

Local council electoral structure review

# Final Report

Casey City Council

January 2024

### Acknowledgement of Country

The electoral representation advisory panel acknowledges the Bunurong people 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	19 December 2023	The Honourable Frank Vincent AO KC
1	20 December 2023	Ms Liz Williams PSM
1	10 January 2024	Mr Sven Bluemmel

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## Executive summary

An electoral structure review panel appointed by the Minister for Local Government has reviewed the electoral structure of Casey 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), Casey 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 Casey 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 Casey City Council adopt a 12 single-councillor ward structure – 12 wards with one councillor per ward.

The recommended names for the 12 wards in this electoral structure are: Akoonah Ward, Casuarina Ward, Correa Ward, Cranbourne Gardens Ward, Dillwynia Ward, Grevillea Ward, Kalora Ward, Kowan Ward, Quarters Ward, River Gum Ward, Tooradin Ward, and Waratah 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 1 November 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 12 councillors – 12 wards with one councillor per ward.

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 35 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 Tuesday 28 November 2023. 5 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 Casey City Council) must now have single-councillor ward electoral structures.

For Casey 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 Casey 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 Casey 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.

Casey City was also offered but did not take up 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.

### **Public consultation**

The panel encouraged public input to the review of Casey 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 Casey 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 Casey 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. 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 Casey City Council

## Profile

Casey City Council is located on the south-eastern fringe of metropolitan Melbourne and covers an area of 397 km<sup>2</sup>. With 365,239 people it is Victoria's most populated council (ABS 2022).

Casey City Council is surrounded by Knox City Council and Yarra Ranges Shire Council in the north, Cardinia Shire in the east, Mornington Peninsula Shire to the south, and Frankston City and Greater Dandenong City councils to the west.

Stretching from the base of the Dandenong Ranges in the north to the Western Port shoreline in the south, the council includes established and rapidly growing suburbs, commercial districts, agricultural land use and green wedge land.

The Traditional Custodians of the land in the Casey City Council area are the Bunurong people.

## Landscape

Heavily urbanised in its northern half, and largely rural in the south, the council area sits at the interface of Melbourne's sprawling south-eastern suburbs and its rural outskirts. In the north are the Casey foothills which give way to established suburbs, including Endeavour Hills in the northwest to Harkaway in the northeast. Densely populated suburbs running along the south of the Monash freeway include Eumemmering, Hallam, and Narre Warren to Berwick. Newer housing developments expanding southward and spreading out from the Cranbourne centre include Cranbourne East, Cranbourne West, Lyndhurst, Clyde, and Botanic Ridge. In the south is farmland and areas with green wedge protections and then the Casey Coast and coastal towns such as Pearcedale and Tooradin (DTP 2023; .id 2023).

Notable features of the council include Churchill National Park, Dandenong Police Paddocks Reserve, Lysterfield Park, Lysterfield Lake, Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne, Casey Fields, and the Western Port coastline (.id 2023).

The Monash and Princes freeways cut across the northern part of the council. The South Gippsland Highway, running southeast, is a major transport link to Bass Coast. Many other significant roads run through the council and include Hallam and Cranbourne roads which run north-south, and Heatherton and Thompsons roads which run east-west. Metropolitan train services to Pakenham and Cranbourne are also in the council.

## Population and community

Since 2001 the population has more than doubled (ABS 2001, ABS 2022a), its rapid growth is forecast to continue and is projected to be nearly 450,000 in 2028 and 550,000 people by 2041 (.id 2023). From 2022 to 2028 the population is forecast to increase at a rate of 2.8% per annum. Most of the future growth will occur in the Clyde area. This growth is following a pattern of expansion which began in the north-west and has followed major transport corridors towards the south as new fields have been opened to development and settled. This has seen the Narre Warren, Berwick, and Cranbourne areas turn into significant population centres (.id 2023).

The proportion of the population identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander is 0.7%, the same as for Greater Melbourne (ABS 2022a, ABS 2022b).

Casey is a comparatively young council area with a median age of 34, compared to 37 for Greater Melbourne. The council area has mainly family households (82% of households compared with 71% for Greater Melbourne). Housing is dominated by separate, mostly large builds with about 50% of houses having 4 or more bedrooms, far greater than the average for Greater Melbourne (33%). In addition, with so much recent development, over 50% of all homeowners have a mortgage, compared to 37% for Greater Melbourne (.id 2023).

The median weekly income for individuals in the council is \$783, less than that for Greater Melbourne (\$841), while for households it is \$1,918, slightly more than \$1,901 for Greater Melbourne (ABS 2022a, 2022b).

Overseas migration has made a large contribution to population growth, with 42% of people born overseas, compared to 36% for Greater Melbourne. Since 2011, the number of people from India and Afghanistan has close to tripled, and people from Sri Lanka doubled (ABS 2022c). Consequently, there are many households (42% of the total) in which a language other than English is spoken, compared to 34% for Greater Melbourne (.id 2023). Other large populations of people with Chinese, Italian, Afghan, and Hazara ancestry are present in the council. At about 4% of the overall population, the council has a comparatively large number of people from Afghanistan, and many of these people have refugee backgrounds and are in the north-west of the council in Doveton and Eumemmerring (.id 2023).

## Current number of councillors and electoral structure

Casey City Council is currently divided into 6 wards with a total of 11 councillors:

- one ward with one councillor (Balla Balla Ward)
- 5 wards with 2 councillors each (Edrington, Four Oaks, Mayfield, River Gum, and Springfield wards).



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

There are approximately 252,670 voters in Casey City Council, with an approximate ratio of 22,970 voters per councillor.

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

## Last electoral structure review

The electoral structure of Casey City Council was last reviewed in 2020. However, the electoral structure recommended as part of the review process and published shortly before the introduction of the Local Government Act 2020 did not meet the requirements of the new Act. A

copy of the final report for the 2020 Casey City Council representation review is available at the VEC website at [vec.vic.gov.au](http://vec.vic.gov.au).

Casey City Council was dismissed by an Act of Parliament in February 2020 and consequently no elections were held for the council in October 2020.

## Preliminary report

A preliminary report was released on Wednesday 1 November 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 12 councillors – 12 wards with one councillor per ward.

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

## Response submissions

The panel received 35 response submissions to the preliminary report from the public by the deadline of 5 pm on Wednesday 22 November 2023. Of the 35 submissions, 3 people made more than one submission, meaning there were submissions from 32 different submitters. 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 (12 single-councillor wards)	Mapped submission	Out of scope
0	24	7	2*	2^

\* 2 people made mapped submissions in addition to written submissions.

^ One person made 2 submissions, one of which was out of scope.

Model 2 presented an 11 single-councillor ward model, which received the most support with 24 submissions. Of the 24 submissions in favour of Model 2, 19 used a templated submission (“form letter”) with identical or near identical wording. Model 2 was typically preferred because it kept localities and grouped communities of interest together and had an odd number of councillors.

Model 3 presented a 12 single-councillor ward model and was preferred by 7 submitters. Supporters of Model 3 highlighted its strong boundaries, and use of 12 councillors as appropriate for managing population growth, especially having 2 councillors in the south of the council.

Model 1 presented an 11 single-councillor model with different boundaries to Model 2. No submissions supported this model.

Three submitters made multiple submissions with either supplementary or updated information. Of those, Stephen Capon of Narre Warren and Garry Page of Hampton Park, made mapped submissions in addition to their written submissions. Former Casey City Council councillor Steven Beardon of Tocumwal in New South Wales also made 2 submissions, one of which was out of scope for the purposes of this review.

Arguments regarding the appropriate number of councillors was an important part of many submissions. Support for 11 councillors was strongest. In total, 4 submissions explicitly stated a preference for 11 councillors and implied support came from the further 20 submissions preferring Model 2. Support for 12 councillors was made explicit in 4 submissions and 3 provided implied support. In addition, one submitter made no comment on councillor numbers.

## **Model 1**

The panel received no submissions in support of Model 1 and 27 submissions opposed to it, including 19 form letters containing near identical wording. This model was developed using major roads and train lines as clear and recognisable boundaries. The major arguments against Model 1 included the model not reflecting communities of interest and tending to split suburbs in illogical ways.

Form letter submitters argued that Model 1 split some suburbs in ways that did not effectively capture communities of interest. Specifically, the division of Berwick did not group the older and newer parts of the suburb into separate wards, but rather Berwick was divided into 3. Waratah and Grasmere wards were described as problematic due to how they grouped unrelated communities of interest. Merinda Ward was also criticised for covering multiple suburbs.

Casey City Council noted that the proposed Coastal Ward covered a significant geographic area, including Clyde the council's largest growth area, and was concerned this could impact future levels of representation. Similarly, Graeme Phipps of Pearcedale believed Model 1 would be unfair for the Coastal Ward councillor to have to cover or be responsible for all of the environmental coastline.

The Casey Residents and Ratepayers Association felt Model 1 to have some oddly shaped wards and too often covered many suburbs and divided communities of interest. Submitters Elaine Smith of Narre Warren South, Stuart Chalmers of Narre Warren North, and Capon felt the division of suburbs, particularly in the Narre Warren suburbs, to be a disadvantage.

## **Model 2**

The panel received 24 submissions supporting Model 2. Where possible, Model 2 used suburb boundaries to define wards and group communities of interest. Many submitters responded in favour of Model 2 as it was seen to keep suburbs and communities together better than the other models. Submitters were from Berwick, Cranbourne, Cranbourne North, Dandenong, Endeavour Hills, Hallam, Hampton Park, Keysborough, Narre Warren, Narre Warren North, Narre Warren South, Noble Park, Noble Park North, and Springvale.

Many submissions supporting Model 2 were mainly concerned with how the northern suburbs were grouped into wards. For instance, the form letter submitters preferred the division of Berwick in Model 2 as it grouped the older part of the suburb with the semi-rural areas to the north. Also, the southern part of Berwick being in its own ward was preferred. Churchill, Maramba and River Gum wards each contained demographically similar areas which was an identified advantage of the model. Clyde North Ward was supported due to it encompassing the whole suburb. Likewise, Quarters Ward was seen to suitably group communities of interest. However, all form letter submissions proposed slight changes to Quarters Ward to better represent the localities contained within it.

Submissions from the Casey Residents and Ratepayers Association, Smith and Capon all suggested the model being based on suburb boundaries better represented communities of interest. Chalmers felt it better represented Narre Warren communities of interest.



Former Casey City Council councillor Brian Oates from Endeavour Hills provided a submission with similarities to the one submitted previously for the 2019 Casey City Council electoral boundary review. He described it as being very similar to Model 2 in keeping communities of interest together and preferred Model 2 for that reason.

The appropriate number of councillors for the council was also raised as a point of concern in some submissions. Some submitters supported increasing the number of councillors because the council has such a large and rapidly growing population but expressed concern about the potential for tied votes with 12 councillors. Casey Residents and Ratepayers Association cited the history of internal politics amongst councillors in their support for Model 2. They expressed concern that an even number of councillors could result in deadlocks and internal fighting and that an odd number of councillors was the best way to prevent this. Similarly, submitters Stephen Matulec of Narre Warren, Beardon and Capon supported an odd number of councillors to potentially reduce the occurrence of tied votes.

Stuart Chalmers preferred Model 2 but believed forecast population growth justified 12 councillors for the council. In contrast, Beardon gave qualified support for Model 3 to reduce the voter to councillor ratio but did not support an even number of councillors. Beardon was also critical of Model 2 not giving fair representation to southern parts of the council. Page was opposed to Model 2 because its voter to councillor ratio was higher.

Phipps felt Model 2 placed too much environmental responsibility onto the councillor of the proposed Pelican Point Ward. They felt a single councillor for the large southern region of the council would not provide enough representation for a large area with complex land management considerations.

### **Model 3**

Model 3 was developed as a 12, single-councillor ward structure with boundaries focusing on major roads. Seven submitters supported Model 3, and were from Berwick, Hampton Park, Narre Warren, and Pearcedale. Submitters favouring Model 3 highlighted the need for 12 councillors to support the council's large and growing population, and a need for more representation around the existing Coastal Ward.

In its submission, Casey City Council noted Model 3 accounted for future growth and better facilitated representation of the community. The Council also believed many boundaries would be familiar to residents.

Page, Matulec, and Chalmers each submitted that 12 councillors would help address the large population and strong growth forecasts. Stephen Capon also noted concerns with the high elector to councillor ratio in an 11-councillor model but preferred the benefits of an odd number of councillors to avoid tied votes.

Tim Ahchow of Pearcedale, Phipps, and Beardon argued for additional representation in the southern area. Phipps noted that councillors representing the area need to balance complex land management and environmental needs with ongoing developments such as those in

Devon Meadows and Cranbourne South. Phipps argued this warrants a second councillor in the south and believed Model 3 presented strong boundaries for the entire council.

The Casey Residents and Ratepayers Association, Beardon, and Capon were concerned about the possibility of 12 councillors resulting in a greater chance of tied votes. Other submitters were less concerned with this prospect. For instance, Page noted that irrespective of the number of councillors, councillor absences can result in votes held between an even number of councillors.

The form letter submitters felt Model 3 divided some communities of interest. Their submissions highlighted divisions in communities around Berwick, Clyde North, Lynbrook and Lyndhurst which they felt were better grouped in Model 2.

### **Other options**

Some suggested improvements to one of the models. For instance, the form letter submitters proposed a minor amendment of adding all of Lynbrook and Cranbourne West into Quarters Ward and reducing the extent of Cranbourne North in the ward, resulting in a better model.

Capon submitted an alternative mapped submission based on Model 2. Capon's model focused on more solidly grouping communities together with a focus on suburb and natural boundaries rather than road boundaries. It only made boundary modifications for the area around Endeavour Hills, Hallam, and Narre Warren. The panel examined if these modifications would make a viable model and found it was possible to keep all of Narre Warren North together and use the locality boundary south of Hallam rather than splitting along the train line. The modifications also followed the boundary of Narre Warren rather than splitting along more minor roads as was the case in the preliminary Model 2 proposal. Boundaries in the rest of the model were retained.

Submitter Page presented a set of minor amendments to Model 3. These changes were made to reduce the population in the proposed Tooradin Ward in Model 3 and increase the population in River Gum. This was in consideration of the main areas of high growth shifting to the southern parts of the council. On assessment, Page's amendments did not meet the +/-10% requirement so were not considered further.

In addition, several submitters raised the idea of dividing the entire council into 2 councils as a solution to managing its population. The panel is unable to consider this as an option.

### **Ward names**

The panel received 20 submissions from the public and Casey City Council about possible ward names that use Aboriginal language. The panel includes these for the Minister's information but notes that it was not possible to verify whether appropriate consultation took place with relevant Aboriginal groups about the proposed names:

Akoonah, Alkira, Booring, Bunerong, Bungarlook, Bunurong, Burremah, Eumemmerring, Kalora, Kambrya, Kowan, Kurrajong, Marnebek, Mayone-bulluk, Merinda, Myuna, Narre Warren South, Timbarra, Tooradin, Topirum, and Warneet.

## Public hearing

The panel held an online public hearing for those wishing to speak about their response submission at 2 pm on 28 November 2023. 5 people spoke at the hearing.

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

Graeme Phipps described the south of the council as a complex area, and not simply all farmland, with additional councillor responsibilities to include managing the balance between development pressures and environmental values. For instance, the Cranbourne South suburb is expected to experience significant industrial development, while a UNESCO designated biosphere reserve exists along the coastal zone and forms a critical link in the Mornington Peninsula and Western Port Biosphere Reserve.

Phipps felt the division of the southern part of the council in Model 3 into Cranbourne Gardens and Tooradin wards preferable as it would divide responsibility, workload, and travel in the south between 2 councillors. In comparison, Coastal Ward in Model 1 accounted for over 40% of the entire council while Pelican Point Ward in Model 2 took in over 36%. Phipps felt wards of this size and complexity were comparatively unfair for any elected councillor.

Phipps also described Model 3 as well-crafted in the north and was in support of its proposed names. Tooradin Ward was preferred over Pelican Point Ward, as locally people identified with Tooradin. Phipps was not concerned about even councillor numbers, but rather saw any impasse as needing further negotiation between councillors until resolved.

Stuart Chalmers spoke about the number of electors to councillors. Because of the current high ratio when compared to other councils and because of the forecast population growth, Chalmers felt increasing to 12 councillors was appropriate. However, they preferred Model 2 because the boundaries of models 1 and 3 divided Narre Warren North unfavourably. Chalmers prioritised keeping Narre Warren North in one ward over 12 councillors. However, they did not feel 12 councillors would be problematic and believed it would be a workable option, particularly given the mayor has a casting vote.

Stephen Capon argued for 11 councillors to avoid the prospect of ties and deadlocks in council votes. Capon compared the voter to councillor ratio for 11 and 12 councillors and suggested that in practice 11 councillors would not make a large difference in terms of residents having access to councillors. Capon also suggested ward names which they considered more appropriate than the proposed names in the preliminary model.

Manisha Dona reiterated the arguments in their submission and described a preference for 11 councillors over 12, even if a 12-councillor model could be developed that adhered more strongly to suburb boundaries.

Garry Page preferred Model 3 and argued that according to their research the prospect of even councillor numbers creating problems in council meetings was unsubstantiated. Page also believed the ratio of voters to councillors was unbalanced when contrasting Casey City Council to other interface councils. Page noted that minor modifications were possible with Model 2 that

could change it to a 12-councillor model and maintain boundaries that generally adhere to suburb boundaries. Page recommended several ward name changes that were believed to be improvements on proposed names.

## 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. In practice this means when the models were developed some of the proposed wards were set outside the +/-10% deviation range. This is because, for this council, they show elector numbers for July 2023. However, with forecast population changes all wards are expected to be within the +/-10% range by the 2024 election.

### Number of councillors

After considering the requirements of the Act, public submissions and the agreed criteria, the panel found 12 councillors to be an appropriate number for Casey City Council.

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

Some submitters argued 11 councillors as appropriate for the council because of the problems that might emerge under an even number of councillors. These included the prospect of tied votes and deadlocks, and historical governance problems that led to council dismissal. However, there were also submitters who preferred the structure of Model 2, yet who saw a strong justification for 12 councillors because of the council population.

Submitters in favour of 12 councillors raised arguments including the large and growing population of the council, that the risk of tied votes had not been an issue in the past, and the legislation allowed for 12 councillors. In coming to a decision, the panel considered the findings of the *Local government electoral review stage 2 report* and noted in that review the authors:

could not see any compelling reason for applying a preference for uneven numbers when determining councillor numbers, given that absences of councillors from time to time mean that the full complement of councillors is frequently not in attendance for council decisions and, in any case, the legislation allows for a stalemate to be resolved through the mayor's casting vote (Georgiou *et al.* 2014, p. 42).

The panel agreed that councillors tend to negotiate as part of their voting process and that formal and legislated mechanisms were in place to address any impasses that may emerge

from even councillor numbers. Moreover, the panel noted that the council dismissed was an 11-councillor electoral structure.

Casey City Council currently has 252,670 voters represented by 11 councillors and covers an area of 397 km<sup>2</sup>. This is 55,000 more voters than the next largest interface council. According to the 2021 Census, there are 73,000 more people in the council than the next largest interface council (ABS 2022a, ABS 2022d). Additionally, the population is growing at over 11,000 per annum (.id 2023). Given these considerations, the panel believed it entirely appropriate to increase the number of councillors to 12.

In some cases, a local council may have special circumstances that support a recommendation for fewer or more councillors. The panel identified high population growth and the fact that Casey City Council is the most populated of Victoria's councils. 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 Casey City Council challenging. Because of this, the panel considered a range of models with 11 and 12 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 an increased number of councillors: Model 3.

## **Electoral structure**

After considering the requirements of the Act, public submissions and the agreed criteria, the panel found Model 3 to be the single-councillor ward model with the best potential to promote fair and equitable representation for voters in Casey City Council and consequently facilitate good governance.

The panel examined Model 1; the suggested modifications in the form letter; Model 2; a modified version of Model 2 incorporating submitter Capon's recommended changes; Model 3; and a modified version of Model 3 which had a greater emphasis on localities.

Model 1 was not supported in public submissions and the panel decided to not pursue the model any further because the other models were preferable. The form letter submission suggested adjustments in Model 2 to Quarters Ward which would keep Lynbrook and Cranbourne West together. However, the panel found this was not possible without creating oddly shaped surrounding wards, which the panel did not prefer.

The panel reviewed Model 2 and the amendments to the northern wards as recommended in the Capon submission. The panel found Capon's suggested modifications better captured the localities and development in the north. The panel felt Capon's modifications resulted in an overall improved Model 2 and opted for this model over the preliminary Model 2 in comparing the advantages and disadvantages of the possible models.

Because there had been such a strong emphasis in submissions on wards that adhere to locality boundaries, the panel examined whether a 12-councillor model based on locality boundaries was possible. A model was developed as a variation of Model 3, based on localities

as in Model 2. However, the panel found that due to voter distribution it was not possible to adhere to localities for all boundaries. This was particularly the case for Narre Warren North which was divided between 3 wards, and that it could not be contained in a single ward without having a significant impact on surrounding boundaries. Another disadvantage of the model was that it did not use the South Gippsland Highway to the same extent as the proposed preliminary Model 3, and the panel preferred the use of the Highway as it was the clearest definable feature in the south of the council. The panel agreed the modified Model 3 did not address the issues it set out to remedy and was therefore not considered a compelling alternative to the original Model 3.

The panel noted that the wards in Model 3 followed those of the current electoral structure relatively closely, as had been identified in the Council submission, which it agreed was an advantage because of their familiarity. Some submitters had been critical of the way Model 3 divided the south into 2 wards. However, those submitters were not from that area of the council. Submitters from the south had been in favour of Model 3 precisely because it divided the south into 2 wards.

The panel agreed that the preferred structures were Capon's modified Model 2 and the original Model 3, and debated whether the advantages of Model 2 outweighed those of Model 3. The panel agreed that the way Model 2 kept localities together achieved an important objective. However, it felt Model 3 was a fairer model for the council because with 12 councillors it reduced the voter to councillor ratio and achieved better representation outcomes for all in the process.

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 3 to be the single-councillor ward model with the best potential to promote fair and equitable representation for voters in Casey 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 Casey 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. In addition, due to the high and variable population growth across the council area, it was necessary to set some current ward deviations outside +/-10% to increase the likelihood of ward deviations being within the +/-10% requirement at the time of the 2024 election. Despite best efforts, the panel acknowledges that, due to the volatility of population growth as well as the uncertain impacts of changes to council voting entitlements under the Act, that there remains a risk that some wards may remain or move outside +/-10% by the time of the 2024 election.

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 Casey 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 area and in all wards under the current electoral structure. The panel assumes this trend will continue under a structure of 12 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:

- Akoonah Ward: New name based on a park in the ward. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Casuarina Ward: New name based on flora native to the area.
- Correa Ward: New name based on flora native to the area.
- Cranbourne Gardens Ward: New name based on the botanical gardens in the ward. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Dillwynia Ward: New name based on flora native to the area.
- Grevillea Ward: New name based on flora native to the area.
- Kalora Ward: New name based on a park in the ward. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Kowan Ward: New name based on a park in the ward. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Quarters Ward: New name based on a school in the ward. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- River Gum Ward: Existing ward name based on a reserve, school and road in the ward. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Tooradin Ward: New name based on a locality in the ward. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Waratah Ward: New name based on a park in the ward. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.

Public submissions suggested over 20 ward names that use Aboriginal language. Of those, the panel recommended Akoonah, Kalora, Kowan, and Tooradin as most appropriate in the final model. The panel considered feedback on ward names from submissions and changed 7 ward names from that in the proposed Model 3. These changed names were all put forward as potential names by Casey City Council: Akoonah Ward for Grasmere Ward; Casuarina Ward for Brechin Ward; Correa Ward for Selandra Ward; Dillwynia Ward for Grices Ward; Grevillia Ward for Maramba Ward; Kalora Ward for Churchill Ward; and Kowan Ward for Berwick Springs Ward.

## The panel's recommendation

The electoral representation advisory panel recommends that Casey City Council adopt a 12 single-councillor ward structure – 12 wards with one councillor per ward.



The recommended names for the 12 wards in this electoral structure are Akoonah Ward, Casuarina Ward, Correa Ward, Cranbourne Gardens Ward, Dillwynia Ward, Grevillea Ward, Kalora Ward, Kowan Ward, Quarters Ward, River Gum Ward, Tooradin Ward, and Waratah 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 3 in the preliminary report.

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

## References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) (2001) [2001 Census All Persons QuickStats, Casey \(LGA\)](#), ABS, accessed 2 October 2023.

—(2022a) [2021 Census All Persons QuickStats, Casey \(LGA\)](#), ABS, accessed 2 October 2023.

—(2022b) [2021 Census All Persons QuickStats, Greater Melbourne](#), ABS, accessed 2 October 2023.

—(2022c) [2021 Census Community Profiles. Casey \(LGA\)](#), ABS, accessed 2 October 2023.

—(2022d) [2021 Census All Persons QuickStats, Wyndham \(LGA\)](#), ABS, accessed 29 November 2023.

DTP (Department of Transport and Planning) (2023) [Casey planning scheme](#), DTP, accessed 2 October 2023.

Electoral Act 2002 (Vic)

Geographic Place Names Act 1998 (Vic)

Georgiou, P., Davis, S., and Murphy, A. (2014) [Local government electoral review: stage 2 report](#), Local Government Victoria, accessed 29 November 2023.

.id (informed decisions) (2023) [City of Casey](#), .id, accessed 2 October 2023.

Local Government Act 1989 (Vic)

Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)

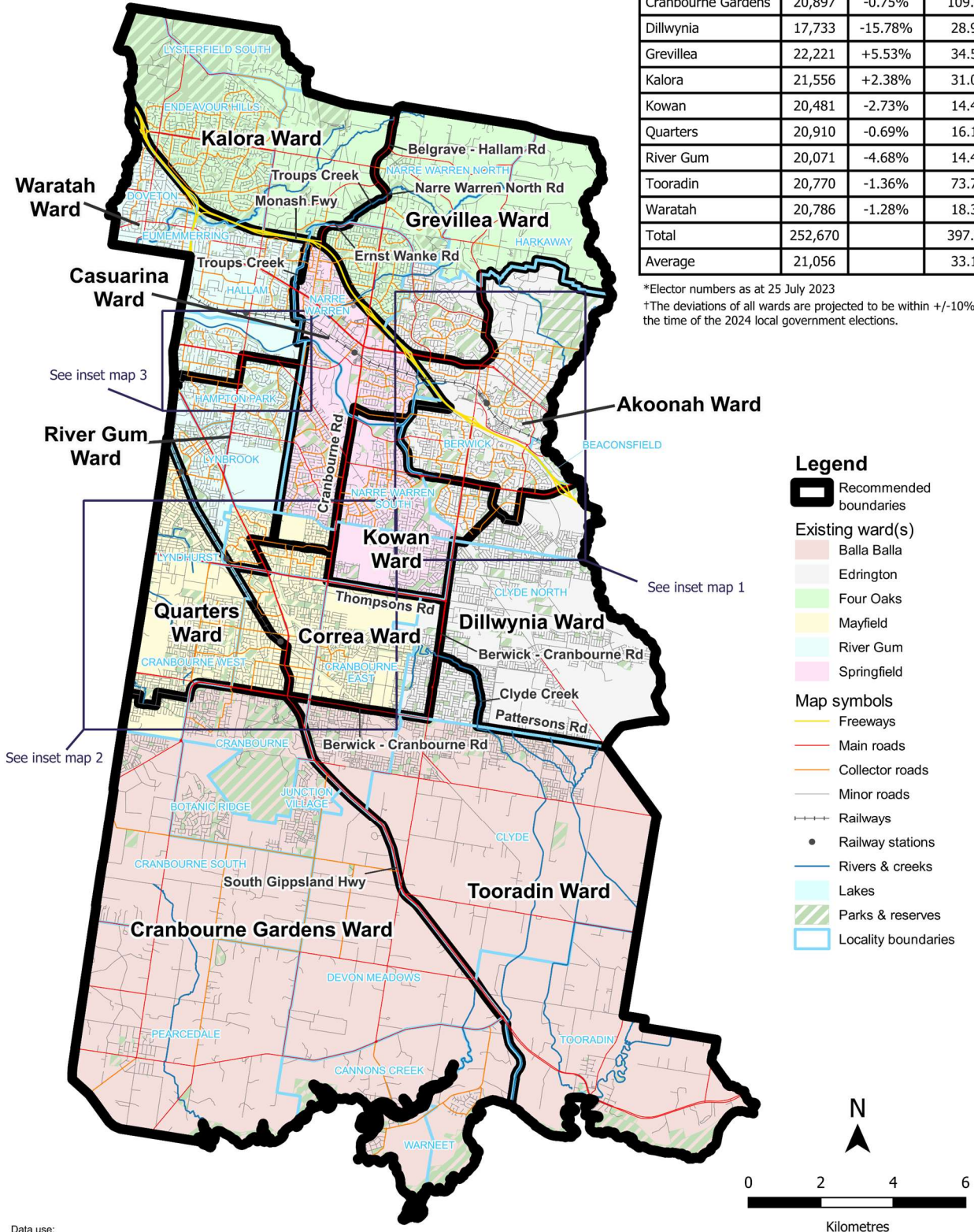
Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020 (Vic)

# Appendix 1: Map of recommended structure

## Casey City Council Map of recommended option 12 single-councillor wards

Ward	Electors*	Deviation†	Area sq km
Akoonah	21,419	+1.72%	21.4
Casuarina	22,820	+8.38%	17.3
Correa	23,006	+9.26%	17.3
Cranbourne Gardens	20,897	-0.75%	109.9
Dillwynia	17,733	-15.78%	28.9
Grevillea	22,221	+5.53%	34.5
Kalora	21,556	+2.38%	31.0
Kowan	20,481	-2.73%	14.4
Quarters	20,910	-0.69%	16.1
River Gum	20,071	-4.68%	14.4
Tooradin	20,770	-1.36%	73.7
Waratah	20,786	-1.28%	18.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>252,670</b>		<b>397.2</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>21,056</b>		<b>33.1</b>

\*Elector numbers as at 25 July 2023  
†The deviations of all wards are projected to be within +/-10% by the time of the 2024 local government elections.

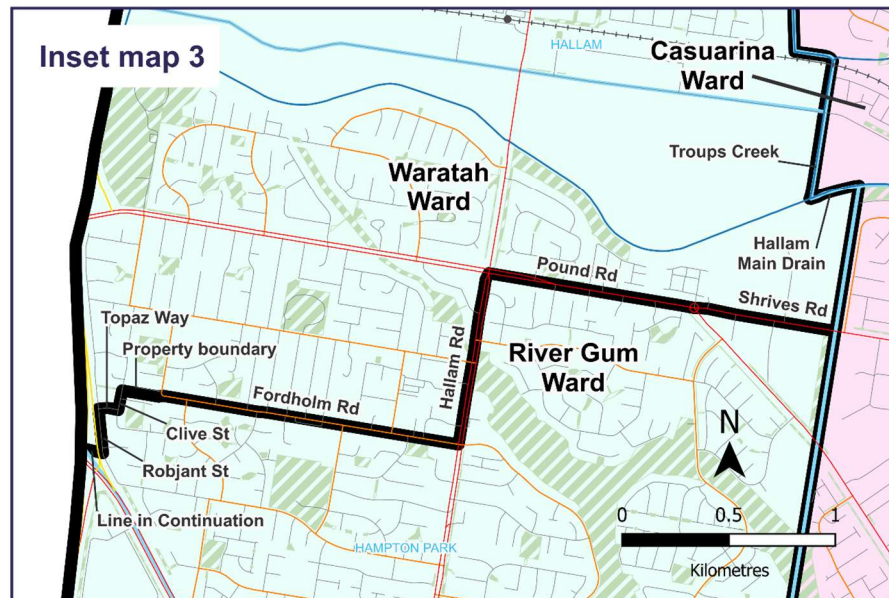
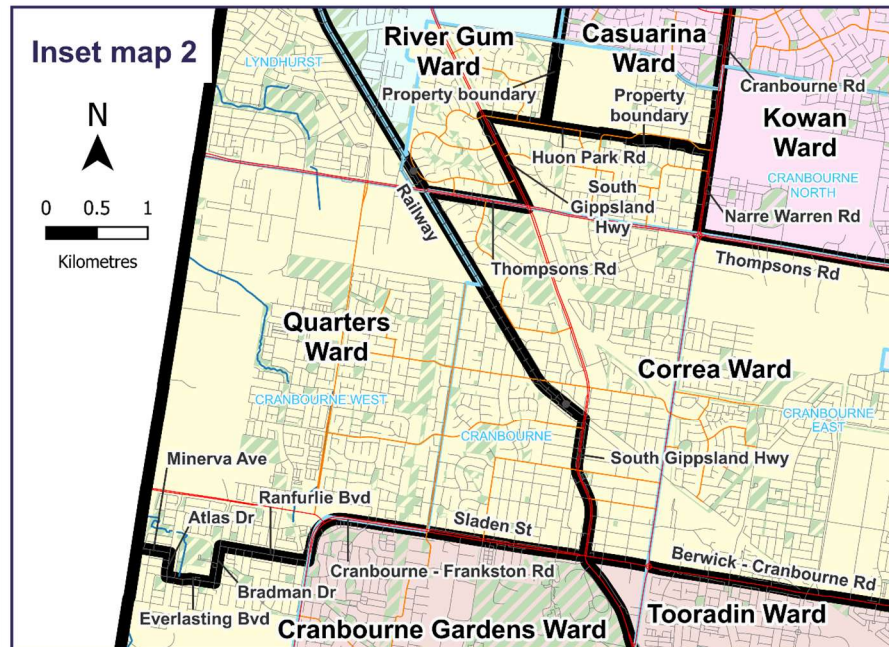
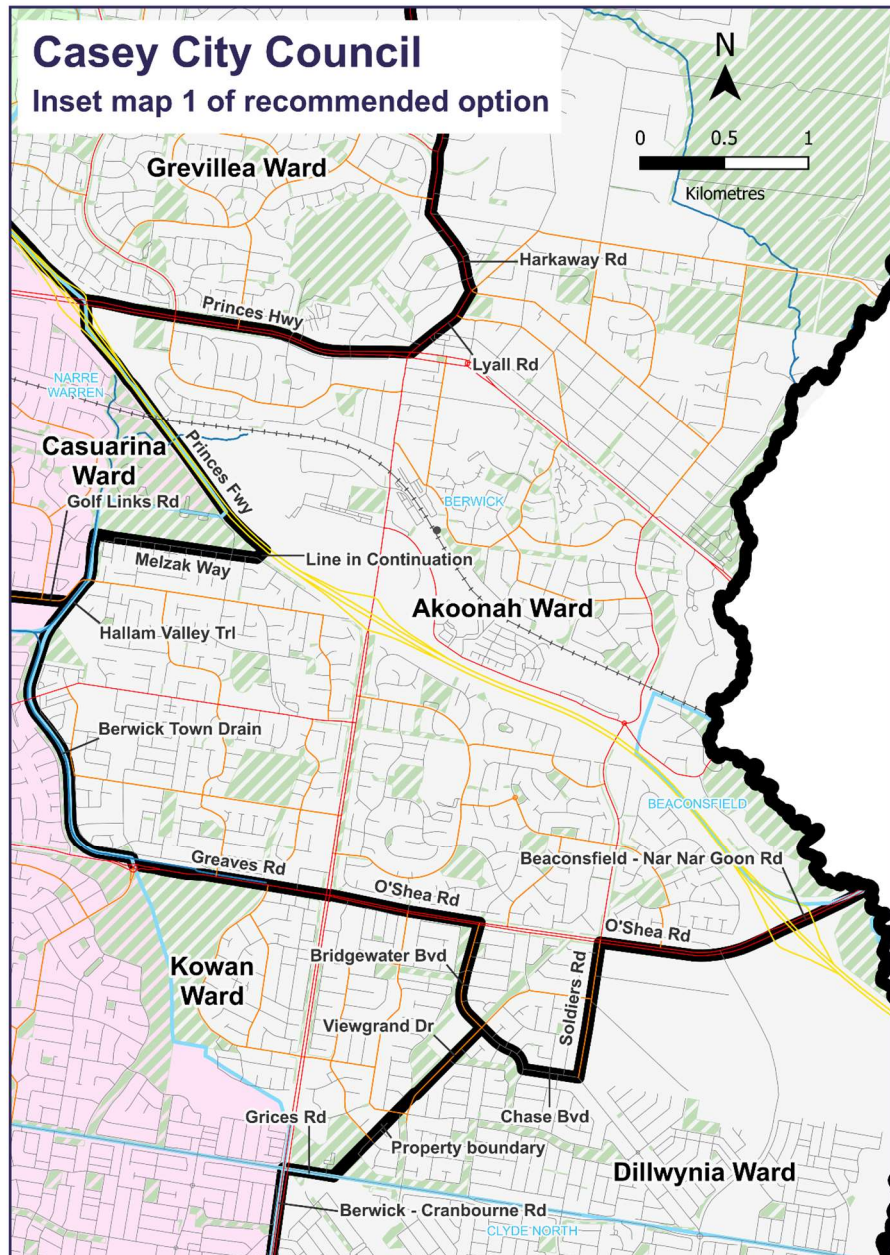


Data use:



Layers for alignment:  
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Data for recommended structure

Ward	Electors*	Deviation†	Area# (square km)
Akoonah	21,419	+1.72%	21.4
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Total	252,670	-	397.2
Average	21,056	-	33.1

\* 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 a 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:

Ahchow, Tim	Masters, Robert
Barnett, Jesse	Matulec, Stephen
Beardon, Steve (2)	Milton, Sylvia
Capon, Stephen (2)	Nafisi, Najah
Casey City Council	Naylo, Pam
Casey Residents and Ratepayers Association Inc.	Oates, Brian
Chalmers, Stuart	Page, Garry (2)
Cornell, Nathan	Percy, Glenn
Dao, Khoa	Perry, David
Do, Isabelle	Perry, Hayley
Dona, Manisha	Phipps, Graeme
Finlay, Tanisha	Raman, Bob
Garad, Rhonda	Rees, Karen
Hindupur, Jyothsna	Sealey, Sandra
Lambert, Maryann	Smith, Elaine
Louis, Heather	Willoughby, Louisa

### Public hearing

The following people spoke at the public hearing:

Capon, Stephen  
Chalmers, Stuart  
Dona, Manisha  
Page, Garry  
Phipps, Graeme

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