

Local council electoral structure review

Final Report

Brimbank City Council

December 2023

Acknowledgement of Country

The electoral representation advisory panel acknowledges the Bunurong and the Wurundjeri 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	5 December 2023	The Honourable Frank Vincent AO KC
1	5 December 2023	Mr Sven Bluemmel

Version approval

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Executive summary

An electoral structure review panel appointed by the Minister for Local Government has reviewed the electoral structure of Brimbank 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), Brimbank 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 Brimbank 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 Brimbank City Council adopt a 11 single-councillor ward structure – 11 wards with one councillor per ward.

The recommended names for the 11 wards in this electoral structure are Albanvale Ward, Cherry Creek Ward, Copernicus Ward, Delahey Ward, Grasslands Ward, Harvester Ward, Horseshoe Bend Ward, Kororoit Creek Ward, Mount Derrimut Ward, Organ Pipes Ward, and St Albans East Ward.

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.

Detailed maps of the boundaries for the recommended electoral structure are 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 18 October 2023 with the following electoral structure models for public consultation:

- Model 1: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 11 councillors – 11 wards with one councillor per ward.
- Model 2: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 11 councillors – 11 wards with one councillor per ward, with different ward boundaries to Model 1.
- Model 3: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 11 councillors – 11 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

Response submissions

The panel received 6 submissions responding to the preliminary report. Of these, one submission included a map.

A full analysis of response submissions received can be found on page [14](#).

Public hearing

The panel held an online public hearing for those wishing to speak about their response submission at 10 am on Wednesday 15 November 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 Brimbank City Council) must now have single-councillor ward electoral structures.

For Brimbank 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 Brimbank City Council had 3 members:

- The Honourable Frank Vincent AO KC (Chairperson)
- Ms Liz Williams PSM
- Electoral Commissioner Mr Sven Bluemmel.

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 VEC.

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 Brimbank 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, 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.

Brimbank City was also offered 2 optional 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.

Brimbank City Council took up the targeted social media option but not the VoterAlert option.

Public consultation

The panel encouraged public input to the review of Brimbank 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 Brimbank 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 Brimbank 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 Brimbank City Council

Profile

Brimbank City Council is the largest metropolitan council in Victoria by population and covers 123 km² between 20 and 40 km west of the Melbourne CBD. It is bordered by Hume City Council to the north mostly following the Maribyrnong River, Merri-bek, Moonee Valley, and Maribyrnong city councils to the east, Hobsons Bay and Wyndham city councils to the south, and Melton City Council to the west.

The Traditional Custodians of the land in Brimbank City Council are the Wurundjeri and Bunurong peoples.

Landscape

Natural features, such as waterways, have shaped the council area's housing and other developments. The Maribyrnong River forms a part of the northern border and Kororoit Creek part of the western boundary.

The council area has a strong industrial and working-class history (Veltri 2008) and remains heavily urbanised, with large residential, industrial and commercial areas. Overall, 85% of the council area is urbanised, with smaller areas for parks, grazing, and rural residential use (DAFF 2021). Significant industrial zones remain in Sunshine and Keilor Park.

Suburbs and housing development have followed the northwest train line around Sunshine and through to St Albans, Taylors Lakes and Sydenham.

The biggest commercial area is in Sunshine and Sydenham has a large activity centre, including Watergardens Shopping Centre. Deer Park Village, Brimbank Central and St Albans also have major shopping precincts.

Population and community

The population of the council area was 194,618 people at the 2021 Census, an increase of about 31,700 since 2001 (ABS 2001, 2022a). It is forecast to grow to nearly 230,000 people by 2040, mostly in the Sunshine and St Albans areas (.id 2023). The proportion of the population identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander is 0.4%, similar to the Greater Melbourne average of 0.7% (ABS 2022a).

The population of the council area is culturally diverse. In 2021, about 70% of people had both parents born overseas, compared to about 50% for Greater Melbourne. People who identified as having Vietnamese ancestry (16.9%) were the largest group and people identifying as having Australian and English ancestry were 12.6% and 11.6% respectively (about 10% less than for Greater Melbourne). Other large cultural groups include people with Chinese, Italian and Maltese ancestry (ABS 2022a, 2022b; .id 2023).

Religious affiliations with faiths such as Catholicism, Buddhism, and Islam are much higher than for Greater Melbourne (.id 2023).

The median weekly household income in the council is \$1,506, compared to \$1,901 in Greater Melbourne. In terms of housing, 36.2% of houses are owned outright, higher than the 29.7% for Greater Melbourne. People who own homes with mortgages account for 33.2%, lower than the 37.1% for Greater Melbourne. Also, dwellings that are occupied by renters account for 26.7%, which is also lower than the 30.2% for Greater Melbourne (ABS 2022a, 2022b).

There are areas of disadvantage in St Albans, Kings Park, Albanvale, and Sunshine West. The same levels of disadvantage are not present in large parts of the north such as in Taylors Lakes and parts of Keilor (ABS 2023).

Current number of councillors and electoral structure

Brimbank City Council is currently divided into 4 wards with a total of 11 councillors:

- one ward with 2 councillors (Horseshoe Bend Ward)
- 3 wards with 3 councillors each (Grasslands, Harvester, and Taylors wards).



Figure 1: Diagram of current electoral structure of Brimbank City Council.

There are approximately 136,190 voters in Brimbank City Council, with an approximate ratio of 12,380 voters per councillor.

Visit the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au for more information on Brimbank City Council.

Last electoral structure review

The VEC conducted an electoral representation review of Brimbank City Council in 2011. 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 Brimbank City Council continue to consist of 11 councillors elected from 4 wards (one ward with 2 councillors and 3 wards with 3 councillors each).

Visit the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au to access a copy of the 2011 representation review final report.

Preliminary report

A preliminary report was released on Wednesday 18 October 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 11 councillors – 11 wards with one councillor per ward.
- Model 2: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 11 councillors – 11 wards with one councillor per ward, with different ward boundaries to Model 1.
- Model 3: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 11 councillors – 11 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

Response submissions

The panel received 6 response submissions to the preliminary report from the public by the deadline of 5 pm on Wednesday 8 November 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 (11 single-councillor wards)	Model 2 (11 single-councillor wards)	Model 3 (11 single-councillor wards)	Mapped submission (11 single-councillor wards)	Other
0	3*	2*	1	1

*1 submitter indicated support for more than one option.

Three submitters supported Model 2, one of whom felt Model 3 was 'also fine'. One submitter supported Model 3 and there was no support for Model 1.

One submitter provided a mapped submission and another addressed matters out of scope for this review. All submitters except for one supported maintaining 11 councillors.

Two submitters felt the council's current structure resulted in uneven representation, with 6 councillors in the south, and 5 in the north. One of these submitters proposed a 4-ward structure, with an even number of voters per ward, which is not permissible under the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Model 1

No submitters preferred Model 1, although some commented on its advantages. For instance, Brimbank City Council submitted the model is based on the current structure and that it has clear boundaries. Harvester Ward Councillor Thomas O'Reilly of Sunshine West felt models 1 and 2 had a better configuration for most of the northern suburbs in the council.

Arguments against Model 1 outweighed those for it. Brimbank City Council noted that Model 1 was the least stable of all models which was the foremost reason for not supporting it. The Council also expressed concerns about Derrimut Ward having limited connectivity between the Derrimut and Sunshine West communities due to the Metropolitan Ring Road passing through the ward. Other concerns, such as the train line dividing Kororoit Creek and Sunshine wards, the division of the Sunshine central business district and the split between Sydenham Ward and Kings Park Ward appearing somewhat arbitrary, were also raised by the Council.

Greg McCann from St Albans did not favour Model 1 because of what was perceived as inequities in representation: Kororoit Creek Ward, described as one of the poorer and more disadvantaged areas, had the largest number of electors (13,928 electors), whereas Organ

Pipes Ward, considered one of the most advantaged areas in the council, had the fewest (11,031).

Shannon Meilak from Keilor Lodge was opposed to models 1 and 2 and believed they would perpetuate a historic trend which tended to favour the south of the council to the detriment of the north. Meilak further suggested these 2 models would result in the south having more councillors and therefore greater representation.

Model 2

Model 2 was the preferred single-councillor structure, with 3 of the 6 submissions in support of it.

Brimbank City Council outlined several reasons for preferring Model 2. The stability of the model and the likelihood it would remain in deviation through to the 2028 election was the main reason. But it had other merits, such as clearer and stronger ward boundaries, and was considered more effective at keeping communities of interest together. From the council's perspective, the model grouped communities of interest in the south particularly well.

Greg McCann preferred Model 2, describing the council as one of the most socio-disadvantaged in Victoria with a significant gap between poorer suburbs in the south (Kings Park, St Albans, Sunshine North, Ardeer, Albanvale and Deer Park) and wealthier suburbs in the north (Keilor, Sydenham and Taylors Lakes). McCann felt that disadvantaged areas should ideally receive greater levels of representation than less disadvantaged areas and believed that Model 2 would result in that. McCann also identified the variations of Model 2 as being more balanced across the council.

Councillor Thomas O'Reilly described models 1 and 2 as having better configurations of the northern suburbs. Alfred Vella of Taylors Lakes preferred Model 2 as it was close to the current structure and resulted in minimal change in the boundaries.

Several arguments were presented against Model 2. For instance, while preferring Model 2 overall, the Council did acknowledge its limitations, such as some unclear boundaries in the north, some central suburbs being spread across multiple wards, and the division of the Sunshine central business district between 2 wards. Shannon Meilak was not in favour of the model because it was considered to result in less representation in the north of the council.

Model 3

Shannon Meilak preferred Model 3 as it had the most councillors in the north of the council area, which would result in improved representation in these areas. Other submitters, although not supporting the model overall, identified particular strengths of Model 3. Councillor Thomas O'Reilly saw Model 3 as using clear natural boundaries and keeping many southern communities of interest together. Greg McCann felt that while Model 3 was 'also fine', it would possibly result in lower representation in the Sunshine West Ward which was an area of high disadvantage.

The Brimbank City Council acknowledged Model 3 had advantages through its use of some easily identifiable and familiar boundaries and in keeping entire suburbs together. However, it noted too many weaknesses of the model, including the shapes of some wards and irregular boundaries in some areas which it argued many residents would not readily identify with. Additionally, the Council was critical of the Maribyrnong River Ward, in grouping the Sunshine and Keilor Park communities, which lacked a community of interest. In Model 3 St Albans was spread over 4 wards, which the Council also considered to be problematic, while it felt Organ Pipes Ward was quite dispersed with some unclear and irregular boundaries.

Other options

Councillor Thomas O'Reilly provided a mapped submission which combined what were seen as better configurations of the northern area in models 1 and 2, with the preferred boundaries in the south of the council as per Model 3. This combination created an alternative model which Councillor O'Reilly felt more closely reflected communities of interest across Brimbank as a whole. Councillor O'Reilly also noted that apart from one ward, all were within +/-5% deviation.

Public hearing

The panel held an online public hearing for those wishing to speak about their response submission at 10 am on 15 November 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 Brimbank City Council, Governance Manager Mark Brady first described the process the council undertook to prepare its submission and came to endorse its preference for Model 2. The preliminary report was made available to all councillors, and input on the report was sought via email and an in-person workshop with councillors. Councillor input was used to draft a submission which was distributed to councillors for further comment and feedback. A special councillor meeting was held specifically for Council to consider the draft submission which was endorsed at the meeting.

Brady also noted that due to timelines, the council did not have the capacity to explore or propose alternative models, particularly relating to ward boundaries.

Brady then reiterated the 2 central components of the Council's submission: the first related to principles on the number of councillors, ward names and ward boundaries; the second concerned the preferred model. Brady described the Council's view, as follows:

- the retention of 11 councillors, mainly because this number limits change, continues to support diversity in representation, and ensures a similar voter-to-councillor ratio to other comparable metropolitan councils.
- the basis for which the panel has determined ward names, but suggested where possible, the panel avoid using suburb names for wards where the suburb is split over 2 or more wards, to avoid confusing voters.
- support for ward boundaries which contained communities of interest within wards, and the preference for avoiding splitting communities of interest across wards and ensuring ward shapes are not overly complicated.

Brady then restated the council's reasoning for selecting Model 2 as the preferred model, as generally keeping communities of interest together, has clearer and stronger ward boundaries, and it groups communities in the south well. The main reason for Model 1 being discounted by the Council was it having the greatest potential for wards to be outside of the deviation by 2028, while Model 3 was not preferred because Maribyrnong Ward lacked a community of interest, mainly through the connection of Sunshine and Keilor Park suburbs. The irregular shape of some wards was also identified as a disadvantage.

The second speaker, Shannon Meilak, described themselves as a long-term resident of the council area, first as a resident of Sunshine Council, then Keilor Council and following amalgamation a resident of Brimbank City Council. Meilak argued that after amalgamation council rates increased but services in the area began to disappear and believed the old Sunshine Council area benefited to the expense of the old Keilor Council area. Meilak felt only Model 3 supported the representation needs of the northern parts of council. The Horseshoe

Bend Ward in Model 3 provided a suitable separation of the Keilor region from St Albans, and the model divided the north of Brimbank into 5 smaller more manageable and appropriate wards (Organ Pipes, Watergardens, Kings, Copernicus, and Maribyrnong River wards), giving the north better representation, funding, and advocacy. Model 3 was also considered to be more reflective of the natural boundaries of the area. Meilak's second preference was Model 2 because it divided the north more equitably and did a better job of grouping communities together than Model 1, but overall, felt it failed to meet their criteria for fair representation in the north.

Findings and recommendation

As outlined in the submission guide for this review, the panel is committed to the principle of 'one vote, one value', which is a requirement for subdivided electoral structures under the Act. This is to ensure that every person's vote counts equally. When undertaking an electoral structure review, the panel must adhere to the Act's legislated equality requirement to seek to ensure the number of voters per councillor in a ward to be within +/-10% of the average number of voters per councillor for all wards in the council area.

The equality requirement exists to support fair and equitable representation for all voters within a local council (and consequently facilitate good governance), which is a major aim of this review. All wards in a subdivided electoral structure recommended by the panel must aim to be within the legislated tolerance in time for the 2024 local council elections. The panel cannot make exceptions to legislated requirements.

Number of councillors

After considering the requirements of the Act, public submissions and the agreed criteria, the panel found 11 councillors to be an appropriate number for Brimbank City Council.

The panel considered the characteristics of Brimbank City Council in relation to similar metropolitan councils, including its size and geography, population and the number and distribution of voters across the council area.

Brimbank City Council currently has 136,190 voters represented by 11 councillors and covers an area of 123 km². Other metropolitan councils with a similar number of voters usually also have 11 councillors. In some cases, a local council may have special circumstances that support a recommendation for fewer or more councillors. The panel did not identify any new circumstances for Brimbank City Council since the representation review in 2011.

However, the panel also recognised that the geographic features and uneven distribution of voters across the council area make developing a satisfactory single-councillor ward structure for Brimbank City Council challenging. Because of this, the panel also considered models with fewer or more councillors. The panel explored whether an increase or decrease in the number of councillors would enable single-councillor ward structures to be created that may provide more favourable representation for the community. However, the panel did not identify any models with fewer or more councillors that provided more favourable representation. As such, the panel believed 11 councillors to be the most appropriate.

Electoral structure

After considering the requirements of the Act, public submissions and the agreed criteria, the panel found Model 2 to be the single-councillor ward model with the best potential to promote fair and equitable representation for voters in Brimbank City Council and consequently facilitate good governance.

The panel felt that, when comparing the three models, a disadvantage of Model 1 was the higher risk that it could fall out of deviation by the 2028 local government elections, triggering a

review of the electoral structure. The panel were also concerned about the equity of a relatively advantaged area in Organ Pipes Ward having far fewer electors than a relatively disadvantaged area in Kororoit Creek Ward, as Greg McCann had submitted. No submitters had voiced support for Model 1 and the panel felt that on balance other models were preferable.

The model submitted by Councillor O'Reilly was considered by the panel to be strong, however the panel noted some weaknesses. One was that the McKay ward did not meet the +/-10% deviation principle, and to correct it some strong boundaries needed to be crossed and other less clear boundaries adopted as a result. One was crossing to the west of Kororoit Creek to include a small section of Sunshine West or alternatively to the north of Ballarat Road. The panel was concerned that whichever modification was selected the relevant community of interest would be split or combined unnecessarily with other areas and this was seen to be the main disadvantage of the model. Additionally, the model had been designed to incorporate the strengths of models 1 and 2 in the north and models 3 in the south. The panel noted that consequently the central part of the council arranged into wards unfavourably. This was particularly evident in Padley Ward which had an irregular shape and St Albans being spread across 4 wards.

The panel identified the key benefit of Model 3 was its strong ward boundaries. While the panel noted Meilak's submission regarding poor representation in the north, concerns were also aired about the relative levels of advantage and disadvantage across the council. The panel had identified southern and central suburbs as having persistent disadvantage, as was described in the McCann submission, and believed representation needs were highest in these disadvantaged suburbs. Comparing models 2 and 3, the panel concluded that on balance Model 2 would likely perform better in addressing the representation of needs of the more disadvantaged areas without unfavourably impacting those relatively more advantaged. The panel also noted that under any of the models, the north of the council could receive strong representation if capable and skilled councillors are elected. As such, the panel felt the weight of arguments leant in favour of Model 2 over Model 3.

Model 2 had the best representation across all wards and the panel felt it delivered residents the closest to the one vote, one value principle of all models, and from that perspective was the fairest of the models under consideration. The panel noted that Kings Ward had arbitrary boundaries in the north and south, which were not ideal but were considered essential to achieving a fair voter to councillor ratio across the council.

The panel notes valid arguments both in favour of and against the different single-councillor ward structures examined in this review. However, the panel considers Model 2 to be the single-councillor ward model with the best potential to promote fair and equitable representation for voters in Brimbank City Council and consequently facilitate good governance under the requirements of the Act.

The panel noted that introducing single-councillor wards represents a large electoral structure change for Brimbank City Council. Achieving models that divide communities of interest into appropriate wards, while also accounting for population growth and distribution, as well as

ensuring they comply with the +/-10% requirement through to and beyond the 2024 local council elections was challenging.

While it is difficult to predict the number of candidates likely to stand at future elections, past election results provide some indication. The panel examined past election results for Brimbank City Council including numbers of candidates nominating, incidences of uncontested elections and rates of informal voting. It found there to have been relatively strong candidate numbers across the council all wards under the current electoral structure. The panel assumes this trend will continue under a structure of 11 single-councillor wards, minimising the risk of uncontested or failed elections under this structure.

Ward names

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

- Albanvale Ward: new name based on a locality in the ward. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Cherry Creek Ward: new name based on a creek in the ward. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Copernicus Ward: new name based on a road in the ward. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Delahey Ward: new name based on a locality in the ward. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Grasslands Ward: the existing name of the ward under the current electoral structure. The new ward covers much of the same area as this existing ward.
- Harvester Ward: the existing name of the ward under the current electoral structure. The new ward covers much of the same area as this existing ward.
- Horseshoe Bend Ward: the existing name of the ward under the current electoral structure. The new ward covers much of the same area as this existing ward.
- Kororoit Creek Ward: new name based on a creek in the ward. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Mount Derrimut Ward: new name based on a park in the ward. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Organ Pipes Ward: new name based on a park in the ward. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- St Albans East Ward: new name based on a neighbourhood and school in the ward. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.

The panel considered feedback on ward names from public submissions and changed 3 ward names from that in the proposed Model 2. The panel noted that the localities of Kings Park, St Albans, and Sunshine were not entirely captured in each ward and, as a result, may not be appropriate. The panel instead put forward Delahey, St Albans East, and Harvester as alternative names which better reflected the wards.

The panel's recommendation

The electoral representation advisory panel recommends that Brimbank City Council adopt an 11 single-councillor ward structure – 11 wards with one councillor per ward.

The recommended names for the 11 wards in this electoral structure are Albanvale Ward, Cherry Creek Ward, Copernicus Ward, Delahey Ward, Grasslands Ward, Harvester Ward, Horseshoe Bend Ward, Kororoit Creek Ward, Mount Derrimut Ward, Organ Pipes Ward, and St Albans East Ward.

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 2 in the preliminary report.

Detailed maps of the boundaries for the recommended electoral structure are provided as [Appendix 1](#).

References

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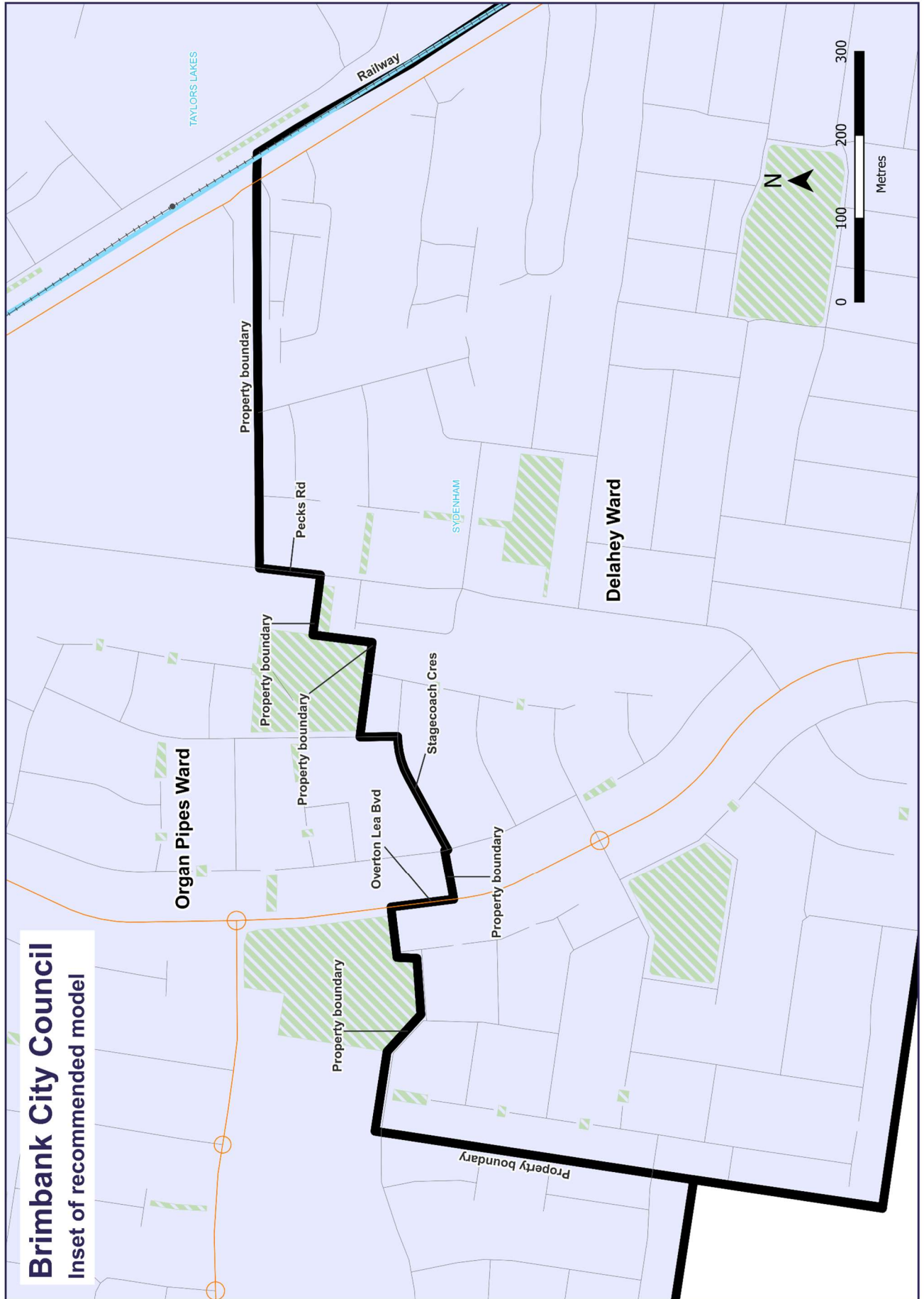
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Veltri, D. (2008) [eMelbourne: Sunshine](#), The University of Melbourne, accessed 1 September 2023.



Data for recommended structure

Ward	Electors*	Deviation†	Area# (square km)
Albanvale	11,386	-8.04%	5.6
Cherry Creek	13,004	5.03%	18.3
Copernicus	12,562	1.46%	6.8
Delahey	11,658	-5.84%	5.9
Grasslands	12,865	3.91%	7.3
Harvester	12,802	3.40%	10.5
Horseshoe Bend	12,717	2.71%	22
Kororoit Creek	11,868	-4.14%	14.2
Mount Derrimut	12,315	-0.53%	8.6
Total	136,190	-	123.3
Average	12,381	-	11.2

*Elector numbers at 25 July 2023

†The deviations of all wards are projected to be within +/-10% by the time of the 2024 local government elections.

#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:

Bennett, John

Brimbank City Council

McCann, Greg

Meilak, Shannon

O'Reilly, Thomas (Councillor, Brimbank City Council)

Vella, Alfred

Public hearing

The following people spoke at the public hearing:

Brady, Mark (on behalf of Brimbank City Council)

Meilak, Shannon

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