

Local council electoral structure review

Final Report

Wyndham City Council

January 2024

Acknowledgement of Country

The electoral representation advisory panel acknowledges the Bunurong and Wadawurrung peoples 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	29 December 2023	Ms Julie Eisenbise
1	22 December 2023	Mr Tim Presnell
1	20 December 2023	Ms Dana Fleming

Version approval

Version	Date approved	Submission approved by	Brief description
1	19 January 2024	Program Sponsor	Final proofread and confirmed to be sent

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Executive summary

An electoral structure review panel appointed by the Minister for Local Government has reviewed the electoral structure of Wyndham 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), Wyndham 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 Wyndham 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 Wyndham City Council adopt a 11-single-councillor ward structure – 11 wards with one councillor per ward.

The recommended names for the 11 wards in this electoral structure are: Bemini Ward, Brinbeal Ward, Cheetham Ward, Featherbrook Ward, Grange Ward, Heathdale Ward, Iramoo Ward, Quandong Ward, Werribee Park Ward, Williams Landing Ward and Wimba Ward.

This advice is submitted to the Minister for Local Government as required by the Terms of Reference of the electoral representation advisory panel and the Act.

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

Summary of approach

Developing electoral structure models

The panel considered a range of factors when deciding on its final recommendation including:

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

More information on the way the panel decided on the models is available on [page 7](#).

Preliminary report

The panel published a preliminary report on Wednesday 1 November 2023 with the following electoral structure models for public consultation:

- Model 1: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 11 councillors – 11 wards with one councillor per ward.
- Model 2: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 11 councillors – 11 wards with one councillor per ward, with different ward boundaries to Model 1.

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

Response submissions

The panel received 19 submissions responding to the preliminary report. Of these, 2 submissions included maps.

A full analysis of response submissions received can be found on [page 16](#).

Public hearing

The panel held an online public hearing for those wishing to speak about their response submission at 10 am on Tuesday 28 November 2023. 2 people spoke at the hearing.

Background

About the 2023–24 electoral structure reviews

In October 2022, the Minister for Local Government formed 2 electoral representation advisory panels to review and provide advice on the electoral structures of 39 local councils, under section 16 of the Act. If the Minister accepts the electoral structure recommended by the panel, any changes will take effect at the October 2024 local council elections.

The Act introduced several changes to local government representation, including the types of electoral structures local councils may have. All metropolitan, interface and regional city councils (including Wyndham City Council) must now have single-councillor ward electoral structures.

For Wyndham 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 Wyndham 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 Wyndham 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, 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.

Wyndham City was also offered and took up 2 optional methods to promote the reviews:

- targeting social media advertisements at the council area
- notifying voters in the council area subscribed to the VEC's VoterAlert service about the start of the review and release of the preliminary report.

Public consultation

The panel encouraged public input to the review of Wyndham 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 Wyndham 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 Wyndham 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 Wyndham City Council

Profile

Located in Melbourne's outer western suburbs, halfway between Melbourne and Geelong, Wyndham City Council covers an area of 542 km². It is bordered to the south-west by Greater Geelong City Council, to the north-west by Moorabool Shire Council, to the north by Melton City and Brimbank City councils and to the east by Hobsons Bay City Council.

In the south the council area includes the localities of Werribee South and Cocoroc and to the east are Point Cook, Williams Landing, and part of Laverton. Along the northern council boundary are Laverton North, Truganina, Tarneit, and part of Mount Cottrell. The established areas of Werribee and Hoppers Crossing are in the centre of the council area. Wyndham Vale and Manor Lakes, and the less populated areas of Mambourin, Quandong, and parts of Eynesbury and Little River are in the west.

The Traditional Custodians of the land in Wyndham City Council are the Bunurong and Wadawurrung peoples.

Landscape

Wyndham City Council contains major transport routes connecting Melbourne with Geelong and regional Victoria, including the Princes Freeway and two train lines. The Werribee train line consists of the suburban line that finishes at Werribee and the national freight line that traverses the council from east to west. The regional train line extends around the north and west of the established areas and connects into the Werribee train line south-west of Werribee. The Werribee River flows through the council area and there are a number of waterways and wetlands, including Skeleton Creek and Cheetham Wetlands.

Urban development is limited by the urban growth boundary around the north-western, western and southern parts of the council area (DTP 2023). Land inside the boundary contains established residential areas and large areas of former agricultural land being subdivided for new residential development.

There is a significant industrial area in Laverton North and Truganina, and commercial areas include the Werribee employment precinct and a network of activity centres. Non-urban areas to the south and west of the council area contain small townships, agriculture, quarries, conservation areas, and over 27 km of coastline. Wyndham also includes Werribee Racecourse, Werribee Park, Werribee Open Range Zoo, the Western Treatment Plant, the Port Phillip Prison, and RAAF Bases Point Cook and Williams-Laverton.

Population and community

Wyndham City Council was home to 292,011 people in 2021 (ABS 2022a), an increase of 130,436 over the previous decade (ABS 2011). The median age in 2021 of 32 years was lower than for Greater Melbourne overall (37 years) (ABS 2022a; 2022b). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people comprised 0.9% of the population in 2021 (ABS 2022a).

As one of Australia's fastest growing local council areas, Wyndham's population is forecast to grow at a rate of 3.4% per annum from 2022 and 2028. The population is expected to reach over 500,000 by 2041 (.id 2022c). Most growth will be in new residential areas north and west of established areas – Truganina, Tarneit, Wyndham Vale and Manor Lakes (DTP 2023). Higher density housing will be built near activity centres and public transport (DTP 2023), especially in Werribee and Hoppers Crossing.

In 2021, 48% of people were born overseas (from over 120 countries), including 17.3% from India (.id 2022a). Nearly half of all residents (49.8%) spoke a language other than English at home (.id 2022a). Nearly 40 religious communities were represented, including Catholicism (18.1%), Hinduism (14.5%), Islam (9.9%) and Sikhism (6.1%) (.id 2022a).

In 2021, 87.6% of all dwellings were separate houses, significantly higher than 65.1% for Greater Melbourne (.id 2022a). A higher proportion of families also had a mortgage (46.1%) compared with 35.6% for Greater Melbourne overall (.id 2022a). The median household weekly income was \$2,203 in 2021, again higher than for Greater Melbourne (\$1,901) (ABS 2022a, 2022b).

Wyndham has more than 32,000 local businesses that employ over 100,000 people (.id 2022b). The labour force participation rate in 2021 for all residents aged 15 years and over was 66.9%, higher than the average for Greater Melbourne of 64.1% (.id 2022a). The largest employers were transport, postal and warehousing businesses, employing 15.6% of workers in 2021-22 (.id 2022b).

Current number of councillors and electoral structure

Wyndham City Council is currently divided into 3 wards with a total of 11 councillors:

- one ward with 3 councillors (Iramoo)
- 2 wards with 4 councillors each (Chaffey and Harrison wards).

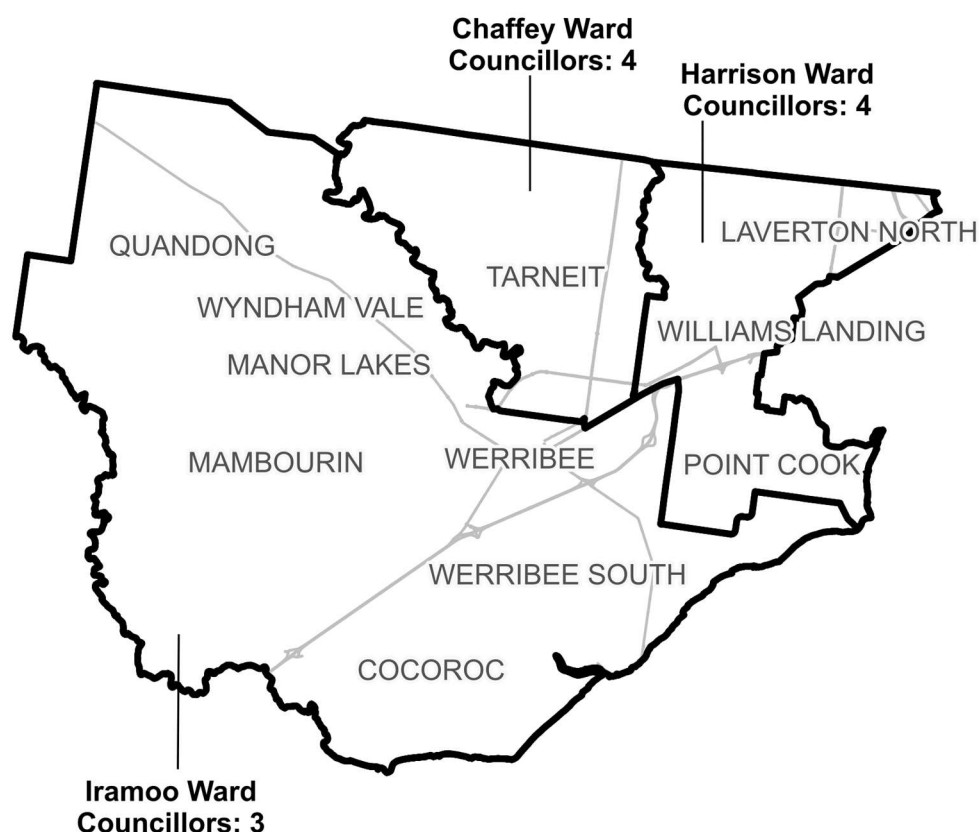


Figure 1: Diagram of current electoral structure of Wyndham City Council.

There are an estimated 196,938 voters in Wyndham City Council, with an estimated ratio of 17,903 voters per councillor.

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

Last electoral structure review

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

Subdivision review

Since the 2012 representation review, the VEC also conducted a subdivision review of Wyndham City Council in 2020.

Subdivision reviews conducted under the *Local Government Act 1989* (Vic) adjusted the internal ward boundaries of a council but did not change the electoral structure or number of councillors. Subdivision reviews were conducted in situations where the voter-to-councillor ratios in one or more wards of a council were forecast to move outside the legislated +/-10% tolerance before the council's next election and aimed to ensure voter-to-councillor ratios for all wards were within tolerance at the election.

The 2020 review of Wyndham City Council aimed to return Chaffey and Harrison wards to within the permitted +/-10% tolerance before the 2020 local council elections.

Visit the Wyndham City Council profile page on the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au to access a copy of the 2020 subdivision review final report.

Preliminary report

A preliminary report was released on Wednesday 1 November 2023. The panel considered research findings and the requirements of the Act when formulating the models presented in the preliminary report.

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

- Model 1: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 11 councillors – 11 wards with one councillor per ward.
- Model 2: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 11 councillors – 11 wards with one councillor per ward, with different ward boundaries to Model 1.

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

Response submissions

The panel received 19 response submissions to the preliminary report from the public (from 16 submitters) by the deadline of 5 pm on Wednesday 22 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 (11 single-councillor wards)	Model 2 (11 single-councillor wards)	No preferred model indicated
6*	5	5*

* Preferences from submitters who lodged multiple submissions have only been counted once in the table.

Of the 16 submitters, 6 supported Model 1, 5 supported Model 2 and 5 did not indicate a preference for either model. One submitter suggested a change to the boundaries of Model 1 and 3 suggested changes to the boundaries of Model 2.

There were 3 submitters who did not support the move to single-councillor wards.

One submitter, while supporting Model 2, believed that the panel should also investigate a 12-councillor model, based on population forecasts and to bring the voter-to-councillor ratio more in line with comparable councils.

Model 1

Multiple submissions in favour of Model 1 argued that the inclusion of Williams Landing in one ward was preferred, as it made no sense to divide this small suburb. It was felt that the councillor elected for this ward could better represent Williams Landing as a whole.

One submitter indicated a preference for the boundaries of Cheetham Ward proposed in Model 1 compared to the ward nominally referred to as Saltwater Ward in Model 2, on the basis that it included all the parks and recreation area within the one ward. Another submitter indicated a preference for the more compact Wimba and Brinbeal wards proposed in Model 1 compared to how these areas were divided in Model 2.

It was also argued in a submission that the boundary for Bellbridge Ward in Model 2 was preferred as it extended east to Skeleton Creek.

Several arguments were presented against Model 1, including that the use of minor roads as boundaries were not as clear as the boundaries adopted in Model 2, and could lead to confusion for residents and councillors. An example of this being the proposed boundary between Bemini and Wimba wards in Model 1 was not a strong one, and would divide the communities of Tarneit and Truganina, particularly in the new estates to the west of Skeleton

Creek. It was felt that these areas in Tarneit would not be effectively represented with a Truganina-based councillor from Bemini Ward.

It was also argued that Model 1 did not account for the impacts of population change, being more likely to require more significant boundary adjustments in the future.

From a governance perspective, one submitter felt that Model 1 did not present equitable municipal representation for communities of interest. The example given was that the small community of Williams Landing was within its own ward, yet other communities such as Hoppers Crossing, Truganina and Tarneit were all split across multiple wards, thereby reducing levels of effective representation for these suburbs.

Model 2

The primary argument of most submitters supporting Model 2 was that it made better use of clear boundaries, such as major roads and creeks, and better reflected local communities of interest across the council area. It was felt this would enhance understanding of ward boundaries for residents and would provide more effective representation of local interests.

One submitter clarified this by stating that Model 2 boundaries reflected the diverse demographic, historic and cultural characteristics of Wyndham City Council better than Model 1, particularly in the central and northern suburbs. On this basis, it was argued that Model 2 would be better able to bring different communities together to advocate for their distinct community needs and services.

Reference was made by 2 submitters to Model 2 being more closely aligned to the existing electoral structure, which they felt would cause the least disruption and reduce division of communities. It was also pointed out the use of main roads and existing electoral boundaries in Model 2 would be more effective. This was because it allowed for future population growth and would minimise the level of change required in future electoral boundary reviews (rather than relying on local roads that will need more significant changes at each review, causing confusion).

The boundaries of Model 2 in the north between the proposed Wimba and Bemini Wards was identified by a submitter as being preferred over Model 1 boundaries. It was argued that the use of Skeleton Creek in Model 2 as the boundary, which is also the locality boundary between Tarneit and Truganina, and an existing ward boundary, aligns more effectively with community expectations for residents in the north of the council area.

Several arguments were presented by submitters against Model 2. This included that Williams Landing, as a small suburb, was divided across 2 wards. It was argued that it made no sense to divide this local community, which would be better represented in one ward. It was suggested that the boundary of the ward nominally referred to as Waterholes Ward in Model 2 in the preliminary report should be extended east to the municipal boundary, to contain all of Williams Landing. A map of this alternative boundary was provided to the panel for consideration.

In the north of the council area, an argument against Model 2 was that proposed Bemini Ward should include the land west of Skeleton Creek, up to Derrimut Road, effectively containing all land bounded by Derrimut, Boundary, Palmers and Sayers Roads. It was felt that the new estates east and west of Skeleton Creek all identify as one community and should be together. A map of an alternative boundary was provided to the panel for consideration.

Models 1 and 2

Arguments presented by two submitters that applied equally to both Models 1 and 2 were that the inclusion of part of Point Cook in a ward north of the railway line was not a preferred outcome, as it was divided by the Princes Freeway, and included the Point Cook town centre in the proposed ward to the north. It was felt that the town centre was an important part of the Point Cook community and its inclusion in a ward to the north would divide communities of interest and not allow for appropriate representation for Point Cook residents. It was further suggested that the ward boundaries should not divide the postcode that applied to Point Cook.

It was also suggested by one submitter that the boundary of proposed Heathdale Ward in both Models 1 and 2 should be moved south to Heaths Road, to avoid dividing a community of interest.

Other options

One submitter supporting Model 2 felt the panel should consider a 12 single-councillor ward structure, as it would provide better clarity for residents, accommodate future population growth more effectively and reduce the average electors per ward to align more closely with comparable councils. The submitter did not provide an alternative 12 single-councillor model for the panel's consideration.

Public hearing

The panel held an online public hearing for those wishing to speak about their response submission at 10 am on Tuesday 28 November 2023. 2 people spoke at the hearing.

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

The first speaker was Patrick Ong, a resident of Williams Landing, who indicated he had property interests in both the proposed Bemim Ward and Waterholes Ward of Model 2. He began by identifying Model 1 as his preferred electoral structure. He clarified that his comments to the panel related to suggestions to improve Model 2. His primary argument was that Williams Landing, as a small suburb, should be kept together in one ward. He outlined to the panel his suggestion that the proposed Waterholes Ward in Model 2 should extend east to the municipal border, south of Sayers Road to capture all of Williams Landing and that part of Laverton within Wyndham City Council. He indicated a preference for this ward to be renamed Williams Landing Ward rather than Waterholes Ward.

Patrick Ong also spoke about proposed Bemim Ward in Model 2. He referred to a map he had included in his written submission, suggesting Bemim Ward should include the land west of Skeleton Creek, up to Derrimut Road, effectively containing all land bounded by Derrimut, Boundary, Palmers and Sayers Roads. He argued that these areas consist of new estates that all identify as one community. He clarified this further by stating that he felt the boundary between Tarneit and Truganina was very flexible and interchangeable, with the residents in the new estates both east and west of Skeleton Creek not identifying specifically with either Tarneit or Truganina, but rather as one mixed area.

The second speaker was Beelan Ong, a resident of Point Cook. She stated to the panel that neither model was preferred, as both divided Point Cook across multiple wards. Significantly, the Point Cook town centre was contained within the ward to the north of the freeway (either Williams Landing Ward in proposed Model 1 or Waterholes Ward in proposed Model 2). She felt strongly that the town centre represented the heart of Point Cook, which reflected an established community of interest. The town centre was described as a place within walking and cycling distance of their homes where residents came for their daily shopping, medical and community needs. She stated that she did not believe that a councillor representing the ward north of the freeway would adequately represent the residents of Point Cook and their town centre.

Beelan Ong recognised that Point Cook residents do have connections to other localities within the council area. However, it was argued their daily activities are focussed on the Point Cook town centre. Whilst there are new areas in Williams Landing that Point Cook residents will have some connection with, having to travel across Princes Freeway to get there does create a barrier. She felt that Williams Landing does have a town centre that is growing in size to service the community north of the railway line, and it doesn't make sense to have both town centres in the same ward. When asked by the panel if any potential change to the ward boundaries to allow for the Point Cook town centre to be contained within proposed Featherbrook Ward to the

south in either model would make a difference, she responded that it would definitely be a better outcome.

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 for the 2024 local council elections.

A significant challenge facing Wyndham City Council is the high population growth forecast that will continue over the next 2 decades. The growth will be unevenly spread, focused mostly on new subdivisions inside the urban growth boundary to the north and west of the established areas and within activity centres. This presents challenges in seeking to maintain even voter distribution across all wards to ensure legislated voter deviations are met in 2024 and beyond, whilst also seeking to capture communities of interest.

As a result of the high level of growth and its uneven distribution across the council area, neither of the models are expected to be viable by 2028, with most wards in both models expected to be outside the +/-10% legislated deviation by 2028 by a significant margin. Wyndham City Council is therefore expected to require a further ward boundary review prior to the 2028 local council elections.

Number of councillors

After considering the requirements of the Act, public submissions and the agreed criteria, the panel found 11 councillors to be an appropriate number for Wyndham City Council.

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

Wyndham City Council currently has 196,938 voters represented by 11 councillors and covers an area of 542 km². Wyndham has the second highest number of voters of all interface councils.

Like most interface councils, Wyndham City Council is expected to have high population growth over the next two decades that will be unevenly spread across the council area. As already outlined, this level of growth is expected to result in the need for a further ward boundary review prior to 2028.

One submission suggested that the panel should also consider a 12 councillor model, however no alternative model was put forward for consideration. In some cases, a local council may have special circumstances that support a recommendation for fewer or more councillors. The panel did not identify any new circumstances for Wyndham City Council since the last

representation review in 2012, other than general population growth that has occurred, similar to most interface councils.

As growth continues to occur at a high rate, the panel recognised that with the second highest number of voters among interface councils, there may be justification at a future electoral structure review to consider an increase of the number of councillors for Wyndham City Council. However, given that current voter numbers were consistent with other interface councils with 11 councillors, the panel believed 11 councillors to be the most appropriate.

Electoral structure

After considering the requirements of the Act, public submissions and the agreed criteria, the panel found Model 2 with some adjustments to be the single-councillor ward model with the best potential to promote fair and equitable representation for voters in Wyndham City Council and consequently facilitate good governance.

Model 1 used strong features as ward boundaries including railway lines, main roads, waterways and locality boundaries where possible, particularly the Werribee River and the Werribee rail line in the south and west. In the centre and north, the need to meet legislated voter distributions resulted in the use of some minor roads being used as boundaries, particularly between Brinbeal and Bellbridge wards in the centre, and between Bemina and Wimba wards in the north.

The strengths of Model 1 highlighted in response submissions included Williams Landing being contained in one ward, providing a better structure for Cheetham Ward (compared to proposed Saltwater Ward in Model 2), providing compact Brinbeal and Wimba wards and using Skeleton Creek as the boundary for Bellbridge Ward.

The identified drawbacks of Model 1 included the use of more local roads as boundaries compared to Model 2 and the division of localities across ward boundaries. The panel noted that most localities in the north, east, and centre of the council area had too many voters for one ward, so it was essential to divide them across more than one ward. The division of Point Cook across 4 wards, and Werribee and Hoppers Crossing across 3 wards each was unavoidable in both models due to the need to balance voter deviations. However, a drawback of Model 1 was that it divided Tarneit across 3 wards compared to Model 2 which was able to contain Tarneit within 2 wards.

Model 2 represented the least change from the current electoral structure and maintained most of the boundaries of the existing 3 multi-councillor wards, dividing them into 11 single-councillor wards. Except for part of the existing Iramoo Ward in Werribee and part of the existing Harrison Ward in Point Cook, each existing ward was divided into equivalent single-councillor wards under Model 2 to create 3 wards in place of Iramoo Ward, and 4 wards each covering the current Chaffey and Harrison wards.

Model 2 adopted the same boundaries as Model 1 in the south and west, where strong boundaries of the Werribee River, the Werribee railway line and locality boundaries created

clear community divisions. The panel noted there were no submissions relating to the boundaries of the proposed Iramoo, Quandong or Werribee Park wards of either Models 1 or 2. In the east, the boundaries for Point Cook were similar to Model 1, however the ward nominally referred to as Saltwater Ward in the preliminary report in Model 2 did not extend south of Point Cook Homestead Road. One submitter suggested that the boundary of Cheetham Ward in Model 1 was preferred over the boundary of Saltwater Ward in Model 2, as it included all the parks and recreation area in one ward. The panel agreed with this and felt it would be appropriate for all the wetlands and park areas at the eastern end of Point Cook to be included in the same ward.

The panel therefore decided that the boundary of Cheetham Ward in Model 1 be applied to the ward nominally referred to as Saltwater Ward in Model 2, with corresponding adjustments to the boundary of Werribee Park Ward. This adjusted boundary is included in the recommended electoral structure in [Appendix 1](#).

Several submitters were not supportive of either model as they both included the northern part of Point Cook in the ward containing Williams Landing to the north, dividing communities of interest and separating the Point Cook town centre from the majority of residents of Point Cook. The panel explored different boundary options to address this. However, in all options the northern part of Point Cook was required to be included in a ward north of the railway line to meet legislated voter deviations. Nonetheless, the panel determined that it was possible to adjust the boundaries of Featherbrook Ward in Model 2 to include the Point Cook town centre and still maintain the required +/-10% voter deviations across all wards. The panel felt this would be a positive outcome for the Point Cook community, by allowing for the town centre to be included within a ward with a Point Cook representative.

The panel therefore decided that the boundary between Featherbrook Ward and the ward nominally referred to as Waterholes Ward in the preliminary report for Model 2 be adjusted, so that the Point Cook town centre on the north-east corner of Boardwalk Boulevard and Dunnings Road in Point Cook (and up to the property boundary of the Boardwalk Boulevard Wetlands) is contained within Featherbrook Ward. This adjusted boundary is included in the recommended electoral structure in [Appendix 1](#).

Some submitters preferred the electoral structure of Model 1 over Model 2 due to Williams Landing being contained within one ward in Model 1. One of these submitters suggested that if Model 2 was used, the boundary of the ward nominally referred to as Waterholes Ward in the preliminary report for Model 2 should be extended east to the council boundary. This would allow for all of Williams Landing and that part of Laverton within the council area to be within the same ward. As a small locality that is relatively new, the panel agrees that keeping the community of Williams Landing in one ward is a preferable outcome. The suggestion to extend the eastern boundary of this ward was tested by the panel, and whilst it would result in the number of voters in Bemim Ward to the north being reduced with a large deviation, the distribution of voters across both wards is still expected to be within legislated deviations for the 2024 local council elections.

The panel therefore decided that the boundary of the ward nominally referred to as Waterholes Ward in the preliminary report for Model 2 be extended east to the municipal boundary, so that it contains all of Williams Landing and that part of Laverton that is within the council area. Corresponding adjustments should also be made to the boundary of Bemini Ward, so that its southern boundary is Sayers Road. This adjusted boundary is included in the recommended electoral structure in [Appendix 1](#).

In the centre of the council area, a submitter suggested that the northern boundary of proposed Heathdale Ward in both models between Tarneit Road and the Werribee River should be moved south to Heaths Road, to avoid dividing established communities north of Heaths Road. This option was explored by the panel, however it resulted in the voter numbers for Heathdale Ward for the 2024 local council elections being outside the legislated +/-10% deviations. The proposed northern boundary of Heathdale Ward west of Tarneit Road follows the existing locality boundary between Tarneit and Werribee. This is considered to be a strong boundary that would be well understood by local residents. The panel is satisfied that the northern ward boundary for Heathdale Ward as proposed is appropriate.

In the north of the council area, the boundary between proposed Wimba and Bemini wards in Model 2 received different and conflicting responses in submissions. An alternative mapped suggestion for Model 2 was to include the new estates in Tarneit (west of Skeleton Creek and east of Derrimut Road), that are currently proposed in Wimba Ward to be located within Bemini Ward. This was on the basis that the new communities in both Tarneit and Truganina all identify as one mixed community of interest, rather than as separate communities. The panel tested this suggestion however determined that the voter numbers in Bemini Ward would be too high and outside the +/-10% legislated voter deviation requirements for 2024.

This contrasted with another view that the proposed boundary of Skeleton Creek to divide Bemini and Wimba wards was a strong one as it reflected community expectations in this area. The panel accepts that there may be many communities of interest in the new residential areas in the north that cross locality boundaries, based on a range of factors such as cultural connections, school communities and other local interests. However, the panel agrees with the use of Skeleton Creek as an appropriate boundary between Wimba and Bemini wards. It is a physical feature as well as a locality boundary and an existing ward boundary, that the panel felt would provide a strong and well understood ward boundary in this location.

The panel's decision to recommend the electoral structure proposed in Model 2 with some adjustments, is based on consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of both models and how these translate into an effective electoral structure for the whole council area. The panel appreciates the support expressed for Model 1 from submitters and acknowledges it has some benefits.

However, the panel agrees with submitters who suggested that Model 2 boundaries align more effectively with community expectations and will better reflect the individual differences of communities across Wyndham City Council. Taking into account the adjustments recommended to the boundaries of Model 2 following feedback from submitters, the panel

considers the ability of Model 2 to contain Tarneit within 2 wards and all of Williams Landing in one ward, to include Point Cook town centre in Featherbrook Ward and the use of Skeleton Creek as a boundary between Wimba and Bemim wards in the north are all strong features that align with community interests.

Therefore, considering a range of factors including voter numbers per ward, use of clear features as ward boundaries, communities of interest and governance outcomes – Model 2 with some adjustments was determined to be on balance, the most appropriate electoral structure for Wyndham City Council.

The panel summarises the strengths of the adjusted Model 2 as:

- Greater use of the existing electoral structure as the basis for the least change, maintaining a similar level of representation for the same geographic areas.
- Use of strong physical barriers to create clear and understandable ward boundaries, such as main roads, railway lines, waterways and locality boundaries.
- More recognisable and familiar features adopted as ward boundaries to support a more seamless transition from multi-councillor to single-councillor wards.
- Use of boundaries that capture communities of interest across the whole council area better than Model 1. The panel felt that the boundaries of Model 2 will be better able to reflect local interests and community expectations, leading to improved representation of local communities and more effective governance outcomes.

The panel noted that introducing single-councillor wards represents a large electoral structure change for Wyndham City Council. It has groups of voters in both urban and rural areas that are separated by strong physical barriers, such as main roads, railway lines and waterways that divide communities. Future growth is also expected to be very high and unevenly spread across the council area. 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 the 2024 local council elections was challenging. The panel acknowledges that, despite best efforts, due to the volatility of population growth as well as the uncertain impacts of changes to council voting entitlements under the Act, that there remains a risk that some wards may be outside the +/- 10% by the time of the 2024 election.

While it is difficult to predict the number of candidates likely to stand at future elections, past election results provide some indication. The panel examined past election results for Wyndham City Council including numbers of candidates nominating, incidences of uncontested elections and rates of informal voting. It found there to have been relatively strong candidate numbers across the council area under the current electoral structure. The panel assumes this trend will continue under a structure of 11 single-councillor wards, minimising the risk of uncontested or failed elections under this structure.

The panel noted valid arguments both in favour of and against both single-councillor ward structures examined in this review. Both models received some level of support from submitters

for various reasons. For the reasons outlined in this report, the panel considers Model 2 with some adjustments to be the single-councillor ward model with the best potential to promote fair and equitable representation for voters in Wyndham City Council and consequently facilitate good governance under the requirements of the Act.

Ward names

The panel considered feedback on ward names from public submissions and changed 2 ward names from those proposed in Model 2 as a result of this feedback. One submitter suggested that Waterholes Ward in Model 2 should be renamed Williams Landing Ward. Given that the eastern boundary of this ward in the recommended Model 2 has now been extended to include all of Williams Landing, the panel agreed with and changed this ward name.

Model 1 proposed that the eastern most ward in Point Cook be Cheetham Ward and in Model 2 it was proposed to be Saltwater Ward. The panel had used different names in each model to gauge public opinion. Two submitters indicated a preference for the ward name of Cheetham rather than Saltwater, as it was felt that it better reflected the main features of the area, including Cheetham Creek and Cheetham Wetlands. The panel agreed with this suggestion and has recommended this ward name be changed in the recommended Model 2.

One submitter suggested Birdsville as an alternative name for Heathdale Ward in both models 1 and 2, to reflect the large number of streets named after birds in this area. The panel noted this suggestion, however the name is not registered in the VICNAMES register. The panel was satisfied that the name Heathdale was a recognisable and appropriate name for this ward, reflecting a local school and kindergarten and being part of the name of a large park located centrally in this ward (Heathdale Glen Orden Wetlands).

Two submitters suggested that in Model 2, Brinbeal Ward should be renamed Tarneit West Ward, and Wimba Ward should be renamed Tarneit North Ward. Both submitters felt these alternative names would better align with residents' understanding of where these wards were located. Reference was made to precinct structure plans, other planning projects and local features using both Tarneit North and Tarneit West. It was noted that the boundaries of both precinct structure plans referred to do not exactly align with the proposed ward boundaries, which may cause confusion. The panel was satisfied that the proposed ward names of Brinbeal and Wimba, reflecting schools in each ward and both based on Aboriginal language, are appropriate names for each ward.

One submitter queried the use of the ward name of Quandong in both models, not being sure about the naming convention for this name. Quandong is a locality within the proposed ward for both models and is also an Australian native tree. The name was originally derived from Aboriginal language. The panel was satisfied that it is an appropriate ward name for this area.

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

- Bemis Ward: New ward name based on the name of a school in the ward. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Brinbeal Ward: New ward name based on the name of a school in the ward. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Cheetham Ward: New ward name based on the name of a creek and wetlands in the ward. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.

- Featherbrook Ward: New ward name based on the name of a street, school, park, community centre, kindergarten and shopping centre in the ward. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Grange Ward: New ward name based on the name of a school, community centre and kindergarten in the ward. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Heathdale Ward: New ward name based on the name of a school and kindergarten in the ward. It is also part of the name of the Heathdale Glen Orden Wetlands in the ward. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Iramoo Ward: A ward name based on the existing name of a ward under the current electoral structure. It is also the name of a school in the ward. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Quandong Ward: New ward name based on a locality that is contained within the ward. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Werribee Park Ward: New ward name based on the name of a Park and a school in the ward. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Williams Landing Ward: A new ward name based on a locality that is contained within the ward. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.
- Wimba Ward: New ward name based on the name of a school in the ward. This name is registered in the VICNAMES register.

The panel's recommendation

The electoral representation advisory panel recommends that Wyndham City Council adopt an 11 single-councillor ward structure – 11 wards with one councillor per ward.

The recommended names for the 11 wards in this electoral structure are Bemmin Ward, Brinbeal Ward, Cheetham Ward, Featherbrook Ward, Grange Ward, Heathdale Ward, Iramoo Ward, Quandong Ward, Werribee Park Ward, Williams Landing Ward and Wimba 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 2 in the preliminary report, with some changes in response to submissions.

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

References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) (2022a) [2021 Census All persons QuickStats, Wyndham \(LGA\)](#), ABS, accessed 2 October 2023.

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

—(2011) [2011 Census All persons QuickStats, Wyndham \(LGA\)](#), ABS, accessed 2 October 2023.

DTP (Department of Transport and Planning) (2023) [Wyndham planning scheme](#), DTP website, accessed 29 September 2023.

Electoral Act 2002 (Vic).

FPSR (First Peoples State Relations) (2023) [Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners](#), First Peoples State Relations website, accessed 19 September 2023.

Geographic Place Names Act 1998 (Vic).

.id (Informed Decisions) (2022a) [City of Wyndham community profile](#), .id website, accessed 2 October 2023.

—(2022b) [City of Wyndham economic profile](#), .id website, accessed 2 October 2023.

—(2022c) [City of Wyndham population forecast](#), .id website, accessed 2 October 2023.

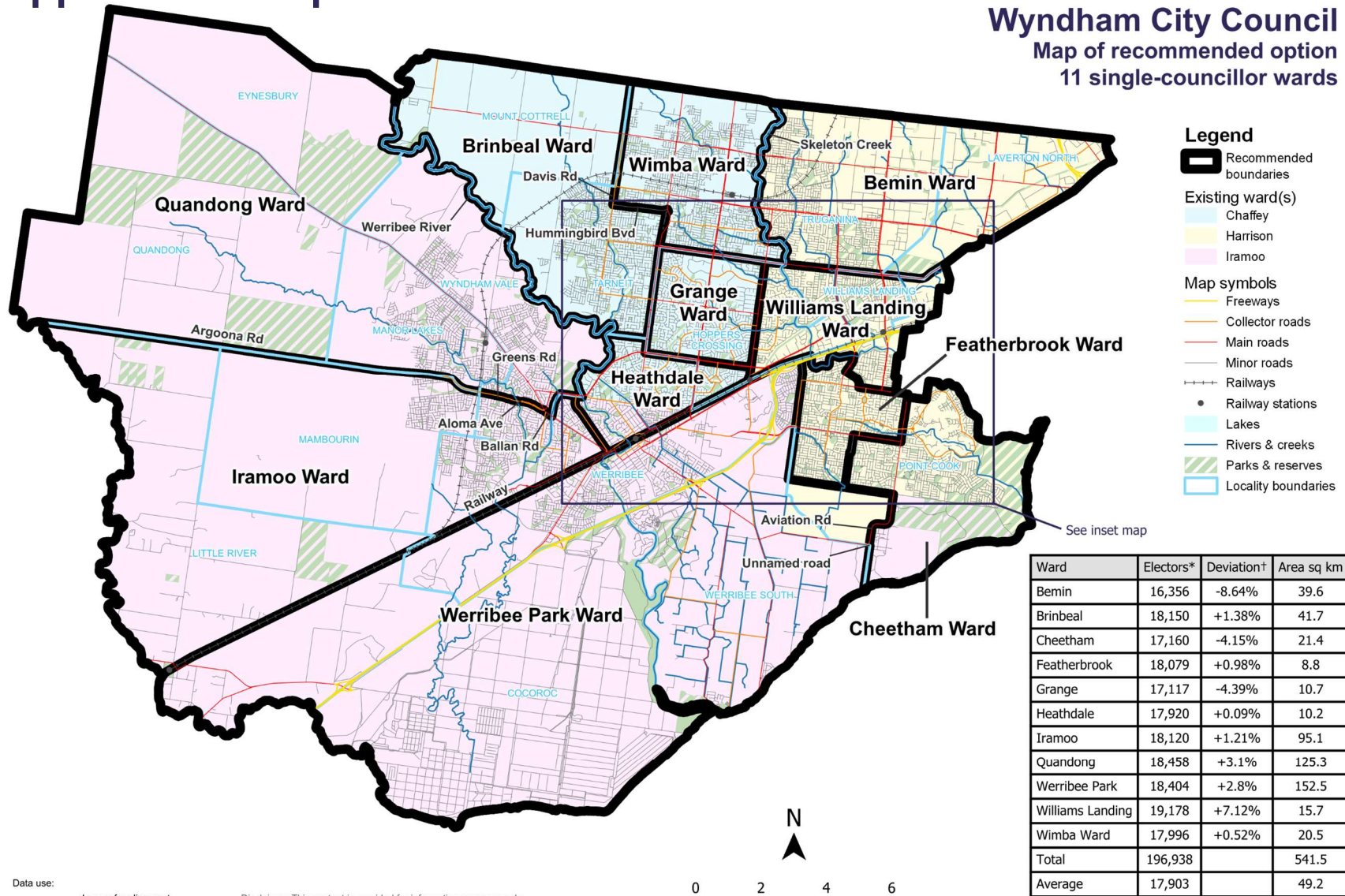
Local Government Act 1989 (Vic).

Local Government Act 2020 (Vic).

Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020 (Vic).

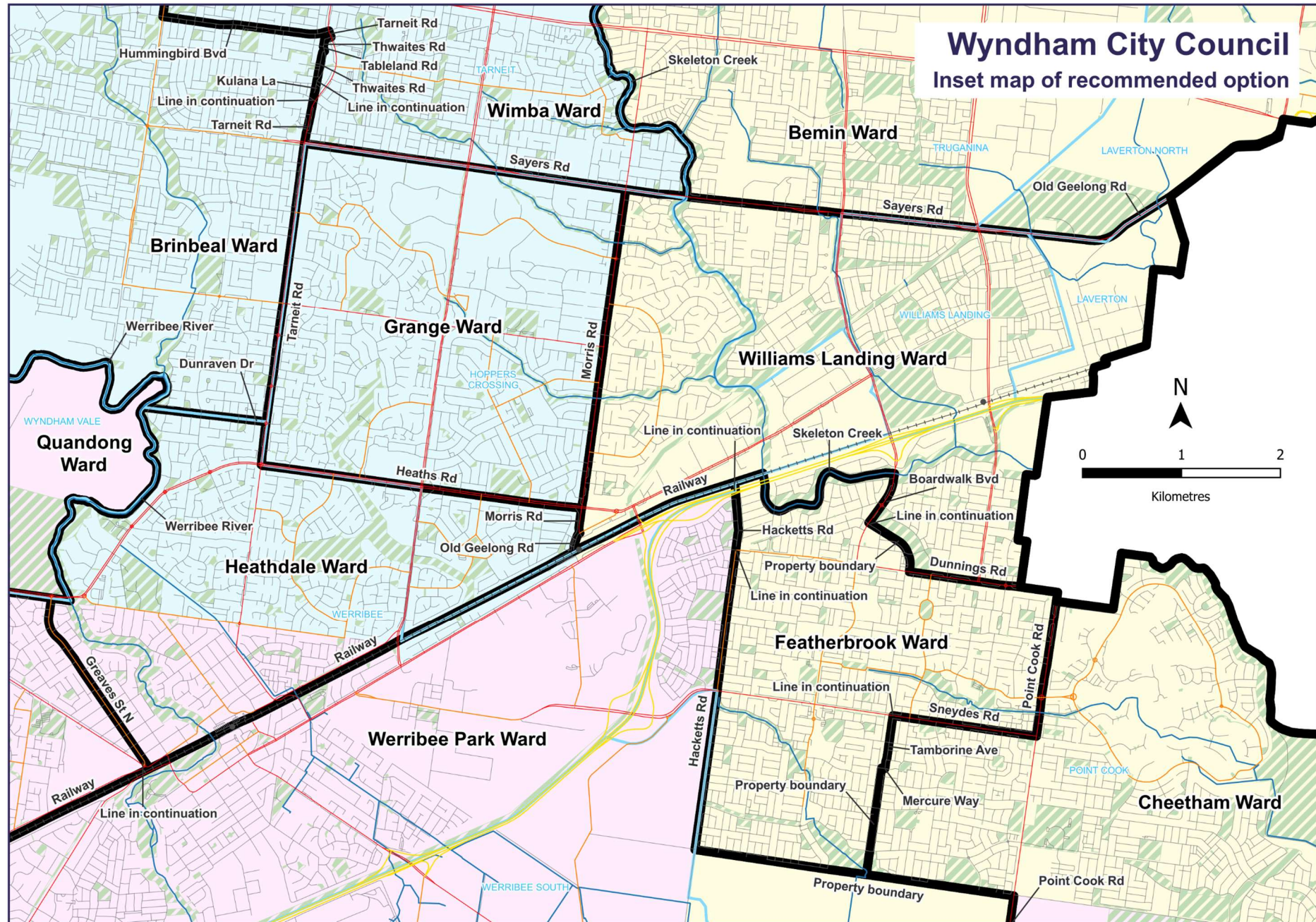
Appendix 1: Map of recommended structure

Wyndham City Council Map of recommended option 11 single-councillor wards



*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

Ward	Electors*	Deviation†	Area# (square km)
Bemin	16,356	-8.64%	39.6
Brinbeal	18,150	+1.38%	41.7
Cheetham	17,160	-4.15%	21.4
Featherbrook	18,079	+0.98%	8.8
Grange	17,117	-4.39%	10.7
Heathdale	17,920	+0.09%	10.2
Iramoo	18,120	+1.21%	95.1
Quandong	18,458	+3.1%	125.3
Werribee Park	18,404	+2.8%	152.5
Williams Landing	19,178	+7.12%	15.7
Wimba	17,996	+0.52%	20.5
Total	196,938	-	541.5
Average	17,903	-	49.2

*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 and speakers at the public hearing for their participation in the review process.

Response submissions

Response submissions were made by:

Agarwal, Gunjan
Boddeke, Jack
Chirag, Majithiya
Gilligan, Josh (Councillor, Wyndham City Council)
Ke, Lijin
Khan, Nurul
McGuire, Shannon
McIntyre, Susan
Ma, Qimin
Ng, Dennis
Ong, Beelan
Ong, Patrick (3 submissions)
Ramakrishnan, Ramya
Schaum, Amadea
Smith, Tully
Truong, Thi Phuong Thao (2 submissions)

Public hearing

The following people spoke at the public hearing:

Ong, Beelan
Ong, Patrick

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