

Local council electoral structure review

# Final Report

Mildura Rural City Council

August 2023

## Acknowledgement of Country

The electoral representation advisory panel acknowledges the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee, being Latji Latji and Ngintait Traditional Owners, and the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagalk peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters for which it is holding 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       | 16 August 2023 | Ms Julie Eisenbise |
| 1       | 16 August 2023 | Mr Tim Presnell    |
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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 Mildura Rural 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), Mildura Rural 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 Mildura Rural 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 Mildura Rural 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: City Gate Ward, Henderson Park Ward, Karadoc Ward, Kings Billabong Ward, Lake Ranfurly Ward, Mildura Wetlands Ward, Millewa Ward, Nowingi Place Ward, Sunset Country 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.

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 7 councillors – 7 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.
- Model 3: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 9 councillors – 9 wards with one councillor per ward, with different boundaries to 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 5 submissions responding to the preliminary report. Of these, 2 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 2 pm on Wednesday 26 July. One person 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 Mildura Rural City Council) must now have single-councillor ward electoral structures.

For Mildura Rural 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 Mildura Rural City Council had 3 members:

- Ms Julie Eisenbise (Chairperson)
- Mr Tim Presnell
- Acting Electoral Commissioner Ms Dana Fleming.

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 Mildura Rural 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.

Mildura Rural 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 Mildura Rural 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 Mildura Rural 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 Mildura Rural 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 Mildura Rural City Council

## Profile

Located in the Mallee region about 550 km north-west of Melbourne, Mildura Rural City Council is the largest municipality in Victoria, covering an area of 22,082 km<sup>2</sup>. Mildura Rural City Council is bordered by West Wimmera, Hindmarsh and Yarriambiack Shire Councils to the south, Buloke Shire Council to the south-east and Swan Hill Rural City Council to the east. It shares its northern border with New South Wales and its western border with South Australia.

The Traditional Custodians of the lands within Mildura Rural City council are the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee, being Latji Latji and Ngintait Traditional Owners, and the Wotjbaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagalk peoples (FPSR 2023).

## Landscape

The land covered by the municipality is predominantly parkland or agricultural land, making up nearly 90% of total land area, with the population concentrated in Mildura and other towns along the Murray River, and in smaller towns throughout the rural areas. The municipality hosts about 40% of the total area of the Victorian Parks system (DTP 2023), with protected land covering approximately 47.5% of its total land area (ABS 2022a), including the Hattah-Kulkyne, Murray-Sunset and Wyperfeld national parks, Big Desert Wilderness Park and the Murray-Kulkyne Park. The Murray River, which forms the northern boundary of the council, is part of Australia's largest river system, the Murray-Darling Basin.

Agricultural land covers approximately 40% of the municipality (ABS 2022a). To the north near the Murray River, agricultural land is used mainly for irrigated farming of dried vine fruits, grapes, citrus and vegetable production. In the areas further inland to the north and south of the Murray-Sunset National Park, land is used primarily for dryland agriculture for cereal, grain and legume production, sheep and cattle grazing, and wool and beef production (DTP 2023).

Mildura Rural City Council has a population of 56,972 (ABS 2022b) and the town of Mildura itself is home to 35,652 people, or approximately 62.5% of the population. Large townships close to Mildura include Red Cliffs, (3,070 residents) and Merbein (2,077), while in the rural south, larger townships include Ouyen (1,022 residents) and Murrayville (214) (ABS 2022b).

The major roads servicing the council include the Sturt, Mallee and Calder highways. Mildura Airport is the state's largest and busiest regional airport, providing passenger and freight services, and makes a significant contribution to the regional economy.

## Community

The population is forecast to grow at an annual rate of 0.8% from 2022 to 2028. This rate is lower than the average annual population growth rate for 2011-2021 of 1.06% (RDV 2023). Population growth will be centred in the south and south-eastern suburbs of Mildura, as well as the nearby townships of Red Cliffs, Irymple and Merbein (DTP 2023).

The median age of the population is 40 years, lower than the median age of the rest of regional Victoria of 43 years (ABS 2022b, ABS 2022c).

With approximately 14% of the population born overseas and approximately 12.8% speaking a language other than English at home (ABS 2022d), Mildura Rural City Council is more culturally diverse than other regional centres on average.

People born in Australia make up 78% of the population and 79.9% of people speak only English at home (ABS 2022b), lower than the regional Victorian averages of 81% and 86.4% (ABS 2022c). Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people make up 4.6% of the population, more than double the regional Victorian average of 2% (ABS 2022b, ABS 2022c).

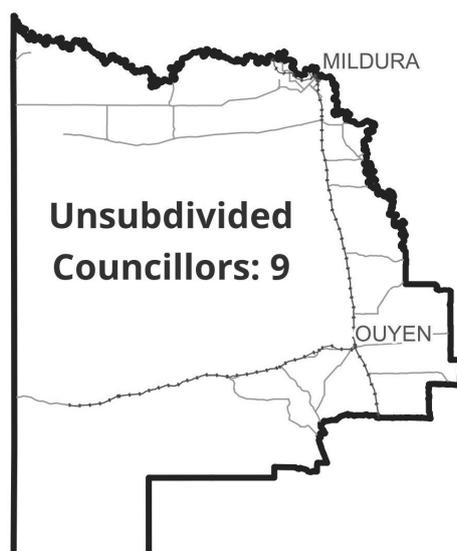
The median weekly household income is \$1,326, slightly lower than the average for regional Victoria of \$1,386 (ABS 2022b, ABS 2022c). Of occupied homes (90.9% of total dwellings), 33.3% are owned outright and 32.1% are owned with a mortgage, which is the lower than the average for regional Victoria, and 29.8% are rented, higher than the average of 23.6% (ABS 2022b, ABS 2022c).

Although unemployment was 5.3% in 2021, higher than the regional Victorian average of 4.1%, labour force participation was consistent with the average at 57% (ABS 2022b, ABS 2022c).

The main industries by employment in the municipality included health care and social assistance (16.8%), agriculture, forestry and fishing (11.8%), retail trade (11.7%), education and training (8.9%) and construction (9.1%) (REMPPLAN 2023).

## Current number of councillors and electoral structure

Mildura Rural City Council is currently unsubdivided with a total of 9 councillors.



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

There are approximately 42,932 voters in Mildura Rural City Council, with an approximate ratio of 4,770 voters per councillor.

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

## **Last electoral structure review**

The VEC conducted an electoral representation review of Mildura Rural 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 Mildura Rural City Council continue to consist of 9 councillors elected from an unsubdivided municipality.

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 7 councillors – 7 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.
- Model 3: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 9 councillors – 9 wards with one councillor per ward, with different boundaries to 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 5 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<br>(7 single-councillor wards)                 | Model 2<br>(9 single-councillor wards) | Model 3<br>(9 single-councillor wards) | No preferred model indicated | Other |
| -  | 2*                                     | 1*                                     | -                            | 2*    |

\*While stating a preference, most of these submissions preferred Mildura Rural City Council to stay unsubdivided.

All submissions supported one of the 9-councillor models put forward for public comment or a variation on them. However, such support was qualified by 4 of the 5 submitters, on the grounds that any single-councillor ward structure would not provide fair and equitable representation for the council. In contrast, one submitter argued a single-councillor ward structure would provide greater levels of transparency and encourage more community input into council business. Two submissions provided a mapped model.

### Model 1

While no submissions supported Model 1, which reduced the number of councillors from 9 to 7, features of this model were included in a mapped submission of an alternative 9 single-councillor ward structure. This alternative structure would provide for 2 rural wards, instead of the one large rural ward found in Models 2 and 3, to better reflect the rural/farming communities of interest.

### Model 2

Two submissions favoured Model 2, arguing that it would support fairer and more equitable representation and that it more effectively subdivided the council. Those critical of this model, and indeed Model 3, expressed concern at the exceptionally large rural ward that totalled over 21,000 km<sup>2</sup>, highlighting the unfair travel burden that would be placed on the councillor elected to this ward.

### Model 3

One submitter supported Model 3, but did provide the reasons why, arguing instead against the adoption of single-councillor wards and the drawbacks of having such a large rural ward.

## Public hearing

The panel held an online public hearing for those wishing to speak about their response submission at 2 pm on Wednesday 26 July 2023.

One person, Michael DiFabrizio, spoke at the public hearing. DiFabrizio's written submission was comprehensive, totalling 18 pages, and detailing several scenarios he found acceptable. DiFabrizio chose not to re-state the details of the submission at the hearing and elected instead to let the panel ask questions about his submission.

When asked why his mapped model was better than those put forward in the preliminary report, DiFabrizio argued that Deakin Avenue made a more sensible boundary owing to an east-west divide in Mildura city and as such would better cater for communities of interest. He added that the avenue is well-known within Mildura city, had been used as a tram line and functioned as a social divide with a different suburban profile and feel on each side of the road. While he felt other roads within Mildura city might also make sensible boundaries, due to the grid-like layout, Deakin Avenue was considered the most suitable.

DiFabrizio then stated that the 2 rural wards found in his model might be a fairer outcome for the rural councillors elected to those wards, while conceding that the 2 north/south rural dryland farming communities were united in one ward in Models 2 and 3, and that those communities might consider this arrangement more favourable.

Asked to comment whether the ward names presented in the models would be suitable, DiFabrizio suggested that Mildura North and Mildura Central wards would potentially confuse locals. This was because they have an established meaning which might not correspond with the ward they were named after. Mildura Central in particular is the name of a shopping centre in the southwest of the city, some 3 km from the Mildura city centre.

Lastly, DiFabrizio was asked about his suggestions for alternatives to the name of the proposed Washington Park Ward and whether he thought Old Aerodrome or Chaffey Bend was more suitable, to which he answered Chaffey Bend.

## 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 in any other ward.

Several submissions called for the panel to make exceptions to the legislated requirement for Mildura Rural City Council to adopt a single-councillor ward structure (and/or to be treated the same as those country councils permitted to be unsubdivided or subdivided in multi-councillor wards with equal numbers of councillors per ward). While the panel understands the concerns of these submitters, the panel must comply with the 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 Mildura Rural City Council.

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 Mildura Rural City Council since the representation review in 2015. However, the panel recognised that the geographic features and uneven distribution of voters across the council area make developing a satisfactory single-councillor ward structure for Mildura Rural City Council problematic. 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. As a result, the panel put forward one option with fewer councillors: Model 1.

The panel considered the characteristics of Mildura Rural City Council in relation to similar regional city councils, including its size and geography, population and the number and distribution of voters across the council area. Mildura Rural City Council currently has 42,932 voters represented by 9 councillors and covers an area of 22,082 km<sup>2</sup>. It is common for other regional city councils with a similar number of voters to have 9 councillors, such as Greater Shepparton and Latrobe City councils. The panel also noted the considerable geographic size of Mildura Rural City Council and the significant travel burden that might be placed on councillors if the number of councillors reduced to 7. In addition, the panel noted that Mildura Rural City Council has had 9 councillors since it was amalgamated in 1995. Accordingly, the panel saw no compelling reason to reduce the number to 7.

### Electoral structure

After considering the requirements of the Act, public submissions and the agreed criteria, the panel found a combination of Model 1 and 2 with 9 councillors to be the single-councillor ward

model with the best potential to promote fair and equitable representation for voters in Mildura Rural City Council and consequently facilitate good governance.

The panel noted the difficulties developing sensible single-councillor ward structures for Mildura Rural City Council. The overwhelming majority of the council's population is concentrated in the northeast in and around the city of Mildura, with small towns dotted along the main transport corridors of the Sturt Highway in the north of the council area, the Mallee Highway in the south and the Calder Highway running north-south connecting Ouyen to Mildura. Large areas of national park land where there are no council residents or easy transport routes presented additional challenges. This necessitated models with large rural-focused wards, comprised of one exceptionally large rural ward in the 9-councillor structures of Models 2 and 3 but having 2 relatively smaller rural wards in the 7-councillor structure of Model 1.

While already noted by the panel in the preliminary report, it became evident through public feedback that a single rural ward covering over 95% of the council's land area might not facilitate fair and equitable representation compared with possible alternatives. Moreover, the size of the ward was considered likely to impose an onerous travel burden on the councillor elected from it. As such, the panel sought a workable solution to maintain 9 councillors, while accommodating 2 rural wards as in Model 1. This was supported in submissions and involved certain trade-offs.

For 2 rural wards to be included in a 9-councillor ward structure, the town of Merbein needed to be part of the ward capturing the rural area in the north-west of the council. This was essential to fulfil the +/-10% requirement and meant that Merbein would not be contained in its own ward as found in Model 2 and 3. While the panel was hesitant for Merbein to lose its own ward, it noted that a balance needed to be struck, and the benefits of having 2 large rural wards, instead of one very large ward justified change in this instance. As such, the northern rural ward found in the recommended model (named Millewa Ward) combines the town of Merbein and Mildura's sparse western outskirts with the western hinterland and rural communities along the Sturt Highway and Millewa Road up to the South Australian border.

The newly created southern rural ward (named Sunset Country Ward) provides representation for the towns and farming communities along the Mallee and Calder highway transport corridors, with Ouyen being the nexus and main service centre for towns along both highways. While the boundaries of the ward extend up to Mildura's sparse southern fringes, this trade-off was necessary to meet the +/-10% requirement. Overall, having 2 smaller rural wards, instead of a single larger one, was favoured due to the potential of encouraging more candidates to stand for these wards, and to better serve the geographically distant north and south rural communities of Mildura Rural City Council.

As such, the final recommended model combines elements from both Model 1 and 2 in the preliminary report, while also incorporating adjustments to the ward boundaries dividing the city of Mildura as suggested in public submissions. The panel was particularly convinced that the use of Deakin Avenue made for a strong recognisable boundary, noting the sheer size of the road from curb-to-curb made it a logical divide. Deakin Avenue becomes Sturt Highway and is

the main transport corridor between Mildura and South Australia, further establishing it as a strong boundary. Other slight boundary changes were also made to Karadoc, Nowingi Place, Lake Ranfurly, and Henderson Park wards to utilise straighter or more recognisable boundaries.

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

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 Mildura Rural City Council, including numbers of candidates nominating, incidences of uncontested elections and rates of informal voting. With the change in structure, the panel notes the potential for uncontested or failed elections in areas where historically candidate numbers have not been as strong. Given 9 councillors has been determined to be the appropriate number, this is a compromise the panel considered as unavoidable in light of the legislative requirements for a single councillor ward electoral structure. Moreover, the possibility that some candidates could be deterred from standing in either one of the large rural wards, increases the risk of uncontested or failed elections in these wards.

The panel would also like to acknowledge the difficulty it experienced establishing a suitable model for Mildura Rural City Council that complies with the legislated +/-10% requirement due to the council's vast size and therefore the difficulty in providing wards that could properly provide comparable councillor workloads. As such, the recommended model is the result of necessary compromise to adhere to the narrow strictures of the Act.

## **Ward names**

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

- Henderson Park, Kings Billabong, Mallee, Lake Ranfurly, Mildura Wetlands, Nowingi Place and Sunset Country wards: New names based on registered names of parks, regions and natural features within each ward.
- City Gate ward: New name based on the City Gate precinct identified in the Mildura Planning Scheme as an important sub-regional retail and activity centre.
- Karadoc ward: New name based on the registered name of the road that runs through the middle of this ward.

## **The panel's recommendation**

The electoral representation advisory panel recommends that Mildura Rural 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 City Gate Ward, Henderson Park Ward, Karadoc Ward, Kings Billabong Ward, Lake Ranfurly Ward, Mildura Wetlands Ward, Millewa Ward, Nowingi Place Ward, Sunset Country 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 a combination of Model 1 and 2 in the preliminary report.

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

## References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) (2022a) [Region Summary: Mildura](#), ABS website, accessed 30 March 2023.

— (2022b) [2021 Census All Person QuickStats, Mildura \(LGA\)](#), ABS website, accessed 30 March 2023.

— (2022c) [2021 Census All Persons QuickStats, Rest of Vic](#), ABS website, accessed 30 March 2023.

— (2022d) [2021 Census Community Profiles: Mildura](#), General Community Profile Data Set, accessed 30 March 2023.

DTP (Department of Transport and Planning) (2023) [Mildura Planning Scheme](#), DTP, accessed 28 March 2023.

Electoral Act 2002 (Vic)

FPSR (First Peoples State Relations) (2023) [Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners](#), First Peoples State Relations website, accessed 2 May 2023.

Geographic Place Names Act 1998 (Vic)

Local Government Act 1989 (Vic)

Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)

Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020 (Vic)

RDV (Regional Development Victoria) (2023) [Regional Snapshot](#), Data set (Mildura LGA), accessed 28 March 2023.

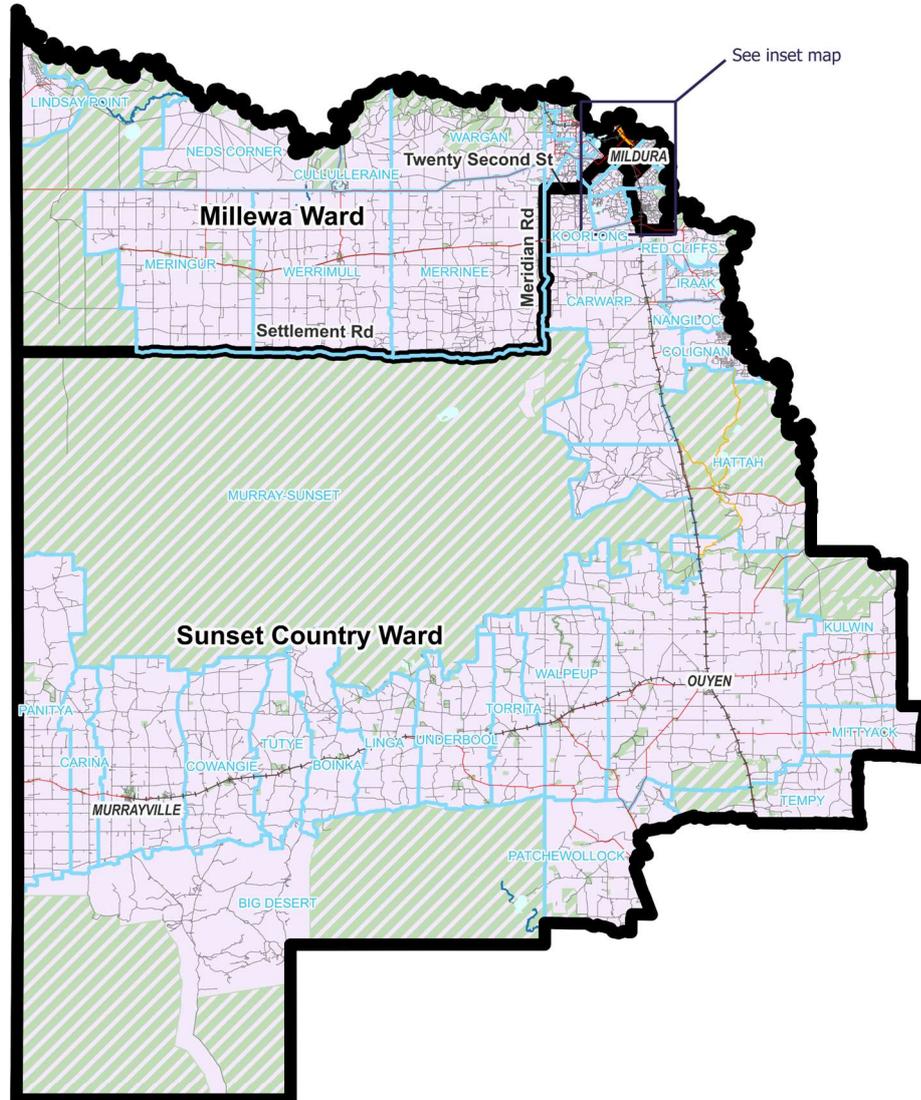
REMPLAN (2022) [Economy, Jobs and Business Insights \(Mildura\)](#), REMPLAN website, accessed 30 March 2023.

# Appendix 1: Map of recommended structure

## Mildura Rural City Council

### Map of recommended option

### 9 single-councillor wards



| Ward             | Electors* | Deviation | Area sq km |
|------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| City Gate        | 4,680     | -1.89%    | 5          |
| Henderson Park   | 5,155     | +8.07%    | 4          |
| Karadoc          | 4,719     | -1.07%    | 33         |
| Kings Billabong  | 4,770     | 0%        | 83         |
| Lake Ranfurly    | 4,596     | -3.65%    | 19         |
| Mildura Wetlands | 4,858     | +1.84%    | 4          |
| Millewa          | 4,667     | -2.16%    | 4,675      |
| Nowingi Place    | 4,781     | +0.23%    | 5          |
| Sunset Country   | 4,706     | -1.35%    | 17,252     |
| Total            | 42,932    |           | 22,080     |
| Average          | 4,770     |           | 2,453      |

\*Elector numbers as at 30 March 2023

Data use:

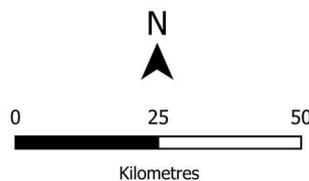


Layers for alignment:  
© State of Victoria (Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action)

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#### Legend

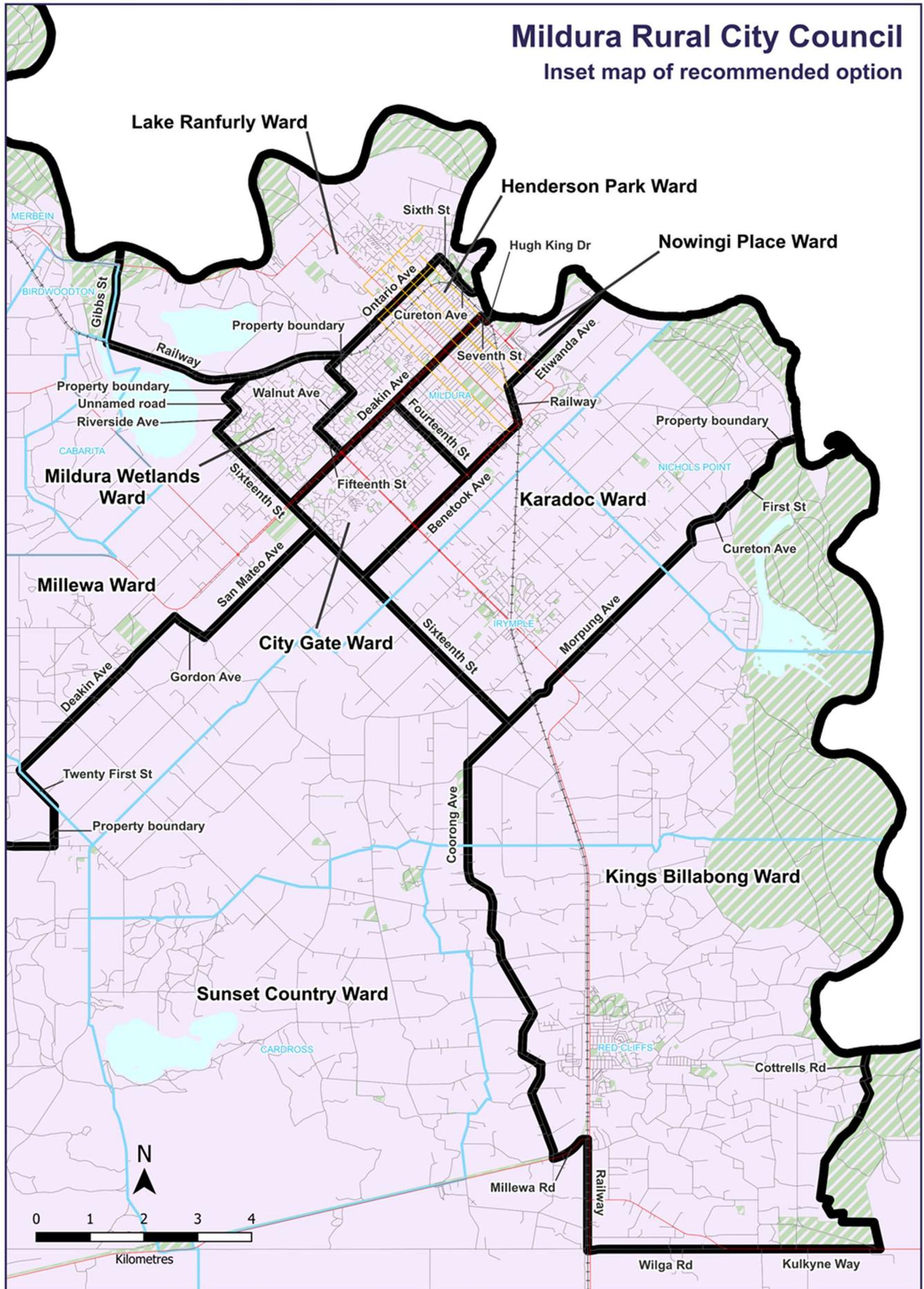
- Recommended boundaries
- Existing wards
  - Unsubdivided
- Map symbols
  - Freeways
  - Main roads
  - Collector roads
  - Minor roads
  - Railways
  - Railway stations
  - Rivers & creeks
  - Lakes
  - Parks & reserves
  - Locality boundaries



| Ward             | Electors*     | Deviation | Area# (square km) |
|------------------|---------------|-----------|-------------------|
| City Gate        | 4,680         | -1.89%    | 5                 |
| Henderson Park   | 5,155         | +8.07%    | 4                 |
| Karadoc          | 4,719         | -1.07%    | 33                |
| Kings Billabong  | 4,770         | 0%        | 83                |
| Lake Ranfurly    | 4,596         | -3.65%    | 19                |
| Mildura Wetlands | 4,858         | +1.84%    | 4                 |
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| Nowingi Place    | 4,781         | +0.23%    | 5                 |
| Sunset Country   | 4,706         | -1.35%    | 17,252            |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>42,932</b> | <b>-</b>  | <b>22,080</b>     |
| <b>Average</b>   | <b>4,770</b>  | <b>-</b>  | <b>2,453</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:

Bailey, Troy (1) (Councillor, Mildura Rural City Council)

Bailey, Troy (2) (Councillor, Mildura Rural City Council)

DiFabrizio, Michael

Healy, Helen (Councillor, Mildura Rural City Council)

Milne, Glenn

### Public hearing

The following people spoke at the public hearing:

DiFabrizio, Michael

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