

Local council electoral structure review

# Final Report

Ballarat City Council

August 2023

## Acknowledgement of Country

The electoral representation advisory panel acknowledges the Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters for which it held this review and pays respects to ancestors and Elders past, present and emerging. The panel acknowledges their custodianship for many thousands of years and their continuing living culture.

## Report approval

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1	14 August 2023	Ms Máiréad Doyle

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## Executive summary

An independent electoral structure review panel appointed by the Minister for Local Government has reviewed the electoral structure of Ballarat City Council.

The purpose of the review was to advise the Minister on the appropriate number of councillors and electoral structure, including ward names, for the council.

Under Victoria's *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act), Ballarat City Council must now have a single-councillor ward electoral structure.

The panel looked at:

- the appropriate number of councillors and wards for the council
- the location of ward boundaries
- appropriate ward names.

This report presents the panel's final advice to the Minister on the recommended new electoral structure of Ballarat City Council to meet the requirements of the Act.

More information about the background to the review is available on [page 6](#).

## Recommendation

The electoral representation advisory panel recommends that Ballarat City Council adopt a 9 single-councillor ward structure – 9 wards with one councillor per ward.

The recommended names for the 9 wards in this electoral structure are Alfredton, Brown Hill, Buninyong, Central, Delacombe, Golden Point, North, Sebastopol and Wendouree.

This advice is submitted to the Minister for Local Government as required by the Terms of Reference of the electoral representation advisory panel and the Act.

A detailed map of the boundaries for the recommended electoral structure is provided as [Appendix 1](#).

## Summary of approach

### Developing electoral structure models

The panel considered a range of factors when deciding on its final recommendation including:

- research and analysis
- voter growth or decline over time
- public submissions (see below).

More information on the way the panel decided on the models is available on [page 7](#).

### Preliminary report

The panel published a preliminary report on Wednesday 28 June 2023 with the following electoral structure models for public consultation:

- Model 1: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 9 councillors – 9 wards with one councillor per ward.
- Model 2: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 9 councillors – 9 wards with one councillor per ward, with different ward boundaries to Model 1.
- Model 3: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 9 councillors – 9 wards with one councillor per ward, with different ward boundaries to Model 1 and Model 2.

The full preliminary report is available on the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) website at [vec.vic.gov.au](http://vec.vic.gov.au)

### Response submissions

The panel received 9 submissions responding to the preliminary report. Of these, 3 submissions included maps.

A full analysis of response submissions received can be found on [page 15](#).

### Public hearing

The panel held an online public hearing for those wishing to speak about their response submission at 10 am on Tuesday 25 July 2023. Two people spoke at the hearing.

## Background

### About the 2023–24 electoral structure reviews

In October 2022, the Minister for Local Government formed 2 electoral representation advisory panels to review and provide advice on the electoral structures of 39 local councils, under section 16 of the Act. If the Minister accepts the electoral structure recommended by the panel, any changes will take effect at the October 2024 local council elections.

The Act introduced several changes to local government representation, including the types of electoral structures local councils may have. All metropolitan, interface and regional city councils (including Ballarat City Council) must now have single-councillor ward electoral structures.

For Ballarat City Council, the electoral representation advisory panel examined:

- the number of councillors and wards
- where the ward boundaries should be
- the names of each ward.

The Act requires electoral structures to provide fair and equitable representation and facilitate good governance. Each ward must have an approximately equal number of voters per councillor (within +/-10% of the average). While conducting the review, the panel also noted the role of a councillor as specified under section 28 of the Act.

### The electoral representation advisory panel

The panel that conducted the electoral structure review of Ballarat City Council had 3 members:

- The Honourable Frank Vincent AO KC (Chairperson\*)
- Ms Liz Williams PSM
- Acting Deputy Electoral Commissioner Ms Máiréad Doyle.

\*Please note that during the public hearing and the final decision meeting of this review, Ms Elizabeth Williams sat as Acting Chairperson while the Honourable Frank Vincent took a period of leave. The content of the final report was endorsed by the Honourable Frank Vincent on his return from leave.

The purpose of the review is to advise the Minister on the appropriate number of councillors and electoral structure, including ward names, for the council. The panel is independent of councils and the Victorian State government.

Under the Act, the VEC is not responsible for reviewing council electoral structures but must provide administrative and technical support to the panel. The Electoral Commissioner (or their delegate) must be a member of each panel.

## Public engagement

### Public information program

On behalf of the panel, the VEC conducted a public information and awareness program to inform the public about the Ballarat City Council electoral structure review. This included:

- public notices in state-wide newspapers
- public information sessions to outline the review process and respond to questions from the community
- media releases announcing the start of the review with the release of the preliminary report
- information on social media channels
- updated website content on [vec.vic.gov.au](http://vec.vic.gov.au), including:
  - current information on the review process
  - submission guide and fact sheets for each council under review with background information
  - response submissions from the public.

Ballarat City Council was also offered but did not take up 2 optional promotion methods to promote the reviews:

- targeting social media advertisements at the council area
- notifying voters in the council area subscribed to the VEC's VoterAlert service about the start of the review and release of the preliminary report.

### Public consultation

The panel encouraged public input to the review of Ballarat City Council via:

- response submissions to the preliminary report
- an online public hearing for anyone who made a response submission to speak to the panel and expand on their submission.

Public submissions are an important part of the review process and are considered alongside other factors addressed during the review. These are outlined below.

## Developing recommendations

The panel's final recommendations comply with the Act and were developed through careful consideration of:

- research and analysis conducted by the VEC support team, including geospatial and demographic data
- rates or patterns of population and voter change over time, and relevant forecasts of growth or decline based on forecast information provided by .id (informed decisions, a company specialising in demographics and forecasting)

- input received during public consultation.

### **Deciding on the number of councillors**

The Act allows local councils to have between 5 and 12 councillors, but neither the Act nor the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020 specify how the number of councillors is to be determined. As such, the recommendation put forward by the panel in this report is guided by the Act's intention for fairness and equity in voter representation and the consequent facilitation of good governance.

In examining the appropriate number of councillors for Ballarat City Council, the panel considered the following criteria:

- the population and number of voters in the council area, compared to other councils with a similar population size and number of voters in the same category (for example, other comparable metropolitan, interface and regional city councils)
- patterns of population change and voter growth or decline in the council area over time
- the current and past numbers of councillors
- the representation needs of communities of interest in the council area
- any matter raised in public submissions not already listed above.

Local councils with a larger number of voters will often have more councillors. Large populations generally have greater diversity, both in the type and number of communities of interest and issues relating to representation. However, the ideal number of councillors can also be influenced by the circumstances of each council, such as the:

- nature and complexity of services the council provides
- geographic size and topography of the area
- forecast population and voter growth or decline
- social diversity.

### **Deciding the electoral structure**

Under the Act, regional city, metropolitan and interface councils must now have single-councillor ward electoral structures.

When developing single-councillor ward models for Ballarat City Council, the panel considered these criteria:

- whether the structure would comply with section 15(2) of the Act (see below), and for how long it would likely comply
- the appropriate number of councillors, as outlined above
- whether meaningful and effective ward boundaries could be established and whether these would be easily identifiable to local communities
- the representation of communities of interest



- the voter distribution and physical features of the area, and the impact these may have on the shape and size of wards
- past elections for the council, including:
  - numbers of candidates nominating
  - incidences of uncontested elections
  - rates of informal voting.
- other matters raised in public submissions not already listed above.

Under section 15(2) of the Act, subdivided structures must aim for an approximately equal number of voters per councillor in each ward. This means the number of voters represented by each councillor in a ward should be within +/-10% of the average number of voters per councillor for all wards.

During this review, the panel aimed to recommend a structure that would comply with section 15(2) at the time of the 2024 local council elections and, if possible, also comply based on voter numbers at the time the review was conducted. The panel used forecasts of population and voter change to assess compliance at the 2024 elections with as much accuracy as possible. In some cases, population change and other factors impacting voter numbers mean it is not possible to create compliant subdivided structures based both on voter numbers that were current at the time of the review and forecast voter numbers. In these instances, the panel prioritised compliance at the 2024 local government elections to ensure each vote will have approximately equal value at the 2024 election.

One of the factors that may impact compliance with section 15(2) is the number of current and forecast voters with ratepayer-based voting entitlements, also known as council-enrolled voters. Voters' rolls include both state-enrolled electors (the majority of the roll) and a smaller number of council-enrolled electors. The Act introduced changes to ratepayer-based entitlement categories, which come into full effect at the 2024 local council elections. The panel took this change to the makeup of voters' rolls, and therefore compliance with section 15(2) of the Act, into consideration during this review.

### **Deciding on ward names**

The panel has taken the following approach to naming wards.

1. Retaining existing ward names if these were still relevant to the area covered by the ward.
2. When a new name was required, the panel based this on features such as:
  - places (registered under the *Geographic Place Names Act 1998*) in the ward
  - compass directions
  - native flora or fauna.

## **Use of Aboriginal language**

The panel recognises that there should first be meaningful consultation with local Aboriginal communities and groups before a ward is named using Aboriginal language. Meaningful consultation is a significant process that the panel was not able to undertake within the timeframes of the current review program.

The panel also recognises that many of the place names in current use across Victoria are based on Aboriginal language. As such, the panel has only put forward new ward names using Aboriginal language if:

- it is the name of a place within a ward
- it is currently in common use

and

- the name is registered under the *Geographic Place Names Act 1998*.

Unregistered names using Aboriginal language have not been put forward by the panel as new ward names. While the panel supports the adoption of names based on Aboriginal language, this requires appropriate consultation.

Accordingly, for the panel to consider an Aboriginal language ward name that is suggested in a public submission to the review, the name submitted needs to comply with the above guidelines.

# About Ballarat City Council

## Profile

Ballarat City Council is in the Central Highlands region of Victoria, about 110 km west of Melbourne. It shares its borders with Hepburn Shire in the north, Moorabool Shire in the east, Golden Plains Shire in the south, and Pyrenees Shire in the west.

The Traditional Custodians of the lands in Ballarat City Council are the Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung peoples.

## Landscape

The council covers an area of 739 km<sup>2</sup>, comprised of commercial and residential areas predominantly in the south, with rural and farming land in the north. It contains a number of lakes, reserves and parks, with major industrial areas located mainly in Alfredton, Delacombe, Mitchell Park and Wendouree. Tourism is an important industry with over 2.3 million visitors recorded each year (City of Ballarat 2023b).

The current population of Ballarat City Council is 113,763 (ABS 2022a), with most residing in the large and expanding urban areas of Ballarat. It has a diverse housing market, reflecting the long history of residential development and changing patterns of land use.

The land area dedicated to agriculture is about 412 km<sup>2</sup> and accounts for approximately 56% of the council area. Agricultural activities include broad acre sheep and beef grazing supporting the wool, meat and dairy industries, poultry and piggeries, and cropping for potatoes and cereal (DAFF 2023).

The council area is served by 4 major road networks (the Western Freeway, and Midland, Sunraysia and Glenelg Highways), which connect the regional hub of Ballarat to Melbourne and Adelaide, and also to Geelong, Portland, Bendigo and Mildura.

## Community

Like other regional centres, the council's population over the past decade has increased at a much greater rate than regional Victoria overall. From 2011 to 2021, the population grew by over 18,000 people (95,185 to 113,763) at an average annual growth rate of 1.9%. This growth rate is projected to continue, with the population expected to reach just over 122,000 by 2026. Much of this growth will be in the "Ballarat West growth zone", comprising of Alfredton, Bonshaw-Smythes Creek, Cardigan, Lucas, Bunker Hill and Delacombe (City of Ballarat 2022a, 2022b).

The unemployment rate across the council area sits at 4.7%, higher than the regional Victoria average of 4.1%. The council's main industries include health care and social assistance, education and training, and retail. These sectors collectively employ 40% of residents, with professionals representing 21.8%. Several large businesses are based in Ballarat, including McCain Foods, Mars Confectionary, Alstom and Haymes Paints.

The 2021 Census showed the median age of the population was 39 years, marginally higher than the 2016 Census which was 38 years (ABS 2022a, ABS 2016). However, the age profile

varies across the council area, with the median age significantly lower in Cardigan Village (32 years) and in Alfredton (35 years), while higher in Wendouree (42 years) and Learmonth (45 years) (ABS 2022a).

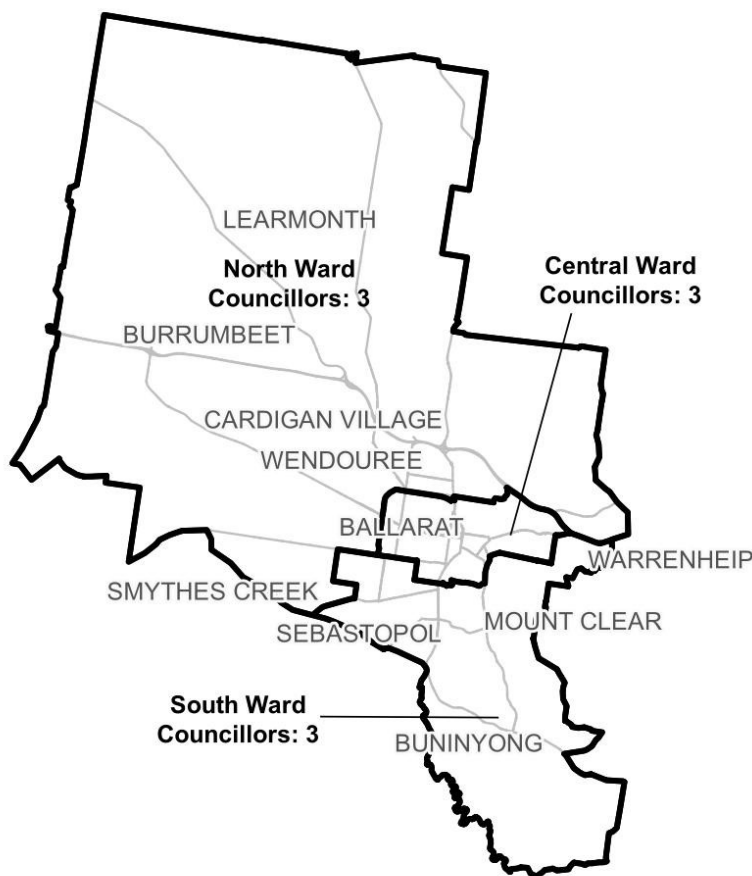
People born in Australia make up 83.7% of the population, and 88.1% speak only English at home, both at rates above the regional Victoria averages (ABS 2022a, 2022b). People of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage make up 1.8% of the city's population, slightly below the regional Victoria average of 2.0% (ABS 2022a, 2022b).

Across the council the median weekly household income is \$1,429, higher than the regional Victoria average. Home ownership is widespread, with 65.6% of homes owned outright or owned with a mortgage, while a larger than average number of people rent (31.6%) than in regional Victoria overall (23.6%) (ABS 2022a, 2022b).

## Current number of councillors and electoral structure

Ballarat City Council is currently divided into 3 wards with a total of 9 councillors:

- 3 wards with 3 councillors in each ward (Central, North and South wards).



**Figure 1:** Diagram of current electoral structure of Ballarat City Council.

There are an estimated 87,340 voters in Ballarat City Council, with an approximate ratio of 9,704 voters per councillor.

Visit the VEC website at [vec.vic.gov.au](http://vec.vic.gov.au) for more information on Ballarat City Council.

## **Last electoral structure review**

The VEC conducted an electoral representation review of Ballarat City Council in 2015. This review was carried out under the *Local Government Act 1989* (Vic), which was replaced by the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic).

After conducting the review, the VEC recommended that Ballarat City Council continue to consist of 9 councillors elected from 3 wards (3 wards with 3 councillors in each ward).

Visit the VEC website at [vec.vic.gov.au](http://vec.vic.gov.au) to access a copy of the 2015 representation review final report.

## Preliminary report

A preliminary report was released on Wednesday 28 June 2023. The panel considered research findings and the requirements of the Act when formulating the models presented in the preliminary report.

After careful consideration, the following electoral structure models were put forward for public consultation:

- Model 1: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 9 councillors – 9 wards with one councillor per ward.
- Model 2: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 9 councillors – 9 wards with one councillor per ward, with different ward boundaries to Model 1.
- Model 3: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 9 councillors – 9 wards with one councillor per ward, with different ward boundaries to Model 1 and Model 2.

The full preliminary report is available on the VEC website at [vec.vic.gov.au](https://vec.vic.gov.au)

## Response submissions

The panel received 9 response submissions to the preliminary report from the public by the deadline of 5 pm on Wednesday 19 July 2023. You can find a list of people or organisations who made a response submission in [Appendix 2](#).

The table below provides an overview of preferences in response submissions. You can read an analysis of submissions below this table.

Table 1: Preferences expressed in response submissions				
Model 1 (9 single-councillor wards)	Model 2 (9 single-councillor wards)	Model 3 (9 single-councillor wards)	No preferred model indicated	Other
5	-	1	3	2

Two submissions did not preference either of the 3 models detailed in the preliminary report, focussing instead on issues specific to the locality in which the submitter resided.

### Model 1

Submissions supporting Model 1 generally felt that of all the models, this best reflected the various communities of interest located throughout the council area. Some also suggested it more effectively captured the new growth in and around Lucas and Alfredton to the west of the town centre. Supporters of Model 1 also saw benefits in having one large ward containing most of the council's rural land and where possible not mixing urban and rural areas in the one ward. However, most supporters of Model 1 proposed changes to ward boundaries and names to better align it with local communities and interests.

The changes proposed to Model 1 by submitters impacted most of the proposed wards, though to varying degrees. For example, Ballarat and District Branch of the Victorians Green and three individual submitters, suggested extensive boundary adjustments to Black Hill Ward to shift its eastern boundary all the way to the council boundary. Robert Kozlovski suggested that as much of the Eureka and Ballarat East localities as possible should be in the proposed Black Hill Ward and Shady suggested that moving the boundary north to above Sturt Street would allow the community in and around the old golf course (Insignia Estate) to be included in Alfredton Ward.

The local Greens branch also proposed extending Wendouree Ward to include all of the Ballarat North locality, and to include the Lucas and Bunkers Hill localities in an expanded Winter Valley Ward. Other minor boundary changes were proposed, all of which were explored in modelling the various options.

Several submissions made comment on ward names, ranging from general feedback through to proposing alternative names for some wards. These are discussed further on [page 22](#).

## **Model 2**

There were no submissions in support of Model 2, though Connor Trainor commented that Model 2 dealt with the growth areas of the council in a more considered manner than other models. However, Trainor argued that due to projected growth west of the city centre, an increase in councillors to 10 or more would be required to implement this model. Conversely, submissions from Kozlovski and the local Greens branch noted that Model 2 would not be desirable, due to the division of the rural communities across wards and combining rural with urban communities in some of the wards nearer the centre of Ballarat.

## **Model 3**

In the only submission supporting Model 3, Eric Braslis suggested its ward boundaries better represented the communities of interest across the council area. While there were no submissions arguing directly against Model 3, one submitter commented that a couple of the ward structures would be confusing and crossed several logical boundaries, with some of the wards combining different demographics.

## **Other options**

Ellen Burns provided a mapped 9 single-councillor ward structure. While not indicating support for any of the models presented in the preliminary, it was considered closer to models 1 or 3 rather than Model 2. Key features of this submission included:

- Valuable information and insights about communities of interest in the council area and appropriate ward names
- Proposals for some ward boundaries were generally not as strong as those presented in Models 1 and 3
- Some features and boundaries were similar to feedback provided in other submissions, especially proposed changes in the east of the council area and the urban areas north of the Ballarat town centre.

Trainor's submission also included a mapped, 12 single-councillor electoral structure. A review of the model identified the risk several of the wards in the structure would not meet the legislated +/-10% tolerance by the time of the 2024 local council elections. In addition, the panel did not identify any circumstances that would justify increasing councillor numbers for Ballarat City Council to 12.

## **Ward names**

The panel received 2 submissions that referenced possible ward names that use Aboriginal language, with one submission providing a specific name (Mullawallah) as an option. The panel includes the proposed name for the Minister's information but notes that it was not possible to verify whether appropriate consultation took place with relevant Aboriginal groups about the proposed name.



## Public hearing

The panel held an online public hearing for those wishing to speak about their response submission at 10 am on Tuesday 25 July 2023. Two people spoke at the hearing.

You can find a list of people who spoke at the hearing in [Appendix 2](#).

Speaking on behalf of the Ballarat and District Branch of the Victorian Greens, Dr Sean Mulcahy stated that whilst the branch would prefer the current electoral structure to remain in place, they understood this was not possible under the requirements of The Act. Qualifying their support for Model 1, Mulcahy noted it had the most logical boundaries to enable fair and equitable representation for the various groups of voters across the council area. However, based on member and community feedback, several changes to ward boundaries were proposed to better capture communities of interest, such as:

- including the Ballarat North locality in Wendouree Ward
- extending Black Hill Ward east across the Western Freeway to encompass the localities of Invermay, Nerrina, Glen Park, Gong Gong and Warrenheip
- including the Lake Gardens locality in Alfredton Ward
- uniting the communities of Redan, Mount Pleasant and Golden Point in the same ward by adjusting the western boundary of Sovereign Hill Ward.

Responding to a question on how these changes would impact the requirement for each ward to remain within the +/-10% tolerance, Mulcahy acknowledged the need for flexibility and compromise when creating wards to balance legislative requirements with representing communities of interest.

In response to a further question on possible odd ward shapes that could result from these changes, Mulcahy commented that people are not necessarily looking at how the structures appear on a map, but more on how they keep their communities united.

The second speaker, Ellen Burns, began by advising the panel that her submission was based on the knowledge and experience gained from being born and raised in Ballarat.

Burns confirmed the map provided as part of her submission was mostly based on Model 1, and that the proposed changes were to avoid dividing some suburbs and to maintain local communities in the one ward where possible. Burns specifically noted:

- changes to better accommodate future growth in the Lucas locality
- adjusting the western boundary of Wendouree Ward to Gillies Street so that Wendouree West is grouped with the more rural areas
- not splitting the Redan, Mount Pleasant, Golden Point and Canadian localities across two wards

- including the Ballarat East locality in Black Hill Ward and extending the ward boundaries to encompass the localities of Nerrina, Invermay, Glen Park, Gong Gong and Warrenheip.

In response to a question about why the communities east of the Western Freeway should form part of the proposed Black Hill Ward, Burns pointed out that this area is more semi-rural, with minimal productive farmland and therefore should be included with more urban areas. It was also noted that these communities shared the strong influence on canopy cover, creating a leafy, small-town feel, that extends into the more urban areas of Brown Hill and Eureka.

Responding to another question from the panel regarding the inclusion of the entire Ballarat North locality in Wendouree Ward, Burns suggested that Wendouree (east of Gillies Street) through to and including Ballarat North is made up of a number of demographically common suburbs. Burns also added that the western side of Gillies Street has a more semi-industrial, rural feel, similar to the Mitchell Park and Miners Rest localities to warrant its inclusion.

## Findings and recommendation

The panel is committed to the 'one vote, one value' principle, which is a requirement for subdivided electoral structures under the Act. This is to ensure that every person's vote carries equal weight. When undertaking an electoral structure review, the panel must adhere to the Act's legislated equality requirement and seek to ensure the number of voters per councillor in a ward to be within +/-10% of the average number of voters per councillor in any other ward.

The panel noted that some submissions advocated for the current multi-councillor ward electoral structure to be retained. But these submissions acknowledged, in preferencing one of the preliminary report models, that this is not possible based on the requirements of The Act. While the panel understands the concerns of these submitters, the panel must comply with legislated requirements.

### Number of councillors

After considering the requirements of the Act, public submissions and the agreed criteria, the panel found 9 councillors to be an appropriate number for Ballarat City Council.

The panel considered the characteristics of Ballarat City Council in relation to similar regional city councils, including its size and geography, population and distribution of voters across the council area. The council currently has 87,340 voters represented by 9 councillors and covers an area of 739 km<sup>2</sup>, consistent with other regional city councils with a similar number of voters. While forecasts indicate strong rates of population growth, such growth will likely occur in (or be confined to) a small number of localities close to the centre of Ballarat itself. As no special circumstances could be identified and councillor's current workloads were not considered to be impacted by the proposed models, the panel determined it appropriate for the total number of councillors to remain unchanged.

### Electoral structure

The panel put forward 3 models in the preliminary report. After considering the requirements of the Act, public submissions and the agreed criteria, the panel found Model 1, with adjusted ward boundaries, to be the single-councillor ward model best able to support fair and equitable representation for voters in Ballarat City Council and therefore facilitate good governance.

Model 2 received no support during the response submission phase. It was criticised by two submitters for dividing communities of interest in the rural north of the council area, splitting them into 3 separate wards and combining them with urban areas associated more with the central parts of Ballarat. Model 3 attracted little support, the preferred option in one submission. Whilst having similarities to Model 1, the general feedback to the panel was that overall Model 1 provided better community representation across the council area, particularly in the division of the Ballarat urban areas.

Model 1 received 5 favourable response submissions. While acknowledging that the ward boundaries in this model were the most logical, the consensus across these submissions was

that adjustments were required to ensure communities of interest were grouped together more effectively in wards.

The panel welcomed the feedback provided in submissions, noting that it reflected deeper understandings of and connections to local communities. Reviewing Model 1 in light of this feedback, the panel agreed many of the suggestions improved several wards and the structure of the model overall. Additionally, the panel was confident most of the changes could be incorporated while maintaining the legislated +/-10% tolerance at the 2024 local council elections.

As such, the panel has included the following boundary changes to Model 1 as part of the final recommended electoral structure for Ballarat City Council. The ward adjustments are presented here in a clockwise direction, starting with Wendouree Ward.

- **Wendouree Ward:** The western boundary shifts east to Gillies Street North (running north-south between the railway line and Western Freeway). The northern boundary moves off the Western Freeway south to Heinz Lane and Swingers Road. To allow for the entirety of the Ballarat North locality to fit within the ward, the eastern boundary moves from Doveton Street North to a boundary line that runs from the Western Freeway in the north through to Doodts Road, the ward's southern boundary. These changes group communities of interest together appropriately.
- **Black Hill Ward:** The northern ward boundary follows the Nerrina locality boundary from the Western Freeway through to the council boundary at Longs Hill Road. Heading south, the ward boundary mirrors the council's eastern boundary down to a locality boundary adjacent to Boundary Road. Following Eureka Street and Canadian Creek, it joins the ward's western boundary at the juncture of Anderson Street East and Steinfeld Street South, running in a northerly direction to join the Western Freeway adjacent to Ballarat New Cemetery. As a result, the shape of the ward is vastly improved, allowing for suburbs with similar features in the east of the council to be contained in one ward.
- **Lake Gardens Ward:** Part of the eastern boundary shifts out to follow Havelock Street up from the railway line. The northern boundary moves from the train line to Howitt Street, allowing for the entire Soldiers Hill locality to be included in this ward. The western boundary shifts east to Gillies Street North. This creates a more compact ward and the inclusion of areas previously in Wendouree and Black Hill wards.
- **Sovereign Hill Ward:** The western boundary shifts out from Yarrowee River to Alfred Street and Pleasant Street South, allowing for more than half of the Redan locality to sit within this ward. Part of the southern boundary moves to a property boundary between Brittain Street and Yarrowee River (just above Ballarat Mine). As a result, the ward is reorientated and more focused around the urban area south of the Ballarat town centre, better reflecting communities of interest.
- **Victoria Park Ward:** With the northern boundary shifting up, the eastern boundary is moved west from the Yarrowee River to Alfred Street and Pleasant Street South. This

improves the shape of the ward and provides clear ward boundaries, particularly the boundaries to the north of the ward.

- Alfredton Ward: The western boundary shifts out from Ring Road to Ballarat Link Road, with the northern boundary moved up to the railway line, encompassing the majority of the Alfredton and the entirety of the Lake Gardens localities. The southern boundary shifts north to a property boundary just below Cuzens Road and Alfredton Drive. This change similarly improves the shape of the wards and captures communities of interest effectively.

There was no change to the proposed Yarrowee Ward, and minimal change to the Buninyong and Burrumbeet wards (reflected in the boundary changes noted above).

The panel notes the challenge of creating a single-councillor ward structure for Ballarat City Council that both complies with the legislated +/-10% requirement and captures differing communities of interest across the 9 wards. Due to the uneven distribution and growth of the population across the Ballarat City Council area, it is also challenging for any single-councillor ward structure to comply with the +/-10% requirement beyond the 2024 local council elections.

While it is difficult to predict the number of candidates likely to stand at future elections, especially in councils changing from an unsubdivided electoral structure to one consisting of single-councillor wards, past election results provide some indication. The panel examined election results for Ballarat City Council, including numbers of candidates nominating, incidences of uncontested elections and rates of informal voting, and found there to be relatively strong candidate numbers across the council area. The panel assumes this trend will continue under a structure of 9 single-councillor wards, minimising the risk of uncontested or failed elections. However, the panel considers the possibility that some candidates could be deterred from standing in the large rural ward in the north of the council and this could increase the risk of uncontested or failed elections in this ward.

The panel notes valid arguments both in support of and against the different single-councillor ward structures examined in this review. However, the panel considers Model 1, with adjusted ward boundaries, to be the single-councillor ward model with the best potential to promote fair and equitable representation for voters in Ballarat City Council under the requirements of the Act and consequently facilitate good governance.

## Ward names

The ward names for the panel's recommended electoral structure were based on the following:

- Alfredton and Wendouree: Based on the locality name with the majority within each ward. These locality names are registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Brown Hill: Put forward by the panel as a replacement name for Black Hill Ward. The panel noted the Brown Hill locality was fully captured within the ward following boundary adjustments.
- Buninyong: Based on the locality name, which is entirely within the ward. This locality name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Central: Put forward in submissions as an alternative name for the Lake Gardens Ward. A directional name with the change supported by the panel.
- Delacombe: Put forward in submissions as an alternative name for the Victoria Park Ward. The panel noted the majority of Delacombe locality is in the ward. This locality name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Golden Point: Put forward in submissions as an alternative name for the Sovereign Hill Ward. While the panel noted that other ward names were also submitted, the Golden Point locality is entirely within the ward. This locality name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- North: Put forward in submissions as an alternative name for the Burrumbeet Ward. A directional name with the change supported by the panel.
- Sebastopol: Put forward in submissions as an alternative name for the Yarrowee Ward. The panel noted the majority of the Sebastopol locality is within the ward. This locality name is registered in the VICNAMES register.

## The panel's recommendation

The electoral representation advisory panel recommends that Ballarat City Council adopt a 9 single-councillor ward structure – 9 wards with one councillor per ward.

The recommended names for the 9 wards in this electoral structure are Alfredton, Brown Hill, Buninyong, Central, Delacombe, Golden Point, North, Sebastopol and Wendouree.

This advice is submitted to the Minister for Local Government as required by the Terms of Reference of the electoral representation advisory panel and the Act. This electoral structure was designated as Model 1 in the preliminary report and incorporates boundary adjustments as described on [page 19](#) in the final report.

A detailed map of the boundaries for the recommended electoral structure is provided as [Appendix 1](#).

## References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) (2022a) [2021 Census All Person QuickStats, Ballarat \(LGA\)](#), ABS website, accessed 21 March 2023.

——(2022b) [2021 Census All Persons QuickStats, Rest of Vic](#), ABS website, accessed 22 March 2023.

——(2016) [2016 Census All Person QuickStats, Ballarat \(LGA\)](#), ABS website, accessed 22 March 2023.

City of Ballarat (2023a) [Ballarat Strategy 2040](#), City of Ballarat website, accessed 23 March 2023.

——(2023b) [City of Ballarat-latest tourism data shows recovery](#), City of Ballarat website, accessed 30 March 2023.

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry (2023) [Land Use](#), DAFF website, accessed 8 May 2023.

Geographic Place Names Act 1998 (Vic)

.id (informed decisions) (2022a) [Welcome to the City of Ballarat Community Profile](#), .id website, accessed 21 March 2023.

——(2022b) [Welcome to the City of Ballarat Population Forecasts](#), .id website, accessed 21 March 2023.

Local Government Act 1989 (Vic)

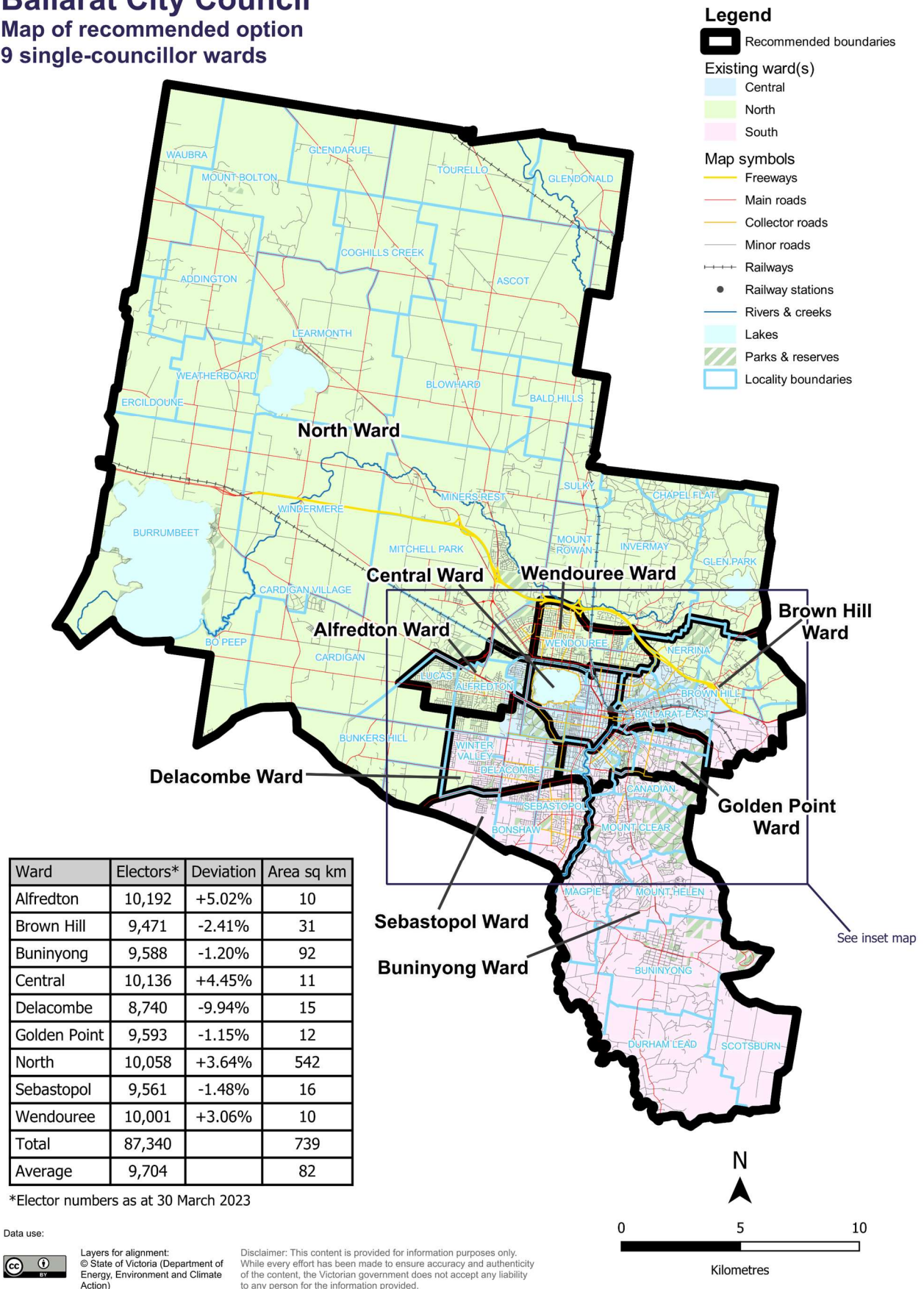
Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)

Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020 (Vic)



# Appendix 1: Map of recommended structure

## Ballarat City Council Map of recommended option 9 single-councillor wards

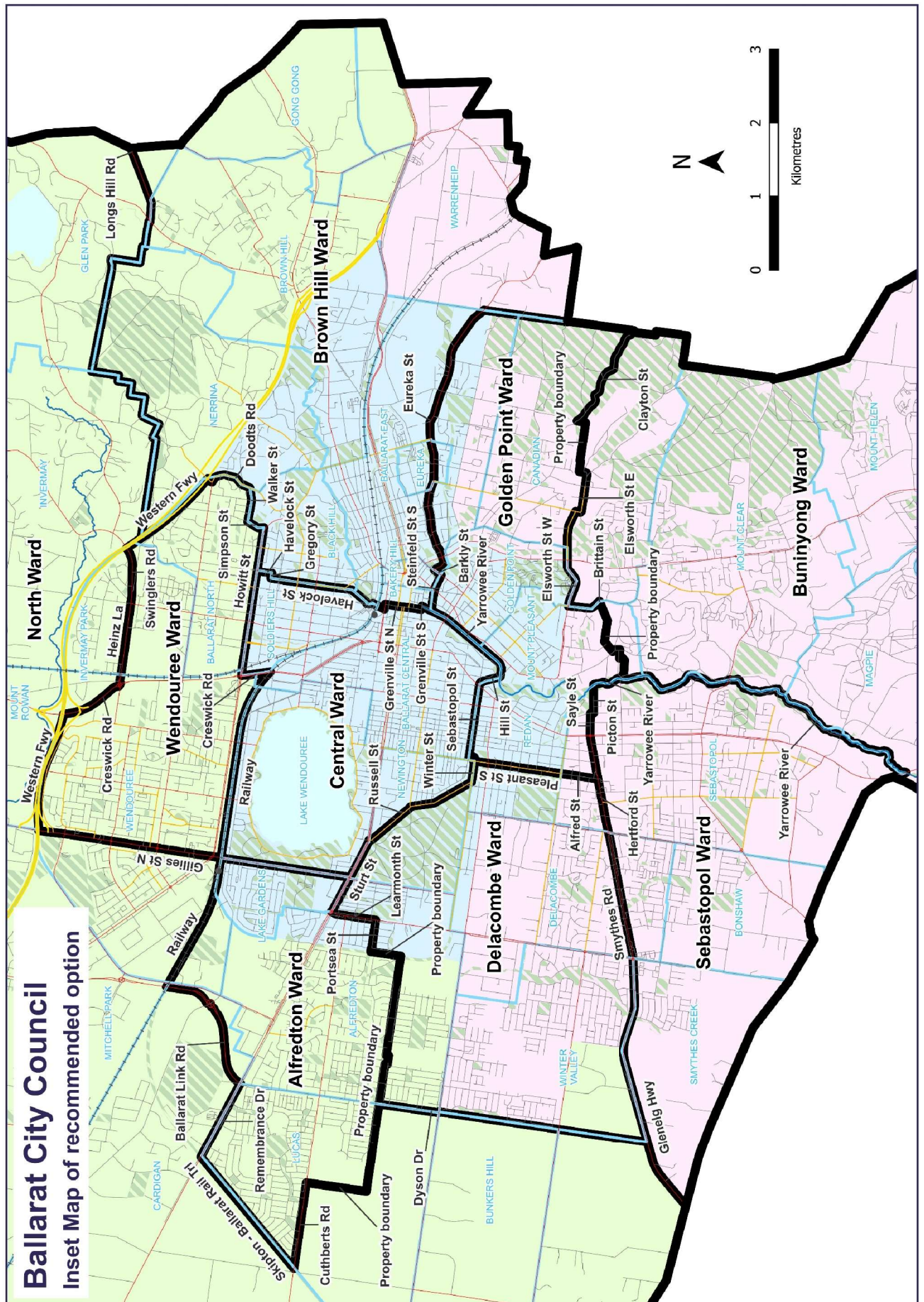




Ward	Electors*	Deviation	Area # (square km)
Alfredton	10,192	+5.02%	10
Brown Hill	9,471	-2.41%	31
Buninyong	9,588	-1.20%	92
Central	10,136	+4.45%	11
Delacombe	8,740	-9.94%	15
Golden Point	9,593	-1.15%	12
North	10,058	+3.64%	542
Sebastopol	9,561	-1.48%	16
Wendouree	10,001	+3.06%	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>87,340</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>739</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>9,704</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>82</b>

\*Elector numbers as at 30 March 2023

# Ward area (square km) and total council area is measured at level of accuracy required for electoral boundaries. This may vary slightly from other data sources (e.g. ABS).



## Appendix 2: Public involvement

The panel wishes to thank all submitters to the review and speakers at the public hearing for their participation in the review process.

### Response submissions

Response submissions were made by:

Ballaarat and District Branch of the Victorian Greens

Braslis, Eric

Burns, Ellen

Kelly, Stuart

Kozlovski, Robert

McMaster, Rohan

Shady, Nick

Tehan, Sean

Trainor, Connor

### Public hearing

The following people spoke at the public hearing:

Burns, Ellen

Mulcahy, Dr Sean (on behalf of Ballaarat and District Branch of the Victorian Greens)

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