

Local council ward boundary review

Final Report

Boroondara City Council

April 2024



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(Victorian Electoral Commission)
April 2024

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Content approval

Version	Date approved	Approved by
1	17 April 2024	VEC panel member
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Report Approval

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1	22 April 2024	Electoral Commissioner	Final approval

Acknowledgement of Country

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) acknowledges the Wurundjeri people 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.

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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.

Boroondara City 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 Boroondara City 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 Boroondara City Council:

- Bellevue Ward
- Cotham Ward
- Gardiner Ward
- Glenferrie Ward
- Junction Ward
- Maling Ward
- Riversdale Ward
- Solway Ward
- Studley 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 2 models were presented for community consideration:

- Model 1, which proposed changes to the boundaries of Bellevue, Cotham, Glenferrie, Junction, Riversdale, and Studley wards.
- Model 2, which proposed changes to the boundaries of Bellevue, Cotham, Glenferrie, Junction, Maling, Riversdale, and Studley wards.

A summary of the models 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 received 3 submissions responding to the preliminary report. Of these, one submission included a map.

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

Public hearing

The VEC held an online public hearing for those wishing to speak about their response submission at 10 am on Tuesday 26 March 2024. One person spoke at the hearing.

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.

Boroondara City 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 Boroondara City 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.

Boroondara City Council was also offered but did not take up 2 optional methods to promote the reviews:

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

Public consultation

The VEC encouraged input to the ward boundary review of Boroondara City 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 Boroondara City Council

Profile

Boroondara City Council is located about 5 km to the east of the Melbourne CBD. Covering an area of 60 km², it has a total population of 167,900 people (ABS 2022b). The council is surrounded by Manningham and Banyule city councils to the north, Yarra City Council to the west, Stonnington City Council to the south, and Monash and Whitehorse city councils to the east. The council was formed in 1994 by the amalgamation of the cities of Kew, Camberwell and Hawthorn.

The Traditional Custodians of the land in Boroondara City Council are the Wurundjeri people (ACHRIS 2024).

Landscape

A predominantly residential council, it contains the suburbs of Ashburton, Balwyn, Camberwell, Canterbury, Deepdene, Hawthorn, Hawthorn East, Kew, Kew East, and part of Balwyn North, Glen Iris, Mont Albert and Surrey Hills. In addition to residential land use there are 3 major commercial centres at Camberwell, Hawthorn and Kew (.id 2024).

Major roads servicing the council area include the Eastern Freeway and the Monash Freeway. The Alamein, Belgrave and Lilydale railway lines also service the area, as do several tramlines.

A section of the Yarra River forms a large part of the council's northern border. The river environment contains most of the council's open space and is its most significant landscape feature (DPT 2024). Smaller, local parklands are located throughout the council area.

Community

The City of Boroondara's name comes from the Woi wurrung language, which means 'where the ground is thickly shaded' and prior to colonisation was a hunting ground for local Wurundjeri people (Boroondara City Council 2024; Blainey 1964). Following colonisation, its proximity to a rapidly expanding Melbourne and highly valued land resulted in the area becoming sought after and known as 'a gentleman's retreat' (Blainey 1964).

Over time, the desirability of the area remained, and the council is now one of Melbourne's more affluent, with its historic mansions and gardens an indication of such prosperity (Peel *et al.* 1993). The ABS Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (SEIFA Index) shows many of the council suburbs rank as some of the most advantaged in Victoria (ABS 2023).

As one of metropolitan Melbourne's more populous councils, the council grew from 148,532 people in 2001 to 167,900 in 2021 (ABS 2001, ABS 2022b). By 2028 the population is forecast to grow to almost 189,000 people, and between 2024 and 2041 to increase by 14% to about 205,000 (.id 2024).

The median age of residents is 40, older than the median of 37 for Greater Melbourne. In general, residents are well educated, with over 52% attaining a bachelor's degree or higher level of education, compared to 32.8% for Greater Melbourne (ABS 2022b, ABS 2022c).

The main country of birth is Australia at about 65% of the population, compared to 60% for Greater Melbourne. Residents born in China account for 8% of the population, which is high compared to the equivalent of 3.4% for Greater Melbourne overall (ABS 2022b, ABS 2022c). At 17.2%, Balwyn has a particularly large number of Chinese-born residents (ABS 2022a).

A non-English language is spoken in nearly a third (32.6%) of households, though not as high as the Greater Melbourne average (37.7%). At 10.4% (4.3% for Greater Melbourne) Mandarin is the most common language after English (ABS 2022b, ABS 2022c).

At 4.3%, unemployment is low, compared to 5.3% for Greater Melbourne. Professionals and managers are the most common professions, accounting for a combined 60% of employment, compared to 40.6% for Greater Melbourne. The median weekly income for individuals in the council is \$1,071, more than the \$841 for Greater Melbourne, while for households it is \$2,376, well above the Greater Melbourne average of \$1,901 (ABS 2022b, ABS 2022c).

Dwellings are most commonly separate houses at 55.4% of the total housing stock, but this proportion is lower than the average rate across Greater Melbourne (67.8%). Semi-detached dwellings account for about 20%, and flats and apartments for 24.2%, both at rates above those for Greater Melbourne (16.2% and 15.6% respectively) (ABS 2022b, ABS 2022c).

Of the occupied private dwellings, just below 39% are owned outright, far higher than nearly 30% for Greater Melbourne. Conversely, about 30% are owned with a mortgage, compared to 37% for Greater Melbourne. Rented homes account for just under 29%, which is lower than for Greater Melbourne at 30.2% (ABS 2022b, ABS 2022c).

Current electoral structure

Boroondara City Council has a total of 11 councillors and is divided into 11 single-councillor wards (Bellevue, Cotham, Gardiner, Glenferrie, Junction, Lynden, Maling, Maranoa, Riversdale, Solway, and Studley wards).



Figure 1: Diagram of current electoral structure of Boroondara City Council.

There are an estimated 130,537 voters in Boroondara City Council, with an estimated ratio of 11,867 voters per councillor.

By October 2024, the voter-to-councillor ratio of Bellevue Ward is forecast to be outside of +10%, and the voter-to-councillor ratio of Riversdale Ward is forecast to be outside of -10%.

Visit the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au for more information on Boroondara City Council.

Last review

The VEC conducted an electoral representation review of Boroondara City Council in 2019. 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 Boroondara City Council adopt a structure of 11 councillors elected from 4 wards (3 wards with 3 councillors and one ward with 2 councillors).

Please note, the current structure differs from the one recommended in the 2019 final report.

Visit the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au to access a copy of the 2019 representation review final report.

Preliminary findings and response

The current ward boundary review of Boroondara City Council was required due to the voter-to-councillor ratios in Bellevue and Riversdale wards, which were projected to be outside of the legislated +/-10% range at the October 2024 local council election.

It was necessary to adjust the ward boundaries of several other wards that were within the +/-10% range, to balance deviations across all wards across the council.

Preliminary report

The VEC's ward boundary review of Boroondara City 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 Boroondara City Council and chose the strongest 2 models for public consultation. The following 2 models were presented for community consideration:

- Model 1, which proposed changes to the boundaries of Bellevue, Cotham, Glenferrie, Junction, Riversdale, and Studley wards.
- Model 2, which proposed changes to the boundaries of Bellevue, Cotham, Glenferrie, Junction, Maling, Riversdale, and Studley wards.

The wards of both models are expected to be within the legislated +/-10% range at October 2024 and remain within this range through to 2028.

Model 1

Model 1 proposed minimal ward boundary adjustments to make all wards compliant with the +/-10% requirement. Overall, Model 1 would impact 2.8% of current voters (3,842 voters) within the council area.

The model proposed the contraction of Bellevue Ward, with both Studley and Cotham wards expanding northward while slightly contracting in the south. Sections of the northern and southern boundaries of Glenferrie Ward also moved northward, and a small part of Cotham Ward was moved into Glenferrie Ward. Riversdale Ward would slightly expand northward, with Burwood Road becoming the proposed boundary. Junction Ward also increased in size, with part of the northern boundary moving further north to Harcourt Street. No adjustments were made to the eastern wards, namely Maranoa, Maling, Lynden, and Solway wards, nor to Gardiner Ward in the south.

Model 2

Model 2 proposed the same boundary adjustments to Bellevue, Cotham, Glenferrie, Junction, Riversdale, and Studley wards as per Model 1. However, it included 3 additional changes to better group some neighbourhoods into wards and improve ward boundaries. The modelled changes would impact 4.49% of current voters (5,859 voters) in the council area.

Model 2 proposed expanding Bellevue Ward slightly westward, with the boundary extending west to Princess Street. In Maling Ward, the western boundary was proposed to be adjusted at 2 points: the current boundary with Cotham Ward was shifted from Oakdale Avenue westward to follow the eastern boundary of Camberwell Grammar School; and, the boundary between Maling and Junction wards was shifted further to the west, so that it followed the trainline north from Prospect Hill Road continuing along the west side of Boroondara Park to Canterbury Road.

Response submissions

The VEC received 3 response submissions to the preliminary report from the public by the deadline of 5 pm on Wednesday 20 March 2024. 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	Model 2
0	3

No submissions were received in support of Model 1. Model 2 was supported by all submitters, 2 of whom recommended minor boundary modifications.

Model 1

No submissions were received in support or opposition to Model 1.

Model 2

Julie Mulhauser, from Canterbury, supported Model 2 because the modifications better reflected neighbourhood precincts around the western boundary of Maling Ward. Mulhauser also approved of the changes resulting in voter numbers being more evenly balanced between wards.

Boroondara City Council submitted that it was “content with Option 2”. However, it recommended against the change in Model 2 that would see Bellevue Ward extended west to Princess Street, because it seemed to undo the initial change (in Model 1) of reducing the ward size and voter numbers in Bellevue Ward.

Benjamin Chesler, from Glen Iris, made a written and mapped submission, describing Model 2 as “a clear improvement over Model 1 and the status quo”. Chesler supported the alterations in Model 2 as these would keep neighbourhoods together and form stronger boundaries. The modifications to Bellevue Ward on its southern boundary, and its western extension to Princess

Street, were seen to create clear and distinct ward boundaries which kept neighbourhoods together.

Chesler argued a significant improvement could be achieved by modifying the boundary between Gardiner and Solway wards. They proposed moving the boundary to the full length of Summerhill Road and then along High Street to the western edge of the council border at Gardiners Creek. Chesler believed this would be an improvement on the current boundaries in this area, which were described as weak and not easily recognisable. Using the VEC public submission tool, Chesler calculated this alteration would result in 747 voters changing from Solway Ward to Gardiner Ward, and 742 from Gardiner Ward to Solway Ward, a net change of 5 voters between wards.

Public hearing

The VEC held an online public hearing for those wishing to speak about their response submission at 10 am on Tuesday 26 March 2024. One person spoke at the hearing.

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

Julie Mulhauser spoke in support of Model 2 and described themselves as a long-standing resident of Maling Ward who lived close to where the proposed changes were to take effect.

Mulhauser supported the changes to the north of Mont Albert Road which brought the boundary to the eastern edge of Camberwell Grammar School, as this was considered a sensible change.

Mulhauser also felt the change in the southwest of Maling Ward, which used the railway line and edge of Boroondara Park, resulted in good boundaries using notable geographic features.

Mulhauser's support for Model 2 was also premised on the way in which the model accounted for changes to voter numbers. Mulhauser described Maling Ward as a well-established area which would not experience significant population change. However, it was noted that provision had been made in Model 2 for increased density along part of Canterbury Road.

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 recognises the different communities within the council and put forward 2 models for community discussion and feedback in the preliminary report.

After considering the models presented in the preliminary report, the requirements of the Act and public submissions, the VEC has chosen to put forward Model 2 as the VEC's recommended model, with 2 minor adjustments:

- maintain the current Willsmere Road ward boundary between Bellevue and Studley wards; and
- change the ward boundary between Gardiner and Solway wards to follow Summerhill Road and High Street.

The main aim of Model 1 was to make minimal changes to ward boundaries while bringing all wards within the +/-10% range at the October 2024 local council elections. Model 2 entailed the same changes as Model 1 but included some minor additional adjustments. These changes were made to better group some neighbourhood precincts together in the same wards and to further improve ward boundaries. It also resulted in an improved balance of voters between wards. All submitters favoured the ward boundaries of Model 2.

In Model 2, the Bellevue Ward boundary following Princess Street was supported by Benjamin Chesler but opposed by Boroondara City Council. While Chesler felt the change made for a stronger, more easily identifiable boundary, the Council argued that the change undid the original improvements to the ward seen under Model 1. On balance, the VEC chose to reinstate the current Willsmere Road ward boundary, noting that the model would remain within deviation and that the existing boundary on Willsmere Road was itself familiar and relatively strong.

Chesler also recommended a further modification to Model 2. This involved adjusting the boundary between Solway and Gardiner wards to use the full length of Summerhill Road and then follow High Street to the western council boundary. Chesler pointed out this resulted in a net change of 5 voters between wards. The VEC agreed with Chesler's observation that the current boundary between Solway and Gardiner wards could be improved, and the use of Summerhill Road and High Street resulted in more easily identifiable boundaries overall.

Adopting Model 2, with the minor adjustments as above, would result in 4.66% of currently enrolled voters (6,088 voters) changing wards, with no changes made to Maranoa or Lynden wards and minor adjustments to all other wards.

The VEC identifies the main strengths of the recommended structure as follows:

- The grouping of some neighbourhoods which have similar characteristics within wards.
- Greater use of main roads as ward boundaries which would be familiar to residents. For instance, the use of Burwood, Doncaster, and Summerhill roads as boundaries.
- The wards meet the +/-10% requirement, but also aim to maximise the longevity of the model to account for changing voter numbers.

The VEC noted that there were some possible drawbacks to the recommended model. A potential disadvantage is the division of wards by main roads, which may result in a commercial centre being divided between 2 wards, for instance the use of Burwood Road to divide Riversdale and Glenferrie wards. However, the VEC considered this drawback would be outweighed by using a strong feature as a ward boundary, and the division of the commercial centre along Burwood Road may mean there are potentially 2 councillors to represent it.

While the VEC acknowledges there are both potential benefits and drawbacks for this recommended model, it considers the boundary adjustments of this model to have the best potential to promote fair and equitable representation for voters in Boroondara City 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 Boroondara City Council:

- Bellevue Ward
- Cotham Ward
- Gardiner Ward
- Glenferrie Ward
- Junction Ward
- Maling Ward
- Riversdale Ward
- Solway Ward
- Studley Ward

The recommended adjustments were presented as Model 2 in the preliminary report, with some additional adjustments incorporated.

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

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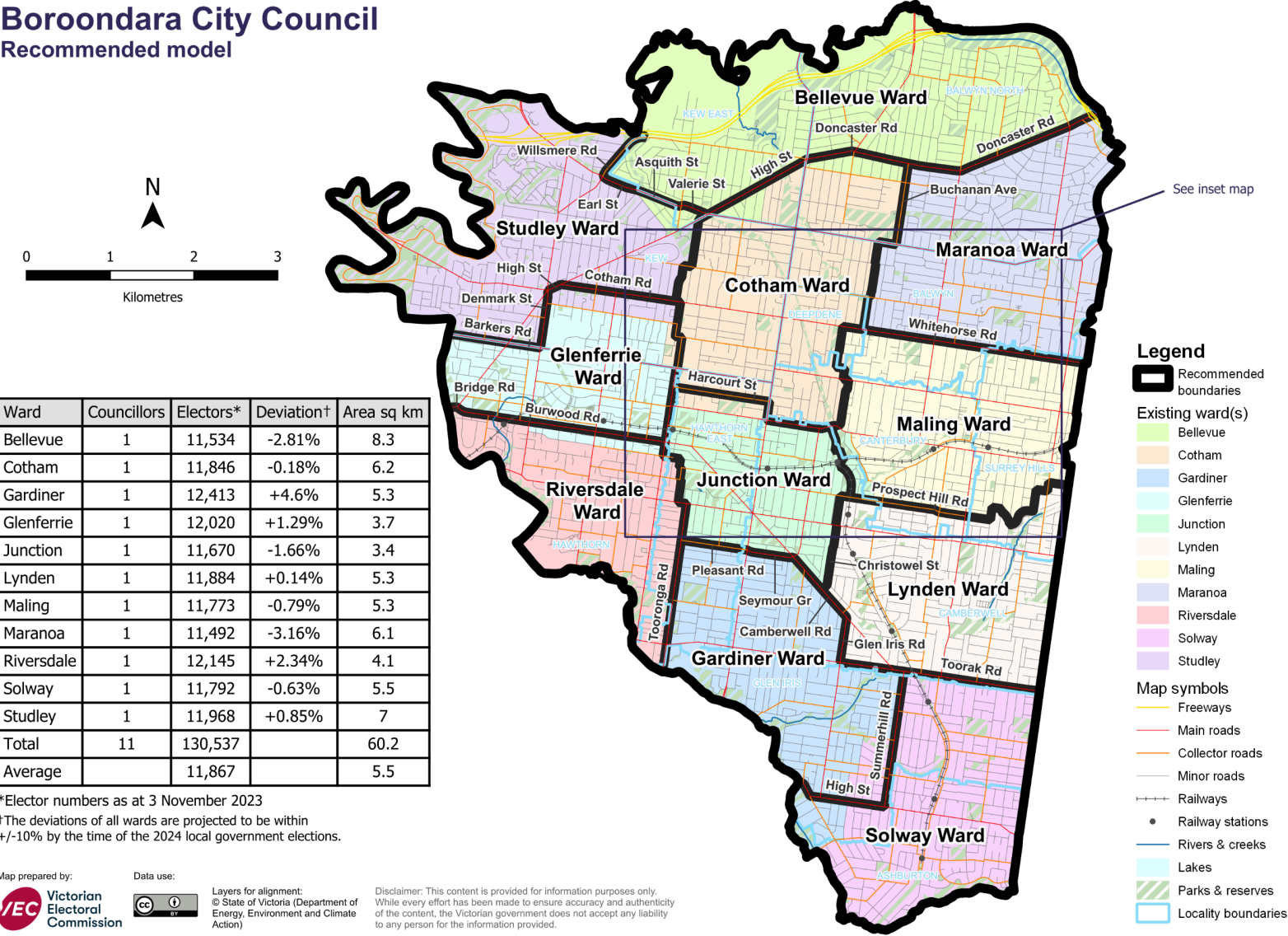
Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)

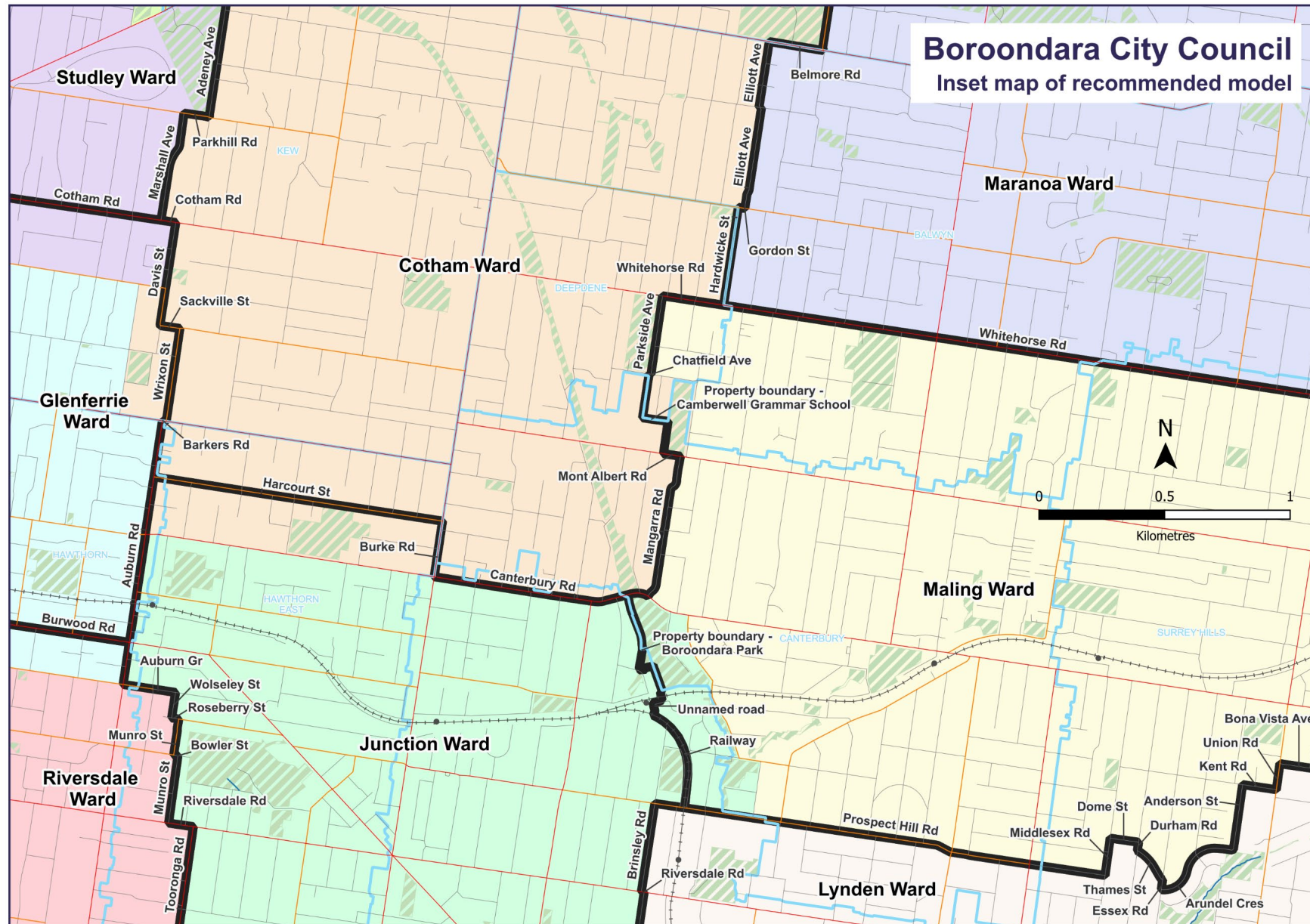
Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020 (Vic)

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Appendix 1: Map of recommended model

Boroondara City Council Recommended model





Data for recommended model

Ward	Electors*	Deviation†	Area# (square km)
Bellevue	11,534	-2.81%	8.3
Cotham	11,846	-0.18%	6.2
Gardiner	12,413	+4.6%	5.3
Glenferrie	12,020	+1.29%	3.7
Junction	11,670	-1.66%	3.4
Lynden	11,884	+0.14%	5.3
Maling	11,773	-0.79%	5.3
Maranoa	11,492	-3.16%	6.1
Riversdale	12,145	+2.34%	4.1
Solway	11,792	-0.63%	5.5
Studley	11,968	+0.85%	7.0
Total	130,537	n/a	60.2
Average	11,867	n/a	5.5

* 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

The VEC 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:

Boroondara City Council

Chesler, Benjamin

Mulhauser, Julie

Public hearing

The following people spoke at the public hearing:

Mulhauser, Julie

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