



## Shire of Mingenew Wards and Representation Review Discussion Paper

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Prepared by Shire of Mingenew 17 June 2020

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The Shire invites you to consider the appropriateness and effectiveness of its current ward system and suggest options for change. Details of the current ward system, the review process and options for change are set out in this paper.

Please contact Belinda Bow, Governance Officer on 99281102 or [governance@mingenew.wa.gov.au](mailto:governance@mingenew.wa.gov.au) for more information.

Submissions must be received by 5pm Monday 10 August 2020

Please email your submission to [governance@mingenew.wa.gov.au](mailto:governance@mingenew.wa.gov.au) and title 'Ward Review'.

Submissions can also be hand delivered or posted to the Shire:  
21 Victoria Street Mingenew (Western Australia)  
PO Box 120 Mingenew 6522 WA

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## 1. Background

Section 2.2 cl. 6 of the *Local Government Act 1995* (the Act) requires local governments with wards to carry out reviews of ward boundaries and the number of councillors for each ward from time to time so that no more than eight years elapses between successive reviews. The purpose of the review is to evaluate the current arrangements of the local government and consider if its system of representation best reflects the characteristics of the district and its people. Possible outcomes associated with a review include:

- The creation of new wards;
- The changing of ward boundaries;
- The abolishing any or all wards;
- The changing of the name of a district or a ward;
- The changing of the number of Councillors; and/or
- Specifying or changing of the number of offices of Councillor for a ward.

The Shire of Mingenew (the Shire) last undertook a formal review of its ward boundaries and representation in 2012. The outcomes of the 2012 review were:

1. The retention of the existing two Wards; [Town and Rural], and
2. The retention of the existing number of offices of councillor for each ward [being 3 Rural and 4 Town].

Given the length of time that has passed since the last review and in preparation for the 2021 elections, the Shire Council has resolved to undertake another review of its ward and representation system to comply with the requirements of the Act.

This paper will examine the Shire's current system as well as presenting options for wards and representation change to provoke discussion and encourage submissions and comments. Please note that these options are for discussion purposes only and are not intended to be all encompassing. The public may consider these options and comment on them or may have alternative options that it feels should be considered by Council. All submissions will be presented to Council to assist in decision making.

## 2. Review Process

The review process is highly prescribed by the Act and involves the following steps:

1. Council resolves to undertake a review
2. A public submission period of 6 weeks opens
3. Public submission period closes
4. The Shire assesses options against the prescribed criteria [detailed in Schedule 2 of the Act]
5. Council submits a report to the Local Government Advisory Board (the Board) for consideration
6. (If a change is proposed) the Board makes a recommendation to the Minister for Local Government
7. The Minister makes a decision and any changes will be implemented at the next council elections. The next council elections are scheduled for October 2021.

### 3. Current Situation

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 census data, the district of Mingenew had a population of 455 persons, 294 of which were registered electors located across its two-ward system. Town Ward, the larger of the two wards is served by four elected members whilst the Rural Ward is served by three (see map 1 & 2). The President is elected from within the Council.

The percentage ratio deviation is a measurement that is considered by the Board to be the principal consideration when reviewing wards and representation. It is the percentage difference between the average councillor/elector ratio for the whole district and the councillor/elector ratio for each ward. This ratio should be as even as possible across wards so that electors have equal representation, however given that some variation is inevitable, the Board requires any deviation to be within plus or minus 10% of the district average.

The table below demonstrates the Shire's current ward and representation system and its percentage ratio deviation. It is evident from the statistics below that the Shire's current system results in a comparable elected member ratio across the 2 wards with its percentage ratio deviation falling within the acceptable range as required by the Board.

Ward	Number of Electors*	Number of Councillors	Elected Member Ratio	Percentage Ratio Deviation
Rural	123 [41.84%]	3	1:41	+2.38%**
Town	171 [58.16%]	4	1:42.75	-1.79%**
Total	294 [100%]	7	1:41.87	N/A

\* Statistics extracted from the WA Electoral Commission's "Local government enrolment statistics reports 2 April 2020".

\*\*A negative (-) indicates underrepresentation whilst a positive (+) indicates overrepresentation.

#### 4. Formal Assessment Factors

When considering changes to wards and representation, Schedule 2.2 of the Act requires certain factors be considered by the local government during examination, including:

1. Community of interest
2. Physical and topographic features
3. Demographic trends
4. Economic factors
5. Ratio of elected members to electors in the various wards.

These factors have been described in detail below and include comments from the Shire that summarise the influence that each factor has on the district's current system. (The ratio of elected members to electors in the wards is discussed in section 3). Section 5 discusses *alternative* representation models for the district.

##### **Physical and Topographic features**

These may be natural or man-made features that will vary from area to area. Water features such as rivers and catchment boundaries may be relevant considerations. Coastal plain and foothills regions, parks and reserves may be relevant as may other man-made features such as railway lines and freeways.

##### **Shire of Mingenew Comment**

The most significant natural features of the Shire are Coleseam Conservation Park, Depot Hill, Mingenew Hill and the Parmelia Aquifer that runs under a large portion of the shire.

Significant physical features within the Shire include the Arc Infrastructure rail track, the CBH site and the main arterial roads including:

1. Mingenew Morawa Rd
2. Midlands Rd
3. Mingenew South Road
4. Mingenew Mullewa Rd.

Currently the town ward boundary partially skirts the townsite's perimeter via minor suburban roads and dissects the landmarks of Mingenew Hill and the CBH site. It does not follow the gazetted townsite boundary nor the town planning scheme zones.

##### **Demographic Trends**

Characteristics of human populations, such as population 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.

##### **Shire of Mingenew comment**

According to the ABS census data the districts population has declined 5.26% over a 5 year period (2011-2016). The total population for the district at the 2016 census was 455 persons with a median age of 42.

With the current focus of the Shire being on townsite housing, district tourism and business development, a small increase in new dwellings or the take up of existing empty dwellings/businesses within the town ward could be projected, however whether the uptake would be significant enough to effect the ward's councillor/elector ratio in the future remains to be seen. Given that the results of such strategies are not anticipated to be seen for some time, population growth in the town ward is not a significant factor for this review.

The rural ward has little capacity for population growth if the lands remain in the ownership of broadacre farming businesses. Whilst farms may be sold to buyers outside of the district, this would only see the rural ward elector numbers preserved not increased. A decrease in the rural ward elector numbers could be projected as farm properties are bought by and sold to neighbouring property owners who are already electors of the ward.

### **Economic Factors**

Any factor that reflects the character of economic activities and resources in the area. This includes 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

#### **Shire of Mingenew Comment**

The ward boundaries currently reflect the character of economic activities in the district with the boundaries delineating peri-urban living and industry from broad acre cropping, livestock farming and rural living.

Industry in the town ward is focused on service delivery and retail provision. Local administration, primary education and transport accounts for 21.6% of the district's employment. Agriculture is mainstay for both wards however grain-sheep, grain-beef and other grain growing accounts for 54.3% of employment which is entirely located in the rural ward.

Whilst the economic health of the town ward is somewhat reliant on the success of the farming activities in the rural ward the interdependence of the wards for employment is considered noteworthy.

Aligning ward boundaries and representation with economic activities has historically been considered appropriate by the Shire due to the dissimilar nature of industries and occupations, lifestyle, income, property size, infrastructure and concerns between the two wards. However, given the economic interdependence of both wards in terms of retail and employment opportunities, the balance of these two economic inputs could also work well within a single ward/district.

### **Community Interests**

Sense of community identity and belonging, similarities in the characteristics of the residents of a community and similarities in the economic activities. 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 newspaper and other publications. Neighbourhoods, suburbs and towns are important units in the physical, historical and social infrastructure and often generate a feeling of community and belonging.

#### **Shire of Mingenew comment**

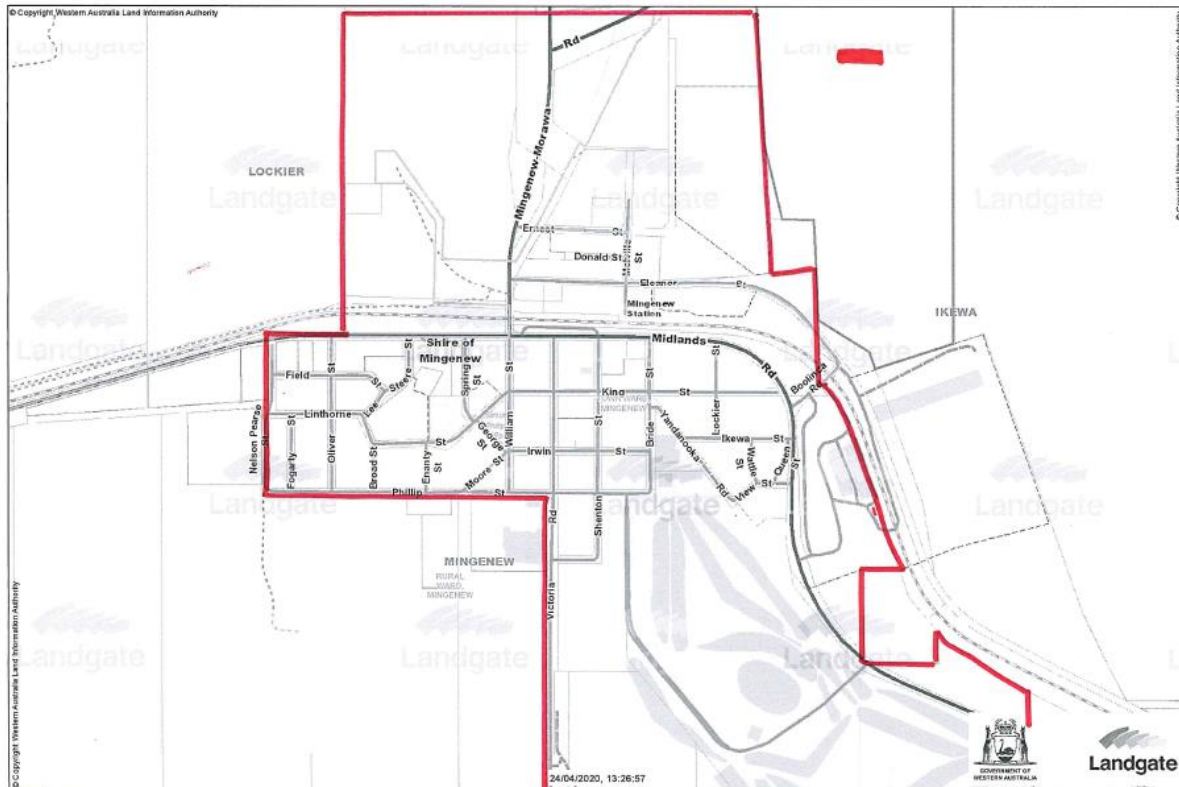
As the Shire is a large geographical area with significant discontinuance between wards in terms of land use and lifestyle it could be argued that the electors living in the rural ward are a different community to those that live in the townsite ward. However, given the below-listed factors, such an interest could be considered negligible:

1. Small population of the district;
2. Dependence of both wards on the shared facilities of the district which are reflected in the local district school and 'Mingenew' sporting teams;
3. Volunteer groups and incorporated bodies in the name of the Shire being inclusive of both wards (the exception being the Shire's Volunteer Bush-Fire Brigades which are gazetted in the names of the Shire's previous ward system- Guranu, Lockier, Yandanooka, North and Town; wards which were abolished in 2004 with the exception of town ward.)

## 5. Options for the district's wards and representation system

The Shire has put forward three options for its ward and representation system to provoke discussion and encourage submissions and comments. Please note that these options are for discussion purposes only and are not intended to be all-encompassing. All options including alternatives considered by the public to have merit, will be put forward to Council for review.

**Option 1 – RETAIN** the current multi-ward structure (Town and Rural) and the seven (7) councillor offices.



Ward boundaries and councillor offices, both in number and in distribution remain as they are. Given that the ratio of electors to council members currently complies with the requirements of the Act, it is not necessary for any changes to be made to the wards or representation system.

The advantages and disadvantages of a multi-ward systems are:

Advantages of a multi-ward system	Disadvantages of a multi-ward system
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councillors are more likely to be truly local representatives, easily accessible to residents and aware/understanding of local issues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councillors may be elected on minor or parochial issues and lack a perspective of what policies benefit the local government as a whole.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major communities of interest are more likely to be represented within a ward as opposed to a no ward system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groups may form within the Council based on multi councillor wards, leading to possible division between councillors.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electors whom own properties in multiple wards and are registered on the Owners and Occupiers Role are able to vote in and therefore influence, a ward election which is not their primary ward.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ward boundaries may appear to be placed</li> </ul>

	arbitrarily and may not reflect the social interaction and communities of interest of the community.
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**Option 2-** ABOLISH the multi-ward system and retain the seven (7) councillor offices.

Under this option wards are dispensed with altogether. Given that s2.10 of the Act requires an elected member to represent the interests of electors, ratepayers and residents of the *district* and not vote along ward lines, the eradication of the ward system should have minimal impact to electors.

The table below summaries the possible advantages and disadvantages of Option 2 to provide further detail:

Advantages of 'no wards'	Disadvantages of 'no wards'
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elected members are elected by the whole community, not just a section of it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elected members living in a certain area may have a greater affinity and understanding of the issues specific to that area.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledge and interest in all areas of the Council's affairs would result in broadening the views beyond the immediate concerns of those in a ward.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is potential for an interest group to dominate the Council.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotes the concept of a whole-of-Shire focus, with Council members being elected by, and concerned for, the local government as a whole rather than narrower interests.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large numbers of candidates might be confusing for voters</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members of the community who want to approach an elected member can speak to any elected member, not just their ward representative.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May be difficult for voters to assess the performance of individual Council members.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is balanced representation with each elected member representing the whole community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May lead to significant communities of interest and points of view to be underrepresented.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The election process is much simpler for the community to understand and administer.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each voter has the opportunity to express a preference for every candidate for the council election.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cost saving to the rate payer as it removes the need to (re)define internal ward boundaries or conduct future ward boundary reviews.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Electors whom are registered on both the Electoral Roll and the Owners and Occupiers Role are only able to vote once for the district and not for multiple wards.</li> </ul>	

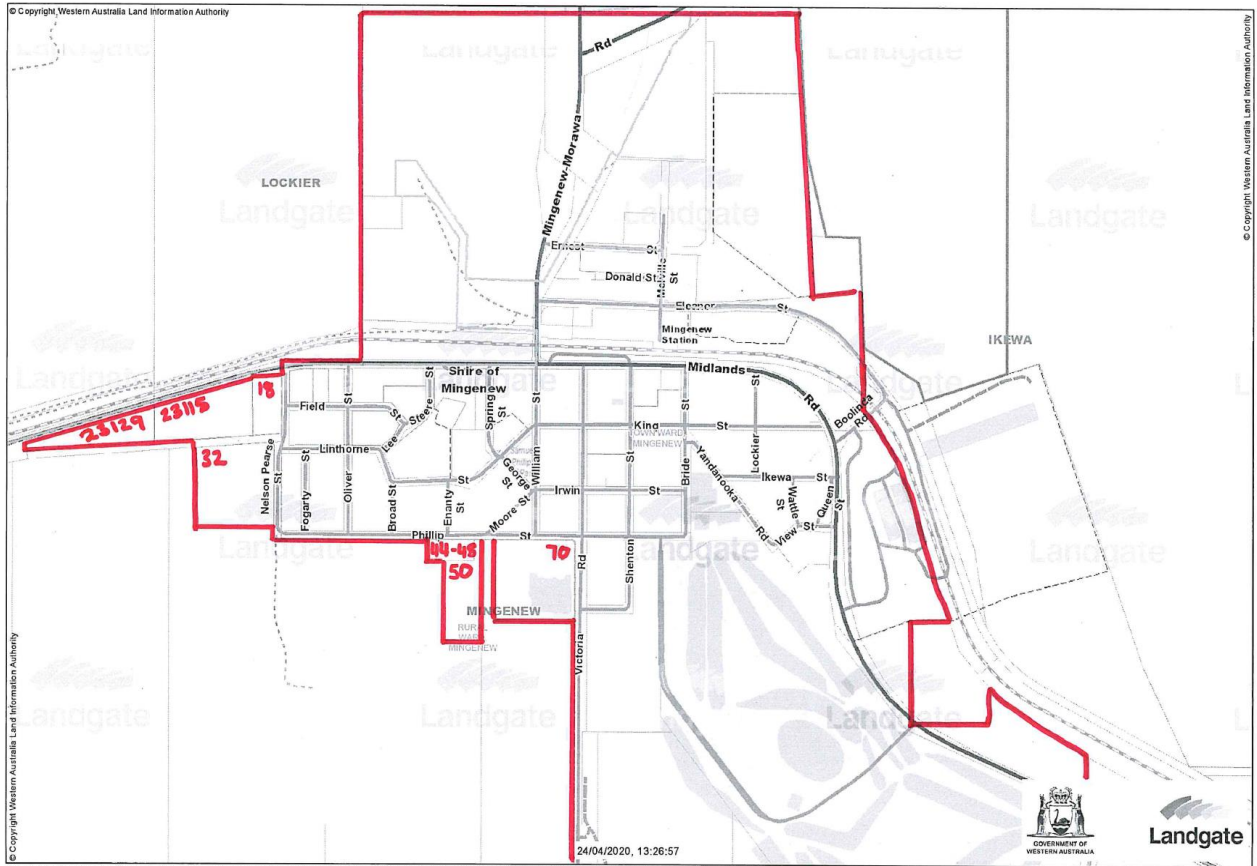
For comparison sake, the ward system of neighbouring Shires within the North Midlands region is included below. Using Western Australian Electoral Commission figures, as at 2 July 2018 Mingenew was the only district to retain a ward system despite having the equal smallest elector numbers. Further, out of 137 WA Local Governments, 89 currently do not have a ward structure.



Local Government	Number electors	of	No of Elected Members	Councillor Ratio	Comments
Shire of Carnamah	382		7	1:55	No Wards
Shire of Coorow	743		8	1:93	No Wards
Shire of Irwin	2656		8	1:332	No Wards
Shire of Mingenew	294		7	1:42	2 Wards
Shire of Morawa	394		7	1:56	No Wards
Shire of Moora*	1640		9	1:182	No Wards
Shire of Perenjori	294		7- Only recently downgraded from 9 after R/V.	1:42	No Wards
Shire of Three Springs	319		7	1:46	No Wards
Shire of Chapman Valley*	987		7	-	No Wards

\*Whilst not located within the North Midlands region, the Shires are within the broader Midwest region.

**Option 3-** RETAIN the multi-ward system, retain the seven (7) councillor offices and AMEND the town boundary to include properties on the perimeter of the townsite.



Under the current ward system [and established boundaries] there are several properties located on the townsite perimeter that are included in the rural ward despite being within the gazetted townsite boundary. Specifically, properties numbered 40-50 and #70 Phillips Street. A gazetted townsite boundary map can be found in section 7. The town ward boundary would be amended to follow the perimeter fencing of these properties before rejoining back up at Victoria Rd and Phillips St. It should be noted that property #70 is the district school so its inclusion would not affect the ward's percentage ratio deviation.

It is proposed that these properties be included in the town ward to align the electors with its communities of interest and the ward's economic profile. It would also align the entire south and south east town ward boundary with the gazetted townsite boundary which, whilst wards are not required to do so, does achieve a sense of consistency and practicality for electors.

The south west border would also be extended to include properties numbered 18 and 32 Nelson Pearse St and properties numbered 23129 and 23115 Midlands Rd.

The boundary would extend north from Phillips St and follow the south and west boundary of property #32 Nelson Pearse St. It would then extend along the south boundary of property #23115 and south and south west of #23129 Midlands Rd. The boundary would follow Midlands Rd east until it re-joined at the intersection of Nelson Pearse St and Midlands Rd.

By implementing the above alteration, the town ward would then encompass all urban and peri-urban areas of the district. The impact to the elected member ratio and the percentage ratio deviation with the revised boundary would be minimal as demonstrated below (assuming the population shifted are enrolled electors):

Ward	Number of Electors*	Number of Councillors	Elected Member Ratio	Percentage Ratio Deviation
Rural	115 [38.4%]	3	1:38	+8.73%**
Town	179 [61.6%]	4	1:45	-6.55%**
Total	294 [100%]	7	1:42	N/A

Whilst ideally the boundary dissecting Mingenew Hill would be altered to retain the integrity of the natural feature, the current absence of population in that area negates an amendment as it would deliver little benefit for this review period.

## 6. Public submissions

Members of the community are invited to make a written submission about any aspect of ward boundaries and representation and lodge it at:

Shire of Mingenew  
21 Victoria St  
PO Box 120  
MINGENEW WA 6522.

Submissions will also be accepted by email: [governance@mingenew.wa.gov.au](mailto:governance@mingenew.wa.gov.au)

All submissions must be received by 5pm on **Monday 10 August 2020**.

Thank you for your interest and involvement in this review. Council welcomes your comments on any matters that may assist it to make informed and responsible decisions for the benefit of the people of the Shire of Mingenew.

Councillor Gary Cosgrove  
PRESIDENT

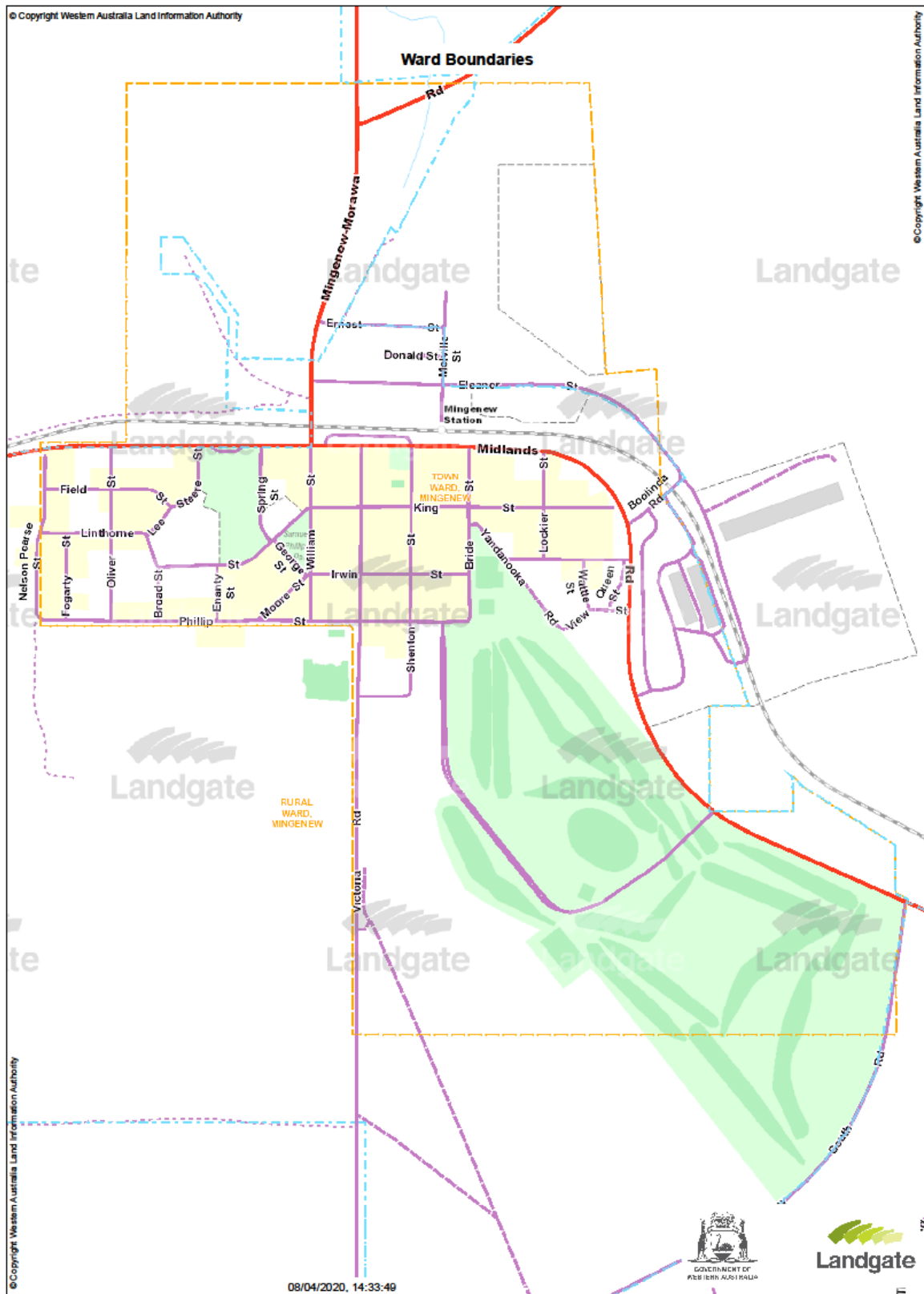
Nils Hay  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

## 7. Maps

Map 1 – Satellite Imagery of the current town ward boundary. The rural ward is classified as all remaining land within the district that is not located within the town ward boundary (yellow outline).



Map 2 – Outline of the current town ward boundary (yellow outline).



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Map 3- Gazetted Mingenew townsite boundary



