



Shire of
Donnybrook Balingup

2026

Discussion Paper
Council Representation

Contents

1. Background.....	3
2. Legislative Context	3
3. Current Representation and Population Profile	3
3.1 Current Representation.....	3
3.2 Population and Electors.....	3
4. Why Representation Matters	3
5. Financial Framework for Elected Members.....	4
5.1 Salaries and Allowances Tribunal Determination	4
5.2 Types of Elected Member Payments.....	4
6. Current Annual Cost of Elected Members (9 Councillors).....	4
6.1 2026-2027 Cost Estimate	4
8. Options for Consideration	5
8.1 Option 1 – Maintain the Status Quo (9 Councillors).....	5
8.2 Option 2 – Reduce to 8 Councillors	5
8.3 Option 3 – Reduce to 7 Councillors	6
8.4 Option 4 – Reduce to 6 Councillors	6
8.5 Option 5 – Reduce to 5 Councillors	6
9. Future Cost Trends and SAT Increases	7
10. Workload, Participation and Allowance Considerations	7
11. What Council Will Consider	7
12. Public Submissions	8

1. Background

The Shire of Donnybrook Balingup has resolved to undertake a review of its system of representation following a Council resolution in May 2025, which requested the Chief Executive Officer to commence the process.

The purpose of the review is to assess whether the current number of Elected Members remains appropriate, taking into account population and elector numbers, governance effectiveness, decision-making efficiency, councillor workload and capability, community access to Elected Members, and financial sustainability.

The Shire is a Band 3 local government and operates under a no-ward structure, with all Councillors representing the entire district.

2. Legislative Context

Local Governments without wards are not required to conduct periodic representation reviews under the *Local Government Act 1995*. However, Council may voluntarily undertake a review to determine whether its current arrangements remain suitable.

If Council proposes a change to the number of Councillors, the decision must be supported by an absolute majority and referred to the Local Government Advisory Board.

3. Current Representation and Population Profile

3.1 Current Representation

- **Number of councillors:** 9
- **Ward structure:** No wards

3.2 Population and Electors

- **Estimated resident population:** approximately 6,400–6,600
- **Number of electors:** approximately 4,794
- **Current Councillor-to-electors ratio:** approximately 1 Councillor per 533 electors

This ratio is broadly consistent with other small regional local governments and reflects the Shire's mix of town-based and rural communities.

4. Why Representation Matters

The number of Councillors influences how Council operates and how residents engage with local government. In assessing representation, Council is considering:

- Governance effectiveness – maintaining sufficient skills, experience and diversity of perspectives at the Council table.
- Decision-making efficiency – ensuring decisions are informed, timely and resilient.
- Councillor workload and capability – recognising the increasing complexity of local government decision-making, compliance and strategic oversight.

- Community access to Elected Members – ensuring residents can reasonably engage with councillors across the district.

5. Financial Framework for Elected Members

5.1 Salaries and Allowances Tribunal Determination

The Salaries and Allowances Tribunal issued its most recent determination on 7 April 2026 under the *Salaries and Allowances Act 1975*. This determination sets remuneration, fees, allowances and reimbursements for Elected Members across Western Australia.

The Tribunal applies a four-band model, based on factors such as population, budget size and service complexity. Banding is only reviewed where there is a substantial and sustained change in a local government's scope or function.

The Shire of Donnybrook Balingup is currently classified as a Band 3 local government.

5.2 Types of Elected Member Payments

Elected member costs may include:

- Meeting attendance fees
- Annual allowances for the President and Deputy President
- ICT allowances or reimbursements
- Superannuation contributions (Band 3 local governments may opt in from 1 February 2025; the Shire applies a 12% contribution)

The Tribunal encourages allowances to be expressed as a percentage of the maximum allowable amount to improve transparency.

6. Current Annual Cost of Elected Members (9 Councillors)

6.1 2026-2027 Cost Estimate

President	Annual cost
• President's allowance	\$11,604.00
• Presidents Meeting attendance fees	\$14,033.00
• Presidents allowance for ICT expenses	\$2,750.00
• Presidents 12% Superannuation	\$1,683.96
Deputy President	
• Deputy President's allowance	\$2,901.00
• Deputy Presidents Meeting attendance fees	\$11,432.00
• Deputy Presidents allowance for ICT expenses	\$1,010.00
• Deputy Presidents 12% Superannuation	\$1,371.84

Elected Member (x7)	Per member	7 x Elected Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Meeting attendance fees	\$11,432.00	\$80,024.00
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Allowance for ICT expenses	\$1,010.00	\$7,070.00
<ul style="list-style-type: none">12% Superannuation	\$1,371.84	\$9,602.88
Total		\$143,482.68

8. Options for Consideration

Cost assumptions outlined below are based on the current allowances and sitting fees being paid to Elected Members as per adopted Council Policy – EM/CP – 5-Elected Members Allowances and Entitlements.

8.1 Option 1 – Maintain the Status Quo (9 Councillors)

Advantages

- Maintains the current balance between representation, workload and governance capacity.
- Provides a broad range of perspectives, skills and community interests at the Council table.
- Allows decision-making responsibilities to be shared across a larger group of Elected Members.
- Maintains multiple access points for community members to engage directly with Councillors.

Disadvantages

- Decision-making may involve more time to canvass views across a larger group.
- Higher overall cost of maintaining Elected Members compared to reduced-size options.
- Fewer incentives for change or efficiency gains in Council processes.

8.2 Option 2 – Reduce to 8 Councillors

Advantages

- Decision-making may become slightly more efficient, with fewer members required to reach consensus.
- Modest reduction in the cost of maintaining Elected Members.
- Retains a strong level of representation while beginning to streamline Council size.
- Councillors may have increased focus and engagement due to slightly increased responsibility.

Disadvantages

- Individual workload increases modestly.
- Slight reduction in the diversity of perspectives at the Council table.
- Marginally fewer access points for community engagement with Elected Members.

8.3 Option 3 – Reduce to 7 Councillors

Advantages

- Decision-making may become more streamlined and timelier.
- Reduced Council size may encourage stronger team cohesion and cooperation.
- Moderate reduction in Elected Member costs.
- Fewer positions may increase interest in elections and strengthen mandate for those elected.

Disadvantages

- Noticeable increase in workload and responsibility for each Councillor.
- Reduced tolerance for absences, conflicts of interest or vacancies.
- Potential reduction in diversity of views and skills.
- Community members have fewer elected representatives available for direct contact.

8.4 Option 4 – Reduce to 6 Councillors

Advantages

- Smaller Council may enable quicker decision-making and clearer accountability.
- Further reduction in the cost of maintaining Elected Members.
- Council members may demonstrate higher levels of commitment and engagement due to increased responsibility.

Disadvantages

- Significant increase in workload for each Councillor, which may affect effectiveness.
- Greater reliance on full attendance and participation by all Councillors.
- Increased risk of dominance by particular interests or viewpoints.
- Reduced diversity of experience and community perspectives at the Council table.
- Fewer opportunities for community members to engage directly with Councillors.

8.5 Option 5 – Reduce to 5 Councillors

Advantages

- Highly streamlined decision-making structure.
- Lowest cost of maintaining Elected Members.
- Strong incentive for Councillors to be highly engaged, informed and active.
- Smaller number of positions may increase electoral competitiveness and mandate strength.

Disadvantages

- Very high workload and responsibility placed on each Councillor.
- Limited capacity to absorb absences, leave or disengagement.

- High reliance on the capability, availability and performance of individual Councillors.
- Increased risk of reduced effectiveness if participation is not consistent.
- Further reduction in diversity of views and community access to Elected Members.

9. Future Cost Trends and SAT Increases

Over time, the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal has periodically increased maximum fees and allowances to reflect:

- inflationary pressures,
- increased governance complexity,
- higher expectations on Elected Members.

While future determinations cannot be predicted with certainty, it is reasonable to expect:

- incremental increases to meeting fees and allowances, and
- ongoing consideration of Elected Member workload and accountability.

As Councillor numbers reduce, any future SAT increases will apply to fewer individuals, but the workload and expectations per Councillor will rise, potentially strengthening the case for allowances to be set closer to maximums to reflect responsibilities.

10. Workload, Participation and Allowance Considerations

As the number of Councillors reduces:

- Each Councillor is required to represent a larger proportion of the community,
- Participation in meetings, briefings and training becomes more critical, and
- 100% attendance and preparedness become increasingly important for effective governance.

In smaller Councils, absences or disengagement can have a material impact on decision-making quality, quorum and governance resilience.

Accordingly, Council may need to consider whether:

- allowances and meeting fees remain appropriate to reflect increased workload,
- higher expectations around preparation, participation and accountability justify higher remuneration within SAT limits.

This consideration is separate from, but linked to, councillor numbers and governance effectiveness.

11. What Council Will Consider

In determining the preferred option, Council will consider:

- Community feedback,
- Governance effectiveness and risk,
- Decision-making efficiency,

- Councillor workload, wellbeing and capability,
- Community access and representation,
- Financial sustainability, and
- Future flexibility as the Shire grows or changes.

12. Public Submissions

Community members are invited to make a written submission on any aspect of this review via the methods listed below.

In Person: Shire Administration Office (1 Bentley Street, Donnybrook, WA 6239)

Email: shire@donnybrook.wa.gov.au

Post: PO Box 94, Donnybrook, WA 6239

Closing date: Monday 13 July 2026