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For immediate release

Voluntary move for Shire of Broome President to be publicly-elected

The Broome Shire Council has resolved to voluntarily move to electing the Shire President by a public vote, rather than being chosen by the councillors.

The move is a result of reforms announced by Local Government Minister John Carey on July 3, which will compel Band 1 and 2 local governments to hold direct elections for City mayors and Shire presidents.

Many larger councils have already gone down that track by choice, but Broome Shire, which is a Band 2 local government, had previously chosen not to go down that path due to there being no issues with the current system.

Despite its objections, the Council voted to change the method of filling the office of Shire President from the election-by-council method to election by electors, at the September 29 ordinary council meeting in anticipation of the Local Government Act 1995 being changed before the October 2023 elections.

It also passed a motion that the Council write to the Local Government Minister: “Expressing our disappointment in the consultation process and justification for the changes required and expressly noting that Councils under Ministerial scrutiny over the last decade have had popularly elected presidents.”

The publicly-elected Shire President will hold a single council position not tied to either of the Shire’s two wards, meaning there will be eight ward councillors instead of nine (there are currently eight councillors due to the resignation of Cr Fiona West in October 2021).

The Council, therefore, resolved to endorse the *Shire of Broome Review of Wards and Representation Discussion Paper* and commence the review of its ward boundaries.

This will be the second review since 2020 when the Council resolved to maintain the existing ward structure and the number of elected members – seven Broome Ward councillors and two from the Dampier Ward.

The new review was further prompted by the local government reforms imposing the abolition of the ward structure from all tier three-and-four local governments.

While the Shire of Broome is not required to abolish its ward system, a continued decline in the number of electors in the Dampier ward, which has one councillor to every 558 electors,

compared to one councillor to every 1010 electors in the Broome ward, could result in changes to the number of councillors representing each ward or the scrapping of wards altogether.

Broome Shire President Harold Tracey said abolishing the Shire's wards had been previously considered before the announcement of the new State Government reforms.

"Councillors elected to a certain ward doesn't just represent that ward," Cr Tracey said.

"Each councillor represents a broad cross-section of the communities in and around Broome and are well informed when it comes to voting on resolutions concerning every part of the Shire."

ENDS

MEDIA CONTACT:

David Bonnici, Marketing and Communications Coordinator – 08 9191 3420 / 0408 599 134