

Local council electoral structure review

Final Report

Strathbogie Shire Council

May 2023

Revised July 2023

Acknowledgement of Country

The electoral representation advisory panel acknowledges the Taungurung and Yorta Yorta 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.

Document history and version control

Version	Date approved	Submission approved by	Brief description
1	12 May 2023	Acting Deputy Electoral Commissioner	Final version
2	21 July 2023	Program Sponsor	Revised version with inclusion of good governance wording

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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 Strathbogie Shire Council.

The purpose of the review is to advise the Minister on the appropriate number of councillors and electoral structure for the council.

The panel looked at:

- whether the council had an appropriate number of councillors
- whether it should be unsubdivided or subdivided
- appropriate ward names.

This report presents the panel's final advice to the Minister on the recommended new electoral structure of Strathbogie Shire Council to meet the requirements of Victoria's *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act).

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

Recommendation

The electoral representation advisory panel recommends that Strathbogie adopt an unsubdivided electoral structure, represented by 7 councillors.

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.

Please see [Appendix 1](#) for a detailed map of this recommended electoral structure.

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 submissions

The panel received 6 preliminary submissions. Of these, 2 submissions included maps.

A summary of the preliminary submissions is contained in the preliminary report, available on the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au

Preliminary report

The panel published a preliminary report on Wednesday 22 March 2023 with the following electoral structure models for public consultation:

- Model 1: an unsubdivided electoral structure with 7 councillors.
- Model 2: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 6 councillors, 2 wards and 3 councillors per ward.
- Model 3: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 6 councillors, 3 wards and 2 councillors per ward.

The full preliminary report is available on the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au

Response submissions

The panel received 4 submissions responding to the preliminary report. Of these, no 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 Wednesday 19 April 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 elections.

The Act introduced several changes to local government representation, including the types of electoral structures local councils may have. Large and small rural shire councils (including Strathbogie Shire Council) can have one of 3 electoral structures:

- unsubdivided (entire council area with no wards)
- single-councillor wards
- multi-councillor wards with the same number of councillors per ward.

For Strathbogie Shire Council, the electoral representation advisory panel examined:

- the number of councillors
- whether the council should be subdivided into wards or unsubdivided.

For subdivided structures, it also examined:

- the number of wards
- where the ward boundaries should be
- the names of each ward
- how many councillors should be elected for each ward.

The Act requires electoral structures to provide fair and equitable representation and facilitate good governance. For subdivided structures, 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 Strathbogie Shire Council had 3 members:

- The Honourable Frank Vincent AO KC (Chairperson)
- Ms Liz Williams PSM
- Electoral Commissioner Mr Warwick Gately AM (January to March 2023)

Upon Warwick Gately's retirement as Victoria's Electoral Commissioner, the following representatives of the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) were nominated as panel members:

- Director, Electoral Integrity and Regulation Mr Keegan Bartlett (April 2023)

- Acting Deputy Electoral Commissioner Ms Máiréad Doyle (May 2023).

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

To inform the public about the Strathbogie Shire Council electoral structure review, the VEC supported a public information and awareness program, which included:

- printing public notices in state-wide newspapers
- holding public information sessions to outline the review process and respond to questions from the community
- sending out media releases announcing the start of the review and the release of the preliminary and final reports
- publishing information on social media channels
- regularly updating the VEC website content on vec.vic.gov.au, with:
 - current information on the review process
 - submission guides and fact sheets for each council under review with background information
 - preliminary and response submissions from the public.

Public consultation

The panel encouraged public input to the review of Strathbogie Shire Council via:

- preliminary submissions at the start of the review
- 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 Strathbogie Shire 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 rural shire 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
- whether a particular type of electoral structure requiring a certain number of councillors would best suit the council (see 'Deciding the electoral structure' below)
- any matter raised in public submissions not already listed above.

Generally, local councils with a larger number of voters will have a higher number of councillors. Large populations are often more likely to 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 particular circumstances of a 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

The electoral structure of large and small rural shire councils can be:

- unsubdivided (entire council area with no wards)
 - made up of single-councillor wards
- or
- made up of multi-councillor wards with the same number of councillors per ward.

When developing electoral structure models for Strathbogie Shire 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 can be established and whether these would be easily identifiable to local communities
- 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 any 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 government 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 always possible to create a subdivided structure that complies with section 15(2) based on voter numbers that were current at the time of the review as well as 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. Voters' rolls are a combination of state electors (making up the majority of a voters' roll) and a smaller number of ratepayer-based voting entitlements. The Act introduced changes to ratepayer-based entitlement categories, which come into full effect at the 2024 local government elections. As this will change the makeup of voters' rolls, and therefore compliance with section 15(2) of the Act, this is a consideration of the panel during this review.

Deciding on ward names

The panel has taken the following approach to naming wards.

1. Existing ward names were retained where possible and appropriate (if the name was still relevant to the area covered by a ward).
2. Where a new name was required, the panel based this on features such as:
 - places (registered under the *Geographic Place Names Act 1998*) located 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 be named using Aboriginal language. Meaningful consultation is a significant and important process which the panel is not able to undertake within the timeframes of the current review program.

At the same time, 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 in some cases put forward new ward names using Aboriginal language, but only where this is the name of a place within a ward, it is currently in common use, and this name is registered under the *Geographic Place Names Act 1998* (Vic). This is a practical solution to the reality that many of Victoria's geographic features are named using Aboriginal language.

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, an appropriate consultation process should be followed before doing so.

About Strathbogie Shire Council

Profile

Strathbogie Shire Council is in northern Victoria, approximately 150 km from Melbourne. It covers an area of 3,303 km² and shares its borders with Campaspe Shire and Greater Shepparton City councils in the north, and Benalla Shire Council in the east. Mansfield, Murrindindi and Mitchell shire councils are to the south and Greater Bendigo City Council is to the west.

The Traditional Custodians of the Strathbogie area are the Taungurung and Yorta Yorta peoples.

Landscape

The shire is in the Goulburn Valley region of Victoria ‘amidst the picturesque Strathbogie Plateau’ (Department of Planning and Transport, 2022a). It has ‘an abundance of natural attractions’ including the Goulburn River system, Nagambie Lakes, Gooram Falls, Polly McQuinns and ‘unique granite rock formations in the Strathbogie Ranges’ (Strathbogie Shire Council, 2023).

At the 2021 Census, the shire’s population was 11,455 and almost 60% of the population lived in 4 of the shire’s main urban centres – Euroa, Nagambie, Avenel and Violet Town.

Euroa is the largest town in the shire and is the main commercial, industrial and administrative centre (Department of Planning and Transport, 2022b). With a population of 3,116 in 2021, it accounted for 27.2% of the shire’s population (ABS, 2021b).

Nagambie, the shire’s second largest town (population 2,036) (ABS, 2021c), is a popular lakeside town and attracts between 4,000 and 5,000 people during peak tourism season (Department of Planning and Transport, 2022b).

Avenel (population 852) (ABS, 2021a) is a small town in the south west of the shire next to the Hume Freeway, known for its rural landscape and floodplains (Department of Planning and Transport, 2022b). Violet Town (population 717) (ABS, 2021d) is in the north east of the shire near the Strathbogie Ranges.

There are 2 major freeways (Goulburn Valley and Hume) connecting major towns in the shire and service centres in other council areas. Strathbogie is serviced by 2 V/Line rail lines – the Shepparton line with a station in Nagambie and the Albury line with stations in Avenel, Euroa and Violet Town.

Community

The main industries in the shire are agriculture, forestry and fishing, which employed 18.4% of residents in 2021 (.id, 2021). The shire has a rural economic base of wool, grain and cattle production. There are extensive vineyards throughout Nagambie and the Strathbogie Ranges as well as cool-climate horticulture (Department of Planning and Transport, 2022a).

The shire's population increased from 9,486 in 2011 (ABS, 2011) to 11,455 in 2021 (ABS, 2021e). This trend is expected to continue with an estimated annual growth rate of 1.3%.

The Census showed the shire had an older population than the overall state and regional populations, with approximately 54% of residents aged 50 or older (ABS, 2021e). The largest age group in Strathbogie Shire Council in 2021 was 60-to-69 year olds, who made up 18.9% of the shire (Remplan, 2021). The median age in 2021 was 53, which was higher than the regional Victorian median of 43 (ABS, 2021e).

In 2021, just over 80% of shire residents were born in Australia, and 1.8% identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, which is slightly less than the 2% in regional Victoria (ABS, 2021e). English was the only language spoken at home for 87.4% of residents, compared to 86.4% for regional Victoria (ABS, 2021e).

Most people in the shire owned their own home either outright or with a mortgage (77.5%), and the median weekly household income was \$1,188 (ABS, 2021e).

Current number of councillors and electoral structure

Strathbogie Shire Council is currently divided into 5 wards with a total of 7 councillors:

- 2 wards with 2 councillors each (Lake Nagambie and Seven Creeks wards)
- 3 wards with one councillor each (Honeysuckle Creek, Hughes Creek and Mount Wombat wards).

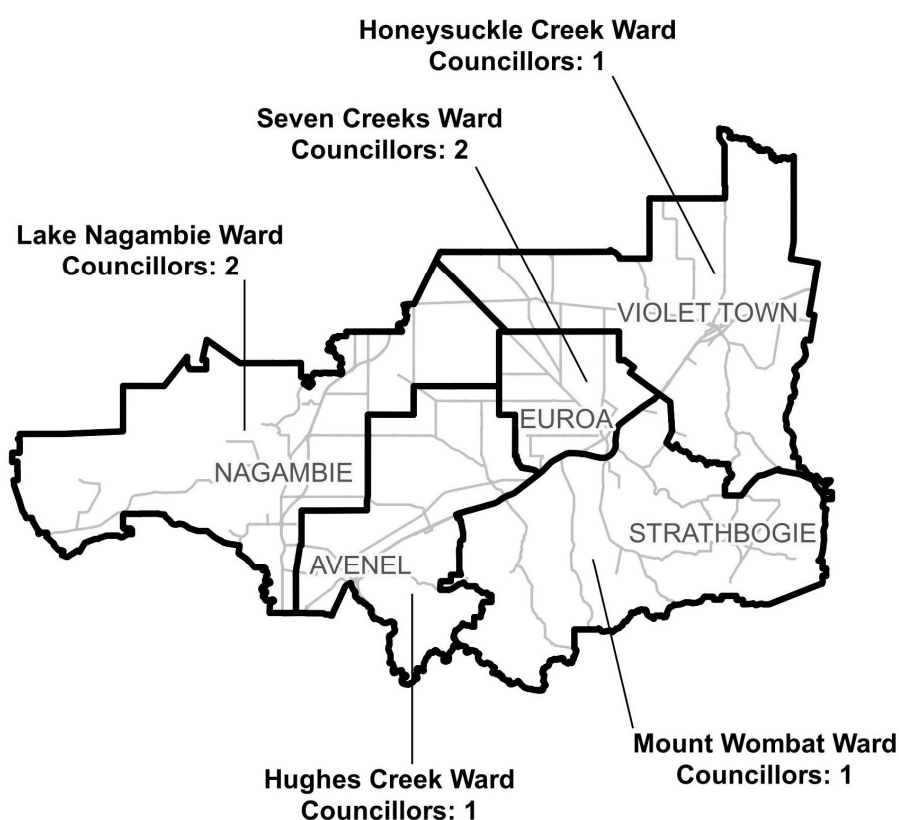


Figure 1: Diagram of current electoral structure of Strathbogie Shire Council.

There are approximately 10,963 voters in Strathbogie Shire Council, with a ratio of 1,566 voters per councillor.

Visit the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au for more information on Strathbogie Shire Council.

Last electoral structure review

The VEC conducted an electoral representation review of Strathbogie Shire 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 Strathbogie Shire Council adopt the current structure consisting of 7 councillors elected from 5 wards (2 wards with 2 councillors and 3 wards with one councillor).

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

Before the 2011 review, a representation review of Strathbogie Shire Council was completed in 2004. This resulted in a multi-councillor electoral structure of 6 wards with a total of 7 councillors (one ward with 2 councillors and 5 wards with 1 councillor each).

Before the 2004 representation review, Strathbogie Shire Council was comprised of 7 single-councillor wards in 2002, changing from an earlier unsubdivided structure with 5 councillors.

Preliminary submissions

At the close of submissions on Wednesday 22 February 2023, the panel had received 6 submissions for the electoral structure review of Strathbogie Shire Council. You can find a list of people who made a preliminary submission in [Appendix 2](#).

The panel received submissions from a range of stakeholders including individuals and 4 current councillors. Submissions were published on the VEC website.

A summary of the preliminary submissions is contained in the preliminary report, available on the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au

Preliminary report

A preliminary report was released on Wednesday 22 March 2023. The panel considered public submissions and research findings 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: an unsubdivided electoral structure with 7 councillors.
- Model 2: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 6 councillors, 2 wards and 3 councillors per ward.
- Model 3: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 6 councillors, 3 wards and 2 councillors per ward.

The full preliminary report is available on the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au

Response submissions

The panel received 4 response submissions to the preliminary report from the public by the deadline of 5 pm on Wednesday 12 April 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 (unsubdivided, 7 councillors)	Model 2 (2 wards with 3 councillors per ward)	Model 3 (3 wards with 2 councillors per ward)	Other
3	-	-	1

Most submissions supported Model 1, an unsubdivided electoral structure with 7 councillors. Submitters put forward a range of arguments in favour of the model, which were similar to those in the preliminary submissions.

One submission did not support any of the 3 models presented, and instead preferred one of the models the panel considered but did not put forward for further comment in the preliminary report (see [Other options](#) below).

Model 1

Kathryn Auty from Euroa reasoned the shire's population did not warrant being divided into wards. Auty preferred an unsubdivided electoral structure as candidates would be elected and required to represent all communities in the shire rather just one ward. Auty felt restricting voters to elect only candidates within an artificial ward boundary was not in the best interests of voters.

Councillor Sally Hayes-Burke from Euroa felt that an unsubdivided electoral structure was more consistent with the *Local Government Act 2020* and the requirement for councillors to govern for the whole municipality. Hayes-Burke argued that Model 1 would encourage a shire-wide approach in decision-making and reduce instances of councillors only considering the ward they represent over the needs of the entire shire. Hayes-Burke also suggested this could encourage big-picture and strategic thinking amongst elected candidates.

Councillor Christopher Raeburn (Violet Town) described Model 1 as the best outcome for the community and suggested a structure without wards could reduce tensions between the urban communities of Euroa and Nagambie. Like Hayes-Burke, Raeburn noted the requirement for councillors to govern for all as per the Act.

The submission from Strathbogie Shire Council did not support Model 1 and suggested an unsubdivided structure could lead to elected representatives coming only from the main towns in the shire.

Models 2 and 3

No response submissions supported the subdivided models put forward in the preliminary report. However, various arguments were presented against models 2 and 3. Auty stated that the wards did not provide representative government in the shire and suggested that such boundaries were artificial, created out of historical circumstance and no longer reflected the demographics or needs of the shire.

Others argued against the prospect of having an even number of councillors. For example, Hayes-Burke highlighted the potential for an imbalance of power to emerge through use of a casting vote in tied decisions, while the council suggested the potential for voting stalemates or ineffective decision-making as a result of having 6 councillors.

Both the council and Christopher Raeburn suggested that having an even number of councillors could place pressure on the mayor (or chairperson) in situations where the use of a casting vote was required.

Other options

Strathbogie Shire Council supported a 7 single-councillor ward model, which the panel had considered during the preliminary stage, but for various reasons, including the fragmentation of Euroa and Nagambie, decided not to put forward for public comment in the preliminary report.

The council's submission argued that this option would:

- ensure elected representatives come from across the shire, and not just the main townships
- reflect the varied and individual communities of the shire
- provide an odd number of councillors, minimising the need for the mayor to use a casting vote.

Public hearing

The panel held an online public hearing for those wishing to speak about their response submission at 10 am on Wednesday 19 April 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 Strathbogie Shire Council, Mayor Laura Binks outlined the council's support for a 7 single-councillor ward structure. This model had been considered by the panel, but not put forward for further comment in the preliminary report. Binks stated that the shire is made up of distinct communities, with towns like Avenel, Ruffy, Longwood, Strathbogie and Violet Town having unique identities and valuing their independence from larger towns such as Euroa and Nagambie. It was argued that all communities of interest would have a greater voice under a 7 single-councillor ward structure than they would under the 3 models presented in the preliminary report.

Binks stated that a 7 single-councillor ward structure would make it easier for residents to know who their councillor was, as well as to divide management of the geographic area between councillors. It was also argued that an uneven number of councillors was preferable to the even number provided for in models 2 and 3, as there was a belief that this may lead to increased incidences of tied votes on council decisions. While acknowledging there are conventions in place for the use of a casting vote to break a voting deadlock on council decisions, Binks suggested that an increased use of the casting vote could lead to a more divisive council.

While supportive of a subdivided structure, the boundaries of models 2 and 3 were not supported by the council who held the view that communities of interest in the shire were not well captured within the wards of those models. Binks also raised concerns with the experiences of neighbouring councils currently operating with an unsubdivided electoral structure, such as a perception that candidates from small or outlying towns have little chance of being elected if competing against candidates from the bigger urban centres. Not wanting this to occur in Strathbogie, the council did not support Model 1.

The final speaker, Christopher Raeburn (Councillor for Honeysuckle Creek Ward), spoke to both his preliminary and response submissions which were made as an individual.

Raeburn was of the view that of the 3 models presented, Model 1 (unsubdivided electoral structure with 7 councillors) worked best within the parameters of the Act, with councillors representing the shire and community as a whole. Raeburn commented on the parochialism of the shire and urban areas infringing on the rural voice. In agreement with the council, Raeburn did not support models 2 or 3 due to the even number of councillors potentially leading to tied votes and the use of a casting vote, and expressed a view that a reduction to 6 councillors may also lead to challenges when electing a mayor. While supportive of Model 1, Raeburn voiced a preference for his preliminary submission suggestion of 5 single-councillor wards, and saw value in splitting towns so that wards contained both urban and rural sectors. Ultimately Raeburn felt the community needed access to an individual councillor they knew would do their

best to progress their local issues, and acknowledged the uncertainty of whether an unsubdivided or subdivided structure would be best suited for the shire.

Findings and recommendation

Number of councillors

After considering the requirements of the Act, public submissions and the agreed criteria, the panel found either 6 or 7 councillors to be an appropriate number for Strathbogie Shire Council.

The panel considered the characteristics of Strathbogie Shire Council in relation to similar rural shire councils, including its size and geography, population and the number and distribution of voters across the shire. Strathbogie Shire Council currently has 10,963 voters represented by 7 councillors and covers an area of 3,303 km². Other rural shires with a similar number of voters generally also have 5 to 7 councillors.

In some cases, a local council may have special circumstances that support a recommendation for fewer or more councillors. While the panel did not identify new special circumstances since the representation review in 2011, the panel also recognised that the geographic features and uneven distribution of voters across the shire make developing a satisfactory subdivided electoral structure for Strathbogie Shire Council challenging. The Act's requirement for multi-councillor ward structures to have the same number of councillors per ward also poses difficulties, as multi-councillor ward structures are not possible with the current number of councillors. Because of this, the panel also considered subdivided electoral structures with fewer or more councillors. The panel explored whether an increase or decrease in the number of councillors would enable multi or single-councillor ward structures to be created that may provide more favourable representation for the community and consequently facilitate good governance). As a result, the panel put forward 2 options with fewer councillors: Model 2 and Model 3.

Electoral structure

After considering the requirements of the Act, public submissions and the agreed criteria, the panel found that Model 1 is the best model for promoting fair and equitable representation for voters in Strathbogie Shire Council and consequently facilitate good governance.

The panel reviewed the arguments in support of each of the 3 proposed models to form a final recommendation. Ultimately, Model 1 (unsubdivided with 7 councillors) was seen to be the most appropriate structure, and best supported the expressed desire to foster a whole of shire approach in council. The panel considered Model 1 to provide effective and equitable representation through the ability of voters to have a voice in electing all 7 councillors and to choose between candidates from any part of the shire. It also considered that with no ward boundaries, Model 1 would keep communities of interest intact, and that the challenges of balancing uneven population growth across wards would be removed. The panel determined these benefits outweighed the potential drawback of a perceived loss of local representation.

In coming to its final decision, the panel acknowledged the distinct voice and communities of interest across the shire and was convinced these communities would have a good chance of achieving favourable representation under an unsubdivided structure. Unlike neighbouring

unsubdivided shires like Greater Shepparton City Council, Strathbogie Shire does not have one centralised main town where a large majority of the population resides. As such, the distribution of voters across the shire and in numerous townships of varying size means candidates from all areas of the shire and with good levels of local support have a reasonable chance of being elected. Moreover, the panel felt the shire's different communities and townships to have strong identities and that these would be retained regardless of the electoral structure.

The panel considered the arguments presented by the council for a single-councillor ward structure, including the need to ensure all areas and communities of the shire are represented and the expressed benefits to voters of familiar and relatable candidates. However, it did not consider these arguments sufficient to change the panel's position on such a structure or to outweigh the drawbacks of a single-councillor ward structure. The splitting of the 2 major townships (Euroa and Nagambie) was of concern, as this would divide communities of interest, and possibly using unfamiliar or artificial boundaries to do so. In addition, the panel identified a potential for voters in rural or farming communities to be marginalised if included in a ward combining part of a more densely populated urban area with a large rural area.

The panel was also concerned about the splitting of towns and communities in the subdivided electoral structures put forward for public comment. In Model 3 Avenel was split between 2 wards, and the panel had reservations on the groupings of towns and communities within wards, particularly the grouping of Violet Town with a large rural area and part of Avenel. Combining these communities in the one ward, along with the reduction in councillor numbers, led the panel to determine Model 3 had too many disadvantages. While the panel initially felt Model 2, with 3 councillors per ward, might be received positively as enabling the election of councillors with local knowledge of their communities, there was no public support for this model in submissions.

There are valid arguments both in favour of and against the various unsubdivided and subdivided electoral structures examined in this review, as each have their own benefits and drawbacks. While it is not possible for an electoral structure to address all the issues at play in the shire, the panel considers that, on balance, Model 1 is the best model for promoting fair and equitable representation for voters in Strathbogie Shire Council and consequently facilitate good governance under the requirements of the Act.

The panel's recommendation

The electoral representation advisory panel recommends that Strathbogie Shire Council adopt an unsubdivided electoral structure, represented by 7 councillors.

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 *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic). This electoral structure was designated as Model 1 in the preliminary report.

Please see [Appendix 1](#) for a detailed map of this recommended electoral structure.

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Appendix 1: Map of recommended structure

Strathbogie Shire Council Seven councillors, unsubdivided

Ward	Councillors	Electors*	Deviation	Area sq km
Unsubdivided	7	10,963	0%	3,303
Total	7	10,963	0%	3,303
Electors per councillor		1,566		

*Elector numbers as at 11 November 2022

Legend

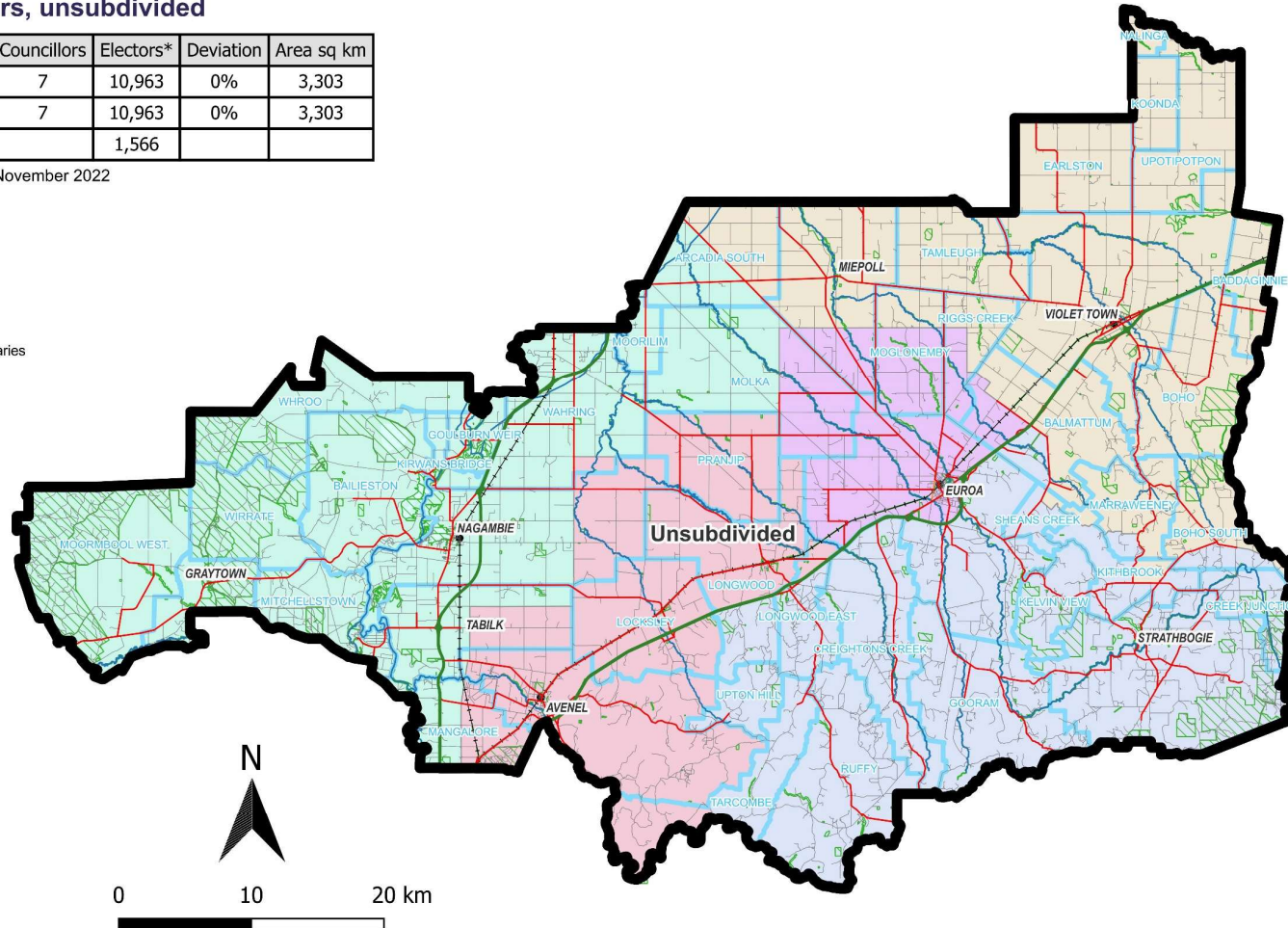
Recommended boundaries

Existing wards

- Honeysuckle Creek
- Hughes Creek
- Lake Nagambie
- Mount Wombat
- Seven Creeks

Map symbols

- Freeways
- Main roads
- Collector roads
- Minor roads
- Railways
- Railway stations
- Rivers & creeks
- Lakes
- Parks & reserves
- Locality boundaries



Map prepared by:



Data use:



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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.

Preliminary submissions

Preliminary submissions were made by:

Dickinson, Reg (Councillor)
Hayes-Burke, Sally (Councillor)
Hourigan, Kristy (Councillor)
Raeburn, Christopher (Councillor)
Taylor, Robyn
Tehan, Michael

Response submissions

Response submissions were made by:

Auty, Kathryn
Hayes-Burke, Sally (Councillor)
Raeburn, Christopher (Councillor)
Strathbogie Shire Council

Public hearing

The following people spoke at the public hearing:

Binks, Laura (Mayor) (on behalf of Strathbogie Shire Council)
Raeburn, Christopher (Councillor)

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