

What Are Your Views?

In order to present a submission to Minister Castrilli, it is important that you, our public, tell us what your views are regarding amalgamation, boundary changes or for the Shire to remain.

3 Ways To Tell Us What You Think

1. Simply complete this questionnaire and return urgently in the pre-paid reply envelope;
2. Complete the questionnaire online at: www.murray.wa.gov.au; or
3. Send your own submission with your views by 31 July 2009 to:

Chief Executive Officer
Shire of Murray
PO Box 21, PINJARRA WA 6208

1. Would you prefer the Shire of Murray remains unchanged, that is no amalgamation?

YES NO

COMMENT:

2. Do you think that the Peel Region Councils should engage in a shared services model to provide new and better services to their communities and still retain local decision making?

YES NO

COMMENT:

3. Do you think that another Council changing its boundaries to make Murray smaller would make the Shire more sustainable economically, socially and environmentally?

YES NO

4. Do you support the Shire of Murray amalgamating with one or more of the following local governments

Mandurah	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Septentine-Jarrahdale	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Waroona	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Boddington	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>

5. Do you support the Minister requesting that there be less Councillor representation from the current number of 12?

YES NO

Name (optional):

Address (optional):

Would you like to provide your email address to ensure that the Shire can keep you up to date with this issue, or any other information that affects your community, such as roadworks, capital works, upcoming events, monthly Shire news etc? Note, your email will not be given to any other organisation.

Email address:



LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM ALERT

Have Your Say on Your Shire's Future: *Facts About Council Amalgamation*

Message from the President



The Shire of Murray is one of Western Australia's original Councils with a very proud history. While the history is proud our future is even more exciting. We need to make decisions that will continue to retain our country lifestyle

We have the cash reserves and low debt levels to be sustainable which places us in an extremely sound position. This has happened through careful planning and management.

However the Minister has asked all local governments to consult with the community to gauge whether amalgamation will make local government more sustainable. Enclosed in this document is information that shows that Murray is sustainable.

I believe it is in the best interests of the district and its people to remain as the Shire of Murray. If amalgamation or boundary changes are forced upon us, we may not be in a position to remain sustainable.

We invite you to a public information session at the Civic Hall in Pinjarra on 21 July from 6.30 pm. Please come along and hear all about local government reform and make your voice heard. Please also complete the questionnaire on the back of this newsletter. It is important that you have your say on the future of the Shire of Murray. Your vote will determine our future and the direction the Shire will develop, towards retaining what we all love, our unique lifestyle.

Cr Noel Nancarrow

In February this year, the Minister for Local Government the Hon. John Castrilli, announced strategies for Local Government reform based on a voluntary reduction in the number of individual Councils and a reduction in the number of elected members to between six and nine.

"I am inviting each of the 139 Councils within Western Australia to embrace this opportunity to voluntarily amalgamate and to voluntarily reduce the total number of elected members for each Council", he said.

Mr Castrilli said there were 85 Councils in WA serving populations of less than 2000 people, and that more than 50 Councils had representation ratios of one Councillor to less than 100 electors and this ratio fell to as low as one to 20.

Mr Castrilli has the view that a reduction in the number of councils has the potential to save ratepayers millions of dollars per year.

Councils are required to have presented the Minister with a submission by the 31 August, with details and justification on what, if any, reform is planned by each Council. Public feedback is a critical component of each council forming a view.

This newsletter aims to provide you with enough information to provoke questions and perhaps to help you form a stronger opinion, one way or the other that may help the Shire on making a final recommendation on the matter.

Feedback is encouraged, either on the submission form enclosed in this newsletter, or in writing to the Chief Executive Officer. Your feedback must be received by 31 July 2009.

The Shire of Murray's View on Structural Reform

As a preliminary position, the Shire of Murray is willing to participate in the reform process in order to achieve reforms proposed by the Minister for Local Government, namely appropriate regional groupings of Local Government, a reduction of Councillors from 12 to 9 and the abolishment of Wards, which will create a structure of Council being a "Board of Directors".

However, the Shire of Murray does not support an amalgamation with adjoining Council/s and the Shire has agreed to seek community opinion on this issue.

The Shire's Financial Sustainability

The Shire of Murray has recently adopted a 2009-2019 Long Term Financial Plan produced by independent and leading local government consultant Mr Ron Back. This ten year plan illustrates that the Shire is in a strong financial position, via a very low debt base, strong cash reserves, and a Shire that will be one of the fastest growing in Australia over the next 20 years.

The Shire also has an Asset Management Plan and Strategies built into the Financial Plan which will ensure that all infrastructure works can be fully funded without unreasonable dependence on either rates, government funding or borrowings.

Have Your Say Council Amalgamations

The Minister has a timeframe for reform. Community consultation is being undertaken to meet the Minister's request. Please take a few moments to read some of the facts about Local Government reform.

We sincerely hope that you give your view on local government reform. It is vital to have your say!

The City of Mandurah has written to the Shire of Murray stating that it is considering:

- a) Amalgamating the City of Mandurah with the Shire of Murray
- b) Boundary adjustments
- c) Shared services

Below is some important information to consider!

Under the Local Government Act, any proposal to amend local government boundaries is to be considered by the Local Government Advisory Board (LGAB). The LGAB has established the following guiding principles when considering proposals:

Community of interests

Murray does not share similar communities of interest. Mandurah City Council has a population of over 60,000 and is totally urbanised. Murray has a population of 14,000 and is predominantly a rural and agricultural district.

Demographic trends

The Shire of Murray grew 6% in 2007/2008 according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Growth is expected to continue at alarming rates and will be one of the fastest, if not the fastest growing Councils in Australia by 2014, with growth rates at 6.7% each year. With this population growth, it is important that the Shire retains its political representation to ensure that the necessary funding is sought for necessary infrastructure. It is also vital that the members of our community have their say as to how the Shire will develop, such as planning to retain its rural and country lifestyle.

Shire of Murray forecast population and average household size, 2006 to 2031



The effective delivery of local government services

The Shire of Murray is structured to deliver all services required by a local government.

It has developed the plans and internal structure to ensure the Shire's sustainability, for example:

- Asset Management plans
- Risk Management plans
- Human Resources plan
- Long term Financial plan
- District Plan for the Future

All services expected of a much larger Council are already provided. There is no service that any other Peel Council provides that the Shire of Murray doesn't provide.

Matters affecting the viability of local governments

The Shire of Murray has a Long-Term Financial plan and Asset Management plans to ensure its financial long-term viability.

At 30 June 2008, the Shire's Gross Debt Ratio was 10%, about 1/3 of the industry average. Mandurah's Gross Debt Ratio was 32%. Independent local government finance consultant Mr Ron Back states in the Shire's 2009 - 2019 Long Term Financial Plan:

"The level of funds required to fund net operating results will diminish from the existing levels of 87% to 68% by 2019. This will allow a greater portion of operating revenues to be applied for capital renewal or new assets. Debt is negligible and indicates a strong base and capacity to leverage capital works should the Council so wish. The plan also provides for outlays on capital works to exceed the annual depreciation of all assets."

AMALGAMATION WILL MEAN PICKING UP ANOTHER LOCAL GOVERNMENT'S DEBT!

Below is a comparison of all of the Peel Council's Gross Debt as published in 2007/2008 Annual Financial Reports

Council	Gross Debt divided by revenue
Mandurah	32%
Boddington	28.2%
Serpentine-Jarrahdale	25.9%
Murray	10.0%
Waroona	8.7%

Structural Reform of Local Government

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1. What are the benefits of local government structural reform (Dept of Local Government)

- increased capacity for local government to better plan, manage and deliver services to their communities with a focus on social, environmental and economic sustainability;
- increased capacity for local government to have adequate financial and asset management plans in place;
- enhanced efficiency in the processing of planning, building and other licence applications made by business and the community;
- greater ability to attract and retain staff including the provision of further career development opportunities;
- greater competition for positions on Council and, in conjunction with other reforms, potential for enhanced governance capacity; and
- larger local governments with greater capacity to partner with State and Federal Government, and the private sector, to further improve services to communities.

Q2. What are the disadvantages of local government structural reform?

- Potential loss of local identity;
- Loss of representation;
- Time consuming and complex;
- Dilution of wealth the Shire anticipates significant developments over the next 20 years;
- Accepting another local government's debts the Shire of Murray has very low loans compared to the rest of WA;
- Cost savings experience in other states has demonstrated that cost savings through perceived economies of scale are not realized for a number of years after amalgamation; if ever;
- perceived favouritism of higher population density over more sparse population, e.g. rural versus urban;
- possible disenfranchising electors by increasing elector numbers and reducing Councillor number;
- larger area to govern increasing competition for funding of services and facilities;
- perceived restricted access to staff in a larger organisation;
- perceived favouritism of staff toward previous affiliates and groups.

Q3. Will the amalgamation with another Shire or the City of Mandurah reduce rates?

No. History from other amalgamations in Western Australia have not resulted in reduced rates. The rates to provide services to all residents are still required. A larger organisation however, with larger budgets has a greater capacity to fund efficiencies and put those efficiencies into new and improved services.

Q4. Is the Shire of Murray sustainable as it is?

Yes. The Shire has completed its Structural Reform Checklist and has concluded that the Shire is sustainable now and into the future for the following reasons:

- The Shire has areas zoned for future residential and industrial development;
- The Shire has strategic plans for expansion of a number of urban areas within the Shire;
- The Shire has accumulated cash backed reserves for asset renewal and replacement;
- The Shire has very low debt levels, lower than the majority in Western Australia.

Q5. Will changing Murray's boundaries, such as making the Shire smaller make Murray less sustainable.

Yes. If boundaries are changed to make the Shire smaller, there will be significantly less income.

Q6. What will happen to the staff?

All Chief Executive Officers will be made redundant immediately the change occurs. The new local government will appoint a new CEO. All other staff will have guaranteed employment for two years.

Q7. Is amalgamation a takeover by the bigger shire?

No. Amalgamation creates a whole new entity. New elected members are elected that represent the new area of the local government.

