

FINAL REPORT
Electoral Representation Review
for the
Horsham Rural City Council



7 March 2005

Table of Contents

1	Recommendation	2
2	Background	2
2.1	Legislative basis.....	2
2.2	The VEC and electoral representation reviews.....	2
2.3	Municipality profile.....	3
2.4	Current electoral structure	3
3	Electoral representation review process	3
4	Public involvement	5
4.1	Public information.....	5
4.2	Advertising.....	5
4.3	Media releases	5
4.4	Information leaflet.....	5
4.5	VEC website.....	6
4.6	Helpline.....	6
4.7	Guide for Submissions.....	6
5	Preliminary Report	6
5.1	Preliminary submissions	6
5.2	VEC research.....	6
5.3	Recommended option.....	6
6	Response submissions	7
7	Public hearing	7
8	Findings and recommendation	8
8.1	Number of councillors	8
8.2	Electoral structure	9
8.3	Recommendation.....	12
9	Appendices	13
9.1	Public notices of the electoral representation review	13
9.2	Media releases	16
9.3	Information leaflet.....	18
9.4	Guide for Submissions.....	19
9.5	List of persons and groups making submissions.....	31

1 Recommendation

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) is required under the legislation for the electoral representation review to make a recommendation to the Minister for Local Government as to the number of councillors and the electoral structure that provides fair and equitable representation for the voters of Horsham Rural City (s.219D *Local Government Act 1989*).

The VEC recommends that the Horsham Rural City Council consist of seven councillors to be elected from an unsubdivided municipality.

This recommended structure is indicated in the map on the back page of this Report and is the same as the current structure.

2 Background

2.1 Legislative basis

The *Local Government (Democratic Reform) Act 2003*, which amended the *Local Government Act 1989* (the Act), was passed by the Parliament in Spring 2003. The amendments included provisions for independent electoral representation reviews of all Victorian councils. In accordance with this new legislation, the Horsham Rural City Council received notice pursuant to s.219C of the Act from the Minister for Local Government that an electoral representation review was to be conducted for Horsham Rural City. The notice appeared in the *Victoria Government Gazette* on 29 July 2004.

Under the legislation, a council is required to appoint an electoral commission to conduct an electoral representation review. On 26 August 2004, the Horsham Rural City Council advised that it had appointed the VEC to conduct the review.

The purpose of an electoral representation review is to recommend an electoral structure that provides fair and equitable representation for the persons who are entitled to vote at a general election of the Council. Matters to be considered by the review are:

- a) the number of councillors;
- b) the electoral structure of the municipality (whether the municipality should be unsubdivided or divided into wards; and, if the municipality is to be subdivided, the number of wards and the number of councillors to be elected for each ward); and
- c) if the recommendation is for the municipality to be divided into wards, boundaries for the wards that will:
 - i. provide for a fair and equitable division of the municipality; and
 - ii. ensure equality of representation, through the number of voters represented by each councillor being within 10% of the average number of voters represented by all councillors.

2.2 The VEC and electoral representation reviews

The VEC has ten years' experience in working on municipal ward boundaries, being contracted by councils to prepare options for their consideration. VEC staff have also worked for the Electoral Boundaries Commission in State redivisions. In doing this work, the VEC has used sophisticated mapping software, conducted field research and

has developed expertise in preparing electoral boundaries that both comply with legislative approximate equality requirements and respect communities of interest.

The VEC has engaged Mr Vern Robson to provide expertise in the field of local government. Mr Robson has worked in local government since 1955, and has been the Town Clerk and Chief Executive Officer of the City of Warrnambool, the Chief Commissioner of the City of Ballarat, the Administrator of the Mansfield Shire Council and the Director of the Local Government Branch of the Department of Infrastructure.

2.3 Municipality profile

Horsham Rural City was formed in 1995 by the amalgamation of the City of Horsham with most of the Shires of Wimmera and Arapiles and parts of the Shire of Kowree.

At the 2001 Census, the population of Horsham Rural City was distributed in the following way:

Horsham:	74.4%
Natimuk:	2.3%
Rural Balance:	23.3%

With such a high proportion of people living in Horsham, the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector accounts for only 13% of employment in the municipality. The retail sector and health and community services sector are the other major employers. Manufacturing accounts for a relatively small proportion of the economy compared to most regional cities in Victoria. Unemployment levels across all age groups are lower than for regional Victoria as a whole.

As in most of regional Victoria, the majority of residents come from an English-speaking background, with relatively small numbers of people from other backgrounds (mostly European).

The latest figures released by the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) suggest that the population is expected to increase by 4.81% over the next eight years, a lower rate than for regional Victoria generally. This is in distinct contrast to neighbouring municipalities such as West Wimmera, Hindmarsh and Yarriambiack, all of which are expected to undergo substantial population declines over the same period. There is expected to be a change in the age structure of the City as in regional Victoria as a whole, with people over 50 years of age becoming a higher proportion of the total population.

(Sources: DSE: *Victoria in Future 2004*; DSE: *Regional Victoria in Fact 2001*; DSE: *Towns in Time*; DSE: *Know Your Area*).

2.4 Current electoral structure

Horsham Rural City is currently represented by seven councillors elected from an unsubdivided municipality.

3 Electoral representation review process

Section 219D of the *Local Government Act 1989* specifies that the purpose of an electoral representation review is to achieve “fair and equitable representation for the persons

who are entitled to vote at a general election of the Council.” To achieve this, the VEC proceeds on the basis of three main principles:

1: to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is within 10% of the average number of voters per councillor for that municipality

Populations are continually changing – they grow in some areas and decline in others. Over time, these changes can lead to some wards having larger or smaller numbers of voters. As part of an electoral representation review, the VEC needs to correct any imbalances that have come about. The VEC also tries to make sure that the boundaries it sets will continue to provide equitable representation until the next review is due in eight years, by taking account of likely future changes.

2: to take a consistent, State-wide approach to the total number of councillors

Regarding the number of councillors, the VEC has adopted as a guide the numbers of councillors in similar-sized municipalities of similar categories within Victoria. In addition, the VEC considers any special circumstances that warrant the municipality having more or fewer councillors than similar municipalities.

3: to ensure that communities of interest are as fairly represented as possible

Every municipality contains a number of communities of interest. The electoral structure should be designed to take these into account where practicable. This is important for assisting the elected councillors to be effective representatives of the people in their particular municipality.

The VEC bases its recommendations on a number of factors, including the following:

- internal research specifically relating to the municipality under review;
- the VEC’s experience from its work with other municipalities and in similar reviews for State elections;
- the VEC’s expertise in mapping, demography and local government; and
- careful consideration of all input from the public in both written and verbal submissions made during the course of the review.

Input from the public is an important part of the process, but it is not the only factor considered. The VEC seeks to ensure fair and equitable representation for all voters of the municipality. This means carefully considering all views expressed in submissions from the public, and also considering other factors, such as the best possible representation for the various communities of interest in the municipality under review.

In considering public submissions, the VEC values the local knowledge and local perspectives that are presented. The VEC believes it important to consider the issues and information presented in submissions, as well as the arguments for particular structural models. In reaching its recommendations, the VEC seeks to combine the information gathered through public submissions with its own research in order to achieve what it considers to be a fair and equitable result until the next review period. The VEC does not make its recommendations based on a “straw poll” of the number of submissions supporting a particular option.

Further details about issues considered by the VEC can be found in Sections 8.1 and 8.2 of this Report and in the Guide for Submissions (Appendix 9.4).

4 Public involvement

4.1 Public information

The VEC informed the community about the electoral representation review through:

- advertising in newspapers;
- an article in the Horsham Rural City Council newsletter;
- conducting an information session at Horsham on 9 November 2004, to outline the review process and to respond to questions from members of the community;
- communicating with the Horsham Rural City community through the use of media releases and the VEC website;
- developing an information leaflet for community groups;
- producing an article to appear in the October edition of the Council newsletter;
- publishing all preliminary submissions on the VEC website;
- establishing a helpline for responding to community questions;
- distributing a Guide for Submissions;
- releasing a Preliminary Report on 17 December 2004 and making the Report available at the Horsham Rural City Council offices, at the VEC office and on the VEC website;
- publishing all submissions in response to the Preliminary Report on the VEC website; and
- conducting a public hearing at Horsham on 15 February 2005.

4.2 Advertising

In accordance with s.219F(4) of the Act, the VEC published the following advertisements for the electoral representation review:

- a public notice of the review, detailing the process, appeared in *The Wimmera Mail-Times* on 3 November 2004;
- a general advertisement covering several electoral representation reviews, including the Horsham Rural City Council review, appeared in the *Herald Sun* and *The Age* on 13 October 2004; and
- a notice that the Preliminary Report had been released appeared in *The Wimmera Mail Times* on 17 December 2004.

See Appendix 9.1.

4.3 Media releases

Media releases designed to supplement the paid advertising were distributed to *The Wimmera Mail-Times*, ABC Radio, Prime TV, Southern Cross TV and Win TV on 29 October and 17 December 2004. See Appendix 9.2.

4.4 Information leaflet

An information leaflet about the review was distributed from 29 October 2004 to community groups within the municipality. See Appendix 9.3.

4.5 VEC website

The VEC used its website to deliver information and to provide transparency in the review process. All preliminary submissions and submissions in response to the Preliminary Report were posted to the website to facilitate public access to this information. The VEC website can be viewed at www.vec.vic.gov.au

4.6 Helpline

The VEC established a helpline to assist with public enquiries concerning the electoral representation review process.

4.7 Guide for Submissions

The VEC developed and distributed its Guide for Submissions to help those persons interested in making submissions. A copy of the Guide is attached. See Appendix 9.4.

5 Preliminary Report

In accordance with s.219F(6) of the Act, the VEC produced a Preliminary Report containing its preferred option for the Horsham Rural City Council. In developing this option, the VEC considered preliminary submissions made by various persons and groups, as well as various other relevant factors.

5.1 Preliminary submissions

The VEC received five preliminary submissions by the closing time (22 November 2004 – 5.00 pm). All five submissions supported seven councillors, although one submission also put forward an alternative proposal involving nine councillors. All five submissions preferred an unsubdivided structure. One submission also suggested a model with three wards electing three councillors each.

Appendix 9.5 contains details of those persons and groups making preliminary submissions. Copies of the submissions can be downloaded from the VEC website, www.vec.vic.gov.au

5.2 VEC research

In addition to information provided in submissions, the VEC conducted its own research. This included research into the demographics of the municipality, using a number of data sources including the 2001 Census. The VEC also took into account changes predicted by the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the Department of Infrastructure. Summaries of some of this research were published in the Guide for Submissions, the Preliminary Report and in Section 2.3 of this Report.

Development projections based on information presented by the Council were also taken into consideration. Extensive fieldwork was conducted throughout the municipality by the VEC. In addition, the VEC examined the considerations of the Horsham Rural City's Commissioners when they recommended the current structure in 1996.

5.3 Recommended option

Having considered the issues outlined in the preliminary submissions and other relevant factors, the VEC proposed one preliminary preferred option for public comment:

-
- That the Horsham Rural City Council consist of seven councillors to be elected from an unsubdivided municipality.

This option is the same as the current electoral structure.

6 Response submissions

In accordance with s.219F(7) of the Act, the VEC invited written submissions in response to the Preliminary Report. The VEC received one response submission by the closing time (31 January 2005 – 5.00 pm).

The submission supported the VEC's preliminary preferred option. It argued that seven is the most appropriate number of councillors because that number "has proved appropriate and workable in delivering streamlined decision making, accessible representation and accommodation of the Councillor workload." The submission suggested that an unsubdivided structure provides the most effective representation given the physical area of the municipality and the distribution of its population. That is, because the municipality is relatively compact and most of the population is in the urban area of Horsham, there is a mutual reliance between urban and rural areas and therefore a community of interest throughout the entire municipality. In such cases, a whole of municipality approach is most appropriate and it is sensible for all voters to vote for all candidates and to be able to approach any councillor.

A list of persons and groups that made preliminary and response submissions is provided in Appendix 9.5. Copies of the submissions can be downloaded from the VEC website, www.vec.vic.gov.au

7 Public hearing

A public hearing was held at the Civic Centre, Horsham, on 15 February 2005 at 6.30 pm. The Council, which made the submission in response to the VEC's Preliminary Report, was invited to speak to its submission, and chose to do so. Members of the public were invited to attend, and there was a total audience of six people (including those presenting).

The presentation emphasised that:

- there is a community of interest around the urban area of Horsham, even extending to the edge of the municipality, as people travel to Horsham for work, education *etc.*, farmers retire to Horsham and urban businesses are intimately linked to the rural area;
- the unsubdivided structure provides all voters with the chance to vote for all candidates and makes all councillors responsible for the whole municipality (including the rural areas);
- subdivision into wards might lead to competition between councillors for funding for their own wards;
- the unsubdivided structure has provided a spread of rural and urban councillors at elections since 1997; and

-
- if the number of councillors were reduced, councillors would have to withdraw from a number of committees.

It was suggested that geography was not the most important fact determining people's voting preferences.

8 Findings and recommendation

The Act states that the purpose of the electoral representation review is to consider two matters. The first matter is the number of councillors for the municipality and the second matter is the electoral structure of the municipality.

8.1 Number of councillors

Issues considered by the VEC

The legislation provides that a council must consist of between 5 and 12 councillors (s.5B(1)). It does not, however, prescribe the matters to be considered by the reviewer in recommending the number of councillors for a municipality.

The VEC has therefore been required to identify the appropriate matters to take into account when considering the number of councillors.

In terms of voter numbers, Victorian municipalities vary from approximately 4,000 to over 161,000. The VEC applies the legislative provisions relating to numbers of councillors in a logical way, with those councils that have the largest number of voters having the most councillors, and those councils that have the least number of voters having the fewest councillors.

In most cases, the electoral structure and the number of councillors were established by the Commissioners when local government was restructured between 1993 and 1995. Commissioners did not have the benefit of a State-wide reference when considering the appropriate number of councillors for their respective municipalities. The result was a degree of disparity in councillor numbers for similar types of municipalities. The VEC has produced a table that lists each municipality and the councillor to voter ratio. The table differentiates between rural, regional and metropolitan councils in recognition of the different circumstances and needs between these categories of councils. The table has been a valuable reference point in considering the appropriate number of councillors and was made available to the public in the Guide for Submissions. The information has enabled the VEC to compare a council being reviewed to councils with similar voter numbers and areas.

The VEC also considers whether the number of voters in the municipality is anticipated to increase or decline in the period between reviews (approximately eight years). Population forecasts produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment have been used to assist the VEC in making its assessment.

In addition, the VEC considers any special issues or circumstances that may require a council to have more or fewer councillors than would otherwise be the case. Public submissions provide valuable information regarding any such issues or circumstances.

The VEC's findings

In its Preliminary Report, the VEC found seven to be the appropriate number of councillors for the Horsham Rural City Council. The VEC noted that a number of regional cities with similar voter numbers have seven councillors, such as Swan Hill, Benalla and Wangaratta. The City of Wodonga and Warrnambool City also have seven councillors, despite having substantially larger numbers of voters. These municipalities, however, cover significantly smaller areas than Horsham Rural City. The VEC believes that the larger area of Horsham Rural City leads to increased councillor workloads compared to the geographically smaller Cities and therefore considers that seven is a fair number of councillors despite the City having fewer voters.

It was suggested by the Commissioners in 1996 that seven would be a sufficient number of councillors to represent the diversity of Horsham Rural City. Preliminary and response submissions expressed the view that this number has, in practice, proven to be sufficient. The VEC agrees that seven seems an appropriate number given the VEC's considerations as explained in the previous section of this Report. The VEC also notes that Horsham Rural City is predicted to have a steady but not exceptional population growth rate between 2004 and 2012 compared to other regional cities.

All preliminary submissions and the response submission advocated seven councillors. The VEC was not provided with any reasons to question its preliminary findings. Consequently, the VEC confirms its view that seven councillors are most likely to provide fair and equitable representation to the voters of Horsham Rural City for at least the next eight years.

8.2 Electoral structure

Issues considered by the VEC

Provisions within the Act allow for a municipality to be unsubdivided, with all councillors elected "at large" by all voters, or for a municipality to be subdivided into a number of wards. If wards have only one councillor, councillors are elected using preferential voting. Under an unsubdivided or a multi-councillor ward structure, councillors are elected through proportional representation. With each system, voters mark their ballot papers the same way.

If the municipality is subdivided into wards, there are three options available:

- single-councillor wards;
- multi-councillor wards; and
- a combination of both single-councillor and multi-councillor wards.

Boundaries for wards must:

- provide for a fair and equitable division of the municipality; and
- ensure equality of representation, through the number of voters represented by each councillor being within 10% of the average number of voters per councillor for the municipality.

In addition to the legislative requirements, a number of other factors were considered when evaluating subdivided structures. These factors included:

-
- communities of interest (Communities of interest are groups of people who share a range of common concerns. They may occur where people are linked with each other geographically, economically or through having particular needs.);
 - spreading developing areas over a number of wards;
 - using logical boundaries such as main roads, physical features and existing boundaries for easy identification of wards; and
 - taking account of likely population changes.

In developing ward boundaries, the VEC aims to achieve the best possible balance between these criteria.

The VEC's findings

In conducting electoral representation reviews, the VEC follows an extensive process of consideration as required by legislation. In the first instance, the VEC considers preliminary submissions along with a wide variety of other information in order to develop a preferred and (in most circumstances) an alternative electoral structure option for the municipality in question. The VEC then makes the options available in its Preliminary Report, to be assessed by the public in response submissions and at the public hearing. Having considered the feedback, the VEC then makes a recommendation.

The VEC followed this process during the Horsham Rural City Council review. The initial stages of consideration resulted in a preferred electoral structure, which was put to the public in the VEC's Preliminary Report. The submission received by the VEC in response to the Report and statements made at the public hearing affirmed the suitability of the VEC's preferred option.

Should the municipality remain unsubdivided?

In coming to a recommendation, the VEC considered a number of options. Firstly, it considered whether or not the municipality should remain unsubdivided.

The VEC noted that there are a number of advantages to the current unsubdivided structure which are particularly appropriate to the nature of Horsham Rural City. An unsubdivided structure:

- allows all voters to vote for all candidates;
- makes all councillors responsible for, and accountable to, all areas of the municipality; and
- allows voters to elect representatives of non-geographically-specific communities of interest (*e.g.* farming or tourism) if they wish.

The VEC considers these features particularly appropriate to municipalities where there is a high degree of inter-dependence between the major regional city and other parts of the municipality – that is, where decisions affecting one area of the municipality also impact on other areas, and where communities of interest may extend throughout the municipality. The VEC believes that such inter-dependence exists between Horsham and the other communities within the municipality. Several preliminary and response submissions emphasised that there is a close connection between urban and rural areas of the municipality through family, business, sporting and recreation activities. They also explained that Horsham is the primary service centre for most residents of the municipality – this means that many rural residents

must regularly travel to Horsham and use its facilities. These rural residents therefore have a clear personal stake in what happens in Horsham.

For these reasons, the VEC determined that an unsubdivided structure was its preliminary preferred option for Horsham Rural City Council.

Should the municipality be divided into wards?

The VEC also considered whether there would be any advantages from dividing the municipality into wards. The VEC came to the view that a subdivided structure would not in any way meaningfully reflect communities of interest within the municipality. In order to meet the legislative requirement that no councillor may represent more than $\pm 10\%$ of the average number of voters represented by councillors in the municipality, any subdivided structure would necessarily involve five of the seven councillors coming from the urban area of Horsham, with only two councillors coming from the rural area. The VEC does not believe that the rural area can be divided into two areas in a way that reflects communities of interest. The VEC also noted in the Report that rural wards would have to be very large geographically, so that councillors would have to travel substantial distances in order to be accessible to all residents within rural areas.

The VEC generally provides alternative options in its Preliminary Reports. However, the VEC only provides alternative options when options can be designed that provide fair and equitable representation. The VEC believes that no subdivided structure would provide such representation in the case of Horsham Rural City Council. The VEC therefore did not provide any subdivided options as alternatives in its Preliminary Report.

The options are tested

As noted above, legislation provides that in conducting an electoral representation review, the VEC must put forward its initial preferred option and any alternative options in a Preliminary Report. The VEC must also invite written submissions on the Report and it must hear verbal presentations if any person making a submission so requests. In effect, the Preliminary Report provides the VEC with an opportunity to test its preliminary option(s) before formulating a final recommendation for the Minister to consider. Similarly, written and verbal responses to the Report operate either to affirm or deny the appropriateness of the electoral model(s) suggested by the VEC.

The VEC received one submission in response to its Report, which supported the preliminary preferred option. The presentation at the public hearing provided further details supporting the appropriateness of an unsubdivided structure, as explained above. No information was presented to the VEC to make it question its preliminary considerations.

Following this process, the VEC confirms its recommendation of an unsubdivided structure for the Horsham Rural City Council. The VEC is confident that this structure will best provide fair and equitable representation at least until the next electoral representation review is undertaken.

8.3 Recommendation

Having taken into account all relevant factors, including the submissions and presentations at the public hearing, the VEC recommends that the Horsham Rural City Council consist of seven councillors to be elected from an unsubdivided municipality.

Steve Tully

Electoral Commissioner

9 Appendices

9.1 Public notices of the electoral representation review

Electoral Representation Reviews West Wimmera Shire and Horsham Rural City

The Minister for Local Government has given notice under section 219C of the *Local Government Act 1989* that there are to be electoral representation reviews of the following councils:

- West Wimmera Shire Council
- Horsham Rural City Council

The councils have appointed the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) to conduct the independent reviews.

What are the reviews about?

The aim of the reviews is to ensure fair and equitable electoral representation for the voters of these municipalities. For each municipality, the VEC will recommend to the Minister for Local Government:

- the appropriate number of councillors;
- whether the municipality should be unsubdivided or divided into wards; and
- if the municipality is to be divided into wards, how many wards there should be, the number of councillors per ward and the ward boundaries.

Under an unsubdivided or a multi-councillor ward structure, councillors are elected through proportional representation. Under a single-councillor ward structure, councillors are elected using preferential voting. With each system, voters mark their ballot papers in the same way.

What will the VEC consider?

The VEC will consider the numbers of councillors and the electoral structures of comparable municipalities, communities of interest, demographics and growth potential. Arguments and evidence in public submissions will assist the review.

Any person or group may make a written submission to the VEC regarding electoral representation for these municipalities. The VEC recommends consulting its Guide for Submissions first.

Key steps in the reviews

Step 1 - Information sessions

West Wimmera: *Monday, 8 November 2004*

Kaniva District Office, 25 Baker Street, Kaniva - 6.00 pm
Edenhope Civic Centre, 49 Elizabeth Street, Edenhope - 8.00 pm
Horsham: *Tuesday, 9 November 2004*

Civic Centre, Roberts Avenue, Horsham - 7.30 pm

Step 2 - Preliminary submissions

Any person or group may make a preliminary submission to the VEC.

Submissions for both municipalities must be received by *5.00 pm, Monday, 22 November 2004*.

Step 3 - Preliminary Reports

The VEC will release Preliminary Reports containing its preferred options.

West Wimmera: *Wednesday, 15 December 2004*

Horsham: *Friday, 17 December 2004*

Step 4 - Response submissions

Any person or group may make a submission to the VEC in response to the Preliminary Reports. Submissions for both municipalities must be received by *5.00 pm, Monday, 31 January 2005*.

Step 5 - Public hearings

People may speak in support of their response submissions. They must request to do in their response submissions.

West Wimmera: *Monday, 14 February 2005*

Mechanics Hall, Elizabeth Street, Edenhope - 6.30 pm

Horsham: *Tuesday, 15 February 2005*

Civic Centre, Roberts Avenue, Horsham - 6.30 pm

Step 6 - Final Reports

The VEC will lodge Final Reports, containing its recommendations, with the Minister for Local Government. The Reports will be publicly available on the VEC's website, by calling the VEC and at council offices from *Monday, 7 March 2005*.

For a Guide for Submissions or further information, call 13 18 32 or visit www.vec.vic.gov.au

Victorian Electoral Commission 

Electoral Representation Reviews

The Minister for Local Government has given notice under section 219C of the Local Government Act 1989 that there are to be electoral representation reviews of the following councils:

- Central Goldfields Shire Council
- Monash City Council
- Mount Alexander Shire Council
- Hindmarsh Shire Council
- Mildura Rural City Council
- Yarriambiack Shire Council
- Brimbank City Council
- Glen Eira City Council
- Maribyrnong City Council
- Horsham Rural City Council
- Loddon Shire Council
- West Wimmera Shire Council

The councils have appointed the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) to conduct the reviews.

What are the reviews about?

The aim of the reviews is to ensure fair and equitable electoral representation for the voters of these municipalities. For each municipality, the VEC will recommend to the Minister for Local Government:

- the appropriate number of councillors;
- whether the municipality should be unsubdivided or divided into wards; and
- if the municipality is to be divided into wards, how many wards there should be, the number of councillors per ward and the ward boundaries.

Under an unsubdivided or a multi-councillor ward structure, councillors are elected through proportional representation. Under a single-councillor ward structure, councillors are elected using preferential voting. With each system, voters mark their ballot papers in the same way.

What will the VEC consider?

The VEC will consider the numbers of councillors and the electoral structures of comparable municipalities, communities of interest, demographics and growth potential. Arguments and information in public submissions will assist the review.

Any person or group may make a written submission to the VEC regarding electoral representation for these municipalities. The VEC recommends consulting its Guide for Submissions first.

Making a submission

Further information about making a submission can be found in the Guide for Submissions. Submissions can be made by mail, fax or email. Submissions must reach the VEC by 5.00 pm on the following dates:

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|------------------|
| • Central Goldfields Shire: | 1 November 2004 | • City of Brimbank: | 15 November 2004 |
| • City of Monash: | 1 November 2004 | • City of Glen Eira: | 15 November 2004 |
| • Mount Alexander Shire: | 1 November 2004 | • City of Maribyrnong: | 15 November 2004 |
| • Hindmarsh Shire: | 8 November 2004 | • Horsham Rural City: | 22 November 2004 |
| • Rural City of Mildura: | 8 November 2004 | • Loddon Shire: | 22 November 2004 |
| • Yarriambiack Shire: | 8 November 2004 | • West Wimmera Shire: | 22 November 2004 |

For a Guide for Submissions or further information, call 13 18 32 or visit www.vec.vic.gov.au

Electoral Representation Review Horsham Rural City Council

Preliminary Report

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) is conducting an electoral representation review for the Horsham Rural City Council. The review aims to achieve fair and equitable electoral representation for persons who are entitled to vote at the Council's general election. Having considered a range of information, including ideas contained in public submissions, the VEC has now released a Preliminary Report including its recommendations.

What are the recommendations in the Report?

Horsham Rural City currently has seven councillors, elected from an unsubdivided municipality.

Preliminary preferred option

The Report recommends that the Horsham Rural City Council consist of seven councillors, to be elected from an unsubdivided municipality.

The map on the right shows the option.

Where is the Report available?

Copies of the Preliminary Report are available from:

- the Horsham Rural City Council offices, Civic Centre, Roberts Avenue, Horsham;
- the VEC website, www.vec.vic.gov.au; and
- the VEC on 13 18 32.

Response submissions on the Report

Any person or group may make a response submission to the VEC about its Preliminary Report. Submissions can be:

- posted to the VEC at Level 8, 505 Little Collins Street, Melbourne Vic. 3000;
- emailed to horsham.review@vec.vic.gov.au; or
- faxed to (03) 9629 9330.

The VEC recommends obtaining a copy of the Report and consulting its Guide for Submissions first. These documents can be obtained free of charge from the VEC.

Submissions must include the following information about the person or group making the submission:

- name;
- address;
- telephone contact number; and
- whether the person or group making the submission wishes to speak at a public hearing in support of their submission.

Submissions must reach the VEC by **Monday, 31 January 2005 – 5.00 pm**. Late submissions will not be accepted.

Submissions will be available to the public at the VEC office and on the VEC website.

Public hearing, Tuesday, 15 February 2005 – 6.30 pm

The hearing will be held at:

- Civic Centre, Roberts Avenue, Horsham.

The hearing is open to the public, but only those people who have indicated in their submission that they would like to speak in support of their submission will be heard at the hearing.

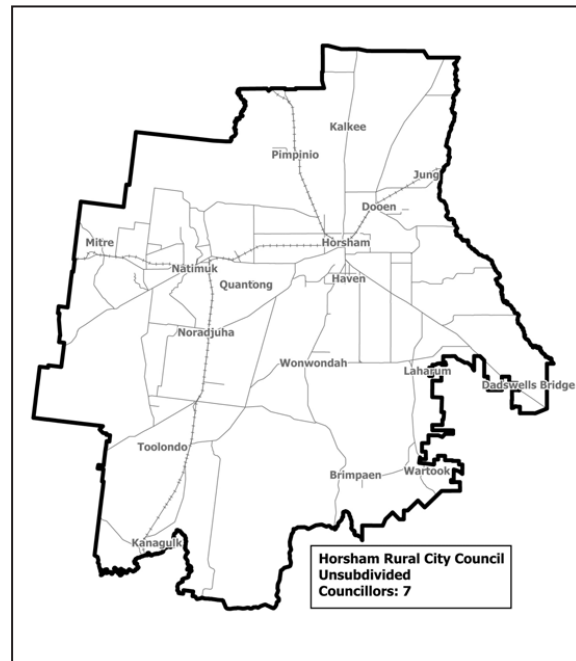
Final Report, Monday, 7 March 2005

After considering a variety of sources of information, including arguments and evidence contained in submissions and provided at the public hearing, the VEC will prepare its Final Report making recommendations to the Minister for Local Government.

Further information 13 18 32 or visit www.vec.vic.gov.au

Electoral Representation Review publications are available in large print on request.

Horsham Rural City Council Preliminary Preferred Option



Media Release

Victorian Electoral Commission 

For release from Friday, 17 December 2004

HORSHAM RURAL CITY COUNCIL ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION REVIEW: PRELIMINARY REPORT RELEASED

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) today released its Preliminary Report on electoral representation for the Horsham Rural City Council. The VEC's preliminary preferred option is to have seven councillors elected from an unsubdivided municipality.

The Report has been released and is available on the VEC's web site at www.vec.vic.gov.au. The Report is also available at the Horsham Rural City Council offices, Civic Centre, Roberts Avenue, Horsham, and at the VEC office, Level 8, 505 Little Collins Street, Melbourne, Vic., 3000.

People have until 5.00 pm, Monday, 31 January 2005 to lodge submissions with the VEC regarding its Preliminary Report.

People who wish to speak publicly in support of their submissions will have an opportunity to do so at a public hearing at:

- Civic Centre, Roberts Avenue, Horsham on Tuesday, 15 February 2005 at 6.30 pm.

The VEC's Final Report and recommendations will be lodged with the Minister for Local Government on Monday, 7 March 2005.

Any person who requires additional information can visit www.vec.vic.gov.au, contact the VEC on 13 18 32, or write to the VEC at Level 8, 505 Little Collins Street, Melbourne, Vic., 3000.

– ENDS –

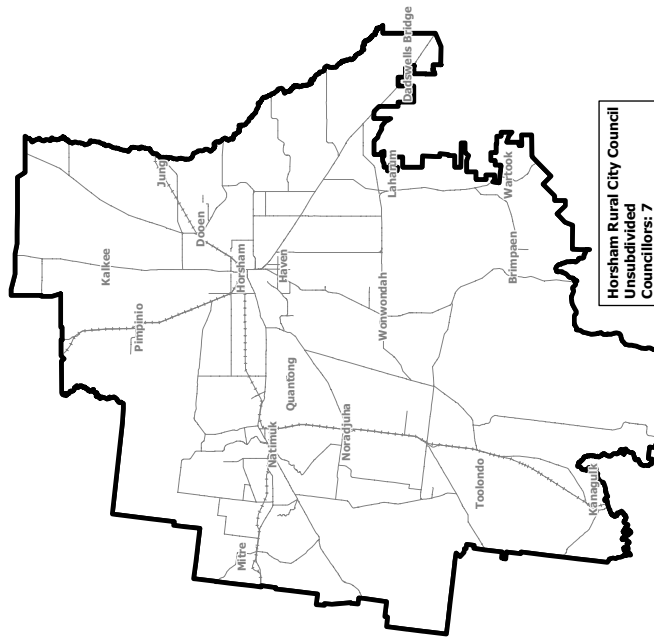
For further media information:

Chris Gribbin
Victorian Electoral Commission
Tel: 9299 0737

Media Fact Sheet

MAP OF RECOMMENDED OPTION FOR HORSHAM RURAL CITY COUNCIL

PRELIMINARY PREFERRED OPTION:
Seven councillors elected from an unsubdivided municipality



9.3 Information leaflet

Current structure of West Wimmera Shire

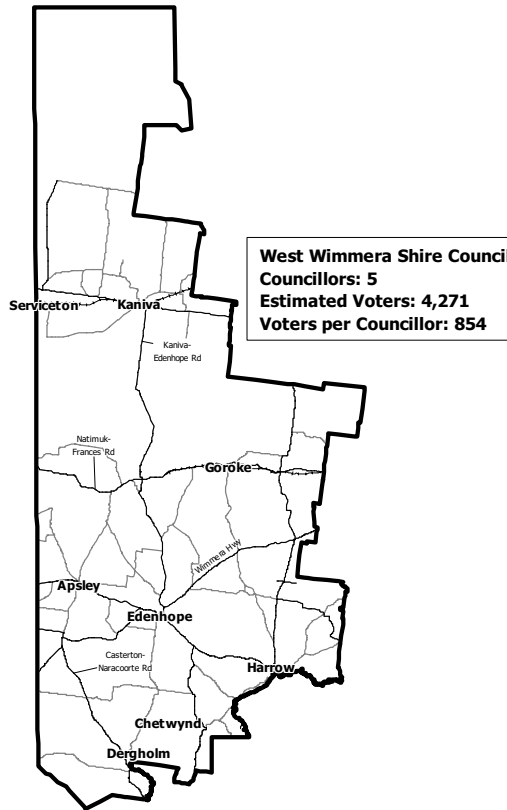
West Wimmera Shire currently has five councillors, elected from an unsubdivided municipality. To the right is a map showing the municipality boundaries and the estimated number of voters as at 31 August 2004.

How to make a submission

Get the Guide for Submissions by telephoning the VEC on 13 18 32 or by checking our website at www.vec.vic.gov.au

Send your submissions to the VEC in one of the following ways:

- post to Level 8, 505 Little Collins Street, Melbourne, Vic. 3000; or
- email to westwimmera.review@vec.vic.gov.au; or
- fax to (03) 9629 9330.



Electoral Representation Review of the West Wimmera Shire Council



Conducted by the Victorian Electoral Commission

Why is this review being undertaken?

New legislation requires every Council to have an independent electoral representation review every eight years. The Minister for Local Government has given notice of the first representation review for West Wimmera Shire. The Council has appointed the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) to conduct the review.

What will the review recommend?

In carrying out the review, the VEC aims to ensure fair and equitable representation for voters of the municipality. The VEC will make a recommendation to the Minister for Local Government as to:

- the appropriate number of councillors;
- the electoral structure of the Shire (whether it should be unsubdivided or divided into wards, how many wards there should be, and the number of councillors per ward); and
- the boundaries of the wards (if the Shire is to be divided into wards).

Under a single-councillor ward structure, councillors are elected using preferential voting. Under an unsubdivided or a multi-councillor ward structure, councillors are elected through proportional representation. With each system, voters mark their ballot papers the same way.

What will the VEC consider?

In conducting its review, the VEC will consider such factors as the number of councillors and the electoral structure of comparable municipalities, communities of interest, demographics and growth potential. The VEC will consider a range of information including ideas in public submissions.

Key steps in the review

Step 1 Information Sessions

Monday, 8 November 2004
Kaniva District Office,
25 Baker St – 6.00 pm
Edenhope Civic Centre,
49 Elizabeth St – 8.00 pm

Anyone interested in making a submission should attend.

Step 2 Preliminary Submissions

Deadline:
Monday, 22 November 2004 – 5.00 pm

Any person or group may make a submission to the VEC. The VEC recommends consulting its Guide for Submissions.

Step 3 Preliminary Report

Wednesday, 15 December 2004

The VEC will release a Preliminary Report containing its preferred option(s). The Report will be publicly available.

Step 4 Response Submissions

Deadline:
Monday, 31 January 2005 – 5.00 pm

Any person or group may make a submission to the VEC about its Preliminary Report.

Step 5 Public Hearing

Monday, 14 February 2005
Mechanics Hall, Elizabeth St,
Edenhope – 6.30 pm

People will be able to speak in support of their response submissions. They must request to do so in their response submissions.

Step 6 Final Report

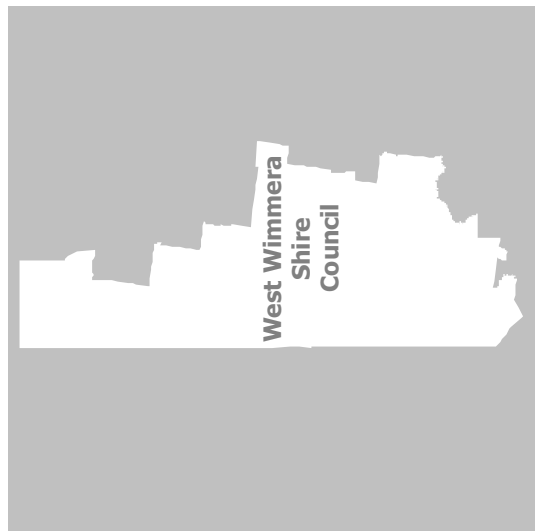
Monday, 7 March 2005

The VEC will lodge a Final Report, containing its recommendations, with the Minister for Local Government. The Report will be publicly available.

9.4 Guide for Submissions

Electoral representation review for the West Wimmera Shire Council

Guide for Submissions



Conducted by the
Victorian Electoral Commission
Level 8, 505 Little Collins Street, Melbourne Vic. 3000
Telephone: 13 18 32
Fax: (03) 9629 9330
Email: westwimmera.review@vec.vic.gov.au
Website: www.vec.vic.gov.au

Victorian Electoral Commission 

CHECKLIST:

Before you send in your submission:

- Have you included your name, address and telephone contact number?
- Do you understand that your submission will be made public (see page 5)?
- Have you given reasons for the model(s) you are suggesting?

If you are making a response submission to the Preliminary Report:

- Have you restricted your discussion to the models proposed in the Preliminary Report?
- Have you indicated whether or not you would like to speak to the submission at the public hearing (see page 5)?

In writing your submission, you might like to consider the following questions (you do not need to answer every question in order to make a useful submission):

The number of councillors (see page 9):

- Have you suggested a number between 5 and 12 (as required by legislation)?
- If the number of councillors you have suggested varies substantially from the numbers in similar-sized municipalities of a similar type, have you explained why?

The electoral structures (see pages 11-15):

- Have you indicated whether you want the municipality to be subdivided or unsubdivided?
- Have you explained why your preferred structure would best suit your municipality?

If you think that the municipality should be subdivided into wards (see pages 12-15):

- Have you indicated whether you want single-councillor wards, multi-councillor wards or a combination of both?
- Have you suggested ward names and given reasons for those names (see page 16)?

Contents

Background	2
The review process	4
Making a submission	5
Getting copies of the Preliminary and Final Reports	6
Current structure of West Wimmera Shire	6
West Wimmera Shire at a glance	7
Matters to consider when preparing submissions	9
How many councillors should there be?	9
Communities of interest	10
Should the municipality be unsubdivided or divided into wards?	11
Voting systems	14
How should ward boundaries be drawn?	15
What should wards be called?	16
Table: Profiles of municipalities	17
About the VEC	back cover

Background

What is an electoral representation review?

An electoral representation review examines the electoral structure of a local council. It considers:

- the number of councillors in a municipality;
- whether a municipality should be unsubdivided or subdivided; and
- if it should be subdivided, what the ward boundaries should be.

In addition, the review must make sure that, within each municipality, the number of voters represented by each councillor in each ward is within 10% of the average number of voters per councillor. That way, each person's vote has the same value.

Another important element to these considerations is that, according to the *Local Government Act 1989* (the Act), wards with only one councillor must elect that councillor using preferential voting, and wards with two or more councillors must elect them via proportional representation. If a municipality is unsubdivided, then all of its councillors must be elected using proportional representation.

When do representation reviews take place, and who conducts them?

The Local Government Act specifies that:

- electoral representation reviews must be conducted before every second council election; and
- a council must appoint an Electoral Commission to undertake the review.

On completion of the review, the Electoral Commission makes a recommendation to the Minister for Local Government, who then has the power to act on it.

This system of electoral representation reviews came into effect at the end of 2003 as a result of amendments to the Act. The first representation review for each municipality under this system takes place at a time specified by the Minister for Local Government by a notice in the *Victoria Government Gazette*.

On 29 July 2004, the Minister for Local Government gave notice under section 219C of the Local Government Act that an electoral representation review is to be conducted for the City of Brimbank. The Brimbank City Council has appointed the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) to conduct the review.

The VEC is an independent statutory authority and, in accordance with the Act, conducts reviews independently of both councils and the State government.

How did the current electoral structures come about, and on what were they based?

The electoral structures currently in place in municipalities across Victoria are diverse. This is because the present structures were determined individually for each municipality by the commissioners appointed during the restructures of the 1990s. The commissioners did not have any State-wide reference available to them when considering the appropriate number of councillors or the appropriate electoral structures for their municipalities. As a consequence, there are substantial differences between similar municipalities across Victoria. Subsequent to these reforms, councils have conducted their own electoral reviews.

What is the purpose of a representation review?

Section 219D of the Local Government Act 1989 specifies that the purpose of a representation review is to achieve “fair and equitable representation for the persons who are entitled to vote at a general election of the Council.”

To achieve this, the VEC proceeds on the basis of three main principles:

1: to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is within 10% of the average number of voters per councillor for that municipality

Populations are continually changing – they grow in some areas and decline in others. Over time, these changes can lead to some wards having larger or smaller numbers of voters. As part of a representation review, the VEC needs to correct any imbalances that have come about. The VEC also tries to make sure that the boundaries it sets will continue to provide equitable representation until the next review is due in eight years, by taking account of likely future changes.

2: to take a consistent, State-wide approach to the total number of councillors

Regarding the number of councillors, the VEC has adopted as a guide the numbers of councillors in similar-sized municipalities of similar categories within Victoria. In addition, the VEC considers any special circumstances that warrant the municipality having more or fewer councillors than similar municipalities.

3: to ensure that communities of interest are as fairly represented as possible

Every municipality contains a number of communities of interest (see page 10). The electoral structure should be designed to take these into account where practicable. This is important for assisting the elected councillors to be effective representatives of the people in their particular municipality.

What can't a representation review do?

The review cannot deal with the external boundaries of the municipality, or such matters as whether the municipality should be divided into two separate municipalities or amalgamated with another municipality.

On what does the VEC base its recommendations?

The VEC bases its recommendations on a number of factors, including the following:

- internal research specifically relating to the municipality under review;
- the VEC's experience from its work with other municipalities and in similar reviews for State elections;
- the VEC's expertise in mapping, demography and local government; and
- careful consideration of all input from the public in both written and verbal submissions made during the course of the review.

Input from the public is an important part of the process, but it is not the only factor considered. The VEC's recommendations are not made by a “straw poll” of the number of submissions supporting particular models. The VEC seeks to ensure fair and equitable representation for all voters of the municipality. This means carefully considering all views expressed in submissions from the public, but also considering other factors, such as giving representation to communities of interest (including those communities of interest which may not be particularly vocal).

The review process

Monday, 27 September 2004	the review begins	The VEC begins conducting research and preparing material for the public.
October 2004	notification of the public	A notice detailing the process for the review and calling for submissions is placed in the <i>Casterton News</i> , the <i>Hindmarsh Messenger</i> , the <i>West Wimmera Advocate</i> and <i>The Wimmera Mail-Times</i> .
Monday, 8 November 2004	information sessions	A leaflet outlining the purpose and process of the review is delivered to households in West Wimmera Shire. Information sessions on the review process are held at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kaniva District Office, 25 Baker St – 6.00 pm • Edenhope Civic Centre, 49 Elizabeth St – 8.00 pm Anyone interested in making a submission is advised to attend.
Monday, 22 November 2004 – 5.00 pm	closing date for preliminary submissions	Preliminary submissions are your chance to contribute your views and local knowledge about any issues relevant to the review. See details in the next section.
Wednesday, 15 December 2004	Preliminary Report released	Based on the VEC's research, including information presented by the public, the VEC formulates a series of different models for how the electoral structure of West Wimmera Shire could be arranged. The models which best fit the VEC's aim of fairness and equity of representation are presented and explained in the Preliminary Report. For details of how to get a copy of the Report, see below.
Monday, 31 January 2005 – 5.00 pm	closing date for response submissions on the Preliminary Report	Any person or group, including the Council, may make a response submission to the VEC about the Preliminary Report. This is your chance to present any additional arguments regarding which of the VEC's models you believe best represents the voters of West Wimmera Shire.
Monday, 14 February 2005	public hearing	A public hearing is held at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanics Hall, Elizabeth St, Edenhope – 6.30 pm People who state in their response submissions to the Preliminary Report that they want to speak in support of their submissions may do so at this public hearing.
Monday, 7 March 2005	Final Report	After considering any written submissions relating to the Preliminary Report, and information provided at the public hearing, the VEC prepares a Final Report making recommendations to the Minister for Local Government. For details of how to get a copy of the Final Report, see below.
		The Minister for Local Government considers the VEC's recommendations and may make a determination. Any determination will take effect at the next Council election.

Making a submission

Any person or group, including the Council, may make a submission to the VEC. Submissions do not have to be elaborate documents; a short letter is perfectly acceptable, as long as it addresses matters within the scope of the review (see the checklist inside the front cover of this document).

When can people make submissions?

The VEC accepts submissions at two stages of the review process:

Preliminary submissions should address matters relating to the number of councillors and the electoral structure of the municipality. At this stage, people can suggest any possible models within the constraints as explained in the "Matters to consider" section of this document. The most helpful submissions are generally those which provide clear explanations or evidence for particular viewpoints. Preliminary submissions must be received at the VEC by **Monday, 22 November 2004 – 5.00 pm. Late submissions will not be accepted.**

Response submissions on the Preliminary Report should address matters relating to the models proposed by the VEC in the Preliminary Report. Alternative models will not generally be considered at this stage. Response submissions should indicate whether the person making the submission wishes to speak at a public hearing in support of his or her submission. Response submissions must be received at the VEC by **Monday, 31 January 2005 – 5.00 pm. Late submissions will not be accepted.**

There will be a **public hearing** for people who want to speak in support of their response submissions on **Monday, 14 February 2005**. People wishing to speak must request to do so in their response submissions.

Where should submissions be sent?

Submissions can be sent to the VEC in the following ways:

- posted to Level 8, 505 Little Collins Street, Melbourne, Vic. 3000;
- emailed to westwimmera.review@vec.vic.gov.au; or
- faxed to (03) 9629 9330.

Submissions must include the name, address and telephone contact number of the person making the submission. Without this information, the submission will not be accepted.

Public access to submissions

Once lodged, submissions will be available to the public at:

- the VEC office at Level 8, 505 Little Collins Street, Melbourne; and
- the VEC website www.vec.vic.gov.au

The VEC will publish all submissions received by the due date on its website. The name and locality of the person making the submission will also be published. The person's telephone number, street address and signature will not be published. The reason for making submissions available to the public is to ensure transparency in the electoral representation review process.

Getting copies of the Preliminary and Final Reports

Copies of the Preliminary and Final Reports will be available from the VEC website, www.vec.vic.gov.au, by contacting the VEC on 13 18 32, and at the West Wimmera Shire Council offices, 49 Elizabeth Street, Edenhope.

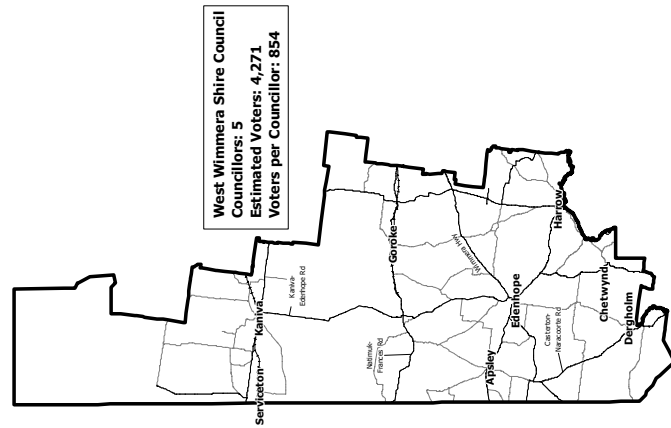
When the Preliminary Report is released, a notice in the *Casterton News*, the *Hindmarsh Messenger*, the *West Wimmera Advocate* and *The Wimmera Mail-Times* will specify how people can make a written submission in response to the Report.

The Preliminary Report will be available from Wednesday, 15 December 2004.

The Final Report will be released on Monday, 7 March 2005.

Current structure of West Wimmera Shire

West Wimmera Shire currently has five councillors, elected from an unsubdivided municipality. The map shows the municipality boundaries and the estimated number of voters as at 31 August 2004. Updated voter numbers will be available shortly from the VEC's website, by telephoning the VEC or at the Information Session.



West Wimmera Shire at a glance

West Wimmera Shire was formed in 1995 by the amalgamation of Shire of Kaniva with parts of the Shires of Kowree, Arapiles and Glenelg.

At the 2001 Census, the population of West Wimmera was distributed in the following way:

Edenhope:	17.0%
Kaniva:	16.1%
Goroke:	5.8%
Apsley:	3.5%
Harrow:	2.4%
Rural Balance:	55.2%

The agriculture, forestry and fishing sector is by far the largest employer in West Wimmera. Unemployment levels are low, but there is a smaller proportion of 18-34 year olds than in regional Victoria generally (this age group often moves to larger cities for employment). West Wimmera has a much larger proportion of people over 60 and this proportion is expected to increase substantially by 2011. Home ownership levels are high, but income levels are below those of Victoria generally.

As in most of regional Victoria, the majority of residents come from an English-speaking background, with small numbers of people from other backgrounds.

Between 2004 and 2012, the population is expected to decrease by 9.78%, in contrast to regional Victoria generally, where it is expected to rise. This is the highest expected rate of loss for any municipality in Victoria, although Hindmarsh and Yarrambiack are expected to decline by similar amounts.

(Sources: Department of Infrastructure: *Victoria in Future*; Department of Sustainability and Environment: *Regional Victoria in Fact 2001*; Department of Sustainability and Environment: *Towns in Time*; Department of Sustainability and Environment: *Know Your Area*).

Size¹:

	West Wimmera Shire:	Regional shires without cities (average):	Regional cities (average):
Area (square kilometres):	9,107	3,891	2,388
Population ² :	4,792	15,805	32,077
Population density (people/square km):	0.53	3.75	27.82
Voters:	4,271	13,859	24,184

Economic profile¹:

	West Wimmera Shire:	Regional Victoria:
Major industries (percentages of workforce):		
<i>Agriculture, forestry and fishing</i>	49.8	11.2
<i>Manufacturing</i>	5.9	13.4
<i>Retail trade</i>	7.3	15.3
<i>Accommodation, cafés, restaurants, cultural and recreation services</i>	2.9	6.9
<i>Property and business services</i>	2.4	6.6
<i>Education</i>	5.5	3.3
<i>Health and community services</i>	8.6	10.8
Unemployment rate:	3.4%	7.4%

Households earning under \$500/week:	40.0%	34.6%
--------------------------------------	-------	-------

Population profile¹:

	West Wimmera Shire:	Regional shires without cities:	Regional cities:
Age groups (percentages of the population):			
<i>0-17 years old</i>	25.0	27.27	26.64
<i>18-34 years old</i>	14.6	17.76	22.24
<i>35-49 years old</i>	22.3	22.53	21.74
<i>50+ years old</i>	38.1	32.44	29.37
Expected population growth (2004-2012) ³ :	-9.78%	4.79% ⁴	6.95%

1 – statistics from 2001 Census

2 – based on ABS estimates as at June 2003

3 – based on 2003 interim projections from the Department of Sustainability and Environment

4 – excluding Cardinia

Matters to consider when preparing submissions

There are many matters to be considered when determining the electoral structure of a municipality. In your submission, you might try to take all of the issues into account, or you might just concentrate on one issue that you wish to bring to the VEC's attention. The VEC's job is to look at all of the relevant matters and to reach the best overall solution, based both on its own research and submissions received from the public.

Below are some of the main matters you might like to consider.

How many councillors should there be?

Under the *Local Government Act 1989*, the number of councillors in every municipality must be between five and twelve inclusive (s.5B(1)). The Act does not specify how to decide what is the appropriate number, but the VEC has identified the following matters to consider.

Parliament has provided a range for the number of councillors to allow for municipalities with large numbers of voters and municipalities with smaller numbers. The numbers of voters in each municipality vary across Victoria from 4,070 to 161,569. The VEC applies these provisions of the Act in a logical way, with those municipalities that have the largest numbers of voters having the most councillors, and those municipalities that have the least numbers of voters having fewer councillors.

The VEC has produced a table that lists each municipality and its area, number of voters and number of councillors (see the end of this document). The table differentiates between rural, regional and metropolitan municipalities in recognition of the different circumstances and needs of these categories of municipalities. This table is a valuable reference point in considering the appropriate number of councillors. This information enables the VEC to compare the municipality being reviewed to other municipalities with similar voter numbers and areas.

The VEC also considers whether the number of voters in the municipality is expected to increase or decline in the period between reviews (eight years). Population forecasts produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment are used to assist the VEC in making its assessment.

In addition, the VEC considers any special issues or circumstances that may require a municipality to have more or fewer councillors than would otherwise be the case. These might include such issues or circumstances as:

- significant population growth within the municipality;
- an especially mobile or transient population;
- cultural and linguistic diversity within the community;
- a large proportion of older residents who may have special interests and needs;
- a wide geographic distribution of voters within a large municipality; or
- a large number of communities of interest (see below).

Communities of interest

An important part of achieving "fair and equitable representation" is making sure that communities of interest are appropriately represented. Communities of interest are groups of people who share a *range* of common concerns or aspirations. They are different from "interest groups" or "pressure groups" which may only have one issue in common (or a very limited number of issues). The communities of interest to which people belong are often also an important part of their self-identity.

Communities of interest may occur where people are linked with each other geographically (e.g. a town or valley) or economically, such as where people work in similar industries (e.g. tourism) or where people work in mutually-dependant industries (e.g. fruit growers, transporters and canners). Communities of interest may also appear where people share a number of special needs because of similar circumstances (such as new immigrants, who may have little English, require assistance with housing and need help finding employment). Communities of interest may also include ethnic groups, retired people, the unemployed or many other groupings of people.

Communities of interest are important in electoral representation reviews when they have similar needs from their local government. In such cases, it is important to endeavour to ensure that communities of interest have the opportunity to be fairly represented on councils. There are a number of ways to take account of communities of interest, depending on how they are distributed geographically. For example:

If:	then fair representation may best be achieved by:
a community of interest is compact geographically,	creating a ward with boundaries reflecting that community of interest.
a community of interest is a widespread minority,	creating multi-councillor wards with proportional representation.
there are numerous minority communities of interest within a municipality,	combining the communities of interest, so that any elected councillor would be responsible to <i>all</i> of these groups.

There are also many other ways to take communities of interest into account.

Should the municipality be unsubdivided or divided into wards?

A municipality can either be unsubdivided, with all councillors elected “at large” by all of the voters, or it can be subdivided into a number of wards. Both electoral structures have advantages and disadvantages, and which structure is best for any individual municipality will depend on the municipality’s particular circumstances.

West Wimmera Shire is currently unsubdivided, with five councillors representing the municipality as a whole.

The following tables list characteristics that are commonly considered to be associated with the different possible electoral structures and may be of use in deciding which structure most suits your municipality.

The table at the end of this document lists all of Victoria’s municipalities and their electoral structures.

Unsubdivided municipalities

Unsubdivided municipalities must elect their councillors by proportional representation (see more on this point below).

The possible features of an unsubdivided municipality can be portrayed as follows:

Positive Features	Less Positive Features
Promotes the concept of a municipality-wide focus, with councillors being elected by and concerned for the municipality as a whole, rather than parochial interests.	May lead to significant communities of interest and points of view being unrepresented. May lead to councillors being relatively inaccessible for residents of parts of the municipality.
Gives residents and ratepayers a choice of councillors to approach with their concerns.	May lead to confusion of responsibilities and duplication of effort on the part of councillors. May be difficult for voters to assess the performances of individual councillors.
Each voter has the opportunity to express a preference for every candidate for the Council election.	Large numbers of candidates might be confusing for voters.
Removes the need to define internal ward boundaries.	
Results in a simple, less expensive voters’ roll for elections as compared with separate voters’ rolls for individual wards.	

Options for division into wards

If the municipality is to be divided into wards, there are three options:

- single-councillor wards;
- multi-councillor wards; and
- combinations of single and multi-councillor wards.

The Local Government Act specifies that wards with only one representative must elect that representative via preferential voting, whereas multi-councillor wards and unsubdivided municipalities must elect their representatives via proportional representation. As far as voters are concerned on the day, it makes no difference. In practice, ballot papers look the same and are filled out in the same way, regardless of whether the candidates are being elected by proportional representation or by preferential voting. Whether a ward elects councillors via proportional representation or preferential voting can sometimes make a difference as to whether or not communities of interest are fairly represented.

Single-councillor wards

The possible features of single-councillor wards can be portrayed as follows:

Positive Features	Less Positive Features
Councillors are more likely to be truly local representatives, easily accessible to residents and aware of local issues.	Councillors may be elected on minor or parochial issues and lack a perspective of what policies benefit the municipality as a whole.
Major geographical communities of interest are likely to be represented.	Ward boundaries may divide communities of interest, and may be difficult to define.
It is less likely that one particular point of view or sectional interest will dominate the Council.	
	Voters may have a restricted choice of candidates in elections for individual wards. Small populations in each ward may make ward boundaries more susceptible to change caused by demographic shifts.

Multi-councillor wards

A multi-councillor ward structure results in fewer but larger wards than a single-councillor ward structure.

The possible features of multi-councillor wards can be portrayed as follows:

Positive Features	Less Positive Features
This structure supports the accommodation of a whole community of interest (such as a sizeable town or group of suburbs) within a ward.	Very local issues may be overridden.
Focus on issues may be broader than for single-councillor wards (though councillors may be more locally focussed than in an unsubdivided municipality).	Groups may form within the council based on multi-councillor wards, leading to possible division between councillors.
Councillors may be more accessible than in an unsubdivided municipality.	In very large wards, councillors may not be accessible for residents in parts of the ward.
Electors have a choice of councillor to approach.	Duplication or gaps may occur if councillors do not communicate or share their workloads effectively.
Councillors may share workloads more effectively.	
Ward boundaries are likely to be easy to identify and less susceptible to change as a result of population growth or decline than for single-councillor wards.	
	It is easier for candidates to be elected as part of a voting ticket than as individuals.

Combination of single-councillor and multi-councillor wards

The possible features of a combined system can be portrayed as follows:

Positive Features	Less Positive Features
A large community of interest can be included within a multi-councillor ward, and a smaller community of interest can be included within a single-councillor ward. This structure accommodates differences in population across a municipality, and allows small communities to be separately represented.	Electors in single-councillor wards may expect that their councillors will be more influential than their numbers suggest.
Clear ward boundaries are more likely.	

Voting systems

The voting system is another important factor to take into account when considering whether to have single-councillor wards, multi-councillor wards or unsubdivided municipalities. In single-councillor wards, councillors must be elected by preferential voting. In unsubdivided municipalities and multi-councillor wards, councillors must be elected by proportional representation. Under either system, people still vote in the same way. The only differences are the way that the votes are counted.

When there are single-councillor wards, the **preferential system** applies. Under the preferential system:

- a candidate must achieve an absolute majority (50% plus one) of the formal votes to be elected;
- if a candidate obtains an absolute majority of the first-preference votes, then that candidate is elected;
- if no candidate obtains an absolute majority of first-preference votes, preferences have to be distributed:
 - the candidate with the lowest number of first-preference votes is declared to be a defeated candidate, and that candidate's votes are distributed to the remaining candidates, according to the second preferences on the ballot papers;
 - the process of excluding the lowest candidate and distributing that candidate's preferences to the remaining candidates continues until one candidate has an absolute majority of votes, and is declared elected.

Under this system, the way in which voters allocate their preferences can be just as important as where they place their first-preference votes. Candidates advise voters (through how-to-vote cards and candidate statements) about how to order their preferences, and may negotiate with other candidates about the order of preferences. In some cases, candidates have informal "running mates" to help with the flow of preferences to them.

When there are multi-councillor wards or unsubdivided municipalities, **proportional representation** applies. The basis of proportional representation is that candidates are elected in proportion to their support. Under the proportional representation system:

- to be elected, a candidate must obtain a "quota", which is calculated by dividing the total number of votes by one more than the number of vacancies, and then adding one (for example, in an election for 3 vacancies with 800 votes cast, the quota would be 201);
- when a candidate receives more votes than a quota, the surplus votes are distributed to the continuing candidates at a reduced value, calculated by dividing the surplus votes by the total votes for the candidate (for example, if a candidate achieved 300 votes and the quota was 201 votes, the candidate's surplus would be 99, and ballot papers would be transferred to the remaining candidates at a value of 99 divided by 300);
- when all surplus votes have been distributed and there are still vacancies to be filled, preferences are distributed from the lowest-scoring candidates until a candidate has a quota.

This system means that any candidate who obtains a quota, either through first-preference votes or through the flow of preferences, is elected. In effect, candidates representing large minorities are likely to be represented as well as candidates representing majorities.

Proportional representation has a number of key differences to the exhaustive preferential system which applied in unsubdivided municipalities and multi-councillor wards at previous elections. Proportional representation may return quite different results to the old system. Proportional representation should return candidates that are more representative of voters' choices and should make it more difficult for candidates to be elected as part of a ticket.

How should ward boundaries be drawn?

Getting the numbers right

If West Wimmera Shire is to be divided into wards, the ward boundaries must comply with legal requirements. Section 219D of the *Local Government Act 1989* requires that:

- the number of voters represented by each councillor must be within 10% of the average number of voters per councillor for that municipality; and
- the ward boundaries must provide a fair and equitable division of the municipal district.

Where there are multi-councillor wards, the number of voters represented by each councillor for such wards is taken to be the total number of voters for the ward divided by the number of councillors for the ward. For instance, if there are 3 councillors and 12,000 voters for a ward, the number of voters represented by each councillor will be 4,000, that is 12,000 divided by 3.

Ward boundaries **must** meet the approximate equality requirement set by the Act. The number of voters represented by each councillor cannot be more than 10% outside the average number for all councillors.

Other considerations

The Act does not prescribe any more details to define what constitutes a fair and equitable division of the municipality. However, the following criteria are useful in considering and (where possible) deciding on proposed ward boundaries:

- the boundaries should take account of communities of interest;
- the boundaries should follow clear lines, such as major roads, rivers and other natural features;
- growing areas should not be concentrated into one ward, but should be spread over several wards; and
- the boundaries should take account of likely population changes, by setting the number of voters in wards with high growth potential somewhat below the average, and the number of voters in wards with little growth potential somewhat above the average. This approach will help ensure that the boundaries stay within the 10% tolerance for a longer period, avoiding the need for frequent redrawing of boundaries.

In developing ward boundaries, the VEC aims to achieve the best possible balance among these criteria.

What should wards be called?

There is a variety of possible approaches to the naming of wards, including:

- **Place names:** A number of municipalities name their wards after localities in the wards. This approach is useful where ward boundaries closely align with localities. However, it can lead to people in smaller localities within a ward feeling overlooked, and may cause confusion if the locality that a ward is named after cuts across a ward boundary;
- **Compass directions:** This is the current approach in, for example, the City of Whittlesea, where the wards are Central, East, East Central, North, North Central, South, South Central, South West and West. It is straightforward. It is of most use where the location of the wards is closely aligned to compass directions;
- **Names of historic buildings:** This is a way of celebrating the municipality's heritage;
- **Names of natural features:** Using the names of natural features such as hills or streams can be a way of identifying wards without the complications of locality names. The features would need to be well known and relevant to the particular wards;
- **Names of pioneers and former prominent citizens:** This is a way of recognising important former residents. It is most appropriate when the person is closely associated with the area covered by the ward; and
- **Aboriginal names:** This is a way of recognising the municipality's Aboriginal heritage. However, the use of Aboriginal names could be seen as being tokenistic if the names are not relevant to areas within the municipality.

Table: Profiles of municipalities

Estimates as at 31 August 2004 (unless otherwise indicated)

Metropolitan (including outer metropolitan)					
Municipality	Area (km ²)	Number on roll	Number of councillors	Number of voters per councillor	Electoral structure
Millmick	433	44,508	9	4,945	Single-councillor wards
Melton	527	45,280	7	6,469	Single-councillor wards
Maribyrnong*	31	48,664	7	6,952	Single-councillor wards
Yarra [†]	20	60,097	9	6,671	3 three-councillor wards
Hobsons Bay [‡]	64	63,197	7	9,028	Single-councillor wards
Melbourne	36	64,000	9	7,111	Unsubdivided
Bayside	37	67,540	9	7,504	Single-councillor wards
Wyndham	542	72,103	7	10,300	Single-councillor wards
Port Phillip	21	73,812	7	10,545	Single-councillor wards
Maroondah	61	77,694	7	11,099	Single-councillor wards
Stonnington [§]	26	78,642	9	8,738	3 three-councillor wards
Frankston*	130	84,479	7	12,068	Single-councillor wards
Whittlesea	490	86,787	9	9,643	Single-councillor wards
Manningham	113	86,976	8	10,872	4 two-councillor wards
Moonee Valley	44	91,297	7	13,042	Single-councillor wards
Banyule	62	91,470	7	13,067	Single-councillor wards
Greater Dandenong	129	93,007	11	8,455	Single-councillor wards
Glen Eira*	39	95,773	9	10,641	3 three-councillor wards
Darebin	53	99,228	9	11,025	Single-councillor wards
Hume	504	99,644	9	11,072	Single-councillor wards
Yarra Ranges	2,470	106,229	9	11,803	Single-councillor wards
Kingston	91	106,602	7	15,229	Single-councillor wards
Moreland [†]	51	108,092	11	9,827	2 four-councillor wards & 1 three-councillor ward
Knox	114	111,249	9	12,361	Single-councillor wards
Whitehorse	64	112,351	10	11,235	5 two-councillor wards
Brimbank*	123	119,937	9	13,326	Single-councillor wards
Monash [†]	81	121,962	8	15,245	Single-councillor wards
Boroondara	60	123,187	10	12,319	Single-councillor wards
Casey	410	136,309	11	12,392	Single-councillor wards
Mornington Peninsula	723	137,483	9	15,276	Single-councillor wards

* under review

[†] as at 2004 representation review

[‡] as at previous election

[§] reviewed 2004 – structure to come into effect at next election

^{||} as at July 2003 boundary review

Regional Cities, Rural Cities and Boroughs

Municipality	Area (km ²)	Number on roll	Number of councillors	Number of voters per councillor	Electoral structure
Queenscliffe	9	4,070	7	581	Unsubdivided
Ararat	4,210	9,586 [†]	7	1,369	Unsubdivided
Benalla	2,354	11,878	7	1,697	Single-councillor wards
Swan Hill	6,116	14,466	7	2,067	1 single-councillor ward & 3 two-councillor wards
Horsham*	4,249	14,644	7	2,092	Unsubdivided
Wangaratta*	3,639	20,274 [†]	8	2,534	1 two-councillor ward & 6 single-councillor wards
Wodonga*	433	24,094 [†]	5	4,819	Unsubdivided
Warrnambool [‡]	121	24,274 [†]	7	3,468	Unsubdivided
Mildura*	22,082	36,380	9	4,042	Unsubdivided
Greater Shepparton*	2,422	40,176	7	5,739	Unsubdivided
Latrobe	1,426	58,159	9	6,462	Single-councillor wards
Ballarat	740	68,144	9	7,572	Single-councillor wards
Greater Bendigo [§]	2,999	77,291 [†]	9	8,588	Single-councillor wards
Greater Geelong	1,247	161,569	12	13,464	Single-councillor wards

* under review

[†] as at 2004 representation review

[‡] as at previous election

[§] reviewed 2004 – structure to come into effect at next election

Municipality	Area (km ²)	Number on roll	Number of councillors	Number of voters per councillor	Electoral structure
Campaspe	4,519	30,798	7	4,400	1 two-councillor ward & 5 single-councillor wards
Baw Baw	4,032	30,862	9	3,429	Single-councillor wards
Bass Coast	864	37,319	7	5,331	Single-councillor wards
East Gippsland	20,931	37,349	8	4,669	2 four-councillor wards
Wellington*	10,989	37,890	9	4,185	Unsubdivided
Cardinia	1,280	38,646	7	5,521	Single-councillor wards

* under review
 † as at 2003/2004 representation review
 ‡ as at previous election
 § reviewed 2003/2004 – structure to come into effect at next election

Municipality	Area (km ²)	Number on roll	Number of councillors	Number of voters per councillor	Electoral structure
West Wimmera*	9,107	4,271	5	854	Unsubdivided
Hindmarsh*	7,850	5,364	6	894	3 two-councillor wards
Towong*	6,673	5,482	5	1,096	Unsubdivided
Buloke	8,004	6,726	9	747	3 three-councillor wards
Yarriambiack*	7,310	7,216	9	802	3 single-councillor wards & 2 three-councillor wards
Pyrenees [†]	3,433	7,224	5	1,445	Single-councillor wards
Loddon*	6,694	8,393	6	1,399	Single-councillor ridings
Strathbogie*	3,302	9,155	7	1,308	Single-councillor wards
Mansfield	3,891	9,287	5	1,857	1 two-councillor ward & 3 single-councillor wards
Gannawarra	3,732	9,858	7	1,408	2 two-councillor wards & 3 single-councillor wards
Northern Grampians	5,728	10,882	9	1,209	1 three-councillor ward & 1 six-councillor ward
Alpine*	4,832	11,198	5	2,240	Unsubdivided
Central Goldfields*	1,534	11,450	5	2,290	Single-councillor wards
Indigo*	2,044	11,553	7	1,650	Unsubdivided
Golden Plains	2,704	13,192	9	1,466	Single-councillor ridings
Southern Grampians	6,652	13,254	7	1,893	Unsubdivided
Hepburn	1,470	13,840	5	2,768	Single-councillor wards
Murrindindi	3,877	13,859	6	2,310	Single-councillor ridings
Corangamite [§]	4,404	13,985	7	1,998	1 three-councillor ward & 4 single-councillor wards
Moyne	5,478	13,995	10	1,400	5 two-councillor ridings
Mount Alexander*	1,529	15,388	7	2,198	Single-councillor wards
Glenelg	6,210	18,674	9	2,075	Single-councillor ridings
Moorabool [§]	2,110	20,391	7	2,913	1 four-councillor ward & 3 single-councillor wards
Colac Otway	3,433	20,498	7	2,928	2 single-councillor wards, 1 two-councillor ward & 1 three-councillor ward
Moira	4,045	20,822	9	2,314	3 three-councillor wards
Mitchell*	2,862	22,476	7	3,211	1 two-councillor ward & 5 single-councillor wards
Surf Coast [†]	1,553	24,521	9	2,829	Unsubdivided
South Gippsland*	3,295	27,612	9	3,068	1 two-councillor ward & 7 single-councillor wards
Macedon Ranges*	1,747	29,948	9	3,328	Single-councillor wards

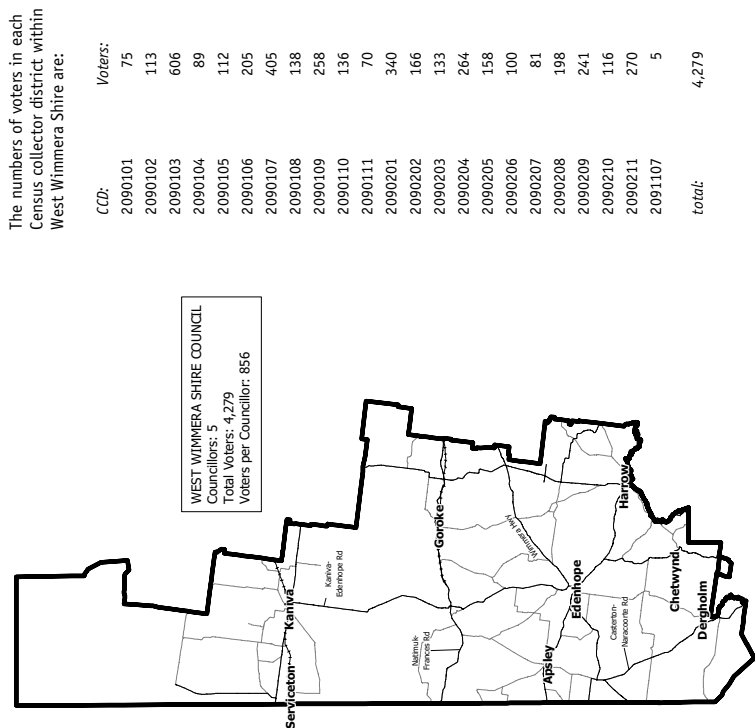
About the VEC

The Victorian Electoral Commission is an independent statutory authority established under Victoria's *Electoral Act 2002*. The VEC is not subject to ministerial direction or control in the performance of its responsibilities. The VEC's main functions include:

- conducting parliamentary elections and by-elections;
- conducting local government elections and by-elections (when appointed by councils);
- conducting representation reviews for councils;
- maintaining an accurate and up-to-date register of electors and preparing rolls for elections; and
- contributing to public understanding of elections and electoral matters through information and education programmes.

In performing these functions, the VEC acts as an independent, impartial authority, acting transparently and with integrity.

West Wimmera Shire Supplement: Actual voter numbers as at 30 September 2004



A map showing the exact boundaries for each Census collector district can be viewed online at www.abs.gov.au for free. A hard copy can also be purchased from the Australian Bureau of Statistics – www.abs.gov.au or call 1300 135 070. An electronic version of voter numbers by Census collector district can be downloaded from the VEC's website at www.vec.vic.gov.au

9.5 List of persons and groups making submissions

Preliminary submissions

Hugh Delahunty, MP
Horsham Rural City Council
Don Johns, OAM, JP
The Proportional Representation
Society of Australia (Victoria-
Tasmania Branch)
Ivan Smith

Response submissions

Horsham Rural City Council