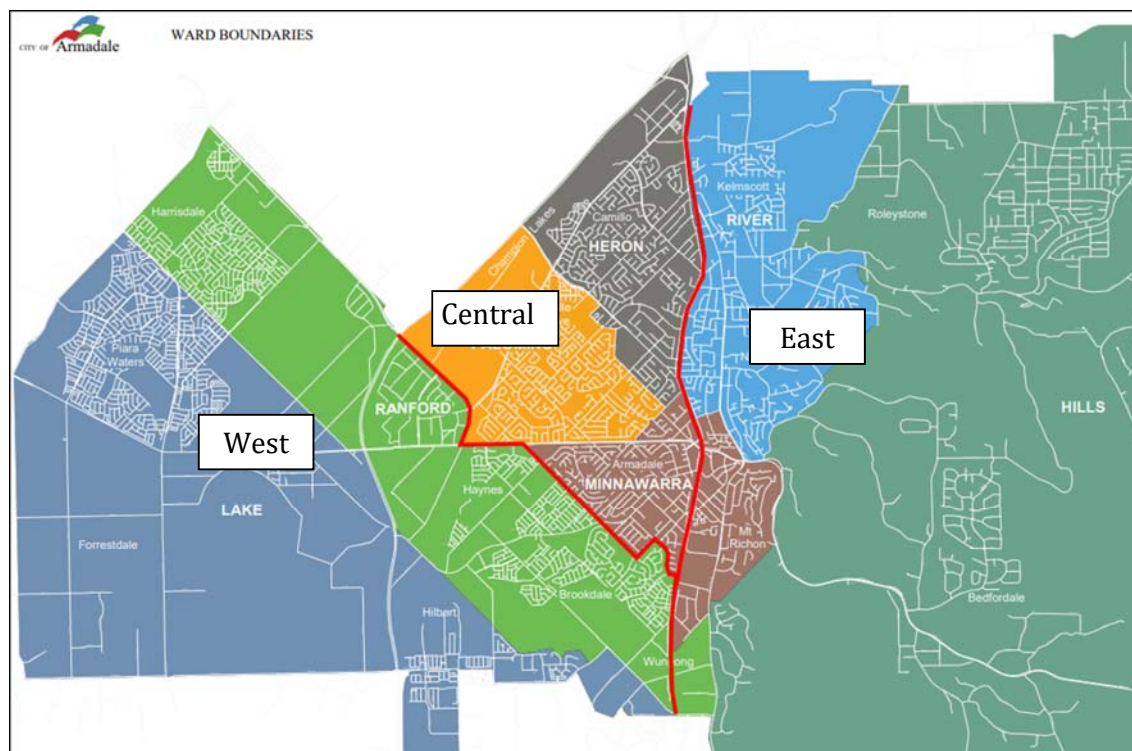
The criteria under the Act for establishing ward boundaries is not applicable - under a 'no wards' option there are none. The only variable is the number of councillors.

If implemented, the need to consider ward boundaries in future reviews also falls away.

Option 2 – 3 wards, 5 councillors per ward

Under this option, the City is split into 3 wards, with 15 councillors and 5 councillors per ward:

A higher quality map of this option is included at Appendix A



The following outcomes in terms of the ratio of electors per councillor result:

Ward	Electors	No of Councillors	Ratio of electors per councillor	% ratio deviation
West	17,890	5	3,578	2.32%
Central	19,363	5	3,873	-5.73%
East	17,699	5	3,540	3.36%
Totals	54,952	15	3,663	

This option has all ratios within the 10% variance considered acceptable by the LGAB. There is capacity in the proposed West ward to accommodate growth in the Haynes/Hilbert areas up to the point where the ratio of electors per councillor exceeds 4,030.

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

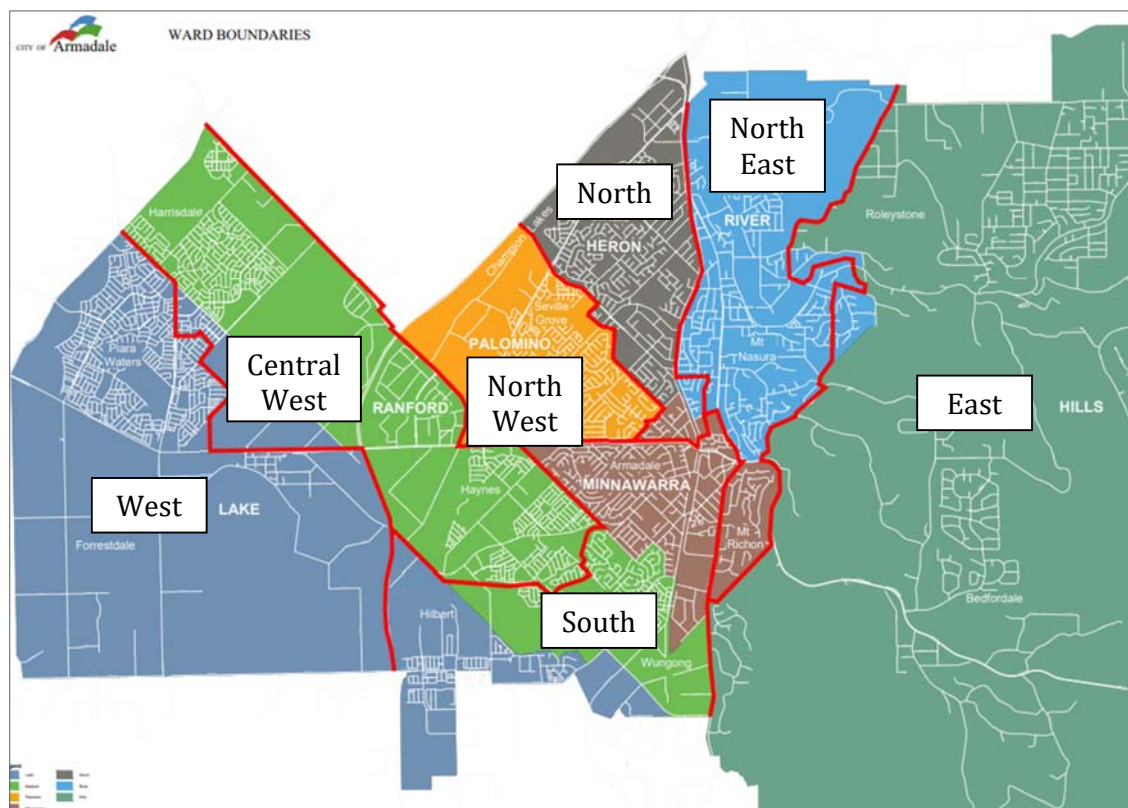
Community of interest	Physical and topographic features	Demographic trends	Economic factors	Ratio of Councillors to electors
Communities of interest in existing wards are maintained to the extent possible.	The existing rail line provides a reasonable separation of most of the Central and East wards.	There is capacity for growth in the proposed Central West to accommodate growth.	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 – 7 wards, 2 councillors per ward

This option sees current ward boundaries adjusted so that the ratio of electors per councillor falls within the limits considered reasonable by the LGAB:



A high quality map of this option is included at Appendix B



The following outcomes in terms of the ratio of electors per councillor result:

Ward	Electors	No of Councillors	Ratio of electors per councillor	% ratio deviation
West (mainly Lake ward)	7,652	2	3,826	2.52%
Central West (mainly Ranford ward)	7,140	2	3,570	9.04%
North West (current Palomino ward)	7,732	2	3,866	1.50%
North (mainly Heron ward)	7,937	2	3,969	-1.12%
South (mainly Minnowarra, parts of Ranford and Lake Wards)	8,048	2	4,024	-2.52%
North East (mainly River Ward, part of Minnowarra Ward added)	8,159	2	4,080	-3.95%
East (Hills ward, part of River ward added)	8,284	2	4,142	-5.53%
Totals	54,952	14	3,925	

This option has all ratios within the 10% variance considered acceptable by the LGAB. Growth in the Haynes/Hilbert areas are likely to require a future adjustment to the South Ward ('new' Minnowarra ward)

when electors in the ward pass 8,635 (or 4,317 per councillor) unless there is growth in the rest of the City to balance this out. There is capacity for growth in the proposed Central West ('new' Ranford ward) however.

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 in existing wards are maintained to the extent possible. In particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The hills area is located primarily in one ward; • Growth areas are in one ward; and • The 'old growth' areas of the City are substantially in one ward. 	The existing rail line and Tonkin Highway provide a reasonable separation of a number of wards. The boundary between the proposed South ward (former Minnowarra, Ranford/ Lake wards) and others is less distinct.	It will require further adjustment to the South Ward ('new' Minnowarra ward) when electors in the ward pass 8,635 (or 4,317 per councillor) unless there is even growth in the rest of the City to balance this out. There is capacity for growth in the proposed Central West ('new' Ranford ward) however	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

Other options

The list above is meant simply to assist with community input and discussion – it is not meant to be exhaustive and other suggestions are welcome.

Suggestions for ward names are also welcome.



Impact of changes

After undertaking community consultation, the City must make a proposal to the LGAB. 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.

Submissions must be received by 5pm 11 October 2020

Submissions may be forwarded via:

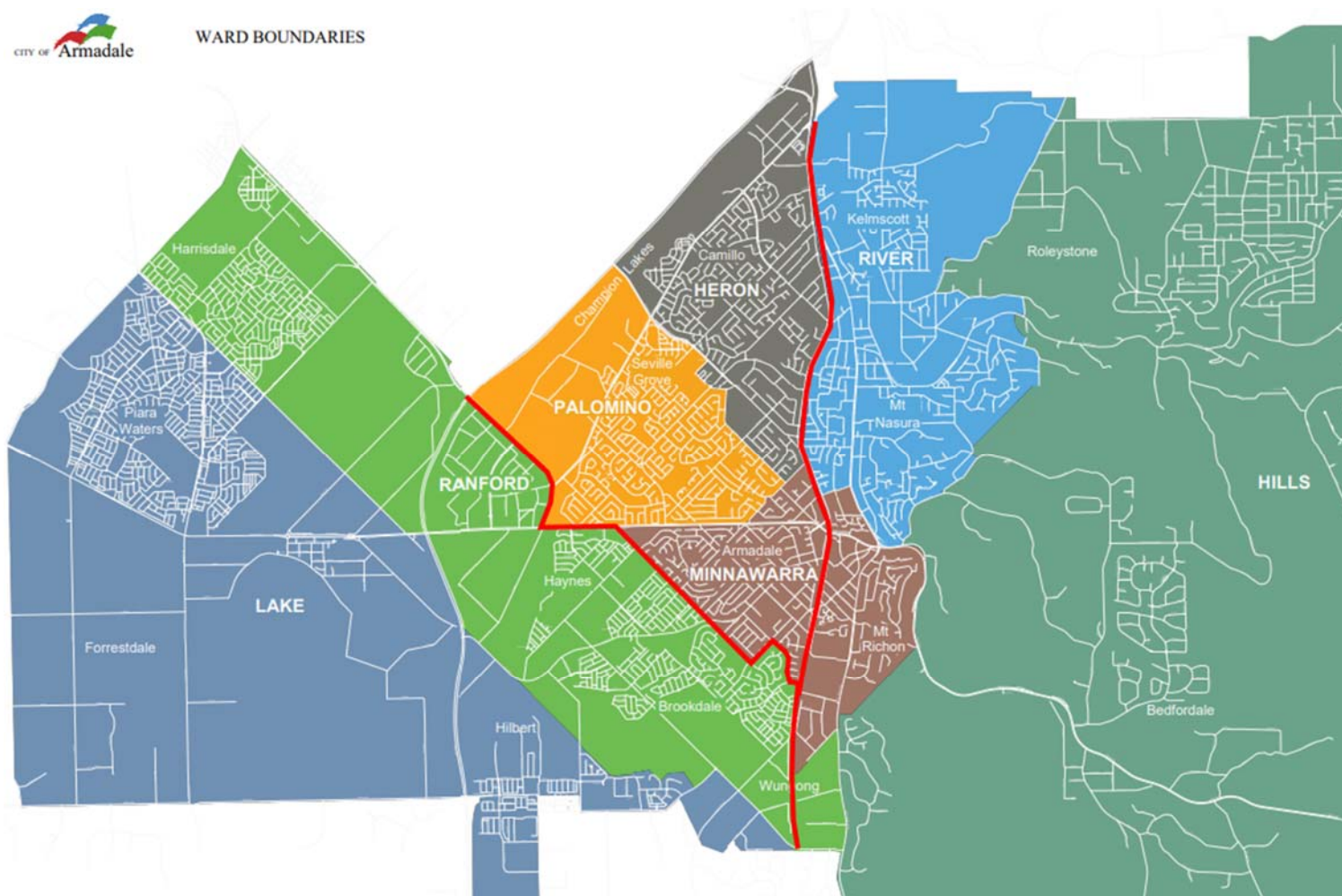
Email: info@armadale.wa.gov.au

Post or in person: 7 Orchard Avenue, Armadale, WA 6112

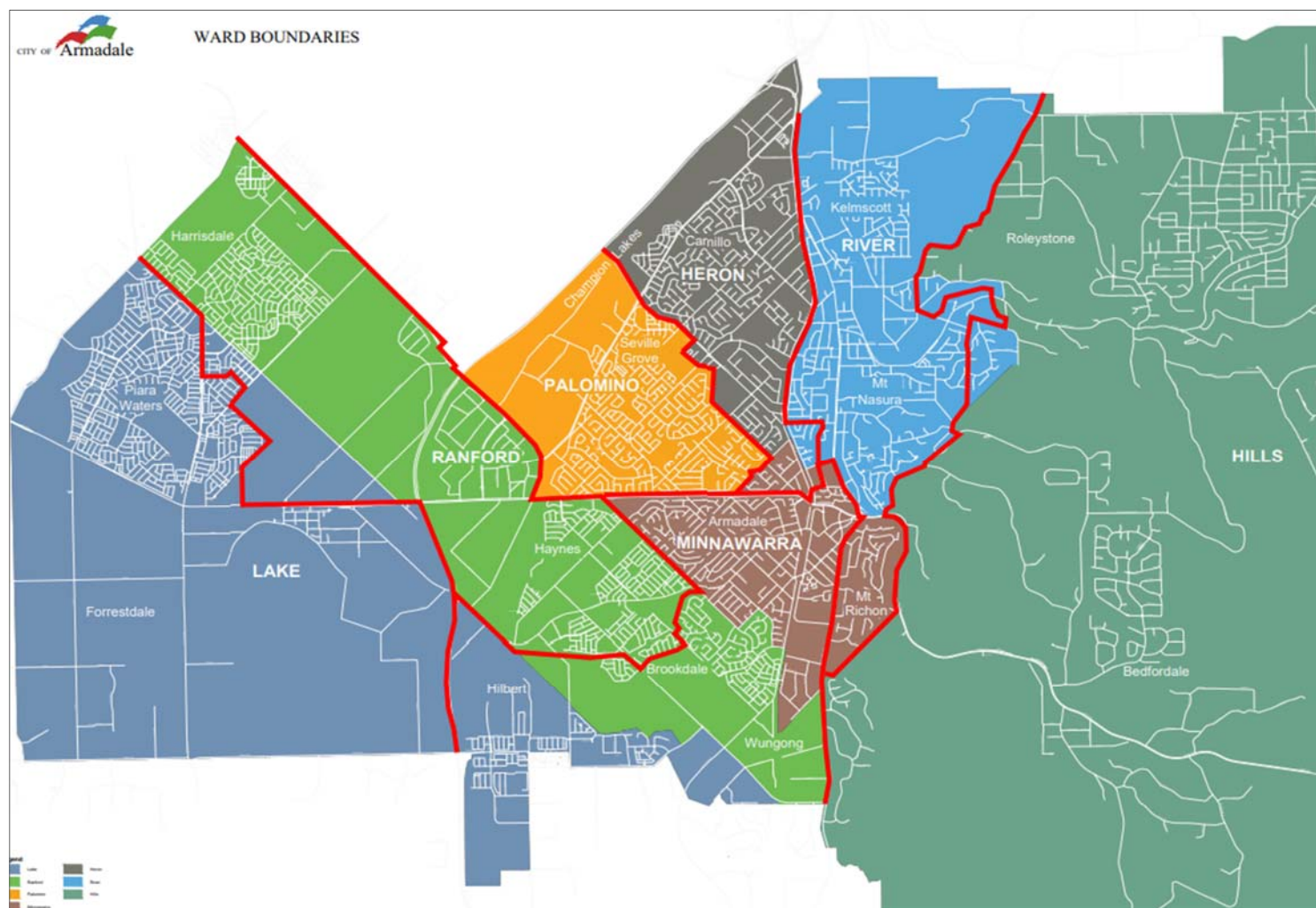
For further information on this discussion paper, please contact Neil Price on 9394 5177 or by email nprice@armadale.wa.gov.au



Appendix 1 – 3 Wards, 5 Councillors per Ward



Appendix 2 – 7 Wards, 2 Councillors per Ward



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