

Local council ward boundary review

Final Report

Cardinia Shire Council

April 2024



© State of Victoria
(Victorian Electoral Commission)
April 2024

This work, Local council ward boundary review – Final report – Cardinia Shire Council, is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 licence [<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>]. You are free to share this work under that licence, on the condition that you do not change any content and you credit the State of Victoria (Victorian Electoral Commission) as author and comply with the other licence terms. The licence does not apply to any branding, including Government logos.



Level 11, 530 Collins Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000
T 131 832
info@vec.vic.gov.au
vec.vic.gov.au

Content approval

Version	Date approved	Approved by
1	17 April 2024	VEC panel member
1	17 April 2024	Program sponsor

Report Approval

Version	Date approved	Approved by	Brief description
1	22 April 2024	Electoral Commissioner	Final approval

Acknowledgement of Country

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) acknowledges the Bunurong and Wurundjeri peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters for which it is holding this review and pays respects to ancestors and Elders past, present and emerging. The VEC acknowledges their custodianship for many thousands of years and their continuing living culture.

Contents

Executive summary	5
Recommendation.....	5
Summary of review steps.....	6
Developing ward adjustment models.....	6
Preliminary report.....	6
Response submissions	6
Public hearing	6
Background.....	7
About the 2024 ward boundary reviews	7
The VEC ward boundary review team.....	7
Public engagement	8
Developing recommendations.....	8
About Cardinia Shire Council	10
Profile	10
Current electoral structure.....	12
Last review.....	13
Preliminary findings and response.....	14
Preliminary report.....	14
Response submissions	14
Public hearing	15
Findings and recommendation	16
The recommended model	16
The VEC's recommendation	17
References	18
Appendix 1: Map of recommended model	19
Appendix 2: Public involvement	23
Response submissions	23
Public hearing	23

Executive summary

Under section 17 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic) (the Act), the Minister for Local Government asked the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) to conduct ward boundary reviews for 10 local council areas prior to the next general local council elections in October 2024.

For these 10 councils, the number of voters per councillor is forecast to be out of balance by October 2024, with the number of voters per councillor in one or more wards forecast to vary from the average number of voters per councillor for all of the wards by more than 10 per cent.

Cardinia Shire Council was one of the 10 local council areas under review. The purpose of this review was to correct this forecast imbalance for the October 2024 local council election.

During its review, the VEC looked at:

- the number of currently enrolled voters in each ward
- the forecast number of enrolled voters at the next election
- adjustments to the locations of existing ward boundaries.

This report presents the VEC's final advice to the minister on the recommended ward boundary adjustments for Cardinia Shire Council to meet the requirements of the Act.

More information about the background to the review is available on [page 7](#) of this report.

Recommendation

The VEC recommends adjustments to the boundaries of the following wards within Cardinia Shire Council:

- Beacon Hills Ward
- Bunyip Ward
- Central Ward
- Henty Ward
- Officer Ward
- Pakenham Hills Ward
- Westernport Ward

This recommendation is submitted to the Minister for Local Government as required by the Act.

Detailed maps of the ward boundary adjustments are provided as [Appendix 1](#) of this report.

Summary of review steps

Developing ward adjustment models

The VEC considered a range of factors when deciding on appropriate ward boundary adjustments:

- research and analysis
- voter growth or decline over time
- public submissions (see below).

More information on the way the VEC decided on ward adjustments is available on [page 8](#).

Preliminary report

The VEC published a preliminary report on Wednesday 28 February 2024. The following model was presented for community consideration:

- Preliminary model, which proposed changes to the boundaries of Beacon Hills, Bunyip, Central, Henty, Officer, Pakenham Hills and Westernport wards.

A summary of the model presented can be found on [page 14](#).

The full preliminary report is available on the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) website at vec.vic.gov.au

Response submissions

The VEC did not receive any submissions responding to the preliminary report.

Public hearing

An online public hearing for those wishing to speak about their response submission was scheduled for 2 pm on Tuesday 26 March 2024. As no submitters asked to speak, the hearing did not go ahead.

Background

About the 2024 ward boundary reviews

Under section 15(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic), for a council that is divided into wards:

- a) each ward should have an approximately equal number of voters per councillor; and
- b) the number of voters per councillor in a ward should not vary from the average number of voters per councillor for all of the wards by more than 10 per cent.

On 22 February 2023, the VEC provided advice to the Minister for Local Government on councils that were projected to have at least one ward with the number of voters per councillor outside this +/-10% range at the time of the October 2024 local council elections.

This advice was based on:

- current enrolment and enrolment trends
- future population projections
- legislated changes to council entitlements for council-enrolled voters.

On 20 April 2023, in response to this advice and under section 17 of the Act, the minister asked the VEC to conduct ward boundary reviews for 10 local council areas before the October 2024 local council elections. These reviews aimed to balance the number of voters per councillor for the wards of these 10 councils in time for the 2024 elections. At the end of each review, the VEC must provide a report to the minister containing recommended ward boundary adjustments for the council.

Cardinia Shire Council was one of the 10 local council areas under review.

During its review, the VEC looked at:

- the number of currently enrolled voters in each ward
- the forecast number of enrolled voters at the next election
- adjustments to the locations of existing ward boundaries.

A ward boundary review does not change a council's electoral structure, number of councillors, or ward names. A ward boundary review also cannot change the external boundaries of a local council, divide local councils, or amalgamate local councils.

The VEC ward boundary review team

The VEC ward boundary review panel provides a recommended structure to the Electoral Commissioner. The Electoral Commissioner will review the panel's recommendation and then decide on the final recommendation for provision to the Minister for Local Government. The VEC panel is made up of 2 senior VEC members including the program sponsor. Administrative and technical support for the program is provided by VEC electoral structure and boundary review experts as well as specialists from across the VEC.

Public engagement

Public information program

The VEC conducted a public information and awareness program about the Cardinia Shire Council ward boundary review. This included:

- printed public notices in state-wide newspapers
- public information sessions to outline the review process and respond to questions from the community
- a media release to announce the start of the review
- information on social media channels
- website content on vec.vic.gov.au, including:
 - current information on the review process
 - fact sheets for each council under review and a submission guide.

Cardinia Shire Council was also offered 2 optional methods to promote the reviews:

- printed public notices in local newspapers
- targeted social media advertisements for the council area.

Cardinia Shire Council took up the option for local newspaper notices but not the option for targeted social media.

Public consultation

The VEC encouraged input to the ward boundary review of Cardinia Shire Council via:

- response submissions to the preliminary report
- an online public hearing for those who made a response submission and wished to speak to the VEC to expand on their submission.

Public submissions are an important part of the review process and were considered alongside other factors during the review. These factors are outlined below.

Developing recommendations

The VEC's final recommendations comply with the Act and were developed through careful consideration of:

- research and analysis conducted by the VEC, including geospatial, electoral 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).

When developing the final recommendation, the VEC considered:

- whether the adjusted wards would comply with section 15(2) of the Act (see below), and how long they are likely to comply

- 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
- the scale of ward boundary changes, aiming for minimal change (where possible)
- 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 across all wards. 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 of that council.

During this review, the VEC aimed to recommend ward boundary adjustments that help ensure a council's wards 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 is conducted. The VEC 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 meant it was not possible to adjust the ward boundaries of a council so that both 'current' (at the time of the review) and 'forecast' (at October 2024) voter numbers were within the legislated +/-10% tolerance. Where this happened, the VEC prioritised compliance at the October 2024 elections to ensure each vote would have approximately equal value at the 2024 elections. In some cases, the VEC's recommended model may set the current ward deviations outside the +/-10% tolerance. This was because the ward deviations were forecast to change over a short period of time and move within the +/-10% tolerance by the time of the 2024 local council elections.

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 electors. 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 VEC took this change to the makeup of voters' rolls, and therefore compliance with section 15(2) of the Act, into consideration during this review.

About Cardinia Shire Council

Profile

Cardinia Shire Council is located 55 km south-east of the Melbourne CBD and covers an area of around 1,281 km². It is bordered by Casey City Council to the west, Yarra Ranges Shire Council to the north, Baw Baw Shire Council to the east, and Bass Coast and South Gippsland shire councils to the south. The Western Port Bay coastline forms part of the south-western boundary.

The Traditional Custodians of the land in Cardinia Shire Council are the Bunurong and Wurundjeri peoples (ACHRIS 2024).

Landscape

The shire has a mix of urban, rural and forest environments. The South-East Growth Corridor runs through the centre of the council where the most urbanised areas are located, including Pakenham and Officer.

The south of the shire features meadows, farms, small communities and coastal areas. The north includes small and medium sized towns, farmland, and the Cardinia Reservoir. Bunyip State Park is in the north-east.

At the 2021 Census the shire had a population of 118,194, mostly living in Pakenham (54,118) and Officer (18,503). Bunyip is the largest town in the east, while Emerald, Cockatoo, and Gembrook form a band of communities across the north-west. Koo Wee Rup and Lang Lang are the major towns in the south along Western Port Bay and the South Gippsland Highway (ABS 2021a, ABS 2021c, ABS 2021d).

Major transport routes run along the growth corridor, including the Princes Highway and Freeway, and Pakenham and Warragul trainlines. The South Gippsland and Bass highways run along the Western Port Bay coastline.

Community

Between 2016 and 2021, the council grew from 94,128 to 118,194 residents (ABS 2021a), at an annual growth rate of around 5.1%. The population is forecast to reach 154,726 by 2028, with growth concentrated around Officer and Pakenham (.id 2022).

There is a strong demand for housing in Pakenham and Officer among relatively young families (.id 2022) resulting in a low median age and high home-ownership rate. The median age at the last Census was 34, compared with 37 for Greater Melbourne overall. Nearly 74% of private households are owned outright or with a mortgage, compared with 66.8% for Greater Melbourne. About half of all homes are owned with a mortgage, and this is higher in some areas, such as Officer at 57%. This compares to 37.1% for Greater Melbourne overall (ABS 2021a, 2021b).

Nearly a quarter of residents (23.5%) were born overseas – lower than the Greater Melbourne median of 40.1%. About 20% of households used a language other than English at home, compared with 37.7% for Greater Melbourne overall (ABS 2021a, 2021b).

Areas of high growth tend to have more diverse communities, with 32.7% of people in Pakenham born outside of Australia and 24.1% of households using a language other than English at home (ABS 2021a). Median household income in Cardinia is \$1,874 per week, compared to Greater Melbourne overall at \$1,901 (ABS 2021a, 2021b). Construction (13.8%), health care and social assistance (13.4%), retail trade (9.9%), manufacturing (9.4%), and education and training industries (8.2%) are the largest employers (.id 2022).

Current electoral structure

Cardinia Shire Council has a total of 9 councillors and is divided into 9 single-councillor wards (Beacon Hills, Bunyip, Central, Henty, Officer, Pakenham Hills, Ranges, Toomuc and Westernport wards).

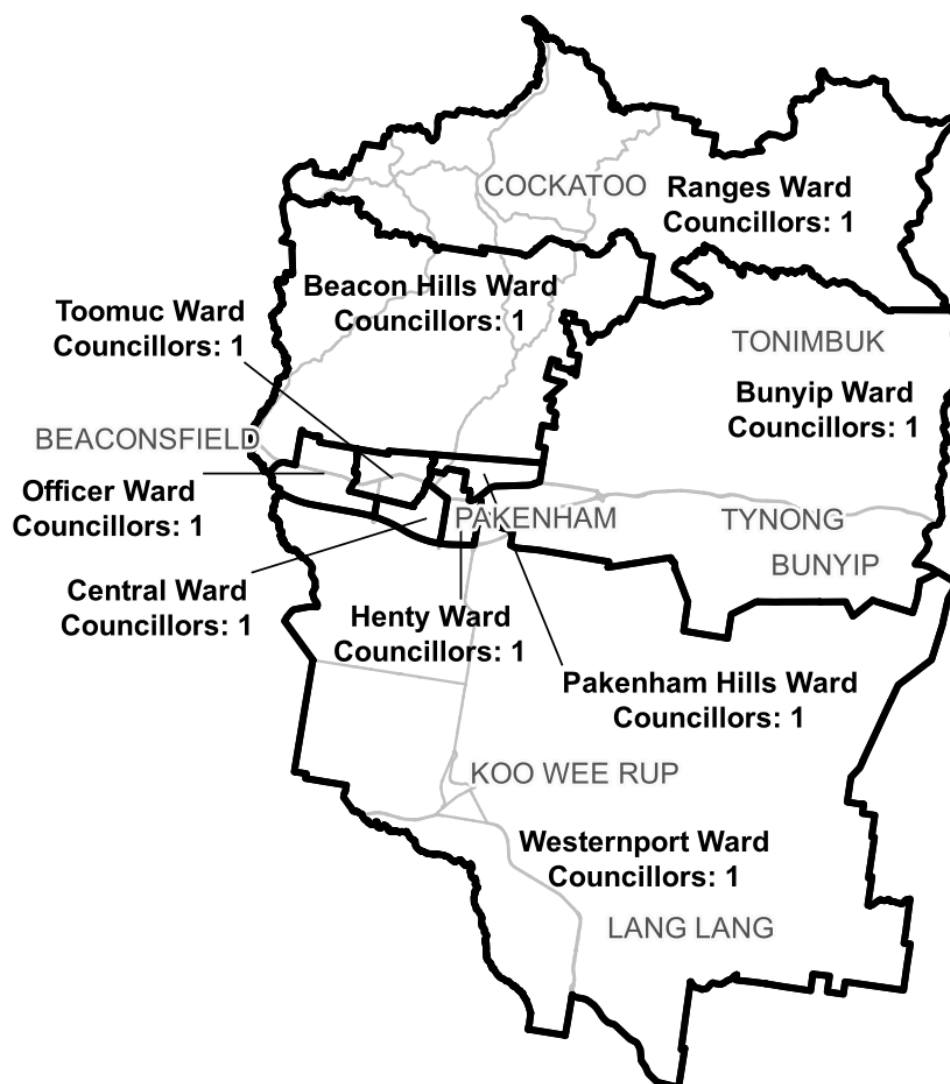


Figure 1: Diagram of current electoral structure of Cardinia Shire Council.

There are an estimated 91,941 voters in Cardinia Shire Council, with an estimated ratio of 10,216 voters per councillor.

By October 2024, the voter-to-councillor ratios of Officer Ward is forecast to be outside of +10%, and the voter-to-councillor ratios of Beacon Hills Ward is forecast to be outside of -10%.

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

Last review

The VEC conducted an electoral representation review of Cardinia Shire Council in 2020. That 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 Cardinia Shire Council continue to consist of 9 councillors elected from 3 wards (one ward with 4 councillors, one ward with 3 councillors, and one ward with 2 councillors).

Please note, the current structure differs from the one recommended in the 2020 final report.

Visit the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au to access a copy of the 2020 representation review final report.

Preliminary findings and response

The current ward boundary review of Cardinia Shire Council was required due to the voter-to-councillor ratios in Officer Ward and Beacon Hills wards, which were projected to be outside of the legislated +/-10% range at the October 2024 local council elections. For all wards to be within +/-10% for the October 2024 elections, the number of voters in Officer Ward must be reduced, while in Beacon Hills Ward voter numbers need to increase.

Preliminary report

The VEC's ward boundary review of Cardinia Shire Council began with the release of a preliminary report on Wednesday 28 February 2024.

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

When preparing the preliminary report, the VEC considered a range of ward boundary adjustments for Cardinia Shire Council and chose the strongest model for public consultation. The following model was presented for community consideration:

- Preliminary model, which proposed changes to the boundaries of Beacon Hills, Bunyip, Central, Henty, Officer, Pakenham Hills and Westernport wards.

The urban areas around Officer and Pakenham are growing at a much faster rate than other areas of the council, therefore ward deviations of the preliminary model are not forecast to remain within the legislated +/-10% range through to the 2028 local council elections.

Preliminary model

The preliminary model made 2 changes to reduce the number of voters in Officer Ward. Land west of Brunt Road and north of the railway line was transferred from Officer Ward into Beacon Hills Ward and land east of Shaw and Sandy roads was transferred into Central Ward.

To balance the above changes, further adjustments were made to the boundaries of Central, Henty, Pakenham Hills, Bunyip and Westernport wards. In the north-east of Central Ward, land north of the railway line was transferred into Henty Ward, and land east of Ahern Road in Henty Ward was transferred into Pakenham Hills Ward. In Westernport Ward, land north of the Princes Freeway was transferred into Bunyip Ward.

The preliminary model made no changes to the boundaries of Ranges or Toomuc wards.

In addition to balancing voter numbers across all wards to achieve legislative compliance for the 2024 local council elections, the changes proposed under the preliminary model used easily identifiable boundaries, mostly along railway lines and roads.

Response submissions

The VEC accepted response submissions to the preliminary report from Wednesday 28 February 2024 until 5 pm on Wednesday 20 March 2024. The VEC did not receive any submissions from the public responding to the preliminary report.

Public hearing

An online public hearing for those wishing to speak about their response submission was scheduled for 2 pm on Tuesday 26 March 2024. 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 VEC 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 a ward boundary review, the VEC must adhere to the Act's legislated equality requirement to seek to ensure the number of voters per councillor in a ward is within +/-10% of the average number of voters per councillor for all wards in the council area.

The recommended model

The VEC did not receive any submissions commenting on the proposed ward boundary adjustments presented in the preliminary report. After considering the model presented in the preliminary report and the requirements of the Act, the VEC has chosen to put forward the preliminary model, with no further adjustments, as the VEC's recommended model.

One of the key considerations in this review was seeking to maintain the current ward boundary divisions between urban and rural areas as much as possible. The rural areas of Cardinia Shire Council include many distinct landscapes and communities which differ significantly from the urban areas around Pakenham and Officer that form part of Melbourne's South-Eastern Growth Corridor.

A major benefit of the recommended model is that it has been able to maintain these existing divisions by keeping the transmission lines and Princes Freeway as boundaries for the urban-based wards, with only minimal changes to wards. Minor adjustments to the boundaries of Beacon Hills, Officer, Central, Henty, Pakenham Hills, Bunyip and Westernport wards allow for the surplus of voters in Officer Ward to be redistributed across multiple wards, balancing voter deviations across the whole council area.

A potential drawback of the recommended model is the disparity in geographic size between the small urban wards and the larger rural wards. This is unavoidable under the current electoral structure, due to the uneven voter distribution and rates of growth across the council area. The majority of the council area is captured within the 4 largest rural-based wards, all of which are relatively sparsely populated and experiencing low growth. This contrasts with the more densely populated urban-based wards undergoing higher rates of growth.

This disparity in the size of wards highlights one of the challenges of maintaining a single-councillor ward electoral structure for such a large, diverse shire like Cardinia Shire Council. While the essential structure of the existing ward boundaries has been retained under this review, as the trend of uneven population growth across the council area continues, the boundaries of the recommended model are unlikely to remain within deviation beyond 2028. It is expected that future ward boundary reviews will likely require more significant change to manage voter deviations, and it may become increasingly difficult to maintain the existing division between urban and rural wards.

The preliminary model is being recommended as it satisfactorily meets all legislated requirements, impacts a minimal number of voters, uses strong features for boundaries and retains the essential structure of the existing ward boundaries. The ward boundary adjustments proposed by the preliminary model affect 5,966 voters, being 6.5% of all voters within Cardinia Shire Council (based on current enrolment figures).

While the VEC acknowledges there are both potential benefits and drawbacks for the recommended model, it considers the boundary adjustments of this model to have the best potential to promote fair and equitable representation for voters in Cardinia Shire Council while also complying with the requirements of the Act.

The VEC's recommendation

The VEC recommends adjustments to the boundaries of the following wards within Cardinia Shire Council:

- Beacon Hills Ward
- Bunyip Ward
- Central Ward
- Henty Ward
- Officer Ward
- Pakenham Hills Ward
- Westernport Ward

The recommended adjustments were presented as the preliminary model in the preliminary report.

This recommendation is submitted to the Minister for Local Government as required by the Act.

Please see [Appendix 1](#) for detailed maps of the recommended ward boundaries.

References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) (2022a) [2021 Census All persons QuickStats - Cardinia](#), ABS, accessed 7 February 2024.

—(2022b) [2021 Census All persons QuickStats - Greater Melbourne](#), ABS, accessed 7 February 2024.

—(2022c) [2021 Census All persons QuickStats - Officer](#), ABS, accessed 7 February 2024.

—(2022d) [2021 Census All persons QuickStats - Pakenham](#), ABS, accessed 7 February 2024.

ACHRIS (Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Register and Information System), [ACHRIS](#), Aboriginal Victoria, accessed 7 February 2024.

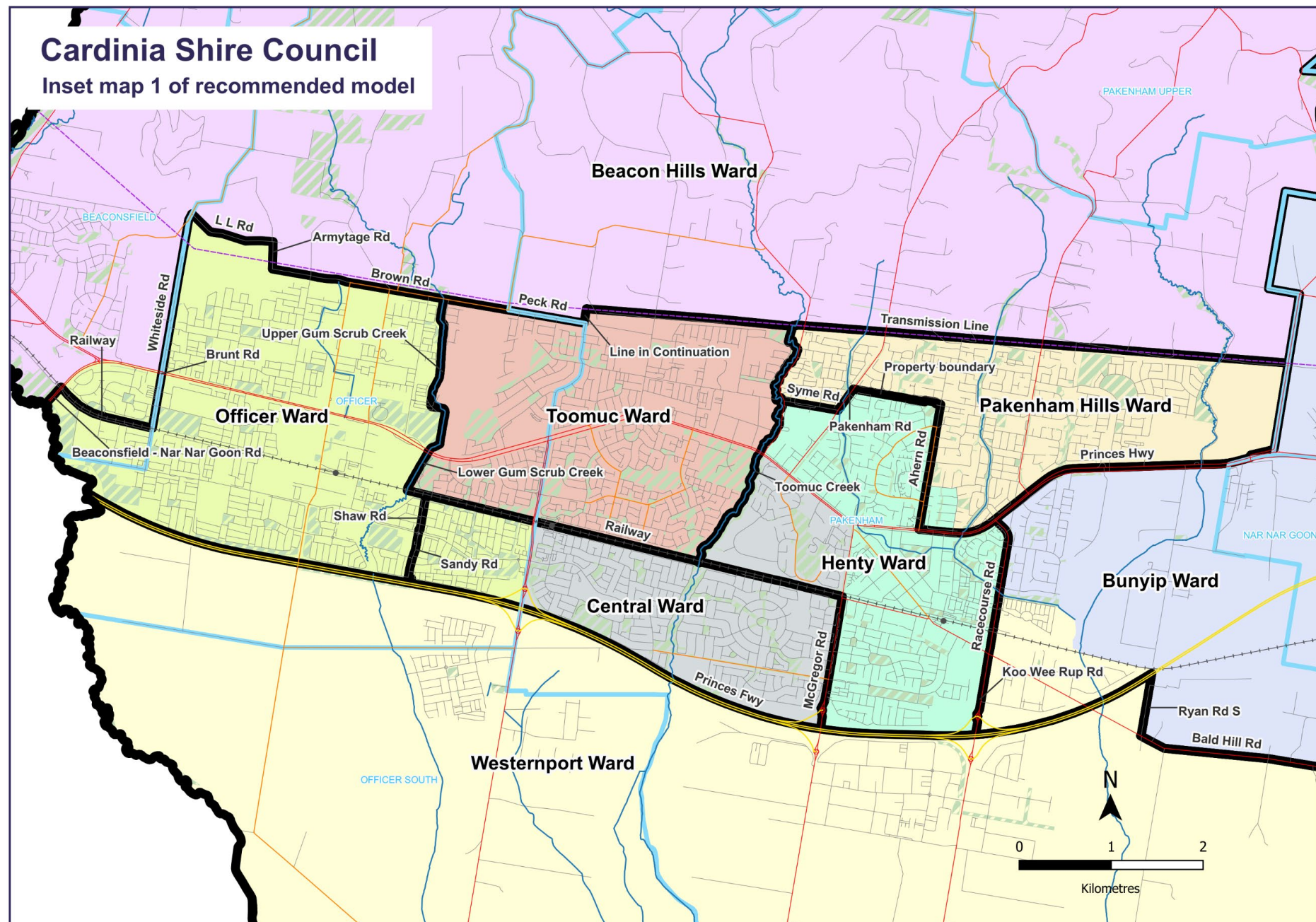
Geographic Place Names Act 1998 (Vic).

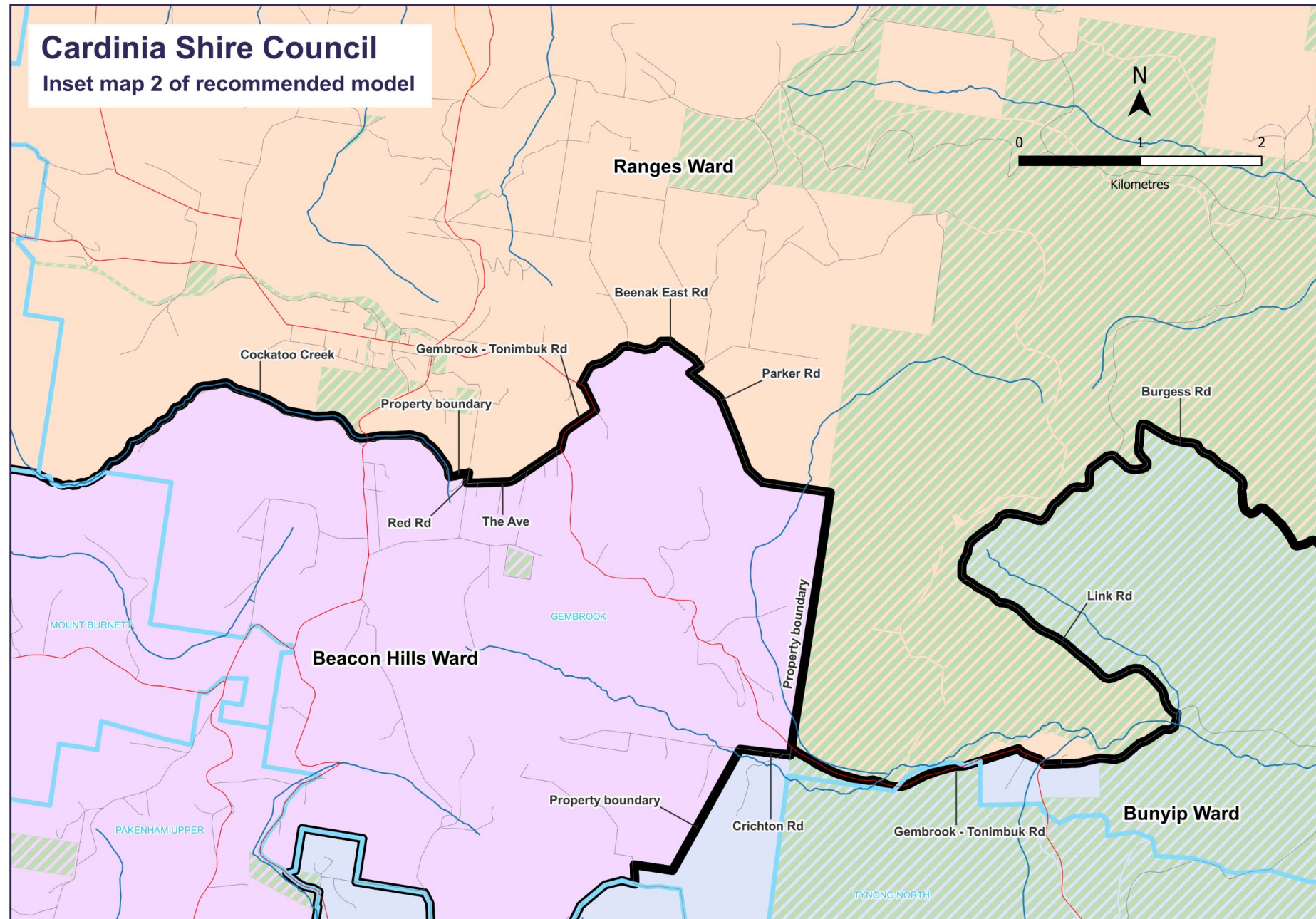
.id (Informed Decisions) (2022) [Cardinia Shire Community Profile](#), .id, accessed 7 February 2024.

Local Government Act 1989 (Vic).

Local Government Act 2020 (Vic).

Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020 (Vic).





Data for recommended model

Ward	Electors*	Deviation†	Area# (square km)
Beacon Hills	9,967	-2.43%	170.8
Bunyip	9,565	-6.37%	295.5
Central	10,915	+6.85%	5.5
Henty	10,719	+4.93%	7.3
Officer	10,486	+2.65%	10.4
Pakenham Hills	10,301	+0.84%	6.7
Ranges	9,946	-2.64%	220.3
Toomuc	10,550	+3.27%	8.5
Westernport	9,492	-7.08%	556.4
Total	91,941	n/a	1,281.4
Average	10,216	n/a	142.4

* Elector numbers at 3 November 2023.

† The deviations of all wards are projected to be within +/-10% at the time of the 2024 local council 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

Response submissions

There were no submissions received.

Public hearing

As there were no submissions, the public hearing did not go ahead.

Forecast information referred to in the text of this report is based on forecasts prepared by .id – informed decisions [id.com.au](https://www.id.com.au). .id and its licensors are the sole and exclusive owners of all rights, title and interest subsisting in that part of the report content where .id are identified. Some of .id content is a derivative of ABS Data, which can be accessed from the website of the Australian Bureau of Statistics at [abs.gov.au](https://www.abs.gov.au), and licensed on terms published on the ABS website.