

Local council electoral structure review

# Preliminary Report

Greater Bendigo City Council

June 2023

### Acknowledgement of Country

The electoral representation advisory panel acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters for which it is holding this review and pays respects to ancestors and Elders past, present and emerging. The panel acknowledges their custodianship for many thousands of years and their continuing living culture.

### Document history and version control

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date approved</b>	<b>Submission approved by</b>	<b>Brief description</b>
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## Contents

<b>Executive summary .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Developing electoral structure models .....	4
Electoral structure models.....	4
Next steps.....	4
<b>Background.....</b>	<b>6</b>
About the 2023–24 electoral structure reviews.....	6
The electoral representation advisory panel.....	6
Public engagement .....	6
Developing recommendations .....	7
<b>About Greater Bendigo City Council .....</b>	<b>11</b>
Profile .....	11
Current number of councillors and electoral structure .....	13
Last electoral structure review.....	13
<b>Preliminary findings and models .....</b>	<b>14</b>
Number of councillors .....	14
Electoral structure .....	15
Models for public feedback .....	18
Ward names .....	18
<b>Next steps.....</b>	<b>20</b>
Response submissions .....	20
Public hearing .....	21
Final report.....	21
<b>References .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Model maps .....</b>	<b>24</b>

## Executive summary

An independent electoral structure review panel appointed by the Minister for Local Government is reviewing the electoral structure of Greater Bendigo City Council.

The purpose of the review is to advise the Minister on the appropriate number of councillors and electoral structure, including ward names, for the council.

Under Victoria's *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act), Greater Bendigo City Council must now have a single-councillor ward electoral structure.

The panel is looking at:

- the appropriate number of councillors and wards for the council
- the location of ward boundaries
- appropriate ward names.

This report outlines the preliminary models the panel is presenting for public consultation, for the proposed new electoral structure of Greater Bendigo City Council to meet the requirements of the Act.

More information about the background to the review is available on [page 6](#).

## Developing electoral structure models

The panel considered a range of factors when deciding on the models in this report, including:

- research and analysis
- voter growth or decline over time.

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

## Electoral structure models

After considering research and the requirements of the Act, the panel is presenting the following electoral structure models for public consultation:

- Model 1: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 9 councillors – 9 wards with one councillor per ward.
- Model 2: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 9 councillors – 9 wards with one councillor per ward.
- Model 3: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 9 councillors – 9 wards with one councillor per ward.

Details on these models, including maps, are available in [Appendix 1](#).

## Next steps

The panel is now seeking feedback on the preliminary electoral structure models. You can make a response submission to the preliminary models until 5 pm Wednesday 19 July. If any response submitters wish to speak at a public hearing, the panel will hold an online public

hearing on Tuesday 25 July. Following this, the panel will present its final recommendation to the Minister on Wednesday 23 August 2023.

More information about the review process is available on the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) website at [vec.vic.gov.au](http://vec.vic.gov.au)

## Background

### About the 2023–24 electoral structure reviews

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

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

For Greater Bendigo City Council, the electoral representation advisory panel is examining:

- the number of councillors and wards
- where the ward boundaries should be
- the name of each ward.

The Act requires electoral structures to provide fair and equitable representation and facilitate good governance. Each ward must have an approximately equal number of voters per councillor (within +/-10% of the average). While conducting the review, the panel also notes the role of a councillor as specified under section 28 of the Act.

### The electoral representation advisory panel

The panel conducting the electoral structure review of Greater Bendigo City Council has 3 members:

- Ms Julie Eisenbise (Chairperson)
- Mr Tim Presnell
- Acting Electoral Commissioner Ms Dana Fleming.

The purpose of the review is to advise the Minister on the appropriate number of councillors and electoral structure, including ward names, for the council. The panel is independent of councils and the Victorian State government.

Under the Act, the VEC is not responsible for reviewing council electoral structures but must provide administrative and technical support to the panel. The Electoral Commissioner (or their delegate) must be a member of each panel.

## Public engagement

### Public information program

On behalf of the panel, the VEC has conducted a public information and awareness program to inform the public about the Greater Bendigo City Council electoral structure review. This has included:

- printed public notices in state-wide newspapers
- public information sessions to outline the review process and respond to questions from the community
- media releases to announce the start of the review
- information on social media channels
- updated website content on [vec.vic.gov.au](http://vec.vic.gov.au), including:
  - current information on the review process
  - submission guide and fact sheets for each council under review with background information.

The VEC will continue to promote the review on behalf of the panel during the response submission stage via media releases, the VEC's social media channels and the VEC website.

### **Public consultation**

The panel now invites input to the electoral structure review of Greater Bendigo City Council via:

- response submissions to this preliminary report
- an online public hearing for anyone who makes a response submission to speak to the panel and expand on their submission.

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

## **Developing recommendations**

The electoral structure models the panel is presenting in this preliminary report comply with the Act and were developed through careful consideration of:

- research and analysis conducted by the VEC support team, including geospatial and demographic data
- rates or patterns of population and voter change over time, and relevant forecasts of growth or decline based on forecast information provided by .id (informed decisions, a company specialising in demographics and forecasting).

### **Deciding on the number of councillors**

The Act allows local councils to have between 5 and 12 councillors, but neither the Act nor the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020 specify how the number of councillors is to be determined. Therefore, the models put forward by the panel in this report are guided by the Act's intention for fairness and equity in voter representation.

In examining the appropriate number of councillors for Greater Bendigo City Council, the panel considered the following criteria:

- the population and number of voters in the council area, compared to other councils with a similar population size and number of voters in the same category (for example, other comparable metropolitan, interface or regional city councils)
- patterns of population change and voter growth or decline in the council area over time
- the current and past numbers of councillors
- the representation needs of the communities of interest in the council area.

The panel's final recommendation will also consider any matters raised in public response submissions not already listed above.

Local councils with a larger number of voters will often have more councillors. Large populations generally have greater diversity, both in the type and number of communities of interest and issues relating to representation. However, the ideal number of councillors can also be influenced by the circumstances of each council, such as the:

- nature and complexity of services the council provides
- geographic size and topography of the area
- forecast population and voter growth or decline
- social diversity.

### **Deciding the electoral structure**

Under the Act, regional city, metropolitan and interface councils must now have single-councillor ward electoral structures.

When developing single-councillor ward models for Greater Bendigo City Council, the panel considered these criteria:

- whether the structure would comply with section 15(2) of the Act (see below), and for how long it would likely comply
- the appropriate number of councillors, as outlined above
- whether meaningful and effective ward boundaries could be established and whether these would be easily identifiable to local communities
- the representation of communities of interest
- the voter distribution and physical features of the area, and the impact these may have on the shape and size of wards
- past elections for the council, including:
  - numbers of candidates nominating
  - incidences of uncontested elections
  - rates of informal voting.

The panel's final recommendation will also consider any matters raised in public response submissions not already listed above.

Under section 15(2) of the Act, subdivided structures must aim for an approximately equal number of voters per councillor in each ward. This means the number of voters represented by each councillor in a ward should be within +/-10% of the average number of voters per councillor for all wards.

During this review, the panel aims to recommend a structure that will comply with section 15(2) at the time of the 2024 local council elections and, if possible, also comply based on voter numbers at the time the review is conducted. The panel uses forecasts of population and voter change to assess compliance at the 2024 elections with as much accuracy as possible. In some cases, population change and other factors impacting voter numbers mean it is not possible to create compliant subdivided structures based both on voter numbers that were current at the time of the review and forecast voter numbers. In these instances, the panel prioritises compliance at the 2024 local government elections to ensure each vote will have approximately equal value at the 2024 election.

One of the factors that may impact compliance with section 15(2) is the number of current and forecast voters with ratepayer-based voting entitlements, also known as council-enrolled electors. Voters' rolls include both state-enrolled electors (the majority of the roll) and a smaller number of council-enrolled electors. The Act introduced changes to ratepayer-based entitlement categories, which come into full effect at the 2024 local council elections. The panel will take this change to the makeup of voters' rolls, and therefore compliance with section 15(2) of the Act, into consideration during this review.

### **Deciding on ward names**

The panel has taken the following approach to naming wards.

1. Retaining existing ward names if these are still relevant to the area covered by the ward.
2. When a new name is required, the panel bases this on features such as:
  - places (registered under the *Geographic Place Names Act 1998*) in the ward
  - compass directions
  - native flora or fauna.

### **Use of Aboriginal language**

The panel recognises that there should first be meaningful consultation with local Aboriginal communities and groups before a ward is named using Aboriginal language. Meaningful consultation is a significant process that the panel is not able to undertake within the timeframes of the current review program.

The panel also recognises that many of the place names in current use across Victoria are based on Aboriginal language. As such, the panel may put forward new ward names using Aboriginal language if:

- it is the name of a place within a ward
- it is currently in common use

and

- the name is registered under the *Geographic Place Names Act 1998*.

Unregistered names using Aboriginal language have not been put forward by the panel as new ward names. While the panel supports the adoption of names based on Aboriginal language, this requires appropriate consultation.

Accordingly, for the panel to consider an Aboriginal language ward name that is suggested in a public submission to the review, the name submitted needs to comply with the above guidelines.

# About Greater Bendigo City Council

## Profile

Greater Bendigo City Council is in the Loddon Mallee region of Victoria, about 150 km north-west of Melbourne. It covers an area of 3,000 km<sup>2</sup> and shares borders with 5 other councils: Campaspe Shire Council in the north, Strathbogie and Mitchell shire councils in the east, Mount Alexander Shire Council in the south, and Loddon Shire Council in the west.

The Traditional Custodians of the Bendigo area are the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung peoples.

### Landscape

Bendigo is a regional city surrounded by forest and rural hinterland. Most of the rural land is for agricultural purposes, such as grazing, poultry and pig farming, and vineyards (DTP 2023). The council area includes national, state and regional parks including the Greater Bendigo National Park and extensive Box Ironbark forests (Bendigo Region 2023) and is home to a population of the critically endangered swift parrot (IUCN 2018). The Campaspe River flows through the municipality and into Lake Eppalock, which serves as major water storage for the population centres of Bendigo and Heathcote and the Campaspe irrigation district (GMW 2023).

At the 2021 Census, the municipality's population was 121,470 with almost 87% of the population living in one of 6 main urban centres – Axedale, Bendigo, Elmore, Goornong, Heathcote and Marong (ABS 2022a).

Bendigo is the largest urban centre, stretching from Big Hill in the south to Huntly in the north. It had a population of 100,649 in 2021 and accounted for almost 83% of the municipality's population (ABS 2022b). Bendigo was known as Big Gold Mountain by the Chinese gold-rush immigrants of the 1850s (Bendigo Heritage Attractions 2023) and the town's Victorian architecture reflects the wealth of this era. Bendigo is now better known as a UNESCO City of Gastronomy (Bendigo Gastronomy 2023).

With a population of about 1,850, Heathcote is in the east of the council area. Heathcote is nestled between the McHarg and McIvor ranges and is well known for its Shiraz grapes.

About 15 km west of central Bendigo is Marong, a semi-rural village on Bullock Creek, home to 1,508 residents (ABS 2022f, 2022g).

Elmore (population 753 in 2021), a small town in the north-east of the council area along the Campaspe River, Axedale (population 348 in 2021) and Goornong (population 326 in 2021) make up the remaining major urban centres (ABS 2022c, 2022d, 2022e).

Several major highways, including the Calder, Midland and McIvor, converge in and support a large freight network across the Bendigo area. The municipality has several bus services, a tourist tram, and Bendigo Airport, while V/line passenger trains connect Bendigo to Melbourne, Echuca, and Swan Hill.

## **Community**

Taking a regional service role, the council area's major economic output is provided through construction, manufacturing, health care, and education (DTP 2023). Mining is still a major industry, and there was a recent expansion of goldmines at Fosterville and Costerfield. However, more residents worked in health care and social assistance than any other industry in 2021, which employed 19.1% of residents (.id 2022a).

Greater Bendigo City Council's population increased from 110,477 in 2016 to 121,470 in 2021. This trend is expected to continue with an estimated annual growth rate of 2%, which would see the city grow to 155,175 by 2036 (.id 2022b).

The 2021 Census showed the council had a higher proportion of younger age groups (0-to-17 years) and a lower proportion of older age groups (over 60) compared with regional Victoria (.id 2022a). The largest age group in 2021 was 25-to-29 year olds, comprising 6.5% of the municipality's population. The median age in 2021 was 40, which was lower than the regional Victorian overall median of 43 in 2021 (ABS 2022a, 2022h).

In 2021, just over 84% of Greater Bendigo City residents were born in Australia, and residents who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people accounted for 2.3% of the municipality's population. English was the only language spoken at home for 87.8% of residents, compared with 86.4% for regional Victoria overall (ABS 2022a, 2022h). Other languages spoken include Karen (1.3%), Mandarin (0.5%), Malayalam (0.4%), Punjabi (0.4) and Tagalog (0.2%).

Most people in the municipality (70.5%) owned their own home either outright or with a mortgage, and in 2021 the median weekly household income was \$1,448 (ABS 2022a).

## Current number of councillors and electoral structure

Greater Bendigo City Council is currently divided into 3 wards with a total of 9 councillors:

- 3 wards with 3 councillors each (Eppalock, Lockwood and Whipstick wards).



**Figure 1:** Diagram of current electoral structure of Greater Bendigo City Council.

There are approximately 93,852 voters in Greater Bendigo City Council, with an approximate ratio of 10,428 voters per councillor.

Visit the VEC website at [vec.vic.gov.au](http://vec.vic.gov.au) for more information on Greater Bendigo City Council.

## Last electoral structure review

The VEC conducted an electoral representation review of Greater Bendigo City Council in 2011. This review was carried out under the *Local Government Act 1989* (Vic), which was replaced by the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic).

After conducting the review, the VEC recommended that Greater Bendigo City Council adopt a structure of 9 councillors elected from 3 wards (3 wards with 3 councillors).

Visit the VEC website at [vec.vic.gov.au](http://vec.vic.gov.au) to access a copy of the 2011 representation review final report.

# Preliminary findings and models

## Number of councillors

After taking into consideration the requirements of the Act and the agreed criteria, the panel found 9 councillors to be an appropriate number for Greater Bendigo City Council.

The panel considered the characteristics of Greater Bendigo City Council in relation to similar regional city councils, including its population, the number and distribution of voters, and the size and geography of the council.

Similar regional city councils to Greater Bendigo City Council						
Local council	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Number of voters at 2020 election	Population (2021 Census)	Current total estimate of voters	Number of councillors	Number of voters per councillor
Greater Geelong City*	1,248	204,092	271,057	212,369	11	19,306
Greater Bendigo City	3,000	91,892	121,470	93,852	9	10,428
Ballarat City*	739	84,694	113,763	87,340	9	9,704
Latrobe City*	1,426	58,170	77,318	59,099	9	6,566
Greater Shepparton City*	2,422	46,242	68,409	46,959	9	5,217
Mildura Rural City*	22,082	40,720	56,972	42,932	9	4,770

\*This local council is undergoing an electoral structure review during 2023–24.

## Maintaining 9 councillors

Greater Bendigo City Council currently has 93,852 voters represented by 9 councillors and covers an area of 3,000 km<sup>2</sup>. Other regional city councils with a similar number of voters generally also have 9 councillors. Forecasts indicate modest population growth is expected, and this growth is anticipated to remain within the Council's urban growth boundary. While the panel acknowledged that the number of councillors may need to increase in future, it considered it appropriate for the total number of councillors to remain unchanged at this time.

## Electoral structure

To identify the most appropriate electoral structure, various factors were considered. This included the requirements of the Act, the communities of interest in Greater Bendigo City Council, the appropriateness of ward boundaries and which models best offered fair and equitable representation and consequently facilitate good governance.

In developing the preliminary models presented in this report, the panel considered a range of models. The strongest 3 models have been put forward for further public comment.

The panel proposes 3 models for the consideration of the Greater Bendigo City Council community:

- a subdivided electoral structure of 9 single-councillor wards (Model 1)
- a subdivided electoral structure of 9 single-councillor wards, with different ward boundaries to Model 1 (Model 2)
- a subdivided electoral structure of 9 single-councillor wards, with different ward boundaries to models 1 and 2 (Model 3).

Diagrams of the preliminary models are included in [Appendix 1](#).

### A single-councillor ward structure with 9 councillors (Model 1)

Under this model, Greater Bendigo City Council would adopt a 9-ward structure. Each ward would be represented by one councillor, in line with the requirements of the Act.

The proposed boundaries of Model 1 create 3 rural-centred wards and 6 urban-centred wards and focus largely on keeping neighbourhoods together by using localities (suburbs or towns) and train lines as the basis of boundaries.

The panel notes the use of the train line creates a spine through the city area, with the 6 urban-centred wards radiating outwards. Diamond Hill Ward takes in Golden Gully, Quarry Hill, most of Spring Gully and Kangaroo Flat. West Bendigo, Golden Square and parts of Maiden Gully and Kangaroo Flat (east of Olympic Parade) form Specimen Hill Ward. Sandhurst Ward includes the Bendigo city centre and Lake Weeroona and follows the train line to Williams Road in the west. Eaglehawk Ward is nestled between the Swan Hill and Echuca train lines. Grassy Flat Ward takes in the Bendigo Airport, Strathdale and Kennington with Condon Street forming the border between the ward and the remaining urban-centred Strathfieldsaye Ward.

In the proposed rural wards, Eppalock Ward extends northwards to Epsom-Barnadown Road and includes Junortown. Lockwood Ward also expands north to include the townships of Sebastian and Woodvale, reducing the size of Whipstick Ward.

The proposed boundaries build on existing boundaries and the panel believes this would support both the population distribution and projected growth in the Epsom/Huntly and Maiden Gully regions. However, the panel also acknowledges some of the boundary changes, mostly those to the north around Whipstick Ward, could be seen as a drawback. As such, the panel is seeking public comment and feedback on this matter, and the arrangement of urban and rural

wards. Nonetheless, the panel agrees Model 1 ward boundaries have longevity, and will mostly keep communities of interest together.

#### **A single-councillor ward structure with 9 councillors (alternative version) (Model 2)**

Under this model, Greater Bendigo City Council would adopt a 9-ward structure. Each ward would be represented by one councillor, in line with the requirements of the Act.

As in Model 1, the proposed boundaries of Model 2 also use the existing ward boundaries to further divide the council into 9 single-councillor wards. However, rather than using localities, Model 2 primarily uses roads to create proposed boundaries, with 3 rural-focused wards and 6 urban-focused wards.

In the urban-centred wards, Eaglehawk Ward is nestled between the Swan Hill and Echuca train lines. Its southern boundary is Holdsworth Road, which also separates it from California Gully Ward. The boundaries of Lake Weeroona Ward are Weeroona Avenue and Lucan Street to the west and Condon Street in Kennington to the south. Golden Square Ward uses Mitchell Street and most of Carpenter Street as its eastern boundary. Kangaroo Flat Ward and Strathfieldsaye Ward are separated by Spring Gully Road.

The proposed 3 rural ward boundaries remain relatively unchanged. Lockwood and Eppalock wards retain the existing east-west ward boundary, while the former extends further north to include parts of Woodvale (west of the train line). Whipstick and Eppalock wards mostly keep the existing boundaries, but extend west along Golf Course Road instead of using Strickland Road.

The panel considers this approach establishes clear and identifiable boundaries, but acknowledges that communities often form around roads and the shopping strips and essential services located on both sides. For this reason, the panel recognises that using roads as ward boundaries could be seen to divide communities.

Overall, the panel considers the proposed boundaries of Model 2 to effectively accommodate projected growth across the council, offering longevity and compliance with the plus-or-minus 10% tolerance until the October 2024 local council elections.

#### **A single-councillor ward structure with 9 councillors (alternative version) (Model 3)**

Under this model, Greater Bendigo City Council would adopt a 9-ward structure. Each ward would be represented by one councillor, in line with the requirements of the Act.

In Model 3, the proposed boundaries also use the existing 3 wards as a foundation but adopt a different approach to models 1 and 2. Model 3 further divides the council into 9 single-councillor wards, including 3 urban-centred wards and 6 wards radiating in a spoke formation from the urban wards, each containing both rural and urban segments.

The 3 central urban-centred wards converge near the Bendigo train station. Lake Weeroona Ward includes the Bendigo Racecourse, Bendigo Airport and California Gully bushland reserve, with Don and Myrtle streets forming the south border. Kennington Ward uses the train line as part of its western boundary and includes Strathdale and Kennington, with Houlahan and

Edwards streets as a southern boundary. The third urban-centred ward, Golden Square Ward, has the train line running through its centre with Golden Square on the west and Golden Gully on the east.

The 6 wards combining rural and urban communities sees the existing Lockwood Ward divided into 2 new wards. Ravenswood Ward takes in the towns of Harcourt North, Ravenswood, and Lockwood South. It extends north to include Big Hill and through to a northern boundary of Alder Street in Kangaroo Flat. The proposed new Lockward Ward includes the towns of Shelbourne, Lockwood, Marong, and Maiden Gully. It stretches east to Long Gully, while retaining most of the existing northern ward boundary.

In the north, the existing Whipstick Ward is also divided into 2 wards. The proposed new Whipstick Ward is significantly smaller than the current ward, with Loesers and Hartlands roads forming part of the eastern boundary shared with the new Epsom Ward. In the east of the council, there are 2 new wards (Axedale and Eppalock wards) in place of the existing Eppalock Ward. Axedale Ward encompasses the northern half of the existing Eppalock Ward to include the towns of Junortown and Strathfieldsaye in the west and Costerfield in the east. The proposed new Eppalock Ward retains the southern half of the existing ward, including Heathcote in the east and Lake Eppalock, then continues west to Spring Gully and extends to Townsend Street in Flora Hill.

The panel considers additional rural wards could enable smaller communities to feel they would retain equal representation under a single-councillor structure. The panel also feels reducing the size of rural wards could assist with councillor workloads and travel times. The panel notes the spoke approach of Model 3 similarly follows the road network that radiates from central Bendigo.

The panel notes a potential drawback related to including urban areas in all wards. There is potential for rural representation to be diluted due to a larger number of city or urban-focused voters being included alongside rural voters. For this reason, the panel considers public comment and feedback to be of value before making a final recommendation on the proposed boundaries.

## Models for public feedback

The panel considers all models outlined below to be the single-councillor ward electoral structures with the best potential to offer fair and equitable representation for voters in Greater Bendigo City Council and consequently facilitate good governance. Please see [Appendix 1](#) for detailed maps of these models.

### Model 1

Greater Bendigo City Council has 9 councillors and is divided into 9 wards with one councillor per ward.

Ward names: Diamond Hill Ward, Eaglehawk Ward, Eppalock Ward, Grassy Flat Ward, Lockwood Ward, Sandhurst Ward, Specimen Hill Ward, Strathfieldsaye Ward and Whipstick Ward.

### Model 2

Greater Bendigo City Council has 9 councillors and is divided into 9 wards with one councillor per ward.

Ward names: California Gully Ward, Eaglehawk Ward, Eppalock Ward, Golden Square Ward, Kangaroo Flat Ward, Lake Weeroona Ward, Lockwood Ward, Strathfieldsaye Ward and Whipstick Ward.

### Model 3

Greater Bendigo City Council has 9 councillors and is divided into 9 wards with one councillor per ward.

Ward names: Axedale Ward, Eppalock Ward, Epsom Ward, Golden Square Ward, Kennington Ward, Lake Weerona Ward, Lockwood Ward, Ravenswood Ward and Whipstick Ward.

## Ward names

The panel has suggested ward names to identify the wards in each model and invites comments from the community on these names as part of submissions responding to the preliminary report. The basis of the ward name recommendations for each model are described below.

### Model 1

Diamond Hill, Eaglehawk, Grassy Flat, Sandhurst, Specimen Hill and Strathfieldsaye ward names are new and are based on natural features, localities or historical names found within each ward.

Eppalock, Lockwood and Whipstick ward names are the existing names of 3 wards under the current electoral structure.

## **Model 2**

California Gully, Eaglehawk, Golden Square, Kangaroo Flat, Lake Weeroona and Strathfieldsaye ward names are new and are based on natural features or localities found within each ward.

Eppalock, Lockwood and Whipstick ward names are the existing names of 3 wards under the current electoral structure.

## **Model 3**

Axedale, Epsom, Golden Square, Kennington, Lake Weeroona and Ravenswood ward names are new and are based on natural features or localities found within each ward.

Eppalock, Lockwood and Whipstick ward names are the existing names of 3 wards under the current electoral structure.

The panel will review ward name suggestions received during the response submission stage when forming the final advice to the Minister for Local Government on the electoral structure of the council. Suggested ward names should comply with the panel's approach to naming wards (see [Deciding on ward names](#) and [Use of Aboriginal language](#)). All ward name suggestions received during the response submission stage will be provided to the Minister for consideration at the conclusion of the electoral structure review.

## Next steps

### Response submissions

Any person or group, including the local council under review, can make a response submission to the electoral representation advisory panel. In your submission you should address the models proposed by the panel in this preliminary report.

You can make a submission:

	<p><b>Online</b> Visit <a href="http://vec.vic.gov.au">vec.vic.gov.au</a> to make a submission online. You will need to make an account to use the online Public Submission Tool and can save a draft submission to finish later.</p>
	<p><b>By email</b> <a href="mailto:GreaterBendigo.ERAPSubmissions@vec.vic.gov.au">GreaterBendigo.ERAPSubmissions@vec.vic.gov.au</a></p>
	<p><b>By post</b> Electoral Representation Advisory Panel c/o Victorian Electoral Commission Level 11, 530 Collins St Melbourne VIC 3000</p>

The panel must receive all response submissions before 5 pm on Wednesday 19 July 2023. If you post your submission, make sure it has enough time to reach the panel before the deadline. Late submissions will not be accepted.

### Required information

For your submission to be considered, you must include your:

- full name
- contact phone number or email address
- postal or residential address.

To protect the integrity and transparency of the review process, the panel will not consider submissions without this information. If you are submitting as a group or organisation, you must include the name of a nominated contact person who is authorised to submit on behalf of your group.

On behalf of the panel, the VEC will handle information provided by submitters in accordance with the privacy policy available at [vec.vic.gov.au/privacy](http://vec.vic.gov.au/privacy)

### **Public access to submissions**

To ensure transparency in the electoral structure review process, your submission will be published on the VEC website at [vec.vic.gov.au](http://vec.vic.gov.au). The VEC will remove your signature and contact details, including residential and postal addresses, from all public copies but must publish your full name (or group name) and locality (suburb or town).

Please note that any submission content that is potentially defamatory, offensive, obscene or that includes the personal information of people or organisations who are not a party to the submission may also be redacted before publication.

### **Public hearing**

If you make a response submission, you can also ask to speak at an online public hearing to support your submission and expand on your views.

The online public hearing is scheduled for:

Time: 2 pm

Date: Tuesday 25 July 2023

The panel encourages participation in the public hearing. If you wish to speak at the public hearing, you **must** indicate this in your response submission. The public hearing will not be held if there are no requests to speak.

Anyone can attend a public hearing, but you will only be able to speak if you asked to in your response submission. If you ask to speak, the VEC will contact you to arrange a time for you to speak at the hearing. You will have 10 minutes to address the public hearing panel, which will include at least 2 of the review panel members. The members of the public hearing panel may ask you questions.

Visit the VEC website at [vec.vic.gov.au](http://vec.vic.gov.au) for more information on public hearings.

### **Final report**

Following the public hearing, the review panel will consider all evidence gathered and prepare a final report for the Minister for Local Government containing a recommendation for the number of councillors and the electoral structure for the local council.

The final report is scheduled to be provided to the Minister on Wednesday 23 August 2023. The Minister will consider the final reports, including any determination to make the reports publicly available. Any change to the electoral structure of Greater Bendigo City Council following on from this review is expected to apply at the October 2024 local council elections. Under the Act, the final council electoral structure will be set by an Order in Council published in the Victoria Government Gazette.

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Local Government Act 1989 (Vic)

Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)

Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020 (Vic)

## Appendix 1: Model maps

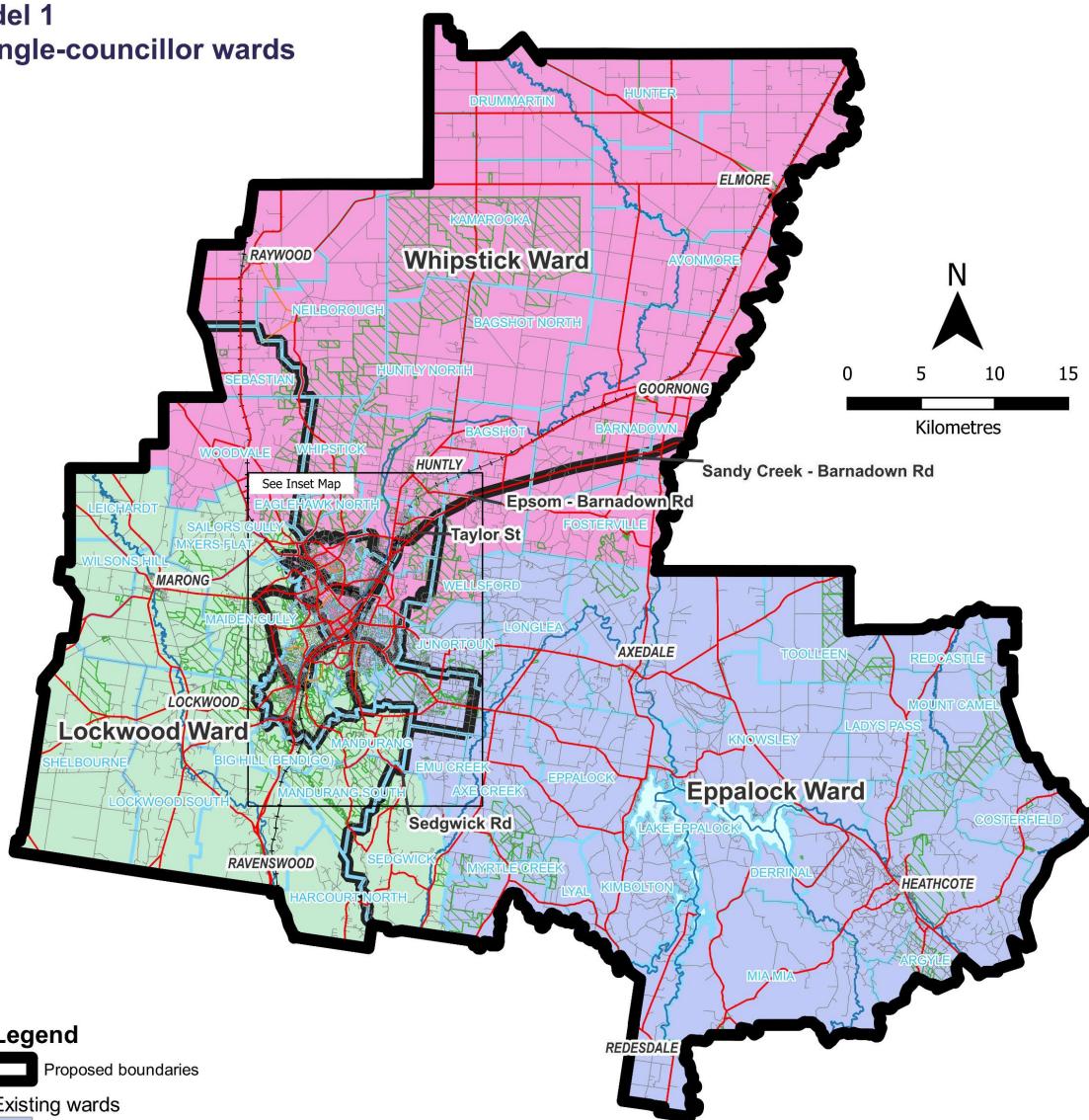
The following maps are included in this report:

Map	Page
Model 1 – a single-councillor ward structure with 9 councillors – 9 wards with one councillor per ward.	25
Model 2 – a single-councillor ward structure with 9 councillors – 9 wards with one councillor per ward (with boundaries different to Model 1).	27
Model 3 – a single-councillor ward structure with 9 councillors – 9 wards with one councillor per ward (with boundaries different to Models 1 and 2).	29

## Greater Bendigo City Council

Model 1

9 single-councillor wards



### Legend

Proposed boundaries

Existing wards

Eppalock

Lockwood

Whipstick

Map symbols

Freeways

Main roads

Collector roads

Minor roads

Railways

• Railway stations

Rivers & creeks

Lakes

Parks & reserves

Locality boundaries

Ward	Electors*	Deviation	Area sq km
Diamond Hill	10,081	-3.33%	28
Eaglehawk	10,486	+0.56%	17
Eppalock	10,537	+1.05%	1,297
Grassy Flat	10,761	+3.19%	26
Lockwood	9,936	-4.72%	607
Sandhurst	10,857	+4.11%	14
Specimen Hill	10,782	+3.39%	18
Strathfieldsaye	10,640	+2.03%	31
Whipstick	9,772	-6.29%	961
Total	93,852		2,999
Average	10,428		333

\*Elector numbers as at 30 March 2023

Map prepared by:

Victorian Electoral Commission

Data use:

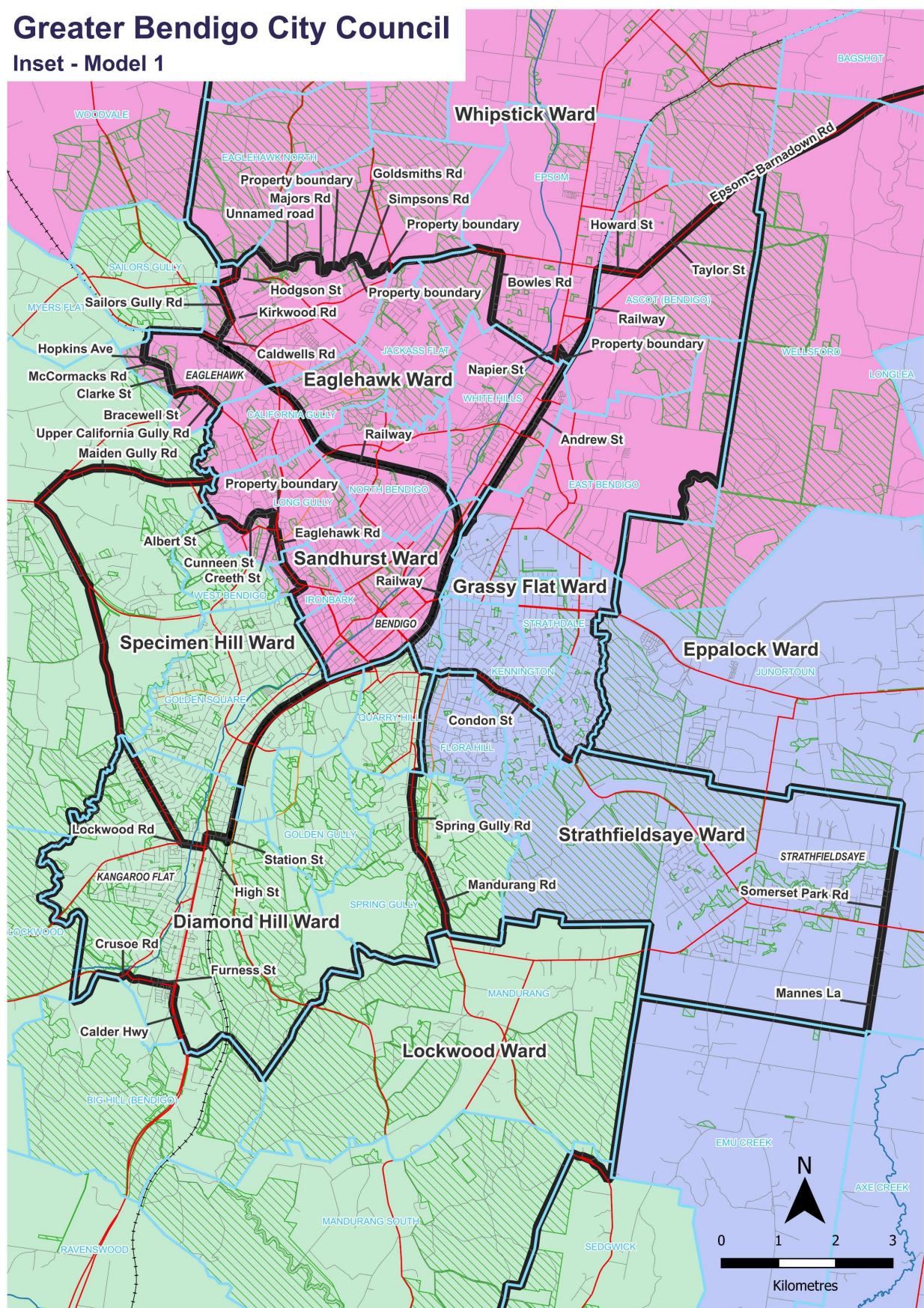


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## Greater Bendigo City Council

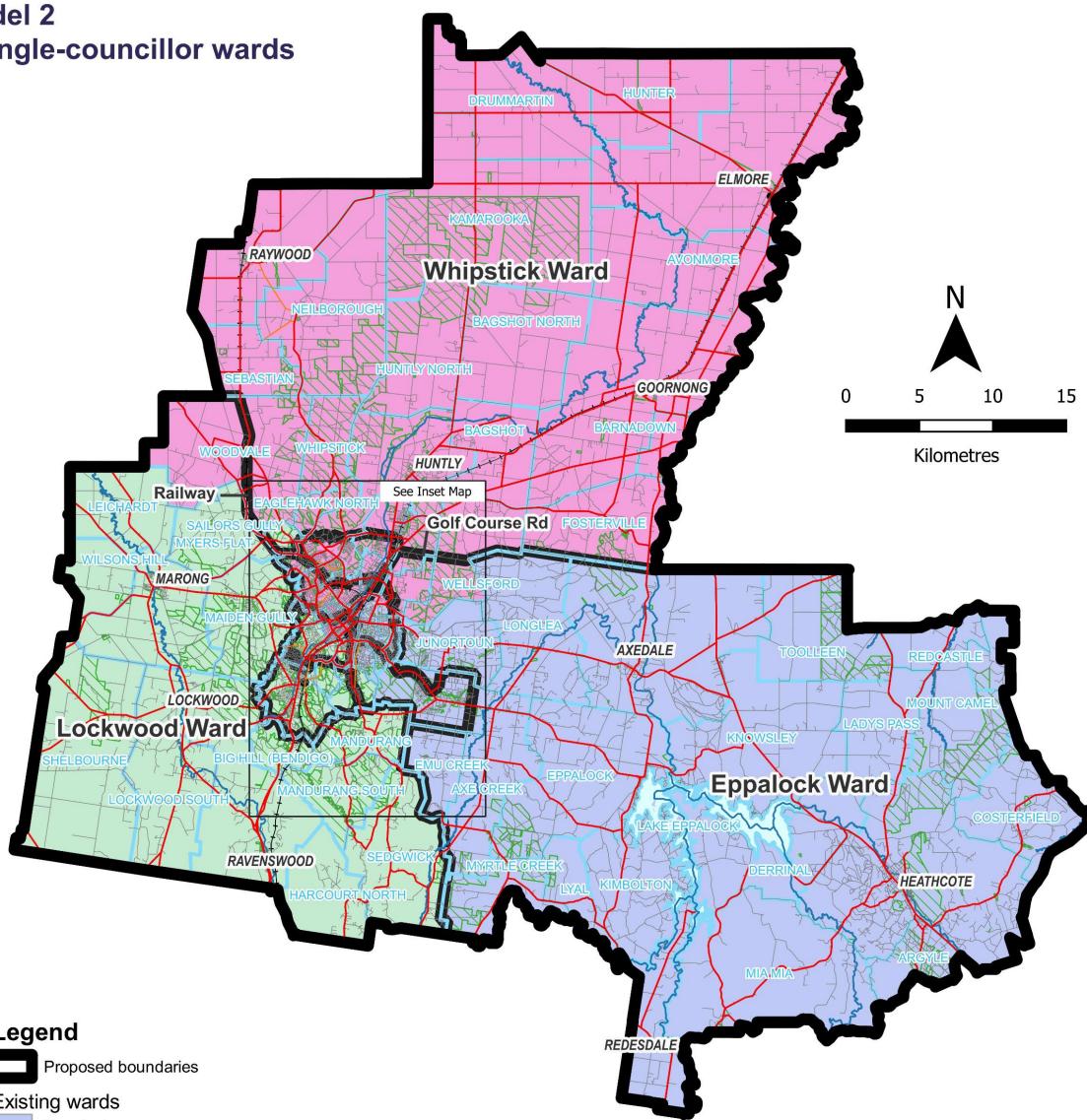
Inset - Model 1



## Greater Bendigo City Council

Model 2

9 single-councillor wards



### Legend

Proposed boundaries

#### Existing wards

- Eppalock
- Lockwood
- Whipstick

#### Map symbols

- Freeways
- Main roads
- Collector roads
- Minor roads
- Railways
- Railway stations
- Rivers & creeks
- Lakes
- Parks & reserves
- Locality boundaries

Ward	Electors*	Deviation	Area sq km
California Gully	10141	-2.75%	14
Eaglehawk	10713	+2.73%	18
Eppalock	11036	+5.83%	1163
Golden Square	10551	+1.18%	15
Kangaroo Flat	10841	+3.96%	27
Lake Weeroona	10376	-0.5%	11
Lockwood	9706	-6.92%	605
Strathfieldsaye	10812	+3.68%	28
Whipstick	9676	-7.21%	1,117
Total	93852		2,999
Average	10428		333

\*Elector numbers as at 30 March 2023

Map prepared by:

Victorian Electoral Commission

Data use:

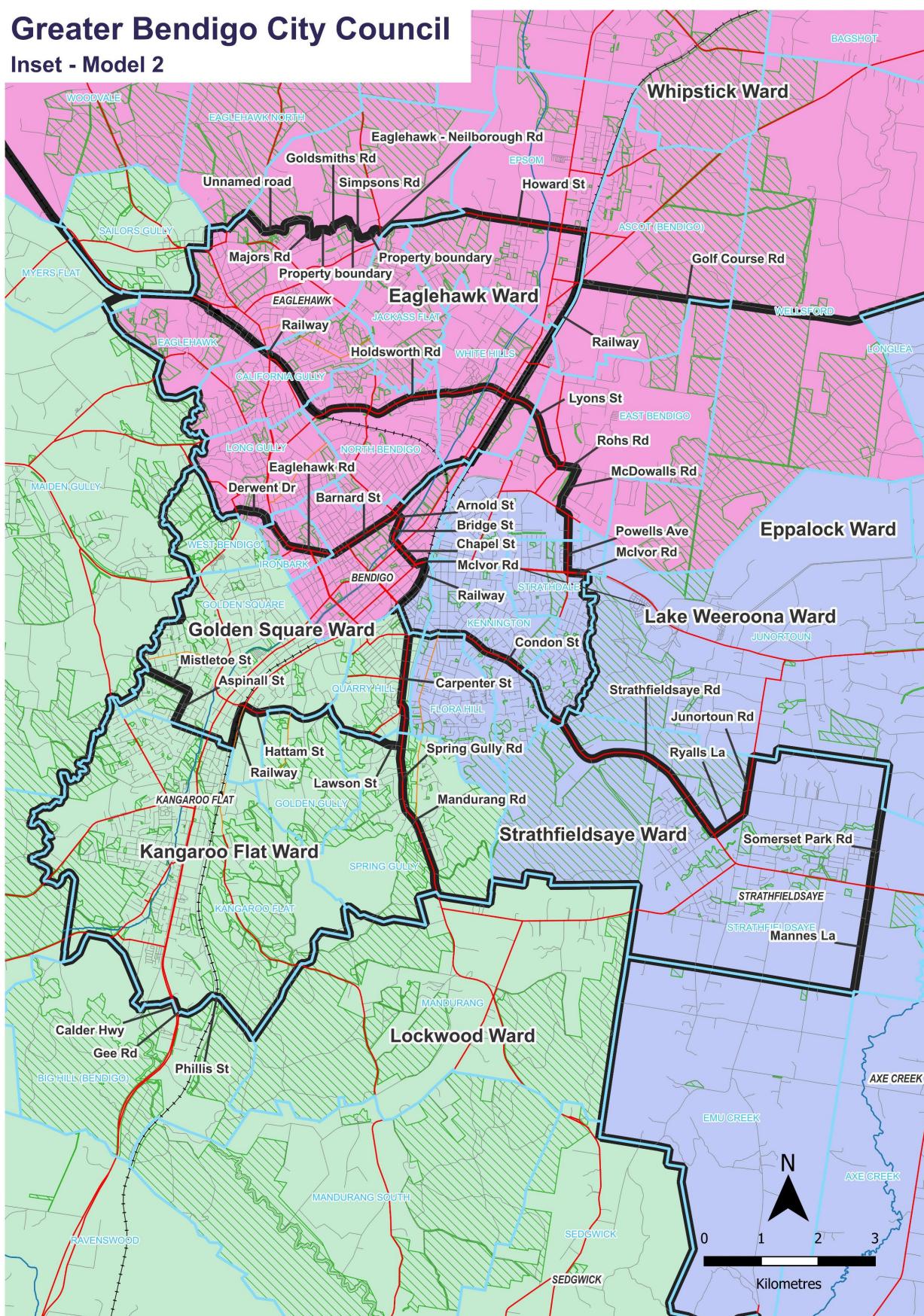


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## Greater Bendigo City Council

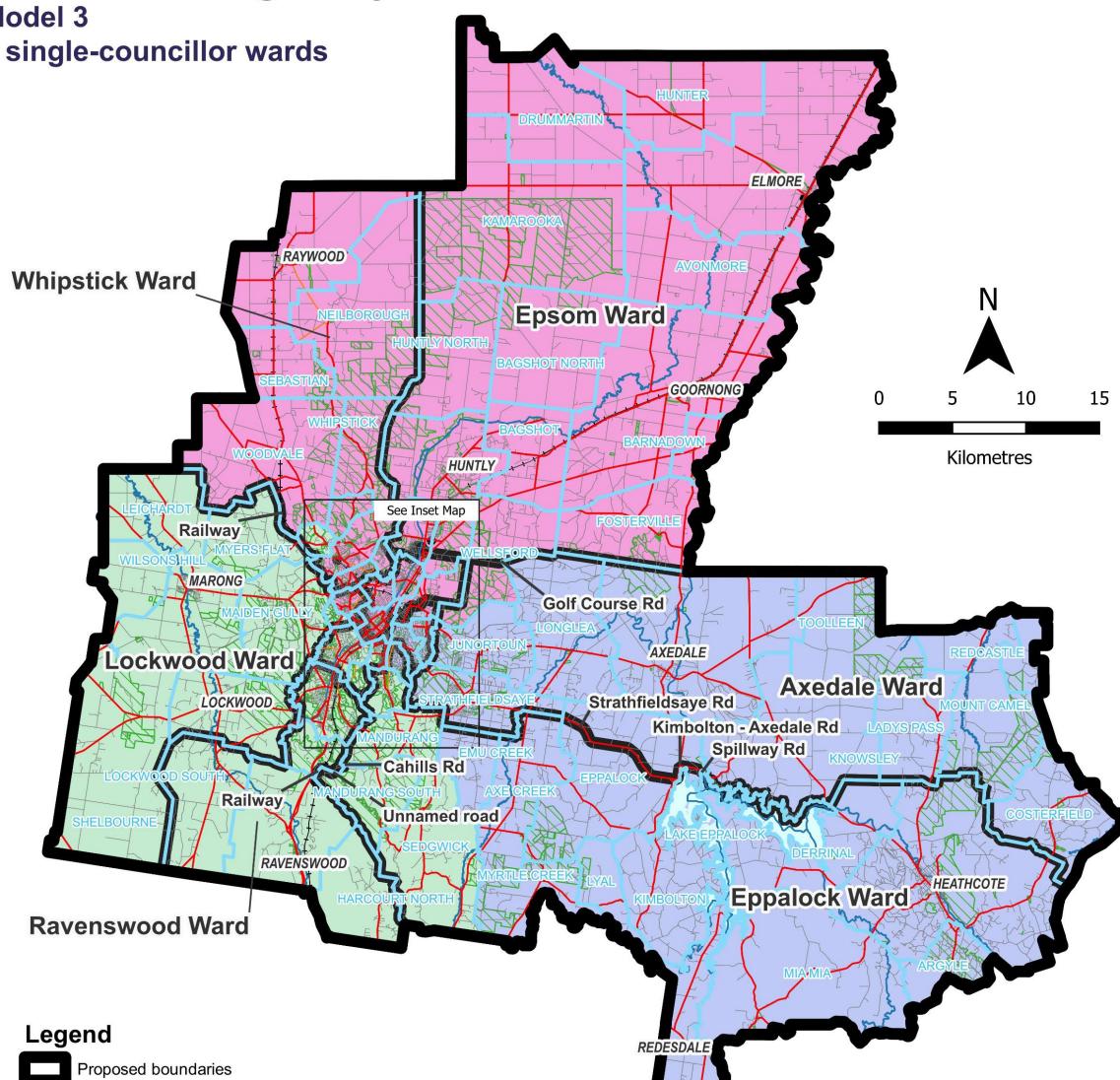
Inset - Model 2



## Greater Bendigo City Council

Model 3

9 single-councillor wards



### Legend

■ Proposed boundaries

#### Existing wards

- Eppalock
- Lockwood
- Whipstick

#### Map symbols

- Freeways
- Main roads
- Collector roads
- Minor roads
- Railways
- Railway stations
- Rivers & creeks
- Lakes
- Parks & reserves
- Locality boundaries

Ward	Electors*	Deviation	Area sq km
Axedale Ward	9,978	-4.32%	573
Eppalock Ward	11,338	+8.73%	712
Epsom Ward	9,602	-7.92%	877
Golden Square Ward	10,380	-0.46%	15
Kennington Ward	10,684	+2.45%	11
Lake Weeroona Ward	10,311	-1.12%	25
Lockwood Ward	10,356	-0.69%	323
Ravenswood Ward	10,287	-1.35%	163
Whipstick Ward	10,916	+4.68%	299
Total	93,852		2,999
Average	10,428		333

\*Elector numbers as at 30 March 2023

Map prepared by:

 Victorian Electoral Commission

Data use:

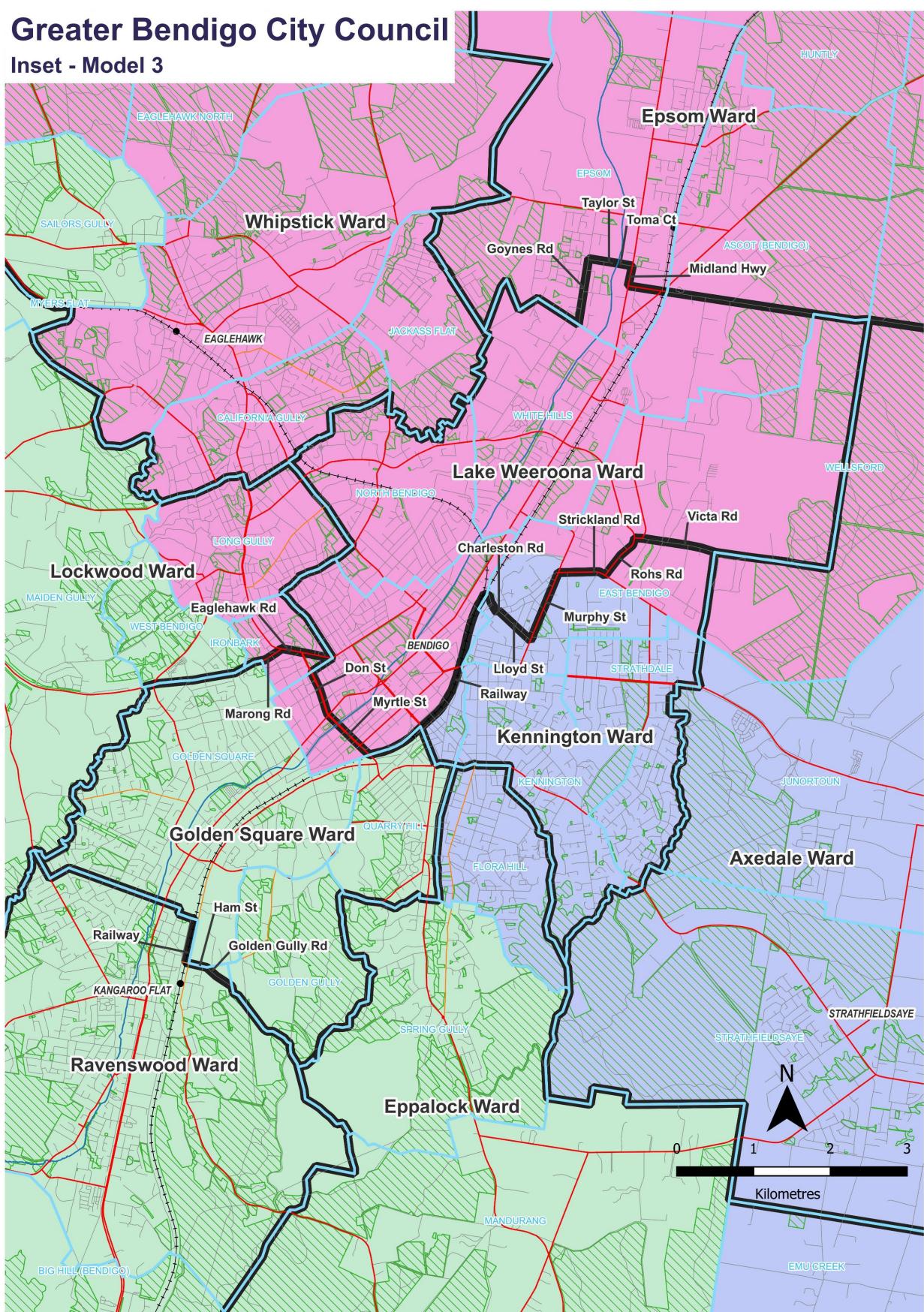


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## Greater Bendigo City Council

Inset - Model 3



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