

Local council electoral structure review

# Final Report

Hobsons Bay City Council

December 2023

### 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

Version	Date approved	Approved by
1	6 December 2023	Ms Julie Eisenbise
1	6 December 2023	Mr Tim Presnell
1	7 December 2023	Ms Dana Fleming

### Version approval

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## Executive summary

An electoral structure review panel appointed by the Minister for Local Government has reviewed the electoral structure of Hobsons Bay 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), Hobsons Bay 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 Hobsons Bay 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 Hobsons Bay City Council adopt a 7 single-councillor ward structure – 7 wards with one councillor per ward.

The recommended names for the 7 wards in this electoral structure are: Altona Ward, Altona Meadows Ward, Altona North Ward, Laverton Ward, Spotswood Ward, Williamstown Ward and Williamstown North 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 18 October 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 7 councillors – 7 wards with one councillor per ward, with different ward boundaries to Model 1.
- Model 3: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 7 councillors – 7 wards with one councillor per ward, with different ward boundaries to models 1 and 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 3 submissions responding to the preliminary report. No submissions included maps.

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

### Public hearing

An online public hearing for those wishing to speak about their response submission was scheduled for 2 pm on Wednesday 15 November 2023. As no submitters asked to speak, the hearing did not go ahead.

## 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 Hobsons Bay City Council) must now have single-councillor ward electoral structures.

For Hobsons Bay 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 Hobsons Bay City Council had 3 members:

- Ms Julie Eisenbise (Chairperson)
- Mr Tim Presnell
- Deputy 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 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 Hobsons Bay 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.

Hobsons Bay City Council was also offered and took up 2 optional methods to promote the reviews:

- social media advertisements targeted 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 Hobsons Bay 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 Hobsons Bay 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 Hobsons Bay 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 Hobsons Bay City Council

## Profile

Hobsons Bay City Council is located at the northern end of Port Phillip Bay, between 7 and 20 km south-west of central Melbourne. Covering an area of 65 km<sup>2</sup>, it includes the suburbs of Williamstown, Newport and Spotswood in the east, Williamstown North, South Kingsville, Brooklyn, Altona North and Seaholme in the central area and Laverton, Altona Meadows and Seabrook in the west. It is bordered to the west and south-west by Wyndham City Council, to the north by Brimbank and Maribyrnong City Councils, and across the Yarra River to the east by Melbourne City Council.

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

## Landscape

To the north and west, Hobsons Bay City Council is bordered by the West Gate Freeway and Princes Freeway and traversed east-west by the national freight rail line. Public transport servicing the council area includes two further train lines, in the east to Williamstown and east-west across its length to Werribee.

Hobsons Bay City Council has a wide range of land uses including diverse residential neighbourhoods, a network of activity centres and large areas zoned for industrial use (DTP 2023). This includes petrochemical and petroleum refining industries that have buffers in place to manage amenity impacts and limit housing development (DTP 2023).

A defining feature of the council area is its foreshore location. With over 20 km of coastline, Hobsons Bay City Council contains significant coastal wetlands, 5 creek systems, the Yarra River estuary, remnant native grasslands and important flora and fauna habitats.

## Population and Community

Hobsons Bay City Council was home to 91,322 people in 2021 (ABS 2022), an increase of 7,459 over the previous decade (ABS 2011).

Its population is forecast to grow at about 1.5% (or 1,400 people) per year to be over 120,000 by 2041 (.id 2022c). The suburbs expected to have the highest rate of growth are Altona North, Spotswood and South Kingsville, where former industrial land has been rezoned for residential use. Population growth is also expected to occur near major activity centres and public transport (DTP 2023).

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

Overall, 30.1% of the population in 2021 were born overseas compared with 35.7% for Greater Melbourne (.id 2022a). More than a quarter (27%) of people spoke a language other than English at home.

Median personal and family incomes of Hobson Bay residents in 2021 were higher than for Greater Melbourne overall (ABS 2022a, 2022b) and a greater proportion of the population had high incomes of \$2,000 or more per week (17.5% compared with 13.7%) (.id 2022a).

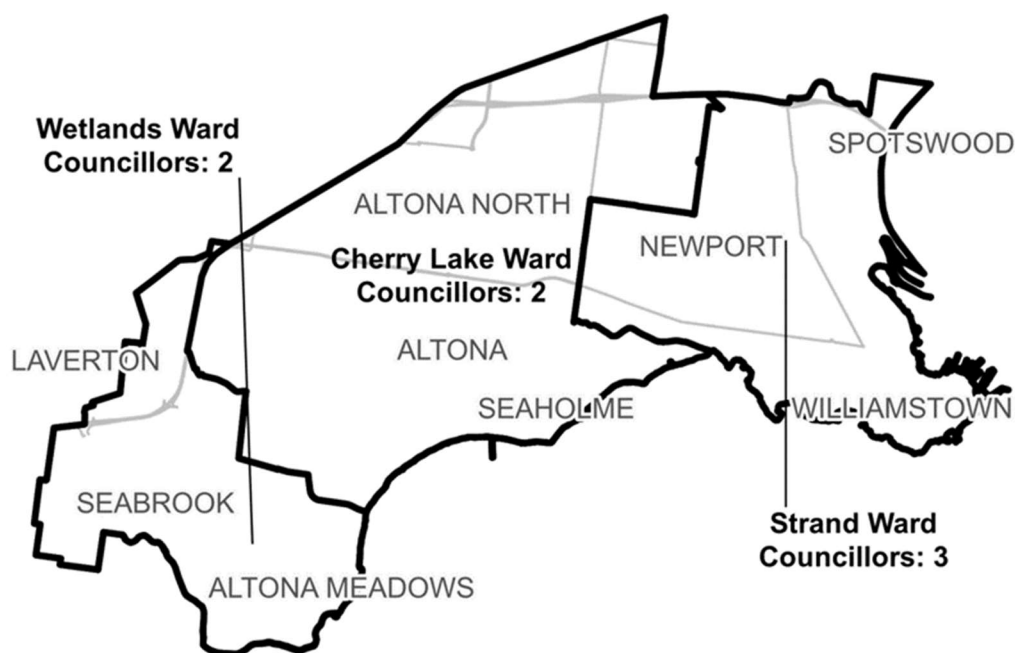
Home ownership rates across the council area in 2021 were similar to the average rates for Greater Melbourne, though a higher percentage were owned outright at 34.1% of dwellings compared with 29.7% (ABS 2022a, 2022b). A significantly smaller proportion of dwellings in the council area in 2021 were flats or apartments (high density) compared with the average for Greater Melbourne (.id 2022a).

Hobsons Bay City Council has more than 8,900 local businesses that employ over 40,000 people (.id 2022b). The labour force participation rate in 2021 for all residents aged 15 years and over was 63.8%, slightly lower than the average for Greater Melbourne of 64.1% (.id 2022a). The most prominent occupations of residents were professionals, managers and clerical and administrative workers.

## Current number of councillors and electoral structure

Hobsons Bay City Council is currently divided into 3 wards with a total of 7 councillors:

- one ward with 3 councillors (Strand Ward)
- two wards with 2 councillors each (Cherry Lake and Wetlands Wards).



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

There are an estimated 67,836 voters in Hobsons Bay City Council, with an estimated ratio of 9,690 voters per councillor.

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

## Last electoral structure review

The VEC conducted an electoral representation review of Hobsons Bay City Council in 2012. 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 Hobsons Bay City Council adopt a structure of 7 councillors elected from 3 wards (one ward with 3 councillors and 2 wards with 2 councillors).

Visit the VEC website at [vec.vic.gov.au](http://vec.vic.gov.au) to access a copy of the 2012 representation review final report.

## Preliminary report

A preliminary report was released on Wednesday 18 October 2023. The panel considered research findings and the requirements of the Act when formulating the models presented in the preliminary report.

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

- Model 1: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 7 councillors – 7 wards with one councillor per ward.
- Model 2: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 7 councillors – 7 wards with one councillor per ward, with different ward boundaries to Model 1.
- Model 3: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 7 councillors – 7 wards with one councillor per ward, with different ward boundaries to models 1 and 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 3 response submissions to the preliminary report from the public by the deadline of 5 pm on Wednesday 8 November 2023. You can find a list of people or organisations who made a response submission in [Appendix 2](#).

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

Table 1: Preferences expressed in response submissions		
Model 1 (7 single-councillor wards)	Model 2 (7 single-councillor wards)	Model 3 (7 single-councillor wards)
-	-	3

All 3 submissions supported Model 3, including one suggesting various changes to the ward boundaries proposed in Model 3.

One submitter queried the population forecasts used to model different boundary options, suggesting that higher population growth would likely occur given recent Government policy on housing supply and migration.

One submitter suggested that ward names should be kept as similar as possible to what people are familiar with, such as existing ward names or locality names that are geographically identifiable.

### Model 1

No submissions supported Model 1.

Two submissions opposed Model 1 due to the division of Altona Meadows across wards. Eric Braslis argued that Model 1 separated a community of interest by not including a significant part of the community around the Central Square shopping centre within the proposed Altona Meadows Ward. Relatedly, Sandra Wilson did not support the use of Everingham Road as a boundary because it divided a community of interest in Altona Meadows.

### Model 2

No submissions supported Model 2.

Two submissions opposed Model 2. As Model 1 and Model 2 proposed the same ward boundaries for the Altona Meadows Ward, the reasons for opposing Model 2 were also the same as those against Model 1.

### Model 3

All 3 submissions supported Model 3.

Braslis supported Model 3 because it provided the most relevant 7 single-councillor ward structure for the communities of interest in the council area. Model 3 was also considered the only model to capture the majority of Altona Meadows as a whole. Similarly, Wilson argued in favour of Model 3 as it kept as much of Altona Meadows as possible together in the same ward by using Queen Street as the ward boundary.

Carmen Largaiolli supported Model 3 and made a number of suggested changes to the proposed ward boundaries as follows:

- Adjust the eastern boundary of Chambers Ward to run in a straight north-south line from Kyle Road to Mills Street, and continue to Mason Street without detouring at Blackshaws Road and Mason Street.
- Use North Road in suburb of Newport for the northern boundary of Ferguson Ward rather than Yarra Street.
- Alter the boundaries of Paisley Park and Riverside wards as a consequence of the changes suggested above to provide more balanced ward deviations across all wards.



## **Public hearing**

An online public hearing for those wishing to speak about their response submission was scheduled for 2 pm on Wednesday 15 November 2023. As no submitters asked to speak, the hearing did not go ahead.

## Findings and recommendation

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

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

One of the challenges facing Hobsons Bay City Council is that although it is a small council area with only modest population growth forecast, the growth will be unevenly spread and focussed mainly in Altona North, Kingsville and Spotswood. This presents challenges in seeking to maintain even voter distribution across wards to ensure legislated voter deviations are met at 2024, whilst also seeking to capture communities of interest and strive for the proposed electoral structure to be still viable at 2028. As a result of such uneven growth, none of the models are likely to be viable by 2028, with at least one ward (and possibly 2) from each of the models likely to be outside the +/-10% legislated deviation by 2028.

The panel noted that one of the submitters queried the population forecasts and suggested that higher growth should be anticipated in Hobsons Bay City Council due to recent government policy relating to housing supply and migration. The panel used independent demographic forecasting to inform the preparation of its models and is satisfied that all factors relevant to the 2024 local council elector forecasts have been taken into account.

### Number of councillors

After considering the requirements of the Act, public submissions and the agreed criteria, the panel found 7 councillors to be an appropriate number for Hobsons Bay City Council.

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

Hobsons Bay City Council currently has 67,836 voters represented by 7 councillors and covers an area of 65 km<sup>2</sup>. This is the lowest number of voters for any metropolitan council. Other metropolitan councils with a similar number of voters also have 7 councillors, such as Maribyrnong and Bayside City Councils. Forecasts indicate only modest population change is expected and the panel did not identify any special circumstances at the council that would warrant a change in councillor numbers. The panel therefore considers it appropriate for the total number of councillors to remain unchanged.

## Electoral structure

Hobsons Bay City Council has distinct groupings of electors that are separated by large industrial areas and waterways, as well as strong physical barriers such as main roads and rail lines that divide communities. Future growth is also expected to be unevenly spread across the council area, concentrated mainly in the north-east.

After considering the requirements of the Act, public submissions and the agreed criteria, the panel found Model 1 to be the single-councillor ward model with the best potential to promote fair and equitable representation for voters in Hobsons Bay City Council and consequently facilitate good governance.

Model 1 used the existing 3 multi-councillor ward structure as its basis for a ‘minimum change’ approach. It divided each existing ward into equivalent single-councillor wards to create 3 wards covering the current Strand Ward and 2 wards each covering the current Cherry Lake and Wetlands wards. The only exception to this was a small area of land in the existing Cherry Lake Ward (located between Victoria Street, Altona Meadows and the Altona Treatment Plant, north of Queen Street) that was included in the proposed Laverton Ward under Model 1, rather than in the proposed Altona Ward to the east. As such, the panel considered the ward boundaries adopted in Model 1 would be mostly familiar to residents and that the level of representation provided under the current multi-councillor structure would continue.

Potential drawbacks of Model 1 included all the industrial area north of the rail line being within one large ward, and the placement of Seabrook in the same ward as the southern part of Altona Meadows, despite there being no direct road access between these 2 communities without having to travel through a neighbouring ward.

Model 2 sought to keep clusters of electors together and generally provided more evenly sized wards than Model 1. It retained the same boundaries separating Altona Meadows and Laverton wards at the western end of the council area as in Model 1, so that Seabrook was included in the same ward alongside the southern part of Altona Meadows. The key difference from Model 1 was its approach in the centre and east of the council area. In the centre the boundary between Laverton and Altona North wards was extended east to Cherry Creek, which more or less marks the middle of the industrial area, rather than using the Princes Freeway, which is also the Laverton locality boundary, at the western end of the industrial area. The benefit of this approach was that it would allow for 2 councillors to share the responsibility for the large industrial area north of the railway line. Nonetheless, the panel did not receive any feedback or suggestions in public submissions about where the industrial area should be split by a ward boundary.

At the eastern end of the council area, some adjustments to the ward boundaries were made to ensure all wards were within deviation due to the boundary between Altona North and Laverton wards being moved east to Cherry Creek. As a result there was some increased use of local roads as boundaries and some less regular ward shapes in Model 2 compared to Model 1, however, communities of interest were still largely retained.

Model 3 was almost identical to Model 2, except for adjustments to the ward boundaries for the localities of Altona Meadows, Laverton and Seabrook and some different ward name proposals. Model 3 placed Seabrook in the same ward as Laverton within proposed Bladin Ward, to reflect the direct road access from Seabrook to Laverton in the north. This resulted in a larger proportion of Altona Meadows being located within proposed Wetlands Ward, using Queen Street as the northern ward boundary.

Model 3 was supported by all 3 submitters, with the Largaiolli submission also suggesting changes would improve the model. The panel explored all suggestions for ward boundary changes and found even slight boundary adjustments had knock-on effects requiring in most cases substantial change to surrounding wards in order to meet and maintain legislated deviations. In the panel's view, these changes did not improve the electoral structure to a sufficient degree to justify such outcomes. Rather, the panel considered the changes resulted in irregular shaped ward boundaries, which did not contain communities of interest as well as any of the 3 models already prepared.

Specifically, the suggested use of North Road rather than Yarra Street as the boundary between the Spotswood and Williamstown wards was tested by the panel and determined to not assist in better meeting voter deviations across wards. Moreover, the panel noted that the proposed Yarra Street boundary (proposed for all models), closely aligned with the locality boundary between the Newport and Williamstown suburbs and was therefore considered to be a strong, pre-existing boundary effective at defining these two communities.

Both the Braslis and Wilson submissions supported Model 3 because they felt that the boundary between the proposed Laverton and Altona Meadows wards in models 1 and 2 (Everingham Road and other local streets) divided a community of interest focused on Altona Meadows. By contrast the Queen Street boundary proposed by Model 3 was preferred as it retained the Central Square shopping centre within proposed Wetlands Ward. The panel accepts that the Central Square shopping centre is a focal point for the Altona Meadows community, however this would apply equally to all the residents at the western end of the council area, including those in Seabrook and Laverton. The panel took the view that the shopping centre likely provided a community focus for many communities, not just for those south of Queen Street.

With a total voting population of 13,942, Altona Meadows has too many electors for one ward, though not enough for 2. This meant a ward boundary was required somewhere within Altona Meadows to create 2 wards at the western end of the council area. Regardless of where that boundary is, the outcome will be a division of some part of the Altona Meadows community. Although under Model 1 some of the residents of Altona Meadows would not as a result be in the same ward as the Central Square shopping centre, the panel felt their community connections to the facility would still remain intact. They would also benefit from having councillors from both the proposed Laverton and Altona Meadows wards who would, more generally, be able to represent this community of interest.

Of the 3 models presented in the preliminary report, the decision by the Panel to recommend the electoral structure proposed by Model 1 is based on a consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of each model and how they translate into an effective electoral structure for the whole council area. The panel appreciates the support expressed from submitters for Model 3, which it acknowledges has many elements worthy of support. The panel agrees that, in isolation, the Queen Street boundary does provide a strong ward boundary for the 2 wards at the western end of the council area. However, considering all factors – elector numbers per ward, use of clear features as ward boundaries, ward shapes and the geography of the council area – Model 1 was determined to be on balance the most appropriate electoral structure for Hobsons Bay City Council.

The panel summarises the strengths of Model 1 as:

- Providing clearer divisions using recognisable and understandable features as boundaries. With the exception of some local roads in the boundary between proposed Altona Meadows and Laverton wards, all ward boundaries use strong roads, rail lines, waterways or locality boundaries.
- Maintaining use of the existing electoral structure as a base to minimise change and maintain much the same level of representation for the same geographic areas. The panel considered the proposed ward boundaries of Model 1 may be more recognisable and familiar to electors and would support a more seamless transition from multi-councillor to single-councillor wards.
- Capturing communities of interest and geographic localities across the council area better than Models 2 and 3.

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 Hobsons Bay 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 all wards under the current electoral structure, however in the 2020 local council elections, there were no candidates coming from the localities of Brooklyn, Kingsville and Spotswood and relatively lower candidate numbers in the existing Cherry Lake Ward by comparison with the existing Strand and Wetlands wards. Accordingly, there is considered to be some chance of an uncontested election in the proposed Spotswood and Altona North wards where historically candidate numbers have not been as strong.

The panel noted that introducing single-councillor wards represents a large electoral structure change for Hobsons Bay 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.

The panel noted valid arguments both in favour of and against the different single-councillor ward structures examined in this review. Whilst Model 3 received support from the submitters,

for the reasons outlined above the panel considers Model 1 to be the single-councillor ward model with the best potential to promote fair and equitable representation for voters in Hobsons Bay City Council and consequently facilitate good governance under the requirements of the Act.

## Ward names

As part of the consultation process, the panel included models with both locality and non-locality based ward names, to gauge public opinion. There were no alternative ward name suggestions made, however one submission stated that they should be kept as similar as possible to what people are familiar with, such as existing ward names or locality names that are geographically identifiable.

The panel has taken this feedback into account, and felt that using ward names based on localities that reflect the new ward boundaries would be the most understandable. The proposed wards do not follow locality boundaries exactly, however ward names have been chosen based on the predominant locality that is contained within each ward.

The proposed ward names are almost identical to the ward names that were in place prior to 2012, except that the original ward name of Seabrook has been replaced with Laverton. This reflects the new proposed Model 1 ward boundaries where Laverton is the predominant locality that is contained within the ward at the western end of the council area.

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

- Altona Ward: A previously used ward name (prior to 2012) based on a locality relevant to the new ward area. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Altona Meadows Ward: A previously used ward name (prior to 2012) based on a locality relevant to the new ward area. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Altona North Ward: A previously used ward name (prior to 2012) based on a locality relevant to the new ward area. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Laverton Ward: A new ward name based on a locality relevant to the new ward area. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Spotswood Ward: A previously used ward name (prior to 2012) based on a locality relevant to the new ward area. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Williamstown Ward: A previously used ward name (prior to 2012) based on a locality relevant to the new ward area. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Williamstown North Ward: A previously used ward name (prior to 2012) based on a locality relevant to the new ward area. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.

## **The panel's recommendation**

The electoral representation advisory panel recommends that Hobsons Bay City Council adopt a 7 single-councillor ward structure – 7 wards with one councillor per ward.

The recommended names for the 7 wards in this electoral structure are Altona Ward, Altona Meadows Ward, Altona North Ward, Laverton Ward, Spotswood Ward, Williamstown Ward and Williamston North 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 1 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) [2021 Census All Persons QuickStats, Hobsons Bay \(LGA\)](#), ABS, accessed 5 September 2023

—(2022b) [2021 Census All Persons QuickStats, Greater Melbourne](#), ABS, accessed 5 September 2023

—(2011) [2011 Census All Persons QuickStats, Hobsons Bay \(LGA\)](#), ABS, accessed 5 September 2023

DTP (Department of Transport and Planning) (2023) [Hobsons Bay planning scheme](#), DTP website, accessed 5 September 2023

Electoral Act 2002 (Vic)

FPSR (First Peoples State Relations) (2023) [Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners](#), First Peoples State Relations website, accessed 5 September 2023.

Geographic Place Names Act 1998 (Vic)

.id (Informed Decisions) (2022a) [City of Hobsons Bay community profile](#), .id website, accessed 8 September 2023.

—(2022b) [Hobsons Bay City economic profile](#), .id website, accessed 8 September 2023

—(2022c) [Hobsons Bay City population forecast](#), .id website, accessed 8 September 2023

Local Government Act 1989 (Vic)

Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)















Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020 (Vic)

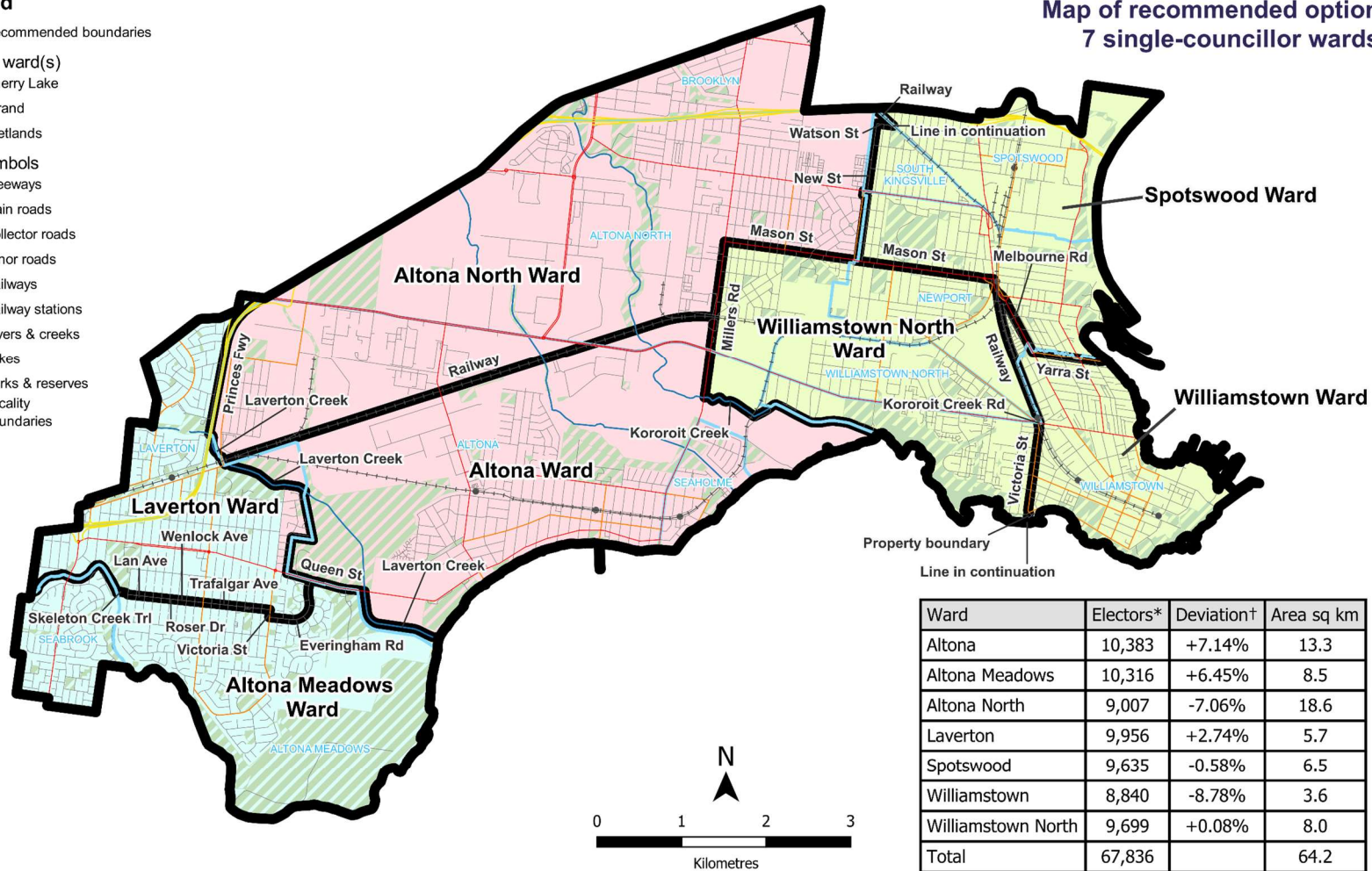


# Appendix 1: Map of recommended structure

## Hobsons Bay City Council Map of recommended option 7 single-councillor wards

### Legend

-  Recommended boundaries
- Existing ward(s)
-  Cherry Lake
-  Strand
-  Wetlands
- Map symbols
-  Freeways
-  Main roads
-  Collector roads
-  Minor roads
-  Railways
-  Railway stations
-  Rivers & creeks
-  Lakes
-  Parks & reserves
-  Locality boundaries



Ward	Electors*	Deviation†	Area sq km
Altona	10,383	+7.14%	13.3
Altona Meadows	10,316	+6.45%	8.5
Altona North	9,007	-7.06%	18.6
Laverton	9,956	+2.74%	5.7
Spotswood	9,635	-0.58%	6.5
Williamstown	8,840	-8.78%	3.6
Williamstown North	9,699	+0.08%	8.0
Total	67,836		64.2
Average	9,691		9.0

\*Electors numbers as at 25 July 2023

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

Data use:



Layers for alignment:  
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### Data for recommended structure

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\*Elector numbers at 25 July 2023

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

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

## **Appendix 2: Public involvement**

The panel wishes to thank all submitters to the review for their participation in the review process.

### **Response submissions**

Response submissions were made by:

Braslis, Eric

Largaiolli, Carmen

Wilson, Sandra

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