

ELECTORAL STRUCTURE REVIEW - PORT PHILLIP CITY COUNCIL DRAFT RESPONSE SUBMISSION

On behalf of the Port Phillip City Council, I would like to thank the electoral representation advisory panel (ERAP) for providing the opportunity to be a part of the Port Phillip City Council Electoral Structure Review process.

In response to the ERAP's preliminary report, Council makes the following submission endorsed at a meeting of Council on 2 August 2023.

Firstly, Council acknowledges that the ERAP is limited by changes to the *Local Government Act 2020* and its own terms of reference, which have required it to develop single-member ward structures for recommendation.

Council takes this opportunity to note that Port Phillip is better served by the application of multi-member wards rather than single member wards.

As quoted in the preliminary report '*The difficulty in developing electoral structures for Port Phillip City Council that meet the requirements of the Act is intensified by the large numbers of rental properties, businesses and commercial properties in the council area.*'

Council believes that multi-councillor wards are less vulnerable to population shifts than single-councillor wards, because growth areas and other areas can be combined in the same ward. As well as being able to more evenly distribute unequal growth rates across larger wards, a greater number of voters per councillor means it takes a more significant population change in a ward to affect the ward deviations.

A multi-councillor ward model is therefore more stable over a longer period for Port Phillip City Council where the population is growing rapidly and unevenly.

NUMBER OF COUNCILLORS

The ERAP determined that the number of councillors remain unchanged at nine.

This recommendation is supported by a majority of Port Phillip City Councillors. In order to maintain a high level of engagement with our diverse and vibrant community, maintaining the current number of Councillors is considered suitable for Port Phillip.

WARD NAMES

The electoral structure review also looks at the names of wards. The position of a majority of Councillors was for the wards to have names that reflect suburbs contained within the relevant boundaries.

The short timeframe between receiving the ERAP's preliminary report and the deadline for making submissions, has not adequately enabled Council to consider the ward names presented. Further consultation and engagement with the Port Phillip community is required to ensure the ward names appropriately reflect the communities that call them home.

ELECTORAL STRUCTURE

The ERAP presented three options for Port Phillip City Council's electoral structure.

While none of the options was considered a perfect solution, Councillors provided the following feedback, noting that the ERAP's submission guide required us to respond to the models presented, as other electoral structures were unlikely to be considered due to time limitations.

Model One

This model was supported by a majority of Councillors. It was felt that with some changes, it would provide a suitable ward structure for Port Phillip.

This model attempts to accommodate the significant population growth that will be experienced in some suburbs of Port Phillip, while also acknowledging that further ward boundary reviews will be required before future Local Government elections to ensure that communities receive equitable levels of representation.

We believe that model one has the most appropriate ward boundaries to enable representation of different groups of voters. However, we believe some minor amendments to ward boundaries should be made, particularly in the North.

A logical change would be to move the boundary of Gateway West Ward so that Union St up to Bridge Street and Liardet Street is incorporated into Gateway Central Ward. This would provide clarity for residents in this area as Bridge Street is a major road.

Model Two

This model was not supported by a majority of Councillors.

While the southern section of this model was considered appropriate, the northern boundaries, including the Port Melbourne, Kirrip Park and South Melbourne wards, should be modified.

It was felt that the ward boundaries presented in the northern section of model three, would be more suitable. Particularly, the use of Bay Street as a boundary of the Port Melbourne and Kirrip Park wards was not ideal, as the ERAP itself noted in its preliminary report.

Model two has sound ward boundaries to enable representation of different groups of voters, however we believe that the North ward boundaries should be redrawn, to incorporate the North wards reflected in Model three.

Model Three

Councillors were unanimous in their feedback that this model was the least suitable of all options presented. In particular, the southern section of this model, including the Ormond, Carlisle, Alma, and Botanical wards boundaries would divide communities of interest and were not considered logical or appropriate for the Port Phillip community.

CONCLUSION

In summary, Council's preferred electoral structure of the single Councillor ward options presented is model one with minor changes to the northern wards to prevent Bridge Street from being split and a small section being utilised as a boundary for Gateway West Ward.