

FINAL REPORT
Electoral Representation Review
for the
Mildura Rural City Council



21 February 2005

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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 the Rural City of Mildura (s.219D *Local Government Act 1989*).

The VEC recommends that Mildura Rural City Council consist of nine 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, Mildura 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 the Rural City of Mildura. 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 3 September 2004, Mildura 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

The Rural City of Mildura was formed in 1995 by the amalgamation of the City of Mildura with the Shires of Mildura and Walpeup.

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

Mildura:	55.0%	Cabarita:	0.6%
Red Cliffs:	5.4%	Murrayville:	0.5%
Merbein:	3.8%	Underbool:	0.5%
Irymple:	3.0%	Walpeup:	0.2%
Ouyen:	2.4%	Rural Balance:	28.6%

With a mix of rural and urban population, the municipality has both a high proportion of people working in the agriculture/forestry/fishing sector and substantial numbers of people in retail and manufacturing. The age structure and wealth levels of the municipality are similar to those for Victoria as a whole. Unemployment levels are slightly below those of regional Victoria generally.

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. There are Italian, Turkish, and various other European minorities within the population.

The latest figures released by the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) suggest that the population is expected to increase 9.28% between 2004 and 2012, a higher rate than for regional cities generally. There is expected to be a change in the age structure of the municipality as in Victoria as a whole, with people over 50 years of age becoming a higher proportion of the 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

The Rural City of Mildura is currently represented by nine 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 9.3).

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 Mildura Rural City Council newsletter;
- conducting information sessions at Red Cliffs, Ouyen and Mildura on 25 October 2004, to outline the review process and to respond to questions from members of the community;
- communicating with the Rural City of Mildura community through the use of media releases and the VEC website;
- 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 1 December 2004 and making the Report available at the Mildura 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 Mildura on 31 January 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 Border Times*, the *North West Express* and the *Mildura Sunraysia Daily* between 13 and 16 October 2004;
- a general advertisement covering several electoral representation reviews, including the Rural City of Mildura review, appeared in the *Melbourne Herald Sun* and *The Age* on 13 October 2004; and
- a notice that the Preliminary Report had been released appeared in *The Border Times*, the *North West Express* and the *Mildura Sunraysia Daily* between 1 and 4 December 2004.

See Appendix 9.1.

4.3 Media releases

Media releases designed to supplement the paid advertising were distributed to *The Border Times*, the *North West Express* and the *Mildura Sunraysia Daily* on 13 October and 1 December 2004. See Appendix 9.2.

4.4 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

4.5 Helpline

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

4.6 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 9.3.

5 Preliminary Report

In accordance with s.219F(6) of the Act, the VEC produced a Preliminary Report containing its preferred option for the Mildura 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 (8 November 2004 – 5.00 pm). All five submissions supported nine councillors, although one submission suggested that more councillors would also be appropriate. Opinion regarding the electoral structure varied. Three submissions supported an unsubdivided municipality, one proposed three wards with three councillors elected from each and one advocated subdivision of the municipality, without providing exact details.

See Appendix 9.4 for 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 Rural City of Mildura's Commissioners when they recommended the current structure in 1996.

5.3 Recommended options

Having considered the issues outlined in the preliminary submissions and all other relevant factors, the VEC proposed two preliminary options for public comment.

The preferred option was:

- **That Mildura Rural City Council consist of nine councillors to be elected from an unsubdivided municipality.**

The alternative option was:

- **That Mildura Rural City Council consist of nine councillors to be elected from four single-councillor wards and one five-councillor ward.**

The preferred option is the same as the current 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 seven response submissions by the deadline (17 January 2005 – 5.00 pm).

All seven submissions supported the VEC's preliminary preferred option. It was argued that nine councillors was the right number because:

- any lesser number would lead to an increase in councillors' workloads;
- more councillors might lead to a divided and unwieldy council and extra cost; and
- the voter to councillor ratio is appropriate when compared to other rural cities and allowing for the large area of the municipality and the projected population growth.

With regard to structure, in addition to describing general advantages of unsubdivided structures, submissions argued that an unsubdivided municipality was particularly appropriate to the Rural City of Mildura because there is a mutual reliance between urban and rural areas in the municipality.

A number of arguments were put forward indicating that the structure has worked well since 1997. Among other things, the VEC was told that:

- the Council has developed an effective community consultation strategy and a portfolio model of work division to ensure that all areas of the municipality are fairly represented;
- a number of councillors have travelled throughout the municipality; and
- the southern area of the municipality has always been represented by one or two councillors with the current structure.

Concerns were raised that, with the alternative option:

- the one councillor for the proposed Mallee Ward (which encompassed all of the municipality except for the north-east sector) would not be able to represent adequately the many different communities with their different needs; and
- the councillors from the urban area might not be inclined to represent the interests of all areas of the municipality.

It was pointed out that the current structure (which was also the VEC's preliminary preferred option) was decided following extensive community consultation in 1996. It was suggested in some response submissions that voters have been satisfied with the structure since it was introduced, though the VEC notes that some preliminary submissions suggested otherwise.

No response submissions favoured the VEC's preliminary alternative option.

A list of those persons and groups who made response submissions is provided in Appendix 9.4. Anyone interested in reading the submissions can download them from the VEC website, www.vec.vic.gov.au

7 Public hearing

A public hearing was held at the Alfred Deakin Centre, Mildura, on 31 January 2005 at 6.30 pm. All persons and groups who made submissions in response to the VEC's Preliminary Report were invited to speak to their submissions, and three chose to do so. Members of the public were invited to attend, and there was a total audience of three people (including those making presentations).

All three speakers spoke in favour of the preferred option. The Council emphasised that it has set up a number of procedures to deal with the large distances and remote communities in the municipality under the current electoral structure, and that it believes these measures to ensure fair representation. Particular concerns were raised about the Mallee Ward proposed in the preliminary alternative option. It was suggested that, at present, all councillors share travel to remote areas, but with the preliminary alternative option, that workload would likely be confined to the one councillor representing the large Mallee Ward. Concern was expressed that one councillor could not be aware of all issues in such a large ward.

One speaker also stressed the inter-connectedness between the different areas of the municipality. He explained that even the outlying areas of the municipality are part of the trading area of Mildura, and that the towns of Merbein, Irymple and Red Cliffs are closely connected to Mildura.

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 nine to be the appropriate number of councillors for the Rural City of Mildura.

The VEC's considerations started by looking at the number of voters in the Rural City and comparing that with other rural cities. Greater Shepparton has a similar number of voters, but only seven councillors, and other rural cities with nine councillors (Lalor, Ballarat and Greater Bendigo) have significantly more voters. The VEC therefore took seven as a starting point for determining the appropriate number of councillors.

The VEC then looked to see if there were any special circumstances within the Rural City of Mildura that would justify more or fewer councillors than would otherwise be the case. The VEC found two relevant factors. Firstly, the municipality is the largest in the State geographically, so councillors have a much larger than normal workload travelling to different and remote areas than is the case in other municipalities with similar numbers of voters. Secondly, the municipality is expected to undergo rapid growth between now and the next review – a 9.28% population increase is predicted between 2004 and 2012 by the Department of Sustainability and Environment. High population growth rates can contribute to larger workloads for councillors due to the need to represent increased numbers of people and because the Council must cater for this rapid growth. For these reasons, the VEC considered that nine councillors were more likely to provide fair and equitable representation for voters than seven.

The VEC also noted that the Commissioners considered nine the most appropriate number of councillors in 1996 because of the extensive size of the municipality, the diversity of interests and economic activity and the remoteness of some of the municipality's communities. All preliminary submissions advocated nine councillors.

Taking into account all of these considerations, the VEC put forward two options involving nine councillors in its Preliminary Report.

All submissions in response to the Report supported nine councillors. None provided any reasons to question the VEC's findings. Consequently, the VEC confirms its view that nine councillors are most likely to provide fair and equitable representation to the voters of the Rural City of Mildura 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 Mildura Rural City Council review. The initial stages of consideration resulted in both a preferred and an alternative

electoral structure which were put to the public in the VEC's Preliminary Report. Submissions 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 be divided into wards.

The VEC noted that there are a number of advantages to the current unsubdivided structure which are particularly appropriate to the nature of the Rural City of Mildura. 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 have affects on other areas, and where communities of interest may extend throughout the municipality. The VEC believes that such inter-dependence exists between Mildura and the other communities within the municipality.

The VEC noted that the Commissioners in 1996 determined that an unsubdivided structure would be more advantageous than a division into wards. They suggested that, under a ward structure, rural areas would receive very limited representation; but under an unsubdivided structure, all councillors would be responsible for, and accountable to, all parts of the municipality. Similar ideas were expressed in preliminary submissions.

The VEC also noted that the voting system to be used in unsubdivided municipalities is different now to the system used in previous elections. The VEC believes that the new system of proportional representation should address some of the concerns that voters expressed about the previous system. The VEC considers that proportional representation should make it more difficult for candidates to be elected as part of a ticket and will eliminate the situation of a candidate receiving 12% of the primary vote, but not being elected (as happened at the last election). Overall, proportional representation should return candidates that are more representative of voters' choices – proportional representation means that candidates representing large minorities and candidates representing majorities can have a reasonable expectation of being elected.

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

Should the municipality be divided into wards?

The VEC also considered whether there would be any advantages to dividing the municipality into wards. The VEC considered that, although there was a high degree of inter-dependence in the municipality, there were also some geographically distinct communities of interest. Mildura, Merbein, Irymple and Red Cliffs are each independent communities, and the rural area has some concerns and interests that

differ from those of the urban areas. Consequently, the VEC investigated the possibility of subdividing the municipality.

The VEC was able to produce an electoral structure that captured those five communities of interest well, with five councillors representing Mildura and one councillor representing each of the other four areas (Merbein, Irymple, Red Cliffs and the rural area). Although the VEC believed that this model would capture communities of interest in a meaningful way and would guarantee that all areas would be represented on the Council, the VEC was concerned about the size of the proposed Mallee Ward, covering the rural area. This ward would encompass an enormous area with a number of distinct communities, and the one councillor representing voters of this ward would have a much higher workload than the other councillors due to substantial travel requirements.

Because of this concern, and because the VEC considered that an unsubdivided structure was particularly appropriate to the Rural City's circumstances, the VEC did not suggest a subdivided model as its preliminary preferred option. However, the VEC did put out the subdivided model as an alternative option for public comment.

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 options 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 models suggested by the VEC.

The VEC received seven submissions in response to the Report, all of which supported the preliminary preferred option. Submissions and verbal responses confirmed the VEC's views on the appropriateness of an unsubdivided structure. They suggested that the unsubdivided structure had enabled all areas within the municipality to be fairly and equitably represented, and confirmed the VEC's belief that there is a high degree of inter-connectedness in the municipality. Submissions also confirmed the VEC's concerns about the practicality of creating a large Mallee Ward under a subdivided structure.

From following this process, and having considered issues raised about the VEC's preliminary preferred option, the VEC confirms its recommendation of an unsubdivided structure for the Mildura Rural City Council. The VEC is confident that this structure will best enable 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 Mildura Rural City Council consist of nine 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 Review Mildura Rural City Council

The Minister for Local Government has given notice under section 219C of the *Local Government Act 1989* that there is to be an electoral representation review of the Mildura Rural City Council. The Council has appointed the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) to conduct the independent review.

What is the review about?

The aim of the review is to ensure fair and equitable electoral representation for the voters of the Rural City of Mildura. 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.

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 the Rural City of Mildura. The VEC recommends consulting its Guide for Submissions first.

Key Steps in the Review

Step 1 - Information sessions, Monday, 25 October 2004

- The Red Cliffs Club, 11 Heytesbury Avenue, Red Cliffs - 5.30 pm
- Mildura Rural City Council Ouyen Office, Oke Street, Ouyen - 7.00 pm
- Benetook Room, The Alfred Deakin Centre, 180-190 Deakin Avenue, Mildura - 7.30 pm

Step 2 - Preliminary submissions. Deadline: 5.00 pm, Monday, 8 November 2004

Step 3 - Preliminary Report, released Wednesday, 1 December 2004

Step 4 - Response submissions. Deadline: 5.00 pm, Monday, 17 January 2005

Step 5 - Public hearing, 6.30 pm, Monday, 31 January 2005

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

- Benetook Room, The Alfred Deakin Centre, 180-190 Deakin Avenue, Mildura

Step 6 - Final Report, released Monday, 21 February 2005

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

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 Reviews Rural City of Mildura and Yarriambiack Shire

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:

- Mildura Rural City Council
- Yarriambiack Shire 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

Monday, 25 October 2004

Mildura: The Red Cliffs Club, 11 Heytesbury Avenue, Red Cliffs - 5.30 pm
Council Ouyen Office, Oke Street, Ouyen - 7.00 pm

The Alfred Deakin Centre, 180-190 Deakin Avenue, Mildura - 7.30 pm

Tuesday, 26 October 2004

Yarriambiack: Gateway BEET Offices, Lascelles Street, Hopetoun - 6.00 pm
Council Chambers, 41 Lyle Street, Warracknabeal - 8.00 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 *Monday, 8 November 2004 - 5.00 pm*.

Step 3 - Preliminary Reports

The VEC will release Preliminary Reports containing its preferred options on *Wednesday, 1 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 *Monday, 8 November 2004 - 5.00 pm*.

Step 5 - Public hearings

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

Monday, 31 January 2005

Mildura: Benetook Room, The Alfred Deakin Centre, 180-190 Deakin Avenue, Mildura - 6.30 pm
Yarriambiack: *Tuesday, 1 February 2005*
Council Chambers, 41 Lyle Street, Warracknabeal - 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, 21 February 2005*.

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

Electoral Representation Review

Mildura Rural City Council

Preliminary Report

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) is conducting an electoral representation review for the Mildura 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?

The Rural City of Mildura currently has nine councillors, elected from an unsubdivided municipality.

Preliminary preferred option

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

Preliminary alternative option

The Report also outlines an alternative option of a Council consisting of nine councillors to be elected from four single-councillor wards and one five-councillor ward.

The maps on the right show the options.

Where is the Report available?

Copies of the Preliminary Report are available from:

- the Mildura Rural City Council offices, Madden Avenue, Mildura;
- 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 mildura.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, 17 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, Monday, 31 January 2005 – 6.30 pm

The hearing will be held at:

- Benetook Room, The Alfred Deakin Centre, 180-190 Deakin Avenue, Mildura.

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.

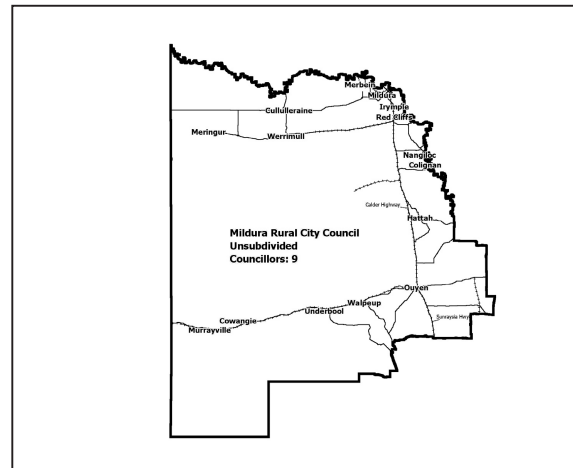
Final Report, Monday, 21 February 2005

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.

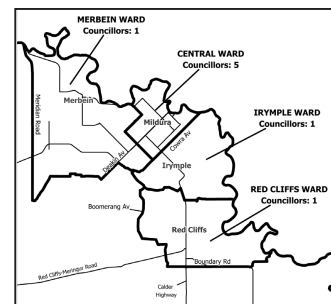
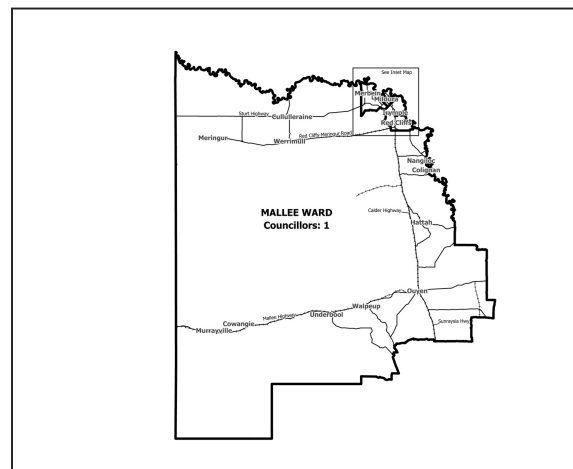
Further information 13 18 32 or visit www.vec.vic.gov.au

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

Mildura Rural City Council preliminary preferred option



Mildura Rural City Council preliminary alternative option



Media Release

Victorian Electoral Commission 

For release Wednesday, 13 October 2004

REPRESENTATION REVIEW GETS UNDERWAY

The electoral representation review for the Rural City of Mildura has begun. The review, conducted by the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC), will consider the number of councillors for the City and the City's electoral structure.

"Anyone interested in the review should attend one of the public information sessions on 25 October," said the Acting Victorian Electoral Commissioner, Mr Doug Beecroft.

The details for the information sessions are:

- Monday, 25 October 2004
- The Red Cliffs Club, 11 Heytesbury Avenue, Red Cliffs – 5.30 pm
- Mildura Rural City Council Ouyen Office, Oke Street, Ouyen – 7.00 pm
- Benetcook Room, The Alfred Deakin Centre, 180-190 Deakin Avenue, Mildura – 7.30 pm

In conducting its review, the VEC will consider a range of information including arguments and information in public submissions.

Any person or group may make a written submission to the VEC about the review. Submissions do not have to be elaborate documents. A letter is perfectly acceptable, as long as it deals with the matters covered by the review. The VEC recommends consulting its Guide for Submissions, which outlines the issues involved.

Key dates for the Rural City of Mildura representation review are:

- Monday, 8 November 2004 – 5.00 pm – Deadline for preliminary submissions. Submissions can be mailed, faxed or emailed to the VEC.
 - Wednesday, 1 December 2004 – The VEC's Preliminary Report will be released containing its preferred options.
 - Monday, 17 January 2005 – 5.00 pm – Deadline for response submissions about the Preliminary Report.
 - Monday, 31 January 2005 – Public hearing. People will be able to speak in support of their response submissions.
 - Monday, 21 February 2005 – The VEC will lodge its Final Report with the Minister for Local Government.
- Any new electoral arrangements, if approved by the Minister for Local Government, would apply at the next Council elections.
- For more information, telephone the VEC on 13 32 or visit the VEC website www.vec.vic.gov.au

– ENDS –

For further media information:

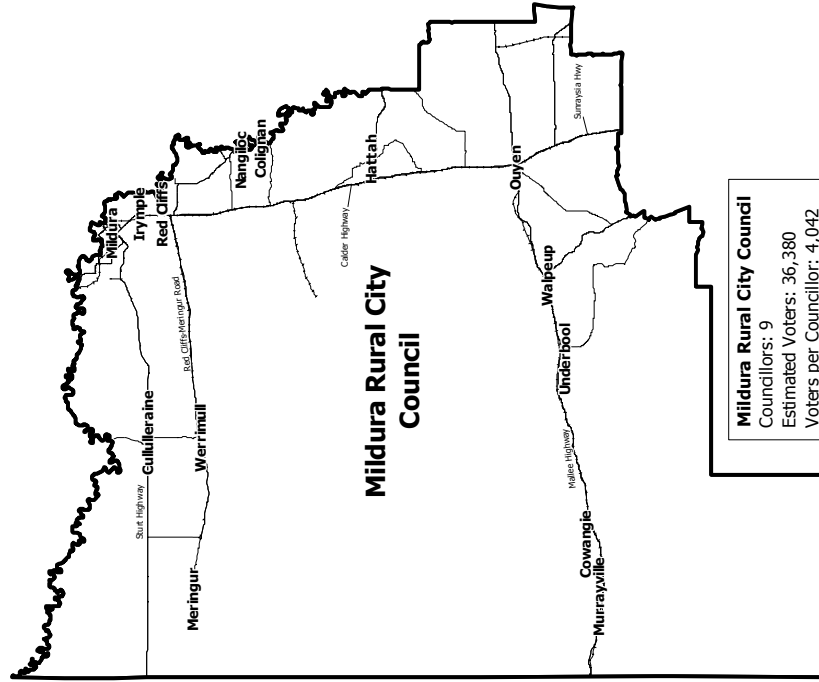
Chris Gribbin
Victorian Electoral Commission
Tel: 9299 0737

9.2 Media releases

Media Fact Sheet

The Rural City of Mildura

The map below shows the current municipality boundaries and estimated voter numbers as at 31 August 2004.



For release from Wednesday, 1 December 2004

MILDURA RURAL CITY COUNCIL ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION REVIEW: PRELIMINARY REPORT RELEASED

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) today released its Preliminary Report on electoral representation for the Mildura Rural City Council. The VEC's preliminary preferred option is to have nine councillors elected from an unsubdivided municipality. A preliminary alternative option of nine councillors elected from one five-councillor ward and four single-councillor wards is also presented for public comment.

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 Mildura Rural City Council offices, Madden Avenue, Mildura, and at the VEC office, Level 8, 505 Little Collins Street, Melbourne, Vic., 3000.

People have until 5.00 pm, Monday, 17 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:

- the Benetook Room, The Alfred Deakin Centre, 180-190 Deakin Avenue, Mildura on Monday, 31 January 2005 at 6.30 pm.

The VEC's Final Report and recommendations will be lodged with the Minister for Local Government on Monday, 21 February 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 –

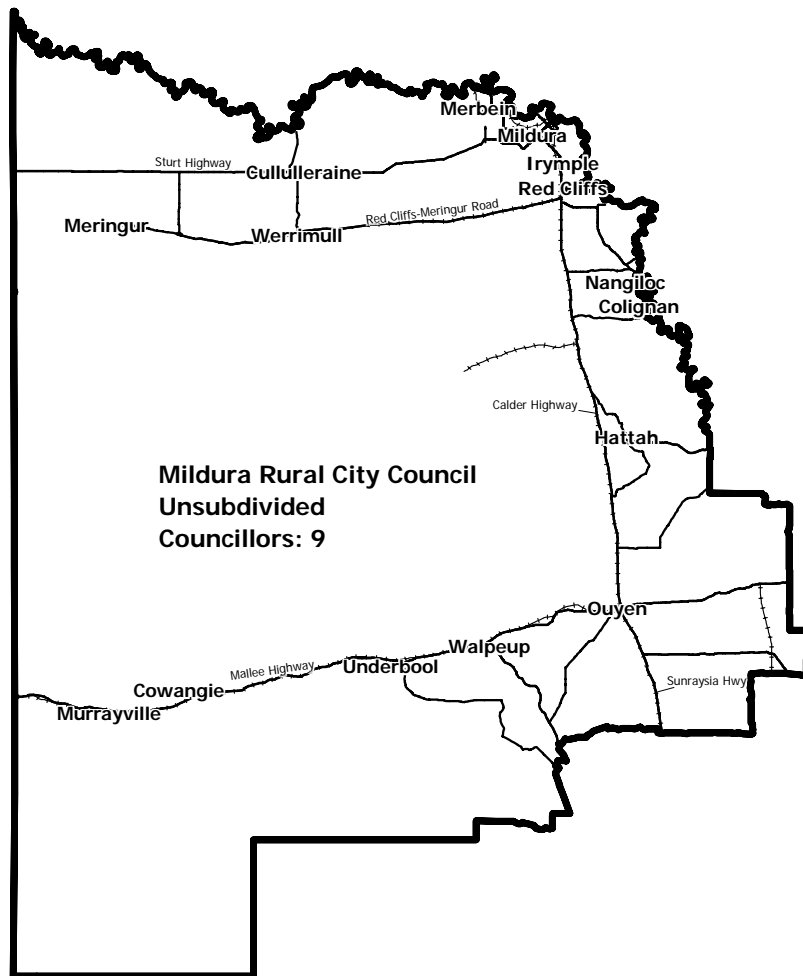
For further media information:

Chris Gribbin
Victorian Electoral Commission
Tel: 9299 0737

Media Fact Sheet

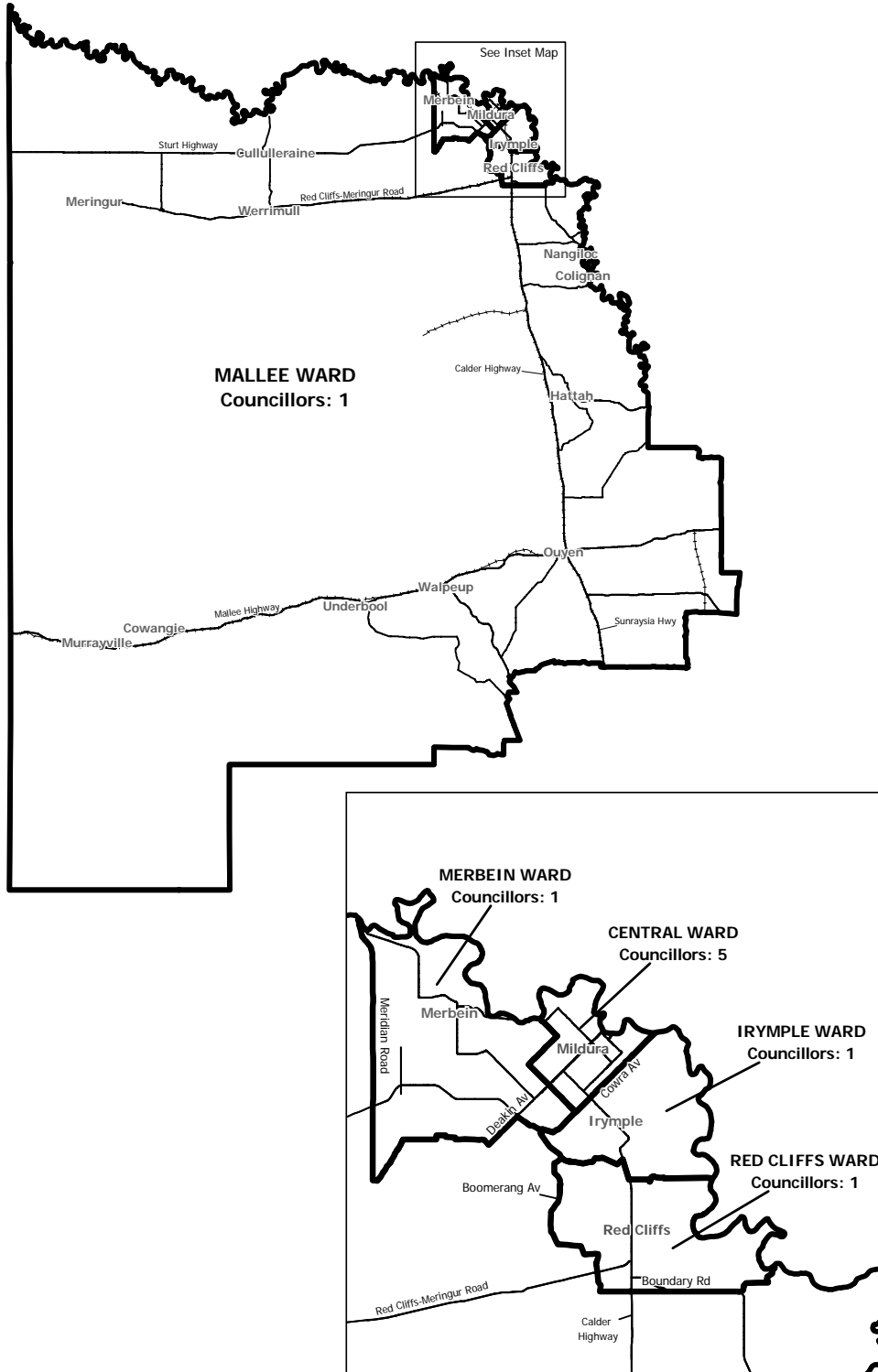
MAPS OF RECOMMENDED OPTIONS FOR MILDURA RURAL CITY COUNCIL

PRELIMINARY PREFERRED OPTION:
Nine councillors elected from an unsubdivided municipality



Media Fact Sheet

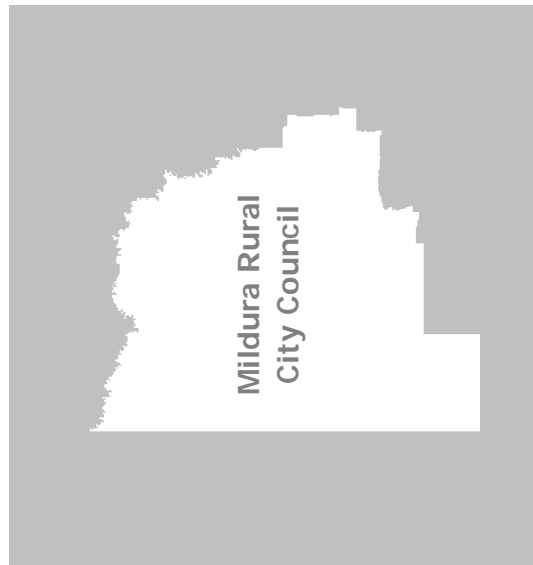
PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVE OPTION:
 Nine councillors elected from one five-councillor ward and four single-councillor wards



9.3 Guide for Submissions

Electoral representation review for the Mildura Rural City 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: mildura.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)?

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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 Rural City of Mildura. The Mildura Rural 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

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>Mildura Sunraysia Daily</i> , <i>The Border Times</i> and the <i>North West Express</i> .
Monday, 25 October 2004	information sessions	An article outlining the purpose and process of the review is included in the <i>Mildura Rural City Council News</i> . Information sessions on the review process are held at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Red Cliffs Club, 11 Heytesbury Ave, Red Cliffs – 5.30 pm; • Council Ouyen Office, Oke St, Ouyen – 7.00 pm • Alfred Deakin Centre, 180-190 Deakin Ave, Mildura – 7.30 pm Anyone interested in making a submission is advised to attend.
Monday, 8 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, 1 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 the Rural City of Mildura 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, 17 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 the Rural City of Mildura.
Monday, 31 January 2005 – 6.30 pm	public hearing	A public hearing is held at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alfred Deakin Centre, 180-190 Deakin Ave, Mildura 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, 21 February 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, 8 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, 17 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, 31 January 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 mildura.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 Mildura Rural City Council offices.

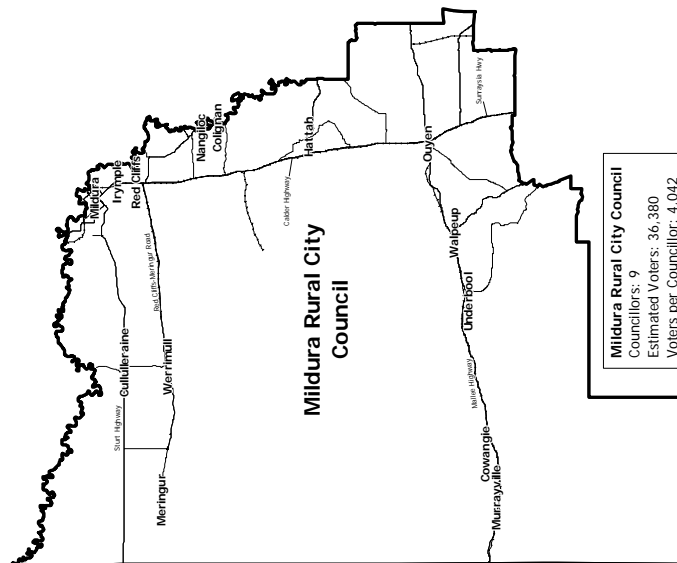
When the Preliminary Report is released, a notice in the *Mildura Sunraysia Daily*, *The Border Times* and the *North West Express* will specify how people can make a written submission in response to the Report.

The Preliminary Report will be available from 1 December 2004.

The Final Report will be released on 21 February 2005.

Current structure of the Rural City of Mildura

The Rural City of Mildura currently has nine councillors, elected from an unsubdivided municipality. The map shows the current 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.



The Rural City of Mildura at a glance

The Rural City of Mildura was formed in 1995 by the amalgamation of the City of Mildura with the Shires of Mildura and Walpeup.

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

Mildura:	55.0%
Red Cliffs:	5.4%
Merbein:	3.8%
Trymple:	3.0%
Ouyen:	2.4%
Cabarita:	0.6%
Murrayville:	0.5%
Underbool:	0.5%
Walpeup:	0.2%
Rural Balance:	28.6%

With a mix of rural and urban population, the City has both a high proportion of people working in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector and substantial numbers of people in retail and manufacturing. The proportions of age groups and wealth levels of the City are similar to those for Victoria as a whole. Unemployment levels are slightly below those of regional Victoria generally.

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. There are Italian, Turkish, and various other European minorities.

Between 2004 and 2012, the population is expected to increase by 8.09%, a higher rate than regional cities generally. There is expected to be a change in the age structure of the Shire as in regional Victoria as a whole, with people over 50 years of age becoming a higher proportion of the population.

(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:

	Rural City of Mildura:	Regional cities (average):	Regional shires without cities (average):
Area (square kilometres):	22,082	2,388	3,891
Population ² :	50,681	32,077	15,805
Population density (people/square km):	2.30	27.82	3.75
Voters:	36,380	24,184	13,859

Economic profile¹:

	Rural City of Mildura:	Regional Victoria:
Major industries (percentages of workforce):		
<i>Agriculture, forestry and fishing</i>	17.8	11.2
<i>Manufacturing</i>	9.7	13.4
<i>Retail trade</i>	15.5	15.3
<i>Accommodation, cafés, restaurants, cultural and recreation services</i>	6.1	6.9
<i>Property and business services</i>	6.4	6.6
<i>Education</i>	7.2	3.3
<i>Health and community services</i>	9.3	10.8
Unemployment rate:	6.6%	7.4%
Households earning under \$500/week:	34.2%	34.6%

Population profile¹:

	Rural City of Mildura:	Regional cities:	Regional shires without cities:
Age groups (percentages of the population):			
<i>0-17 years old</i>	27.9	26.64	27.27
<i>18-34 years old</i>	20.7	22.24	17.76
<i>35-49 years old</i>	21.8	21.74	22.53
<i>50+ years old</i>	29.6	29.37	32.44
Expected population growth (2004-2012):	8.09%	6.95%	4.79%

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 carmers). 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.

The Rural City of Mildura is currently unsubdivided, with nine councillors representing the whole municipality.

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. May lead to confusion of responsibilities and duplication of effort on the part of councillors.
Gives residents and ratepayers a choice of councillors to approach with their concerns.	May be difficult for voters to assess the performances of individual councillors. Large numbers of candidates might be confusing for voters.
Each voter has the opportunity to express a preference for every candidate for the Council election. 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. Ward boundaries may divide communities of interest, and may be difficult to define.
Major geographical communities of interest are likely to be represented. 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.	
Focus on issues may be broader than for single-councillor wards (through councillors may be more locally focussed than in an unsubdivided municipality).	Very local issues may be overridden. 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. Electors have a choice of councillor to approach.	In very large wards, councillors may not be accessible for residents in parts of the ward. 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. Clear ward boundaries are more likely.	Electors in single-councillor wards may expect that their councillors will be more influential than their numbers suggest.

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 the Rural City of Mildura 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
Milmbik	433	44,508	9	4,945	Single-councillor wards
Melton	527	45,280 ¹	7	6,469	Single-councillor wards
Manbyrnong*	31	48,664	7	6,952	Single-councillor wards
Yarra ²	20	60,097 ¹	9	6,677	3 three-councillor wards
Hobsons Bay ¹	64	63,197	7	9,028	Single-councillor wards
Melbourne	36	64,000 ¹	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 ¹	7	10,545	Single-councillor wards
Maroondah	61	77,694	7	11,099	Single-councillor wards
Stonnington ³	26	78,642 ¹	9	8,738	3 three-councillor wards
Frankston*	130	84,479	7	12,068	Single-councillor wards
Whittlesea	490	86,787 ¹	9	9,643	Single-councillor wards
Manningham	113	86,976	8	10,872	4 two-councillor wards
Moonee Valley	44	91,297 ¹	7	13,042	Single-councillor wards
Banyule	62	91,470	7	13,067	Single-councillor wards
Greater Dandenong	129	93,007 ¹	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 ¹	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 ¹	9	13,326	Single-councillor wards
Monash*	81	121,962	8	15,245	Single-councillor wards
Boroondara	60	123,187 ¹	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
¹ as at 2004 representation review
² as at previous election
³ reviewed 2004 – structure to come into effect at next election
⁴ 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 ¹	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 ¹	8	2,534	1 two-councillor ward & 6 single-councillor wards
Wodonga*	433	24,094 ¹	5	4,819	Unsubdivided
Warrnambool ¹	121	24,274 ¹	7	3,468	Unsubdivided
Mildura*	22,082	36,380	9	4,042	Unsubdivided
Greater Shepparton*	2,422	40,176 ¹	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 ¹	2,999	77,291 ¹	9	8,588	Single-councillor wards
Greater Geelong	1,247	161,569	12	13,464	Single-councillor wards

* under review
¹ as at 2004 representation review
² as at previous election
³ reviewed 2004 – structure to come into effect at next election

Regional Shires					
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*	7,550	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

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

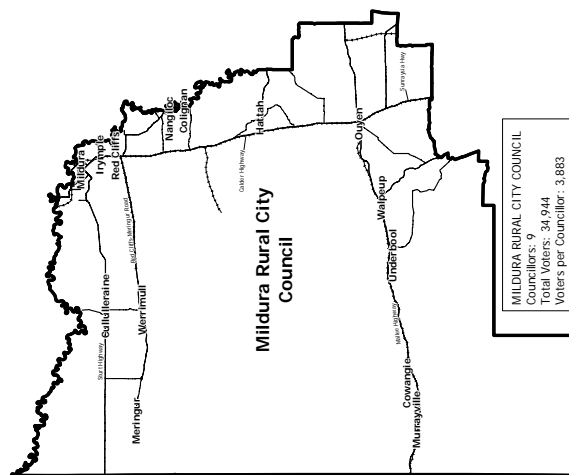
About the VEC

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.

Rural City of Mildura Supplement:
Actual voter numbers as at 30 September 2004



MILDURA RURAL CITY COUNCIL
Councillors: 9
Total Voters: 34,944
Voters per Councillor: 3,883

The numbers of voters in each Census collector district within the Rural City of Mildura are:

CCD:	Voters:	CCD:	Voters:	CCD:	Voters:
2010101	106	2010204	307	2010308	272
2010102	55	2010205	347	2010309	76
2010103	288	2010206	572	2010310	102
2010104	129	2010207	777	2010311	437
2010105	75	2010208	881	2010312	190
2010106	574	2010209	352	2010401	456
2010107	98	2010210	180	2010402	328
2010108	311	2010301	562	2010403	546
2010109	407	2010302	465	2010404	406
2010110	427	2010303	421	2010405	345
2010111	528	2010304	179	2010406	328
2010201	570	2010305	507	2010407	155
2010202	340	2010306	479	2010408	172
2010203	178	2010307	152	2010409	309

CCD:	Voters:	CCD:	Voters:	CCD:	Voters:
2010410	401	2010608	770	2011606	459
2010501	281	2011401	90	2011607	708
2010502	354	2011402	128	2011608	514
2010503	658	2011403	87	2011609	481
2010504	358	2011404	393	2011610	217
2010505	531	2011405	435	2011801	1,014
2010506	257	2011406	134	2011802	640
2010507	349	2011407	163	2011803	384
2010508	605	2011408	119	2011804	592
2010509	308	2011409	147	2011805	325
2010510	458	2011410	54	2011806	216
2010601	520	2011411	92	2011807	362
2010602	681	2011412	197	2011808	407
2010603	670	2011601	371	2011809	410
2010604	336	2011602	473	2011810	286
2010605	532	2011603	489	2011811	519
2010606	466	2011604	236		
2010607	464	2011605	414		

Total for the Rural City of Mildura: 34,944

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

9.4 List of persons and groups making submissions

Preliminary submissions

Tom Nevell
Michael O'Callaghan
Ouyen Incorporated
The Proportional Representation
Society of Australia (Victoria-
Tasmania Branch)
Russell Savage, MP

Response submissions

Cr John Arnold
Cr Greg Brown
Gerald Leach
Mildura Rural City Council
Underbool Progress Group
Ron Vine
Murray Willersdorf

