



Final Report

2015 Port Phillip City Council Electoral Representation Review

Wednesday 3 June 2015

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Contents

1 Executive summary	4
2 Background	6
2.1 Legislative basis	6
2.2 The VEC's approach	6
2.3 The VEC's principles	8
2.4 The electoral representation review process	8
3 Port Phillip City Council representation review	10
3.1 Profile of Port Phillip City Council	10
3.2 Current electoral structure	12
3.3 Public information program	12
4 Preliminary report	14
4.1 Preliminary submissions	14
4.2 The VEC's preliminary findings	15
4.3 Options	17
4.4 Response submissions	18
4.5 Public hearing	22
5 Findings and recommendation	24
5.1 The VEC's findings	24
5.2 The VEC's recommendation	27
Appendix 1: Public involvement	28
Appendix 2: Preliminary submission proposals	30
Appendix 3: Map of recommended option	34

1 Executive summary

The *Local Government Act 1989* (the Act) requires the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) to conduct an electoral representation review of each municipality in Victoria before every third council general election.

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. The matters considered by a review are:

- the number of councillors
- the electoral structure of the council (whether the council should be unsubdivided or divided into wards and, if subdivided, the details of the wards).

The VEC conducts all reviews on the basis of three main principles:

1. ensuring the number of voters represented by each councillor is within 10 per cent of the average number of voters per councillor for that municipality
2. taking a consistent, State-wide approach to the total number of councillors and
3. ensuring communities of interest are as fairly represented as possible.

Current electoral structure

The last electoral representation review for Port Phillip City Council took place in 2007. The review recommended that Port Phillip City Council continue to consist of seven councillors elected from seven single-councillor wards, with changes to some ward boundaries and names from the previous electoral structure.

Preliminary submissions

Preliminary submissions opened at the commencement of the current review on Wednesday 11 February. The VEC received nine preliminary submissions by the deadline for submissions at 5.00 pm on Wednesday 11 March.

Preliminary report

A preliminary report was released on Wednesday 8 April with the following options for consideration:

- Option A (preferred option)
Port Phillip City Council consist of nine councillors elected from three three-councillor wards.
- Option B (alternative option)
Port Phillip City Council consist of nine councillors elected from three three-councillor wards, with different boundaries from those in Option A.
- Option C (alternative option)
Port Phillip City Council consist of seven councillors elected from seven single-councillor wards.

Response submissions

The VEC received 70 submissions responding to the preliminary report by the deadline for submissions at 5.00 pm on Wednesday 6 May.

Public hearing

The VEC conducted a public hearing for those wishing to speak about their response submission at 7.00 pm on Monday 11 May. Nineteen people spoke at the hearing.

Recommendation

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) recommends Port Phillip City Council change to consist of nine councillors elected from three three-councillor wards, adopting the ward boundaries of Option B of the preliminary report.

This electoral structure was designated as Option B in the preliminary report. Please see Appendix 3 for a detailed map of this recommended structure.

2 Background

2.1 Legislative basis

The Act requires the VEC to conduct an electoral representation review of each municipality in Victoria before every third general council election, or earlier if gazetted by the Minister for Local Government.

The Act specifies that the purpose of a representation review is to recommend the number of councillors and the electoral structure that provides 'fair and equitable representation for the persons who are entitled to vote at a general election of the Council.'¹

The Act requires the VEC to consider:

- the number of councillors in a municipality and
- whether a municipality should be unsubdivided or subdivided.

If a municipality should be subdivided, the VEC must ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is within 10 per cent of the average number of voters per councillor for that municipality.² On this basis, the review must consider the:

- number of wards
- ward boundaries (and ward names)
- number of councillors that should be elected for each ward.

2.2 The VEC's approach

Deciding on the number of councillors

The Act allows for a municipality to have between 5 and 12 councillors, but does not specify how to decide the appropriate number.³ In considering the number of councillors for a municipality, the VEC is guided by the Victorian Parliament's intention for fairness and equity in the local representation of voters under the Act.

The VEC considers that there are three major factors that should be taken into account:

- diversity of the population
- councillors' workloads and
- profiles of similar municipalities.

¹ Section 219D of the *Local Government Act 1989*.

² *Ibid.*

³ Section 5B(1) of the *Local Government Act 1989*.

Generally, those municipalities that have a larger number of voters will have a higher number of councillors. Often large populations are more likely to be diverse, both in the nature and number of their communities of interest and the issues of representation.

However, the VEC considers the particular situation of each municipality in regards to: the nature and complexity of services provided by the Council; geographic size and topography; population growth or decline; and the social diversity of the municipality, including social disadvantage and cultural and age mix.

Deciding the electoral structure

The Act allows for a municipality ward structure to be:

- unsubdivided—with all councillors elected ‘at-large’ by all voters or
- subdivided into a number of wards.

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

1. single-councillor wards
2. multi-councillor wards or
3. a combination of single-councillor and multi-councillor wards.

A subdivided municipality must have internal ward boundaries that provide for a fair and equitable division of the municipality, and ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor remains within 10 per cent of the average number of voters per councillor for the municipality.

In considering which electoral structure is most appropriate, the VEC considers the following matters:

- communities of interest, encompassing people who share a range of common concerns, such as geographic, economic or cultural associations
- the longevity of the structure, with the aim of keeping voter numbers per councillor within the 10 per cent tolerance as long as possible
- geographic factors, such as size and topography
- the number of voters in potential wards, as wards with many voters can have a large number of candidates, which can lead to an increase in the number of informal (invalid) votes and
- clear ward boundaries.

2.3 The VEC's principles

Three main principles underlie all the VEC's work on representation reviews:

- 1. Ensuring the number of voters represented by each councillor is within 10 per cent of the average number of voters per councillor for that municipality.**

Over time, population changes can lead to some wards in subdivided municipalities having larger or smaller numbers of voters. As part of the review, the VEC corrects any imbalances and also takes into account likely population changes to ensure ward boundaries provide equitable representation for as long as possible.

- 2. Taking a consistent, State-wide approach to the total number of councillors.**

The VEC is guided by its comparisons of municipalities of a similar size and category to the council under review. The VEC also considers any special circumstances that may warrant the municipality having more or fewer councillors than similar municipalities.

- 3. Ensuring communities of interest are as fairly represented as possible.**

Each municipality contains a number of communities of interest. Where practicable, the electoral structure should be designed to ensure they are fairly represented, and that geographic communities of interest are not split by ward boundaries. This allows elected councillors to be more effective representatives of the people and interests in their particular municipality or ward.

2.4 The electoral representation review process

Developing recommendations

The VEC bases its recommendations for particular electoral structures on the following information:

- internal research specifically relating to the municipality under review, including Australian Bureau of Statistics and .id (Informed Decisions) Pty Ltd data⁴; voter statistics from the Victorian electoral roll; and other State and local government data sets
- small area forecasts provided by .id (Informed Decisions) Pty Ltd
- the VEC's experience conducting previous electoral representation reviews of local councils and similar reviews for State elections
- the VEC's expertise in mapping, demography and local government
- careful consideration of all input from the public in written and verbal submissions received during the review and

⁴ .id is a company specialising in population and demographic analysis that builds suburb-level demographic information products in most jurisdictions in Australia and New Zealand.

- advice from consultants with extensive experience in local government.

Public involvement

Public input is accepted by the VEC:

- in preliminary submissions at the start of the review
- in response submissions to the preliminary report and
- in a public hearing that provides an opportunity for people who have made a response submission to expand on this submission.

Public submissions are an important part of the process, but are not the only consideration during a review. The VEC ensures its recommendations are in compliance with the Act and are formed through careful consideration of public submissions, independent research, and analysis of all relevant factors, such as the need to give representation to communities of interest.

3 Port Phillip City Council representation review

3.1 Profile of Port Phillip City Council

The City of Port Phillip was established in 1994 with the amalgamation of the former Cities of St Kilda, South Melbourne and Port Melbourne.

The City of Port Phillip is located between two and eight kilometres south-east of Melbourne’s CBD and covers an area of 21 square kilometres, of which approximately 80 per cent is built-up area (mainly residential and commercial) and 10 per cent parks and open space, including Albert Park Lake and golf course. The City is bounded by approximately 11 kilometres of foreshore to the south-west, by the City of Melbourne to the north, the Cities of Stonnington and Glen Eira to the east and the City of Bayside to the south-east.

As at 2013, the City of Port Phillip had a population of 102,501, with a population density of 4,881 people per square kilometre.⁵ The City contains several major urban communities and suburbs with the following population breakdown, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Current population distribution in major suburbs

St Kilda	19.4%	Albert Park	6.8%
Elwood	16.3%	Balaclava	5.6%
Port Melbourne/Garden City	15.9%	Middle Park	4.3%
South Melbourne	10.1%	St Kilda West	3.1%
St Kilda East	9.5%	Ripponlea	1.6%
St Kilda Road	7.4%		

The City of Port Phillip’s population increased by 25 per cent between 2001 and 2014 and is projected to increase at an annual rate of 1.7 per cent over the period 2011–2031, to reach 135,137 by 2031.⁶ The City has 85,439 voters, with 12,206 voters per councillor, which is greater than the average of 11,020 voters per councillor across Greater Melbourne as a whole.⁷ Most wards currently fall within 10 per cent of the average number of voters per councillor, except for Junction Ward, which has a deviation of 11.11 per cent above the average.⁸

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Estimated Resident Population*, 2013.

⁶ Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure, *Victoria in Future 2014: Population and Household Projections to 2051*, 2014.

⁷ ‘Greater Melbourne’ is an ABS statistical geographic area including 31 metropolitan and metropolitan fringe local government areas.

⁸ Data derived by the Victorian Electoral Commission from State and Council voter rolls (as at January 2015).

The City has a relatively young population, with a median age of 35, lower than the Victorian median of 37. The population is relatively mobile, with 50 per cent having changed address between 2006 and 2011, compared with 39 per cent for Greater Melbourne on average. It is a culturally diverse municipality, with 31 per cent of inhabitants born overseas. The St Kilda Road corridor and the suburbs of Balaclava, Ripponlea, South Melbourne, St Kilda East and St Kilda have higher proportions of people born in countries where English is not the first language compared with the municipality average. In the past decade, the City has experienced an overall decrease in the amount of cultural diversity as the municipality gentrifies. The City of Port Phillip has a higher proportion of residents with parents born overseas compared to the state and national averages. In particular, the municipality is home to a Hasidic Jewish community in St Kilda East and Balaclava, and significant Greek, Italian and Indian communities.

The original inhabitants of the area are the Boon Wurrung people and there is a small population (0.3 per cent) of people identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander from various backgrounds living in the City.⁹

Professional, scientific and technical services constitute 17 per cent of the workforce. Other significant industries of employment in this economically diverse municipality include education and training, health care and social services, construction and manufacturing, financial services and retail, and accommodation and food services.¹⁰ Compared to Greater Melbourne generally, the City of Port Phillip, as a whole, is relatively wealthy, with a significantly higher proportion of high income earners and a lower proportion of low income earners.¹¹

The City of Port Phillip holds several large events throughout the year, including the Pride March, St Kilda Festival, the St Kilda Film Festival and the Australian Formula One Grand Prix. The City's beaches (particularly in St Kilda), parks and sporting facilities (especially in Albert Park) and shopping, food and entertainment precincts attract a large number of domestic and international visitors.¹²

Communities of interest

One of the main principles underlying the VEC's work on representation reviews is to ensure that communities of interest are represented as fairly as possible.

Communities of interest can be geographic, or there can be non-geographic communities across a city or a State. Geographic communities of interest vary in range from a large region to a single street. For a representation review of a metropolitan municipality, the most relevant geographic communities of interest are generally suburbs or groups of suburbs.

⁹ Port Phillip City Council, *Annual Report 2013/2014*.

¹⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Regional Profile: City of Port Phillip*, 2012.

¹¹ .id (informed decisions) Pty Ltd, 2014.

¹² City of Port Phillip, *Tourism Strategy Plan: 2007-2010*.

In the City of Port Phillip, individual suburbs have a strong sense of identity and vary markedly in demographic and other characteristics. The distinct suburbs of Port Melbourne, South Melbourne, Albert Park, Middle Park, St Kilda East, St Kilda West, Elwood, Balaclava and Ripponlea each have historical, architectural and socio-demographic characteristics which give them a unique character and create a strong sense of connection for local residents.

3.2 Current electoral structure

The last electoral representation review of the Port Phillip City Council took place in 2007. Following the review, the VEC recommended that the council's electoral structure remain the same, with seven councillors to be elected from seven single-councillor wards.

Minor adjustments to ward boundaries were recommended to incorporate parts of Albert Park into each of the adjoining wards, in order to accommodate growth in voter numbers. The following ward names were adopted (including three new names): Sandridge, Emerald Hill, Albert Park, Junction, Catani, Carlisle and Point Ormond.

Prior to the council's general election in 2012, the Minister for Local Government required the VEC to conduct a subdivision review in time for the elections to correct imbalances among ward enrolments.¹³ By the time of the review, the offending ward's enrolment had fallen back within the tolerance provided by the Act. Subsequently, the VEC, in consultation with the Minister, did not proceed with the subdivision review. From the VEC's consideration of enrolment figures and projections, it appears that—had this electoral representation review not been required—a subdivision review would have, again, been necessary prior to the 2016 elections.

3.3 Public information program

Public involvement is an important part of the representation review process. The Port Phillip City Council representation review commenced on Wednesday 11 February and the VEC conducted a public information program to inform the community.

Advertising

In accordance with the Act, public notices of the review and the release of the preliminary report were placed in the newspapers listed in Table 2.

¹³ A subdivision review may be required by the Minister for Local Government where adjustments to ward boundaries are required to ensure wards in a subdivided council remain within +/- 10 per cent of the average number of voters per councillor across the municipality for the next council election. A subdivision review may occur where an electoral representation review is not scheduled nor is otherwise required by the Minister.

Table 2: Public notices

Newspaper	Notice of review	Notice of preliminary report
<i>Herald Sun</i>	Wednesday 4 February	Wednesday 1 April
<i>Caulfield Glen Eira Port Phillip Leader</i>	Tuesday 10 February	Wednesday 8 April
<i>Weekly Review Bayside and Port Phillip</i>	Wednesday 11 February	Tuesday 14 April

Media releases

A media release was prepared and distributed to local media at the commencement of the review on Wednesday 11 February. A further release was distributed at the publication of the preliminary report on Wednesday 8 April.

Public information sessions

Public information sessions for people interested in the review process were held at:

- 7.00 pm on Monday 16 February in the Council Chamber, St Kilda Town Hall, 99a Carlisle Street, St Kilda
- 7.00 pm on Wednesday 18 February in the Auditorium, Port Melbourne Town Hall, 333 Bay Street, Port Melbourne.

Helpline and email address

A telephone helpline and dedicated email address were established to assist members of the public with enquiries about the review process.

VEC website

The VEC website delivered up-to-date information to provide transparency and facilitate public participation during the review process. An online submission tool was made available and all public submissions were posted on the website.

Guide for Submissions

A *Guide for Submissions* was developed and distributed to those interested in making submissions. Copies of the *Guide* were available on the VEC website, in hardcopy on request and also provided to Council.

Council website and newsletter

Information about the review was provided to Council for publication in council media, e.g. website and newsletter.

4 Preliminary report

4.1 Preliminary submissions

The VEC received nine preliminary submissions by the deadline for submissions at 5.00 pm on Wednesday 11 March. Submissions were received from individual residents; Port Phillip City Council; two community groups (unChain Inc and the Community Alliance of Port Phillip); and the Proportional Representation Society of Australia. A list of people who made a preliminary submission can be found in Appendix 1.

Number of councillors

Submissions proposed a wide variety of models for Port Phillip City Council, ranging from seven to 12 councillors and from single-councillor wards to an unsubdivided structure. There was some appetite for change, but also a defence of the current number of councillors.

Most submissions supported increasing the number of councillors, arguing that, in a context of rapid growth and complex issues, citizens' access to councillors would be improved and councillors' workloads would be more manageable.

The Council (at this stage of the review) and unChain Inc supported retaining the current number of seven councillors.

Electoral structure

The issue of electoral structure was more contentious than the number of councillors, with views put forward in submissions supporting potentially significant change to the Council's structure.

Seven single-councillor wards

Preliminary submissions from Port Phillip City Council and unChain Inc supported the current structure of single-councillor wards on the grounds that the single-councillor wards represented the distinct communities of interest in the municipality and that the compact size of the municipality meant that seven councillors were enough to ensure adequate representation.

Nine single-councillor wards

The Community Alliance of Port Phillip proposed nine single-councillor wards and included a map showing suggested boundaries.

The VEC modelled two possible approaches to nine single-councillor wards, one centred on St Kilda and the other on Port Melbourne, shown at Diagrams 1 and 2 in Appendix 2. These models both included wards with enrolments projected to deviate well outside the 10 per cent tolerance for the number of councillors per voter in the short term. As compliance with the 10 per cent tolerance is required under the Act, these options were unviable and could not be considered.

Three three-councillor wards

Five submissions advocated a change to multi-councillor wards, contending that proportional representation would promote diversity of representation. The Community Alliance of Port Phillip proposed both a nine councillor model and a model of four three-councillor wards. In the Alliance's view, multi-councillor wards would represent strong communities of interest and provide for a diversity of viewpoints from the same ward.

4.2 The VEC's preliminary findings

Number of councillors

The VEC considers that similar types of municipality of a similar size should have the same number of councillors, unless special circumstances justify a variation. Table 3 shows where Port Phillip City Council fits among the medium and smaller metropolitan municipalities. The municipalities are ranked by number of voters.

Table 3: Selected metropolitan municipalities

Municipality	Estimated voters[#]	Number of councillors	Voters per councillor	Area (sq km)
Melbourne	114,656	9	12,740	37
Whitehorse	113,729	10	11,373	64
Glen Eira	100,887	9	11,210	39
Greater Dandenong	98,219	11	8,929	130
Banyule	94,043	7	13,435	63
Moonee Valley*	87,392	9	9,710	43
Port Phillip*	85,439	7	12,206	21
Stonnington	84,207	9	9,356	26
Bayside	73,333	7	10,476	37
Yarra	71,291	9	7,921	19
Hobsons Bay	65,547	7	9,364	64

* The municipality is undergoing an electoral representation review by the VEC during 2015-16.

Voter estimate calculated after the January 2015 merge of the State electoral roll and Council-only electors as at the 2012 council elections.

The City of Port Phillip is the second largest of the seven councillor municipalities. An increase to nine councillors would reduce Port Phillip's voter-to-councillor ratio to 9,493, which would be comparable to other metropolitan municipalities that have nine councillors. On the basis of voter

numbers alone, the VEC considered that there was a case for increasing the number of councillors to nine.

The VEC also noted that the population of the City of Port Phillip is growing quite rapidly, at virtually the same rate as the Greater Melbourne area as a whole. This growth imposes significant development pressures on the Council with major planning issues, such as the St Kilda Triangle and Fishermans Bend development, occupying the Council's attention. There is a strong argument for increasing the number of councillors, given the increased workloads for councillors as a result of the complex issues of development and the desirability of maintaining councillor access to a growing number of constituents.

For these reasons the VEC put forward two options with nine councillors in the preliminary report (Options A and B). To reflect the support identified for the status quo, the VEC also included a seven-councillor option (Option C).

Electoral structure

The main argument for the current structure of seven single-councillor wards is that it reflects communities of interest. However, communities of interest can also be non-geographic (such as community groups, and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex (LGBTQI) community). These non-geographic communities may be better represented under proportional representation.

Multi-councillor wards are also less vulnerable to population shifts than single-councillor wards, because growth areas and other areas can be combined in the same ward. As well as being able to more evenly distribute disparate growth rates across larger electorates, a greater number of voters per councillor means it takes a more significant population change in a ward to affect the ward deviations. The model is therefore more stable over a longer period for municipalities where the population is growing rapidly and unevenly, such as the City of Port Phillip.

Multi-councillor wards are often supported on the basis that they provide greater representation of the diversity of voices in the municipality, through the system of proportional representation. Under the proportional representation method of vote counting in place for multi-councillor elections, election results are more reflective of voter support.

Based on these reasons and the views put forward in preliminary submissions, the VEC presented two options of three three-councillor wards (Options A and B), as well as an option to reflect the status quo of single-councillor wards (Option C).

Under Options A and B, suburbs have been grouped as follows:

- 'Gateway Ward' including South Melbourne and Port Melbourne

- 'Lake Ward' including St Kilda and the suburbs to its north and north-west and
- 'Canal Ward' combining the suburbs east and south-east of St Kilda.

Options A and B are considered to broadly reflect suburban identities and communities of interest in the City of Port Phillip. Option A uses the boundary of Kerferd Road and Albert Road to separate the proposed north-western Gateway and Lake Wards. Option B uses the existing ward boundaries between the proposed Gateway and Lake Wards, and retains the higher-density areas of Queens Road and St Kilda Road between Kings Way and Lorne Street within the Gateway Ward.

Option C reflects the current model of the Port Phillip City Council, with slightly modified ward boundaries to correct the apparent imbalances between wards caused by the uneven population change. This option also broadly reflects suburban identities and communities of interest using a single-councillor ward structure.

4.3 Options

A preliminary report was released on Wednesday 8 April. The VEC considered public submissions and research findings when formulating the options presented in the preliminary report. After careful consideration, the VEC put forward the following options:

- Option A (preferred option)
Port Phillip City Council consist of nine councillors elected from three three-councillor wards.
- Option B (alternative option)
Port Phillip City Council consist of nine councillors elected from three three-councillor wards, with different boundaries from those in Option A.
- Option C (alternative option)
Port Phillip City Council consist of seven councillors elected from seven single-councillor wards.

Public response

4.4 Response submissions

The VEC accepted submissions responding to the preliminary report from Wednesday 8 April until 5.00 pm on Wednesday 6 May. The VEC received 70 response submissions. Submissions were made by Port Phillip City Council; current and former councillors and candidates; the Proportional Representation Society of Australia (PRSA); individual community members; and community groups including UnChain Inc, the Community Alliance of Port Phillip, the Port Melbourne Historical Society and the Beacon Cove Neighbourhood Association. Over 40 per cent of submissions were made through an online form prepared by a local group identifying as the Port Phillip Democracy Working Group.

A list of people who made a response submission can be found in Appendix 1. Table 4 indicates the level of support for each option.

Table 4: Preferences expressed in response submissions

Option A	Option B	Option C	Non-VEC options [#]
46 ^{*^†}	40 ^{^*}	10	4

* Of these submissions, 37 submitters indicated that they supported either Option A or Option B.

[^] Of the 37 submissions supporting either Option A or B, seven submissions indicated a slight preference for Option B.

[†] Of the submissions supporting Option A, one submission supported the proposed ward boundaries but preferred 12 councillors.

[#] The VEC's preliminary report proposed three options. Some response submissions proposed additional models, referred to here as non-VEC options.

Number of councillors

The majority of submissions supported increasing the number of councillors. While there was some variation about the appropriate number of councillors, most submissions supported increasing the number of councillors to nine. Approximately 14 per cent of submissions supported retaining the current model of seven councillors.

Although not being considered by any of the options put forward by the VEC in the preliminary report, a small number of submitters proposed increasing the number of councillors to 12.

Options A and B – nine councillors

The most common reason put forward for increasing the number of councillors was to help councillors deal with the workload in what is seen as an increasingly complex council area. The

complexities identified in submissions included significant development issues (such as the Fishermans Bend and Montague urban development areas, the St Kilda Triangle, South Melbourne and the foreshore).

Representation of the diverse communities of interest was also noted by submitters as a complex challenge for councillors. Submitters noted that these communities included ethnic communities and distinct areas of architectural heritage, as well as local groups which were not defined geographically.

Many submissions noted the projected population growth expected in the municipality, and that the voter-to-councillor ratio, compared with other metropolitan municipalities, would soon demand an increase in the number of councillors.

Increasing the number of councillors was also justified, according to a number of submitters, on the basis that it would bring Port Phillip City Council into line with other inner-urban Melbourne councils of a similar size, such as the Cities of Yarra, Stonnington and Glen Eira. On the other hand, one submission cited other metropolitan councils that had fewer voters per councillor than Port Phillip, for example Knox and Moreland City Councils.

Port Phillip City Council proposed an option outside of those presented by the VEC, with nine councillors to be elected from single-councillor wards. Council's submission then indicated support in order of preference for the VEC's Option C (seven single-councillor wards) followed by the VEC's Option A (nine councillors in three three-councillor wards). Council's preliminary submission had favoured an option of seven councillors in single-councillor wards encompassing the distinct areas of Port Melbourne, South Melbourne, Albert Park / Middle Park, St Kilda, Elwood, St Kilda East / Ripponlea and St Kilda Road / Windsor.

A number of current and former councillors identified nine as the preferred number of councillors, on the basis of increased workload, representation of diverse communities of interest, and maintaining voter-to-councillor ratio in the face of a growing population.

A former councillor noted that representatives need adequate time to properly assess and adjudicate the complex issues of the Council, including development issues, foreshore maintenance, management committees for the South Melbourne Market and Port Phillip Housing Association (among others), and major events such as the St Kilda Festival and the Grand Prix. The former councillor also noted that having more councillors increases the breadth of expertise available on Council, and expands the corporate memory of the organisation. Another resident, who had previously been a councillor on another council, stated that the growth in both commercial and non-commercial residents was a significant issue in the municipality, justifying an increase in the number of councillors.

The Community Alliance of Port Phillip stated support for 12 councillors as its first preference, but noted that nine could be sufficient.

Option C – seven councillors

Some submitters wanted to retain the current number of seven councillors, and gave a strong impression of positive working relationships with the current council, which they saw as operating well. Some submitters were concerned that there would be higher costs if councillor numbers were increased, both in terms of the costs to Council for additional councillor salaries and allowances, and the costs to candidates for campaigning across larger geographic areas of multi-councillor wards. Others stated that the small geographic area of the municipality did not justify increasing councillor numbers.

Electoral structure

The majority of submissions endorsed the VEC's Options A or B, supporting a change from single-councillor wards to a multi-councillor structure for Port Phillip City Council. Of the total submissions supporting either Option A or Option B, almost 20 per cent expressed a slight preference for Option B. Option B was seen to outline a better boundary by keeping the suburbs of Albert Park and Middle Park together, and including the high-density residential and commercial area along Queens Road and St Kilda Road, between Kings Way and Lorne Street, in the city-facing Gateway Ward.

Options A and B – multi-councillor wards

Over half of the response submissions for Port Phillip City Council indicated a preference for the electoral structure presented in either Option A or Option B (both multi-councillor wards). A significant number of the submissions supporting either Option A or B were made through an online form prepared by a local group identified as the Port Phillip Democracy Working Group. Of the total submissions supporting either Option A or Option B, almost 20 per cent expressed a slight preference for Option B.

The submissions made through the Port Phillip Democracy Working Group supported Options A or B on the grounds that moving to multi-councillor wards would introduce the proportional representation counting method to Port Phillip City Council elections. According to these submissions, the current preferential counting method used in single-councillor wards does not represent the diversity of the municipality and the strong communities of interest within it. Some of the submissions stated that multi-councillor wards would provide fairer and more equitable representation, more democratic and stable governance, and were able to absorb population shifts more easily.

As well as the Port Phillip Democracy Working Group submissions, there were many submissions from individual residents supporting multi-councillor wards. These submissions also supported the

proportional representation vote counting method, and noted that the multi-councillor ward model was better able to absorb population growth.

Option A or B

Where submissions distinguished between Options A and B, the main reasons were that supporters of Option A preferred the clearer boundary of Kerferd Road. Supporters of Option B preferred following the current ward boundaries, which did not split the suburbs of Albert Park and Middle Park, and kept the high-density residential and commercial area of St Kilda Road and Queens Road, between Kings Way and Lorne Street, intact.

Option C

Those submissions in favour of Option C (minimal change from the current structure) stated that the single-councillor model reflected the City of Port Phillip's distinct communities of interest. There was a concern among these submitters, particularly by the Beacon Cove Neighbourhood Association and Port Melbourne Historical Society, that communities of interest and suburban identity might be lost in the larger wards of Options A and B.

Many of the submissions supporting seven councillors also supported the model of single-councillor wards on the basis that they had developed positive and constructive relationships with existing councillors or that the current system was easy to understand for voters and, therefore, did not require change. One of these submissions suggested that an increase in the number of councillors would not necessarily mean an increase in the quality of representation. Some submissions referred to the accountability of councillors and were concerned that increasing the number might dilute the effectiveness of local representation.

Supporters of the single-councillor model also stated that it is easier for voters to know which ward they are in, and easier for councillors to represent the residents, community groups and issues within clearly defined single wards.

Non-VEC options

A number of submitters put forward options outside of those presented by the VEC's preliminary report. Some of these demonstrated submitters' preference to combine an increase in councillor numbers to nine and retain single-councillor wards. Port Phillip City Council revised its initial proposal of seven councillors and submitted an option comprising nine single-councillor wards. The Council's reasoning was that single wards best reflect the communities of interest and local suburban identities, as well as the 'vibrant village' shopping precincts identified by Council as part of its strategic planning for the municipality. The Council's preferred option is shown at Diagram 3 in Appendix 2. Compared to the nine-councillor ward models that the VEC included as diagrams in the preliminary report, the

Council's model has a higher concentration of wards at the south-eastern end of the municipality, and a larger ward at the north-western end.

The Community Alliance of Port Phillip also mapped out a nine single-councillor ward model, which spreads the wards more evenly throughout the municipality, shown at Diagram 4 in Appendix 2.

4.5 Public hearing

The VEC conducted a public hearing for those wishing to speak about their response submission at 7.00 pm on Monday 11 May in the Council Chamber, St Kilda Town Hall, 99a Carlisle Street, St Kilda. A list of people who spoke at the hearing can be found in Appendix 1.

The public hearing was well attended with 19 speakers, including a number of community members, current and former councillors, representatives from several community organisations and other observers.

Communities of interest

As well as re-stating the details of their response submissions, presenters at the public hearing provided further information justifying their preferred options. Many presenters started their remarks with how long they had lived in their respective suburbs within the municipality, and the panel was given a strong impression of the highly active and engaged community of the City of Port Phillip, very interested in local issues and the structure of representation for its Council.

Number of councillors

The complex nature of development issues in Port Phillip was clearly demonstrated by presenters at the public hearing. The panel was given numerous examples of development sites and the consequences proposed developments could have for the character, population and general identity of the municipality and the specific development areas particularly around Port Melbourne and the St Kilda Triangle. The majority of presenters favoured increasing the number of councillors on the basis of this development activity of the inner-urban municipality, which distinguishes it from other council areas and creates a bigger workload for councillors.

Proportional representation

The arguments for multi-councillor wards on the basis of the more representative results achieved by the proportional method of vote counting came through very clearly in the public hearing presentations. Many presenters had had direct experience as councillors and participating in electoral campaigns as candidates or campaign members, and brought this practical experience to their views on the electoral structure.

Differentiating Options A and B

The written submissions showed strong support for either Option A or B, and the public hearing allowed the panel to seek clarification from presenters on what they saw as the differences and whether, if asked to choose, they could identify a preference. While some presenters maintained support for Option A, most submitters decided on Option B as they preferred the ward boundary not to cut through Albert Park and Middle Park, and saw that the commercial and residential areas off Kings Way and Queens Road as having more in common with the city-facing Gateway Ward.

During the public hearing, the panel noted that if the number of councillors was retained at the current status quo of seven, there might need to be more frequent boundary reviews. Community representatives in support of Option C at the hearing were not opposed to more frequent reviews, and stated that the cost and administration of more frequent reviews should not mean the number of councillors needed to be increased.

5 Findings and recommendation

5.1 The VEC's findings

The diversity of views and commitment to participating in the representation review process by individual residents, the Council itself, and representatives from community groups paints a picture of a highly engaged community in the City of Port Phillip, with a strong sense of local identity and local participation in community issues. One of the key considerations in the City of Port Phillip is the growing population of the inner-Melbourne area and the projected uneven growth within the municipality in planned high-density development zones. This potential growth is likely to affect the voter-to-councillor ratios within the current ward boundaries, resulting in a higher proportion of voters per councillor in some wards, an unfair outcome which would disadvantage the voters of the municipality. It will also place an undue burden on elected councillors, and place Port Phillip City Council out of alignment with other municipalities of a similar size.

The VEC must ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is within 10 per cent of the average number of voters per councillor for that municipality, in accordance with the Act.¹⁴ On this basis, the VEC's preferred option is to change the electoral structure in the City of Port Phillip to a multi-councillor structure with three wards of three councillors each, based on the ward boundaries of Option B of the preliminary report.

Number of councillors

The VEC is guided by its comparisons of municipalities of a similar size and category to the council under review. Table 3 provided earlier in this report clearly shows that Port Phillip City Council is not aligned with councils of a similar size. There was also strong support in public submissions and at the public hearing for increasing the number of councillors, justified by the increasing volume and complexity of their workloads. As one presenter stated, the City of Port Phillip has major tourist events and development issues, and is no longer a 'quaint township'.

The current number of seven councillors was defended by community organisations on the grounds that it is functioning well and based on the positive and constructive interactions they have had with local councillors. While this is evidence of effective representation to date, the VEC does not consider that increasing the number of councillors would disadvantage the municipality as a whole. Similarly, the diversity of the municipality, notable communities of interest, historic significance and the strength of suburban identity should not be compromised by the implementation of multi-councillor wards. As stated in written submissions and by speakers at the public hearing, increasing the number of councillors per ward should give local residents and community organisations strong representation,

¹⁴ Section 219D of the *Local Government Act 1989*

with more choice in candidates and councillors and, ultimately, more representatives to discuss issues with.

Despite some community members objecting to increasing the number of councillors because of additional cost, the municipality has effectively outgrown the current number of councillors and is projected to continue growing into the future. The VEC has noted complex demands on councillors in Port Phillip City Council and, given the VEC's principle of achieving state-wide consistency and complying with the voter-councillor tolerance provided in the Act, the VEC recommends increasing the number of councillors to nine.

Electoral structure

Submissions relating to the electoral structure have been more contentious than the councillor numbers during the VEC's review of Port Phillip City Council. A shift from single-councillor wards to a multi-councillor system is a significant change in structure.

The current system of representation in the Port Phillip City Council appears to be working well, with healthy contests in local council elections and a strong local community clearly engaged in issues affecting them. While these are positives, the VEC has also found that the current single-councillor ward structure is vulnerable to the significant population growth expected in the area.

Many of the arguments in favour of continuing the single-councillor wards in Port Phillip City Council can similarly apply to a multi-councillor model, as councillors must be accountable to voters under either structure. Although the effectiveness of the representation for distinct areas or communities of interest described in submissions still depends on the performance of individual councillors, a shift to multi-councillor wards will not diminish the strong community identities and history present in the City of Port Phillip that was described to the VEC during this review. The responsibility of elected councillors to their constituents should not change as a consequence of a change to the ward structure. Conversely, representation for larger and, perhaps, non-geographic communities of interest may be more effectively achieved through multi-councillor wards as councillors are increasingly likely to take account of 'like issues' affecting the whole municipality and its diverse population.

Most submissions and presenters at the public hearing supported introducing the proportional representation counting method to Port Phillip City Council elections. As outlined in the VEC's preliminary report, proportional representation can be more reflective of voter support and can provide greater representation of a diversity of voices. The diversity of the City of Port Phillip was emphasised in public hearings. There are many unique architectural, cultural and demographic features in the municipality. The VEC considers the system of proportional representation to be well-suited to the City of Port Phillip for this reason.

The most significant challenge for the VEC at this review was to respond to the City of Port Phillip's significant population growth; correct the disproportionality that is already present between the wards; and provide a solution that is as sustainable as possible for future elections.

The VEC modelled two possible approaches to nine single-councillor wards, as well as those presented in submissions by the Council and the Community Alliance of Port Phillip. These models are shown at Appendix 2. While the options generally capture local suburbs and communities of interest, the uneven population growth across the municipality suggests that the projected voter numbers within a nine single-councillor ward structure will deviate outside the 10 per cent tolerance in the future. It is possible to use different methodologies to project voter numbers, which can produce marginally different results. While the Council's submissions show differing voter numbers and projections, the VEC's modelling indicates that the pattern of projected voter numbers is likely to deviate outside the 10 per cent tolerance for the number of voters per councillor in the short term. The wards in the north of the municipality are expected to increase in voter numbers, while the wards in the south-eastern end are more likely to remain steady or, proportionally to overall growth, decline.

The VEC does not consider that these models would provide fair and equitable representation and did not put forward nine single-councillor wards as an option. In addition, single-councillor models would require more frequent boundary reviews, which would place an unnecessary administrative and financial burden on the municipality and unnecessary change for voters, as wards would change more regularly. Given the determination that nine councillors is an appropriate number for Port Phillip City Council, the multi-councillor ward structure is the most appropriate and sustainable option.

The decision is, then, whether Option A or B is the better multi-councillor model for the municipality. Supporters of Option A referred to the strong, clear boundary of Albert Road and Kerferd Road. It was argued that these were logical and natural boundaries, and that the boundaries proposed in Option B could be confusing for voters.

Supporters of Option B argued that the boundary was preferable because it kept the suburbs of Albert Park and Middle Park, which share similar architectural heritage and population demographics, in one ward. Similarly, many submitters stated that the high-density commercial and residential areas of Queens Road and St Kilda Road between Kings Way and Lorne Street would logically identify better in the city-facing Gateway Ward.

On balance, while there was strong support for either Options A or B in submissions and during the public hearing, the VEC has concluded that there was an overall slight preference for the boundaries of Option B. These boundaries reflect current ward boundaries, and in the face of significant change to multi-councillor wards, retaining some current boundaries may be beneficial for candidates, councillors and voters.

5.2 The VEC's recommendation

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) recommends Port Phillip City Council change to consist of nine councillors elected from three three-councillor wards, adopting the ward boundaries of Option B of the preliminary report.

Please see Appendix 3 for a detailed map of this recommended structure.

Appendix 1: Public involvement

Preliminary submissions

Preliminary submissions were received from:

Community Alliance of Port Phillip

John Millard

John Mills

Stephen Morey

Port Phillip City Council

Proportional Representation Society of Australia (Victoria-Tasmania) Inc (PRSA)

Ainsley Symons

unChain Inc

Lorna Wyatt

Response submissions

Response submissions were received from:

Larry Abel	Astrid Hofmann	Kerry Robson
Timothy Baxter	Helen Hoffman	John Rogan
David Baxter	Peter Holland	Sarah Richardson
Yoko Baxter	Adrian Jackson (four submissions)	Michael Sabada
Beacon Cove Neighbourhood Association	Earl James	Suzanne Shaw
Hannah Bertram	Meredith Jelbart	Judith Solomon
John Bertram	Colin and Robyn Jones	Colin Smith
Councillor Andrew Bond	Don Laird	Chris Stephen
Meni Christofakis	Paul Leitinger	Hannah Sycamore
Katherine Copsey	Geoffrey Love	UnChain Inc
Bruce and Nola Cormick	Jill Maddox	David Vernon

Port Phillip City Council	John Middleton	Darren Tyrrell
Nichola Donovan	John Mills	John Wall
Jennifer Edge	Ben Morgan	Mark Wallace
Lucas Eldridge	Ingrid de Neve	Frank Ward
Brenda Forbath Convenor, Community Alliance of Port Phillip	William O'Loughlin	Sean Weatherly
Robin de Garis	Glenn Pannam	Trevor White
Ann Gibson	Anthony Pitman	Ella Wilson
Geoffrey Goode, PRSA	Christine Powers	Bruce Wyatt
Damien Harlow	Port Melbourne Historical and Preservation Society	Danielle Wyatt
Alistair Hart	Toni Rees	Lorna Wyatt
Catherine Hill	Richard Roberts	
Jenny Hector	Allan Robson	

Public hearing

The following individuals spoke at the public hearing:

David Baxter	Peter Holland	Richard Roberts
Timothy Baxter	Earl James	Michael Sabada
Graham Bride, Chair, Port Melbourne Historical and Preservation Society	Meredith Jelbart	Trevor White
Meni Christofakis	Paul Leitinger	Lorna Wyatt
Jennifer Edge	Geoffrey Love	Catherine Sharples, President, UnChain Inc)
Lucas Eldridge	John Middleton	
Brenda Forbath, Convenor, Community Alliance of Port Phillip	Councillor Amanda Stevens, Mayor, Port Phillip City Council	

Appendix 2: Preliminary submission proposals

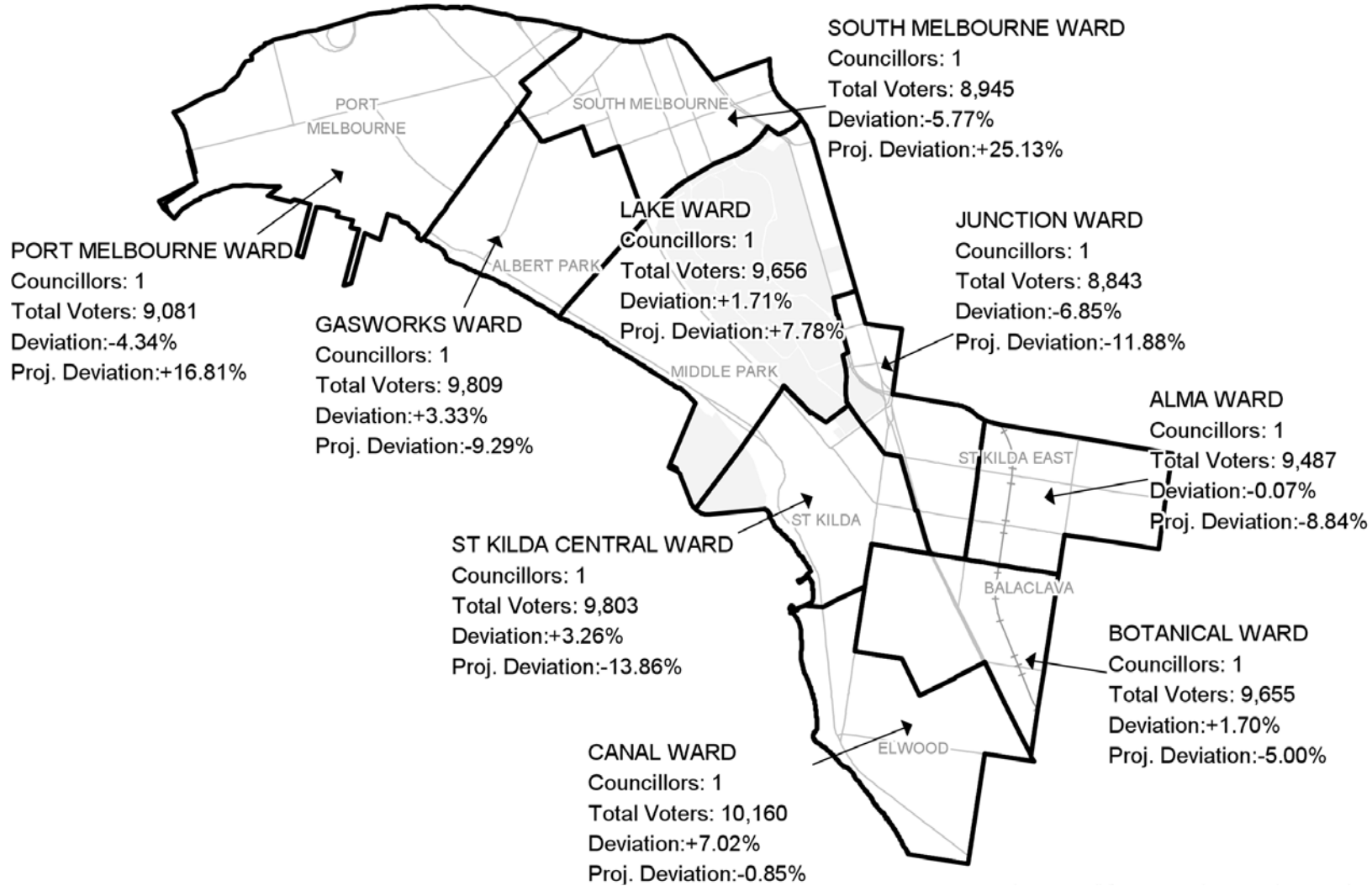


Diagram 1: St Kilda-centric nine single-councillor wards model (projections to 2024)

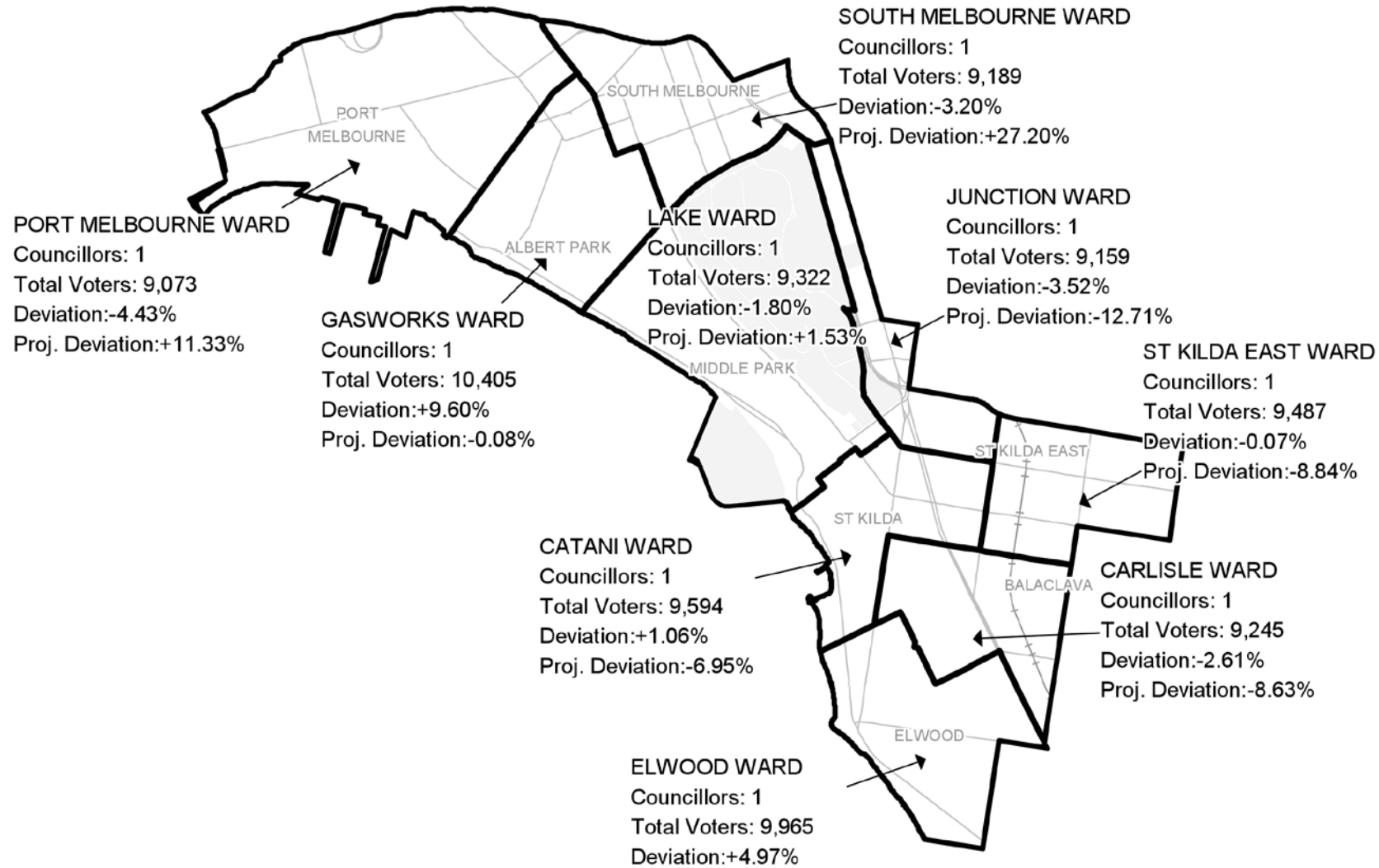


Diagram 2: Port Melbourne-centric nine single-councillor wards model (projections to 2024)

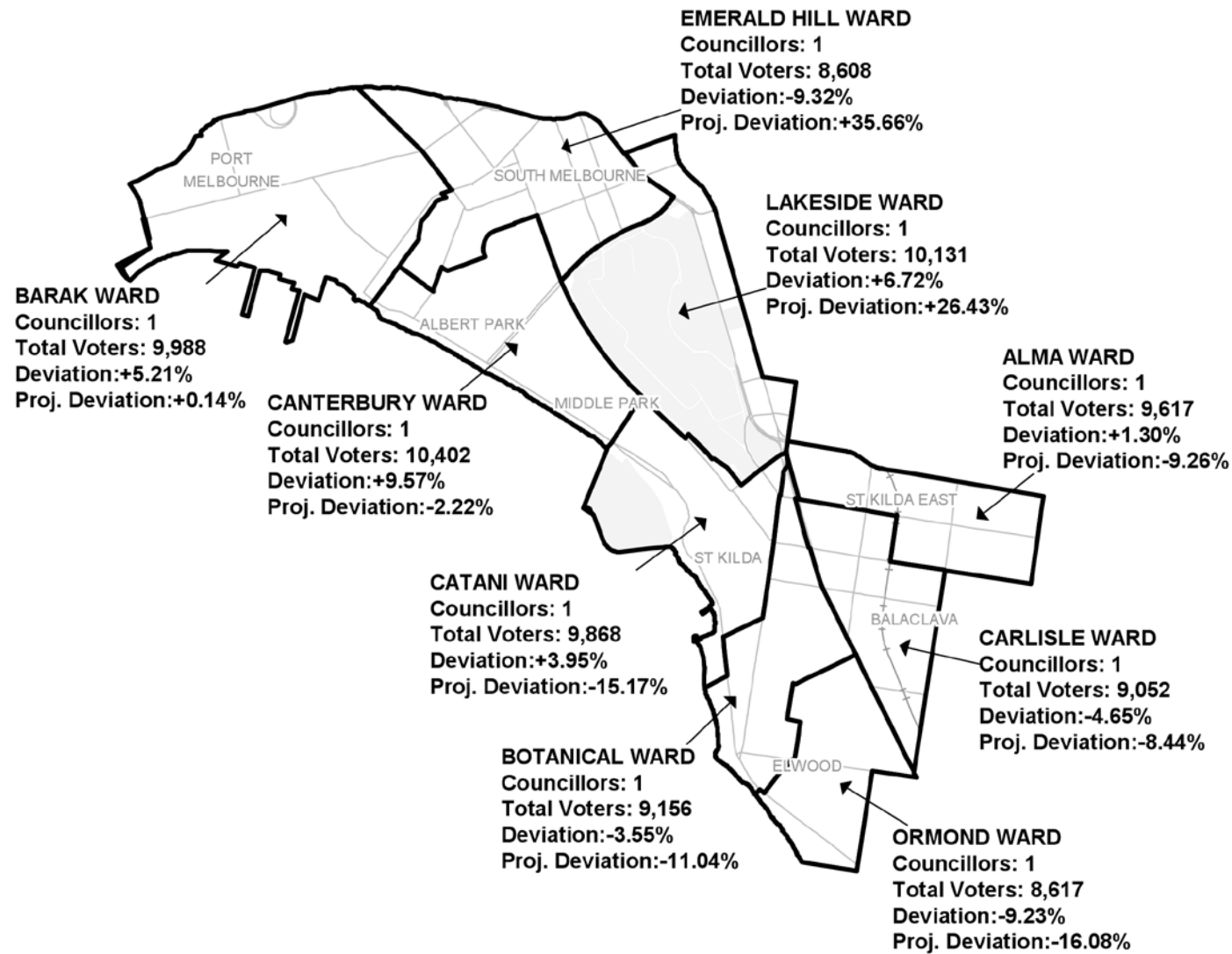


Diagram 3: Port Phillip City Council nine-councillor model (projections to 2024)

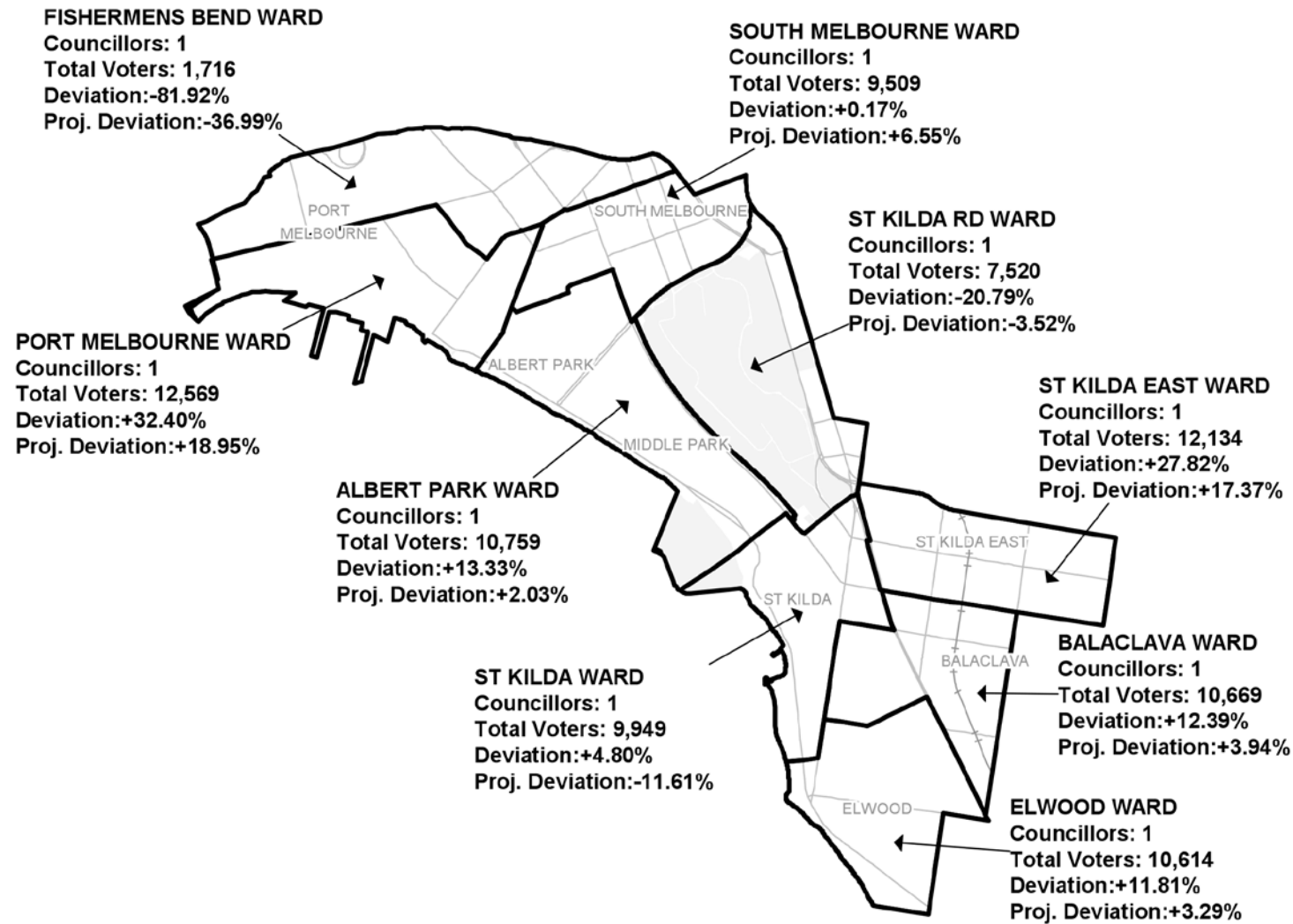
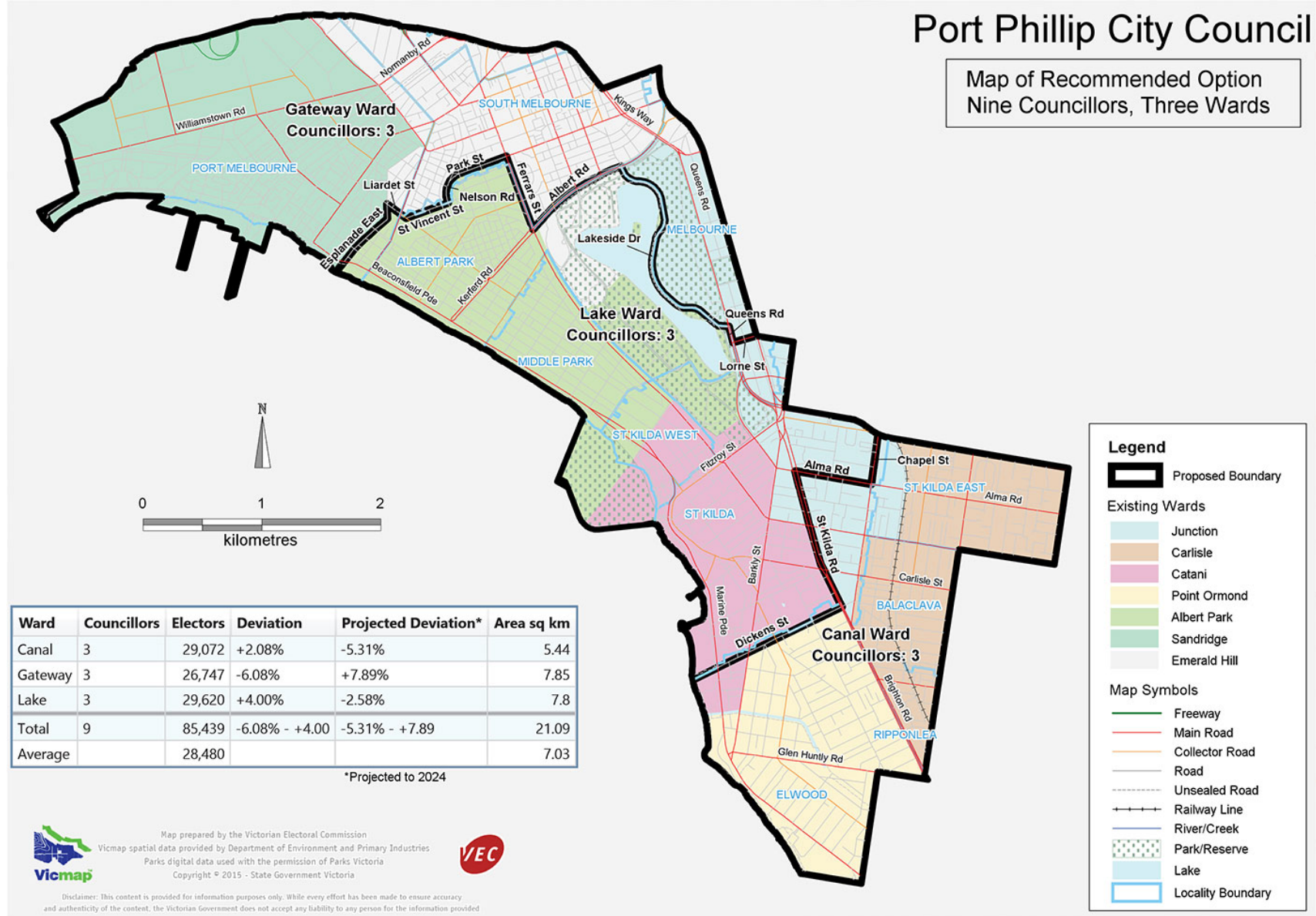


Diagram 4: Community Alliance of Port Phillip nine-councillor model (projections to 2024)

Appendix 3: Map of recommended option



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