

Shire of Cuballing

SPECIAL MEETING OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Cuballing Agriculture Hall
Thursday 3 September 2009 commencing at 7.30pm

ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. Welcome

2. Purpose of Meeting

On 5 February 2009, the Minister for Local Government announced his wide-ranging Local Government Reform Strategies. As part of this, he has encouraged each local government within Western Australia to embrace the opportunity for voluntary amalgamations to achieve much needed structural reform in this State. As part of this initiative, the Minister is also advocating each council to have an elected member group of between six and nine.

Unfortunately, the Minister also included the statement *If you don't want to do it, I'll do it*. This is despite the commitment prior to the election (from both major parties) that forced amalgamations were not on the Agenda and the advice from the Nationals, Labour Party and Independents that they will not support the necessary legislation. It is also against the significant work done by local government over the past years culminating in the Report titled *The Journey – Sustainability Into The Future* which was to address the issue of sustainability.

The Minister has pointing out that assessments need to be undertaken in an open and transparent manner to ensure the members of the community are provided with sufficient information to enable them to form an informed view on the advantages and disadvantages of reform.

The Minister has further advised that where amalgamations take place, local governments:

- will be able to establish a system of wards based on the boundaries of the former local governments; and
- can choose to allocate elected members so that each ward has at least one elected member, even if this does not comply with the one-vote one-value policy of the Local Government Advisory Board.

and that these arrangements may exist for a limited period.

The Local Government Reform Steering Committee has issued various guidelines to the process including indicating that any resultant local government will need to have a demonstrated capacity in the following areas:

- long term strategic planning;
- detailed asset and infrastructure management planning;
- future financial viability and planning;
- equitable governance and community representation;
- proficient organisational capacity;
- effective political and community advocacy for service delivery;
- understanding of and planning for demographic change;
- effective management of natural resources;

- optimal community of interest; and
- optimal service delivery to community.

The Committee also has recommended that consideration be given to the Local Government Advisory Board criteria for amalgamation, with particular emphasis on the first four.

1. Community of interest

Similarity in the characteristics of the residents of a community and economic activities

Key considerations:

- Mechanisms introduced to ensure local identity and community representation is maintained under the new structure created;
- Communities of shared interests and facilities;
- Location of commercial and social infrastructure to create sustainable centres; and
- Regional matters of interest.

2. Local government viability

Local governments to have adequate financial capacity

Key considerations:

- Capacity to efficiently and effectively exercise its proper functions and delegated powers to operate its facilities and services to an appropriate standard;
- Sufficient and diverse rate base to facilitate community and economic growth;
- Capacity to fund current and future service and infrastructure obligations;
- Ability to attract and retain appropriate professional expertise and skills to deliver local government services in a timely manner;
- Organisational capacity to undertake financial and strategic planning; and
- Appropriate community interest in providing breadth and diversity to the composition of a local government council.

3. Effective delivery of local government services

Capacity to meet community expectations

Key considerations:

- Capacity to fund existing and future service and infrastructure obligations;
- Governance and administrative mechanisms to review and refine service provision to ensure effective service delivery;
- Revenue generation to meet operating demands and provide funds to maintain community assets; and
- Financial planning to respond to impacts of cost shifting.

4. Financial assessment

Capacity to increase financial resources and derive long term cost efficiencies

Key considerations:

- Combined costs, asset evaluation and improved financial efficiencies;
- Revenue and expenditure of combined local governments; and
- Indicative savings expected from the proposal and ways the savings can be used to benefit the community.

5. Economic factors

Characteristics of economic factors and resources in the area

Key considerations:

- Industries within the local area;
- Distribution of community assets;
- Diversification of business mix; and
- Infrastructure and asset maintenance.

6. Demographic trends

Appropriate planning for current and projected population characteristics

Key considerations:

- Population forecasts, including assessment of immigration and interstate and intrastate migration and implications for local human capital;
- Demographic composition; and
- Classification of high growth and low growth areas.

7. Transport and communication

Identifiable transport linkages to support connectivity between regions

Key considerations:

- Neighbouring towns' road and rail infrastructure;
- Telecommunication infrastructure; and
- Port access.

8. History of the area

Historical Community ties

Key considerations:

- Historical links between neighbouring communities in adjacent local governments.

9. Physical and topographic features

Structures and boundaries to facilitate the integration of human activity and common land use

Key considerations:

- Catchment boundaries;
- Water features; and
- Coastal plain and foothills.

Comments

In early comments by the Minister, and later by the Premier, a minimum population of 2,000 has been mentioned.

Population figures (Local Government Directory 2009) for the Shire of Cuballing and its neighbours are:

Shire of Cuballing	850
Shire of Narrogin	869
Town of Narrogin	5,000
Shire of Wickpin	716
Shire of Pingelly	1,168
Shire of Wandering	387
Shire of Williams	930

The desired outcome of structural reform is a strong sustainable local government. There are a range of benefits that might be achieved through the reform process:

- 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;
- 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;
- larger local governments with greater capacity to partner with State and Federal Government, and the private sector, to further improve services to communities; and
- enhanced efficiency in the processing of planning, building and other licence applications made by business and the community.

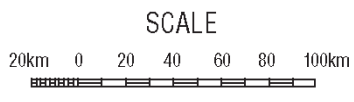
Essential matters that may or must be agreed upon to form the basis of an amalgamated local government would seem to be (but not necessarily restricted to):

- The number and representation of elected members. The President to be elected by the Council.
- Council meetings to be rotated between the old Shires, thus providing an opportunity for equal community input and the sharing of the travel burden among elected members.
- Maintain the operation of the existing Shire Offices into the immediate short term (Administration Offices & Works Depots).
- With the exception of the Chief Executive Officers (and where in place Deputy Chief Executive Officers), maintain the current staff levels of the old Shires for a period of at least two years. *Local Government Act guarantees two years employment unless contracted employee.* Consider maintaining existing Chief Executive Officers (and Deputy Chief Executive Officers) as project Officers in the amalgamation process.
- Staff to remain in current Shire housing provided by the old Shires. One senior employee to be situated in each of the Shires.
- The Reserve Funds of each of the Shires to be restricted to the purposes for which those Reserves have been established.

- Existing Roads and Works Programs to be maintained.
- Existing assets, facilities and amenities to be maintained.
- All amalgamation costs to be borne by the State Government; ie new offices and/or extensions, IT, financial systems, town planning schemes, etc.
- If large rating adjustments are needed (up or down) that these adjustments be phased in over a period of three to five years to ensure that specific ratepayers are not adversely affected.
- A name for the new Shire would have to be decided upon. The name might be representative of the combined districts of the amalgamating Shires or a completely new name – but not the name of an old local government.

3. Closure

Peter Naylor
Chief Executive Officer



LEGEND

- Local Government Boundary
- Regional Development Commission Office
- Town or City (only selected towns have been shown on this map for reference purposes).
- TAMMIN** Local Government Authority