



Government of **Western Australia**
Local Government Advisory Board

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ADVISORY BOARD

Proposal for the Amalgamation of the Shires of Westonia and Yilgarn

July 2011

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The Proposal to Amalgamate the Shires of Westonia and Yilgarn

July 2011

Prepared by:

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CONTENTS

PROPOSAL TO AMALGAMATE THE SHIRES OF WESTONIA AND
YILGARN..... 4

 o Public Hearings..... 4

BACKGROUND INFORMATION..... 6

ASSESSING THE PROPOSAL..... 6

GUIDING PRINCIPLES..... 7

 o Community of Interests..... 7

 o Physical and Topographic Features 7

 o Demographic Trends 8

 o Economic Factors 8

 o History of the Area 8

 o Transport and Communication 8

 o Matters Affecting the Viability of Local Governments..... 9

 o Effective Delivery of Local Government Services 9

FINAL DECISION..... 9

 o Attachment One: Map of Proposal..... 10

 o Attachment Two: Public Submission Form 11

PROPOSAL TO AMALGAMATE THE SHIRES OF WESTONIA AND YILGARN

This document has been prepared by the Local Government Advisory Board and is intended as a guide to the range of issues to be considered as part of its inquiry into the above proposal.

The Local Government Advisory Board (the Board) has received a joint proposal from the Shires of Westonia and Yilgarn to amalgamate and form a new local government. A map illustrating the proposed boundary is included as an attachment to this paper.

The Shires' engaged consultants Morrison Low to conduct an analysis of a potential amalgamation of the two local governments. The Report assessed the strategic and financial impact of amalgamation and, in addition to comprehensive community consultation, determined that an amalgamation is favoured. A copy of the Final Report can be found at:

http://www.westonia.wa.gov.au/latest_news/detailedwestoniayilgarnbusinessplan

The Shires of Westonia and Yilgarn share similar characteristics and many commonalities. The Shires are of the view that an amalgamation will result in a more sustainable local government that will be better positioned to plan for and provide the assets and services to meet the communities needs into the future. Additional benefits include improved strategic planning and community service development while preserving local identities.

As part of the inquiry process, members of the public (individuals and groups) are invited to participate by attending public hearings. The dates and venues of the hearings are as follows:

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Shire of Yilgarn	
Venue	Southern Cross Community Centre Antares Street, Southern Cross
Date	6 September 2011
Time	6.00pm – 8.00pm
Shire of Westonia	
Venue	Miners Hall Wolfram Street, Westonia
Date	7 September 2011
Time	6.00pm – 8.00pm

*Note: Public hearings provide an opportunity for the public and other interested parties to express their views on the proposal. This will be treated by the Board as a formal submission/s. **It is not a forum for debate on the proposal.** The Board may also grant private hearings on request.*

The Board welcomes community participation in its inquiry. Written submissions can be mailed, faxed or e-mailed to the addresses below. A public submission form is included as an attachment to this paper that can be completed and returned to the Board.

Local Government Advisory Board
GPO Box R1250, PERTH WA 6844
Fax: (08) 6552 1555
E-mail: advisory.board@dlg.wa.gov.au

Submissions should be received by the Board by 4pm on Wednesday, 28 September 2011.

For further information on completing a submission or the inquiry process please contact:

Ross Earnshaw
Tel: (08) 6552 1510
Email: ross.earnshaw@dlg.wa.gov.au

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In February 2009 the Minister for Local Government (the Minister) announced wide ranging local government reform strategies which included the opportunity for local governments to consider voluntary amalgamations.

The Shires of Westonia and Yilgarn submitted a joint proposal to the Minister to amalgamate and establish a new local government from 1 July 2012.

The Minister referred the proposal to the Board on 18 May 2010.

The Board is a statutory body established under section 2.44 of the *Local Government Act 1995* (the Act) and is responsible for inquiring into proposals for amalgamations and boundary changes.

The Board resolved on 14 July 2010 to conduct a formal inquiry into the proposal in accordance with the provisions of Schedule 2.1 of the Act.

ASSESSING THE PROPOSAL

Under the Act, the Board is required to take into account the following factors when assessing proposals for amalgamation and boundary changes:

- Community of interests
- Physical and topographic features
- Demographic trends
- Economic factors
- History of the area
- Transport and communication
- Matters affecting the viability of local governments, and
- The effective delivery of local government services.

The Board will consider these factors and any others it considers relevant to the inquiry including the name of the new local government, ward boundaries, names of wards, the number of elected members and the method of electing the Mayor or Shire President.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following information is intended as a guide to the range of issues the Board will take into account in its assessment. However, public submissions need not be limited by these factors and can address any area of interest relevant to the inquiry.

Community of Interests

Community of interests includes parts of a district that share common interests, values, characteristics and issues giving rise to a separate sense of identity or community. Factors contributing to a sense of identity or community include shared interests and shared use of community facilities. For example, sporting, leisure and library facilities create a focus for the community.

The use of shopping areas and the location of schools also act to draw people together with similar interests. This can also give indications about the direction that people travel to access services and facilities. The external boundaries of a local government need to reflect distinct communities of interest wherever possible.

Neighbourhoods, suburbs and towns are important units in the physical, historical and social infrastructure and often generate a feeling of community and belonging. The Board believes that wherever possible, it is inappropriate to divide these units between local governments.

Physical and Topographic Features

Physical and topographic features may be natural or man-made and will vary from area to area. They may include:

- Water features (such as rivers)
- Catchment boundaries
- Coastal plains and foothills
- Parks and reserves, and
- Man-made features (such as railway lines or freeways).

These features can form identifiable boundaries and can also act as barriers to movement between adjoining areas. In many cases physical and topographical features are appropriate district and ward boundaries. The Board supports local government structures and boundaries that facilitate the integration of human activity and land use.

Demographic Trends

Local governments should consider the following characteristics when determining the demographics within its locality:

- Population size
- Population trends
- Distribution by age
- Gender, and
- Occupation.

Current and projected population factors will be relevant as well as similarities and differences between areas within the local government.

Economic Factors

Economic factors can include any factor that reflects the character of economic activities and resources in the area including:

- Industries within the local area
- Distribution of community assets, and
- Infrastructure.

History of the Area

The history of the area can be a relevant consideration, although the Board believes that in a majority of cases this will not be a primary justification for changing or retaining local governments and local government boundaries. The nature of historical ties between the communities is important to understand, irrespective of where the local government boundaries lie.

A community within a local government may have a strong historical identity; alternatively there may be a strong historical links between two or more communities in adjacent local governments. It is important to note that historical identity is not necessarily lessened if an area does not have its own local government.

Transport and Communication

The transport and communications linkages between towns and other areas may be a significant barrier to movement and therefore an appropriate boundary between local governments.

Consideration of the following factors is important in any assessment of local government boundaries:

- Port access
- Neighbouring towns
- Railways, and
- Major roads.

Matters Affecting the Viability of Local Governments

Local governments should have a significant resource base:

- To be able to efficiently and effectively exercise their proper functions and delegated powers and operate facilities and services
- To be flexible and responsive in the exercise of their functions and powers and operation of their facilities and services
- To employ appropriate professional expertise and skills, and
- To be capable of embracing micro-economic reform.

Each local government should have a diverse and sufficient rate base to ensure that general purpose grants do not represent the major revenue source.

Effective Delivery of Local Government Services

A broad range of factors can be relevant to the effective delivery of local government services and these are often directly relevant to those that also affect the viability of local governments. These include:

- The size and geographical spread of the population
- Management effectiveness and efficiency
- The availability of staff expertise, and
- Appropriate infrastructure and equipment.

FINAL DECISION

On completion of its inquiry the Board will submit its inquiry report with recommendations to the Minister for Local Government for consideration.

Should the Board recommend in favour of the proposal, it must notify electors of their right to petition the Minister for a poll on the recommendation.

A valid petition must contain the signatures of either 250 or 10% (Whichever is the lesser) of electors of one of the districts. If a petition contains the required number of signatures the Minister is required to put the Board's recommendation to a poll. A poll can be conducted in one or more of the affected local governments.

A valid poll requires at least 50% of electors of an affected local government to vote. If one or more of the polls returns a majority "no vote" for the Board's recommendation to amalgamate, the result is binding on the Minister and the amalgamation will not proceed.

If a poll is not requested, invalid or returns a majority "yes vote", the Minister can either accept or reject the Board's recommendation in favour of the amalgamation.

In the event that the Board recommends against an amalgamation the Minister must accept the recommendation and the amalgamation will not proceed.

ATTACHMENT ONE: MAP OF PROPOSAL





Public Submission Form

I/We

(Name)

Of

(Address)

PROPOSAL TO AMALGAMATE THE SHIRES OF WESTONIA AND YILGARN

Do you agree with the proposal? (Please circle response)

Yes

No

Please provide reasons for your answer:

(Please attach further documentation if required)

Any other comments:

Signed:

Date:

Do you wish this information to remain private & confidential:

Yes

No

Please return submissions to:

Local Government Advisory Board

GPO Box R1250

PERTH WA 6844

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By 4pm on Wednesday, 28 September 2011

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