

Electoral Representation review

Focus: Representation in Akityarre ward – is there too many representatives for the population and number of electors

Central Desert Elector ratio

Ward	Number of Councillors	2021 Electors	2021 Ratio	2021 % Variance	2017 Akityarre Ratio	2014 Akityarre Ratio	2010 Akityarre Ratio
Akityarre	2	257	1:128	-37.9	1:136	1:152	1:139
Anmatjere	4	979	1:244	18.4			
Northern Tanami	2	357	1:178	-13.6			
Southern Tanami	4	881	1:220	6.8			
Aggregate	12	2474	1:206				

The above table demonstrates an imbalance in elector numbers between existing wards. Legacy electoral representation reviews for Central Desert Regional Council have found that the ward structure was most equitable balance of electors and aligned with broader community desires, interest and views.

The Local Government Act, 2019 and the Regulations do not articulate what constitutes an appropriate level of elector representation – no two councils are identical in size, demographics and population therefore the tables below are for comparison only highlighting the elector ratios from the 2021 elections for Roper Gulf, McDonell and West Arnhem.

Comparison with other Regional Councils

McDonell Regional Council

Ward	2021 Elector Ratio	% Variance
Iyarrka	1:388	31.5
Ljirapinta	1:217	-26.5
Luritja	1:346	17.3
Rodinga	1:268	-9.2
Aggregate	1:295	

Roper Gulf Regional Council

Ward	2021 Elector Ratio	% Variance
Never Never	1:270	-10.0
Numbulwar	1:246	-18
Nyirranggulung	1:296	-1.3
South West Gulf	1:316	5.3
Yugul	1:380	26.7
Aggregate	1:300	

West Arnhem Regional Council

Ward	2021 Elector Ratio	% Variance
Gunbalanya	1:281	-5.7
Kakadu	1:175	-41.3
Manigrida	1:438	47
Minjilang	1:161	-45.9
Murruwi	1:292	-2
Aggregate	1:298	

Arguments to keep the number of Councillors at 2 in the Akityarre Ward

- The current numbers are consistent with other regional councils and the elected member is from the ward or surrounding communities and is familiar with the issues, experiences and culture of the local communities in the ward – therefore aligning with the democratic principle of ‘one person one vote one value’
- Having 2 councillors lessens the likelihood of ward centric views or attitudes and creates diversity
- The ward has continuity in representation in instances where another member is unavailable
- Provides adequate communication lines for Council and community and there is even distribution of elected member workload
- The recent addition of a Councillor from Bonya will also allow adequate number of representation in other areas where Council does not have service delivery offices
- Keeping the number of elected members allows for the accommodation of fluctuations in future elector numbers and economic development in

the region such as Jervois mine which will benefit the region in terms of potential population growth and economic development

Arguments against keeping the number of Councillors at 2 in the Akityarre Ward

- Gradual decline in the population and number of electors in the Ward.
- Aging population
- Challenges to get number of nominations for elections.

However, this has been true of the last election in 2021 and the by-elections in 2019 and 2020. In past elections however, Council has successfully managed to fill both vacancies in 2010 and 2014 and 2017 – the change in economic conditions and increase in jobs such as from road work and construction, has been the main competitor for Council to attract candidates for elected member vacancies due to the low allowances and sitting fees compared to full time employment. Movement of residents for medical treatment into Alice Springs or to reside with family has also been another contributing factor of Councillor resignations in the past – which are not a direct reflection of elector ratio imbalance or demographic but a broader issue in terms of access to essential services

Recent appointment of candidates has indicated a shift in representation in the Ward and Council is developing a youth leadership group across its wards to ensure that communities have succession planning in electoral representation into the future.

Recommendation – notify the Electoral representation committee that CDRC would like to not see a change in the number of elected members in the Akityarre ward.