

Local council electoral structure review

# Preliminary Report

Mildura Rural City Council

June 2023

### Acknowledgement of Country

The electoral representation advisory panel acknowledges the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee, being Latji Latji and Ngintait Traditional Owners, and the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagalk 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

Version	Date approved	Submission approved by	Brief description
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## Executive summary

An independent electoral structure review panel appointed by the Minister for Local Government is reviewing the electoral structure of Mildura Rural 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), Mildura Rural 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 Mildura Rural 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 7 councillors – 7 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, with different ward boundaries to Model 2.

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 2023. If any response submitters wish to speak at a public hearing, the panel will hold an online public hearing on Wednesday 26 July 2023. 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 Mildura Rural City Council) must now have single-councillor ward electoral structures.

For Mildura Rural 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 Mildura Rural 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 Mildura Rural 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 Mildura Rural 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 Mildura Rural 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 Mildura Rural 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 Mildura Rural City Council

## Profile

Located in the Mallee region about 550 km north-west of Melbourne, Mildura Rural City Council is the largest municipality in Victoria, covering an area of 22,082 km<sup>2</sup>. Mildura Rural City Council is bordered by West Wimmera, Hindmarsh and Yarriambiack Shire Councils to the south, Buloke Shire Council to the south-east and Swan Hill Rural City Council to the east. It shares its northern border with New South Wales and its western border with South Australia.

The Traditional Custodians of the lands within Mildura Rural City Council are the First Peoples of the Millewa-Mallee, being Latji Latji and Ngintait Traditional Owners, and the Wotjbaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagalk peoples (FPSR 2023).

## Landscape

The land covered by the municipality is predominantly parkland or agricultural land, making up nearly 90% of total land area, with the population concentrated in Mildura and other towns along the Murray River, and in smaller towns throughout the rural areas. The municipality hosts about 40% of the total area of the Victorian Parks system (DTP 2023), with protected land covering approximately 47.5% of its total land area (ABS 2022a), including the Hattah-Kulkyne, Murray-Sunset and Wyperfeld national parks, Big Desert Wilderness Park and the Murray-Kulkyne Park. The Murray River, which forms the northern boundary of the council, is part of Australia's largest river system, the Murray-Darling Basin.

Agricultural land covers approximately 40% of the municipality (ABS 2022a). To the north near the Murray River, agricultural land is used mainly for irrigated farming of dried vine fruits, grapes, citrus and vegetable production. In the areas further inland to the north and south of the Murray-Sunset National Park, land is used primarily for dryland agriculture for cereal, grain and legume production, sheep and cattle grazing, and wool and beef production (DTP, 2023).

Mildura Rural City Council has a population of 56,972 (ABS 2022b) and the town of Mildura itself is home to 35,652 people, or approximately 62.5% of the population. Large townships close to Mildura include Red Cliffs, (3,070 residents) and Merbein (2,077), while in the rural south, larger townships include Ouyen (1,022 residents) and Murrayville (214) (ABS 2022b).

The major roads servicing the council include the Sturt, Mallee and Calder highways. Mildura Airport is the state's largest and busiest regional airport, providing passenger and freight services, and makes a significant contribution to the regional economy.

## Community

The population is forecast to grow at an annual rate of 0.8% from 2022 to 2028. This rate is lower than the average annual population growth rate for 2011-2021 of 1.06% (RDV 2023). Population growth will be centred in the south and south-eastern suburbs of Mildura, as well as the nearby townships of Red Cliffs, Irymple and Merbein (DTP 2023).

The median age of the population is 40 years, lower than the median age of the rest of regional Victoria of 43 years (ABS 2022b, ABS 2022c).

With approximately 14% of the population born overseas and approximately 12.8% speaking a language other than English at home (ABS 2022d), Mildura Rural City Council is more culturally diverse than other regional centres on average.

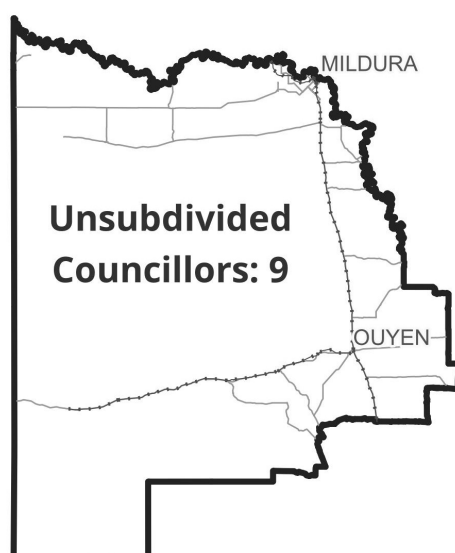
People born in Australia make up 78% of the population and 79.9% of people speak only English at home (ABS 2022b), lower than the regional Victorian averages of 81% and 86.4% (ABS 2022c). Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people make up 4.6% of the population, more than double the regional Victorian average of 2% (ABS 2022b, ABS 2022c).

The median weekly household income is \$1,326, slightly lower than the average for regional Victoria of \$1,386 (ABS 2022b, ABS 2022c). Of occupied homes (90.9% of total dwellings), 33.3% are owned outright and 32.1% are owned with a mortgage, which is the lower than the average for regional Victoria, and 29.8% are rented, higher than the average of 23.6% (ABS 2022b, ABS 2022c).

Although unemployment was 5.3% in 2021, higher than the regional Victorian average of 4.1%, labour force participation was consistent with the average at 57% (ABS 2022b, ABS 2022c). The main industries by employment in the municipality included health care and social assistance (16.8%), agriculture, forestry and fishing (11.8%), retail trade (11.7%), education and training (8.9%) and construction (9.1%) (REMPPLAN 2023).

## Current number of councillors and electoral structure

Mildura Rural City Council is currently unsubdivided with a total of 9 councillors.



**Figure 1:** Diagram of current electoral structure of Mildura Rural City Council.

There are approximately 42,932 voters in Mildura Rural City Council, with an approximate ratio of 4,770 voters per councillor.

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

## **Last electoral structure review**

The VEC conducted an electoral representation review of Mildura Rural City Council in 2015. 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 Mildura Rural City Council continue to consist of 9 councillors elected from an unsubdivided municipality.

Visit the VEC website at [vec.vic.gov.au](http://vec.vic.gov.au) to access a copy of the 2015 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 7 or 9 councillors to be an appropriate number for Mildura Rural City Council.

The panel considered the characteristics of Mildura Rural 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 Mildura Rural 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 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
Wodonga City*	433	32,430	43,253	33,461	7	4,780
Warrnambool City*	121	27,279	35,406	27,731	7	3,961
Wangaratta Rural City*	3,645	23,267	29,808	23,904	7	3,414
Horsham Rural City*	4,267	16,206	20,429	15,753	7	2,250

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

### Maintaining 9 councillors

Mildura Rural City Council currently has 42,932 voters represented by 9 councillors and covers an area of 22,082 km<sup>2</sup>. Other regional city councils with a similar number of voters usually also have 9 councillors. Although Mildura Rural City Council has the lowest number of voters per councillor of any regional city council with 9 councillors, it is important to note that Mildura Rural City Council has the largest geographic area of any council in Victoria. As forecasts indicate only modest population change is expected for the council, the panel considered it appropriate for the total number of councillors to remain unchanged. Moreover, no special circumstances were identified to justify an increase to the number of councillors.

## Decreasing to 7 councillors

The panel also considered 7 councillors to be an appropriate number of councillors for a subdivided structure consisting of 7 single-councillor wards, particularly if it allowed for a more favourable division of the council into single-councillor wards.

Despite its large geographic area, the current number of voters per councillor for Mildura Rural City Council (4,770 voters per councillor) is only 10 more than that of Wodonga City Council, which has 7 councillors. In addition, previous reviews found 9 councillors to be an appropriate number of councillors for an unsubdivided structure, where councillors were required to travel over long distances to attend meetings and community events given the large geographic area of the municipality.

Having 2 fewer councillors may be balanced by the benefits of stronger models in a subdivided structure consisting of 7 single-councillor wards. These benefits could include a division of the council into wards that better capture geographic communities and communities of interest, as well as structures more resilient to forecast population growth and distribution.

## 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 Mildura Rural 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 Mildura Rural City Council community:

- a subdivided electoral structure of 7 single-councillor wards (Model 1)
- a subdivided electoral structure of 9 single-councillor wards (Model 2)
- a subdivided electoral structure of 9 single-councillor wards, with different ward boundaries to Model 2 (Model 3).

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

The panel was concerned at the size of the large rural wards in the proposed models in relation to the smaller urban wards in and around Mildura. Although the panel considered various options, all viable models included at least one large rural ward due to the distribution of the population, with the majority of voters concentrated in Mildura and nearby urban localities. The requirements of the Act for Mildura Rural City Council to have a single-councillor ward electoral structure, and an approximately equal number of voters per councillor in each ward did not allow another alternative.

### **A single-councillor ward structure with 7 councillors (Model 1)**

Under this model, Mildura Rural City Council would adopt a 7-ward structure. Each ward would be represented by one councillor, in line with the requirements of the Act.

This model divides the very large rural areas of the municipality outside of Mildura into 2 wards and most of the town of Mildura into 5 wards.

The proposed Lake Wallawalla Ward captures localities north of the Murray-Sunset National Park along the Sturt Highway including Cullulleraine, Lindsay Point, Meringur, Merrinee and Neds Corner. It also captures the township of Merbein, and neighbouring localities such as Merbein West and Merbein South, to satisfy the legislative requirement to be within +/-10% of the average number of voters per councillor for all wards.

The proposed Sunset Country Ward captures the remainder of the Murray-Sunset National Park, as well as localities along the Mallee Highway such as Murrayville and Ouyen. It also includes the Hattah-Kulkyne National Park and localities south of Mildura on the Calder Highway such as Carwarp, Colignan and Iraak. The township of Red Cliffs is included within the ward to satisfy the +/-10% legislative requirement.

The division of Mildura and the neighbouring localities of Irymple and Nichols Point into 5 urban wards was achieved using a combination of major roads, railway lines, locality boundaries and distinctive geographic features to create strong boundaries.

Most of the urban area of Mildura is captured in the proposed Mildura Central, Mildura South and Walnut Park Wards. The proposed Mildura North Ward captures the urban areas to the north of Mildura, as well as Lake Hawthorn and Lake Ranfurly. The proposed Kings Billabong Ward captures some of Mildura to the east of the railway line, as well as Nichols Point, Irymple and Kings Billabong Park.

Strengths of this model include:

- the division of the rural area beyond the main population centres of Mildura and surrounding townships into 2 wards (compared to one large ward under a 9 single-councillor ward model)
- keeping neighbouring communities together within the same ward, such as:
  - Merbein, Merbein South and Merbein West within the proposed Lake Wallawalla Ward
  - Irymple and Nichols Point within the proposed Kings Billabong Ward
- capturing the centre of Mildura in its own ward (Mildura Central Ward) and the key population growth area of Mildura South in its own ward (Mildura South Ward).

Potential drawbacks are:

- the separation of some townships, such as Red Cliffs and part of Irymple from the Mildura urban wards



- the proposed Sunset Country Ward being very large. It stretches from west to east across national parks and rural localities, and includes Red Cliffs, which may be more closely related to Mildura.

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

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

Model 2 uses major roads and some minor roads to create strong, clear ward boundaries, with one large rural ward and 8 wards capturing Mildura, its outer suburbs and populations located along the Murray River.

The proposed Murray-Sunset Ward captures the rural area of the municipality, including various localities and small towns along the Sturt Highway in the north, as well as along the Mallee Highway to the south, including Murrayville and Ouyen, and along the Calder Highway, such as Carwarp, Colignan and Iraak. The Murray-Sunset and Hattah-Kulkyne national parks are located entirely in this ward.

Most of the urban area of Mildura has been captured in the following 5 proposed wards: City Gate, Henderson Park, Mildura Central, Mildura Wetlands and River Boulevard. This is to satisfy the legislative requirement to be within +/-10% of the average number of voters per councillor for all wards, and to accommodate forecast population growth and its distribution. Main roads form the majority of boundaries for these wards.

The proposed Lake Hawthorn Ward encompasses Merbein, Cabarita and Koorlong, as well as Mildura Airport and parts of the Mildura South future growth area. Lake Ranfurly Ward captures the urban areas to the north of Mildura, while the River Boulevard Ward captures Irymple and Nichols Point. The proposed Kings Billabong Ward includes Red Cliffs and Sunnycliffs, parts of Irymple and Nichols point, and Kings Billabong Park.

Strengths of this model include:

- capturing Mildura growth areas in peri-urban wards such as Lake Hawthorn Ward and River Boulevard Ward
- uniting growth areas around Red Cliffs in a single ward
- accommodating future population growth.

Potential drawbacks of this model include:

- dividing Mildura across several wards and splitting a small section of Red Cliffs into the neighbouring rural ward.
- splitting population centres such as Nichols Point and Irymple into separate wards, and separating Merbein from parts of Merbein South and Merbein West.

- the proposed Murray-Sunset Ward being very large, encompassing much of the municipality outside of Mildura and surrounds, to include disparate rural communities as well as several large national parks and nature reserves.

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

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

Model 3 uses a combination of major roads, locality boundaries and distinctive geographic features to create strong ward boundaries to divide council into one mainly rural ward and 8 wards covering the town of Mildura and surrounds.

The proposed Murray-Sunset Ward captures most of the rural area of the municipality, including rural localities along the Sturt Highway in the north, the Murray-Sunset and Hattah-Kulkyne national parks, localities along the Mallee Highway to the south such as Murrayville and Ouyen, as well as localities south of Mildura on the Calder Highway such as Carwarp, Colignan and Iraak. It was necessary to capture Merbein and Merbein West in this ward to satisfy the +/-10% legislative requirement.

Six urban wards and 2 large peri-urban wards have been proposed to the east and south of Mildura and together they capture much of the population and future population growth areas in and around Mildura.

Most of Mildura is divided into 5 urban wards, using ward boundaries mainly along major roads. A sixth urban ward, Kings Billabong Ward, comprises Irymple and Nichols Point, and uses major roads, locality boundaries, a railway line and the southern boundary of Kings Billabong Park as ward boundaries.

Lake Hawthorn Ward captures the area east of Mildura and contains Lake Hawthorn and Lake Ranfurly, Mildura Airport, Cabarita and Merbein South, as well as parts of Mildura and Irymple, and mainly follows locality boundaries.

Red Cliffs Ward comprises Red Cliffs, Cardross and Koorlong, stretching from the Murray River in the east to Meridian Road in the west, with its boundaries similarly following those of localities. The ward captures the population growth centres of Red Cliffs and Sunnycliffs.

Strengths of Model 3 are similar to Model 2 and include:

- capturing growth areas in Mildura and nearby urban areas into the peri-urban Lake Hawthorn and Red Cliffs Wards
- uniting growth areas around Red Cliffs in a single ward
- accommodating future population growth.

Potential drawbacks of this model are:

- separating townships, such as Merbein and Merbein West, from their community of interest in Merbein South

- splitting population centres such as Nichols Point and Irymple into separate wards, potentially splitting communities
- the proposed Murray-Sunset Ward being very large, encompassing much of the municipality outside of Mildura to include disparate rural communities as well as several large national parks and nature reserves.

### **Model considered but not put forward**

#### *A single-councillor ward structure with 7 councillors*

The panel considered a second 7-ward structure made up of 2 rural wards and 5 urban wards covering Mildura and nearby population centres. This model proposed a north-south division of the large rural area of the municipality into an eastern ward comprising Red Cliffs and Ouyen along the Calder Highway, and a large western ward comprising disparate localities including rural Murrayville, Walpeup and Lindsay Point and urban Merbein.

The panel did not put this model forward for further consultation as it felt that Model 1 better captured geographic communities and communities of interest.

## **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 Mildura Rural City Council and consequently facilitate good governance. Please see [Appendix 1](#) for detailed maps of these models.

### **Model 1**

Mildura Rural City Council has 7 councillors and is divided into 7 wards with one councillor per ward.

Ward names: Kings Billabong Ward, Lake Wallawalla Ward, Mildura Central Ward, Mildura North Ward, Mildura South Ward, Sunset Country Ward, Walnut Park Ward.

### **Model 2**

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

Ward names: City Gate Ward, Henderson Park Ward, Kings Billabong Ward, Lake Hawthorn Ward, Lake Ranfurly Ward, Mildura Central Ward, Mildura Wetlands Ward, Murray-Sunset Ward, River Boulevard Ward.

### **Model 3**

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

Ward names: City Gate Ward, Etiwanda Wetland Ward, Kings Billabong Ward, Lake Hawthorn Ward, Mildura Central Ward, Red Cliffs Ward, Murray-Sunset Ward, Walnut Park Ward, Washington Park 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

The Kings Billabong, Lake Wallawalla, Sunset Country and Walnut Park ward names are new and are based on registered natural features and parks found within each ward.

The Mildura Central, Mildura North, and Mildura South ward names combine the registered name of Mildura with compass directions.

### Model 2

The Henderson Park, Kings Billabong, Lake Hawthorn, Lake Ranfurly, Mildura Wetlands Ward and Murray-Sunset ward names are new and are based on the registered names of parks and natural features within each ward.

The City Gate ward name is new and based on the City Gate precinct identified in the Mildura Planning Scheme as an important sub-regional retail and activity centre.

The River Boulevard ward name is new and based on the registered name of the road that runs along the Murray River waterfront to the north of this ward.

The Mildura Central ward name: as above.

### Model 3

The Etiwanda Wetland, Red Cliffs and Washington Park ward names are new and are based on registered natural features, parks or localities found within each ward.

The City Gate, Kings Billabong, Lake Hawthorn, Mildura Central, Murray-Sunset, and Walnut Park ward names: as above.




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></p> <p>Visit <a href="https://vec.vic.gov.au">vec.vic.gov.au</a> to make a submission online.</p> <p>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></p> <p><a href="mailto:Mildura.ERAPSubmissions@vec.vic.gov.au">Mildura.ERAPSubmissions@vec.vic.gov.au</a></p>
	<p><b>By post</b></p> <p>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](https://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: Wednesday 26 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 Mildura Rural 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.

## References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) (2022a) [Region Summary: Mildura](#), ABS website, accessed 30 March 2023.

— (2022b) [2021 Census All Person QuickStats, Mildura \(LGA\)](#), ABS website, accessed 30 March 2023.

— (2022c) [2021 Census All Persons QuickStats, Rest of Vic](#), ABS website, accessed 30 March 2023.

— (2022d) [2021 Census Community Profiles: Mildura](#), General Community Profile Data Set, accessed 30 March 2023.

DTP (Department of Transport and Planning) (2023) [Mildura Planning Scheme](#), DTP, accessed 28 March 2023.

Electoral Act 2002 (Vic)

FPSR (First Peoples State Relations) (2023) [Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners](#), First Peoples State Relations website, accessed 2 May 2023.

Geographic Place Names Act 1998 (Vic)

Local Government Act 1989 (Vic)

Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)

Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020 (Vic)

RDV (Regional Development Victoria) (2023) [Regional Snapshot](#), Data set (Mildura LGA), accessed 28 March 2023.

REMPPLAN (2022) [Economy, Jobs and Business Insights \(Mildura\)](#), REMPLAN website, accessed 30 March 2023.

## Appendix 1: Model maps

The following maps are included in this report:

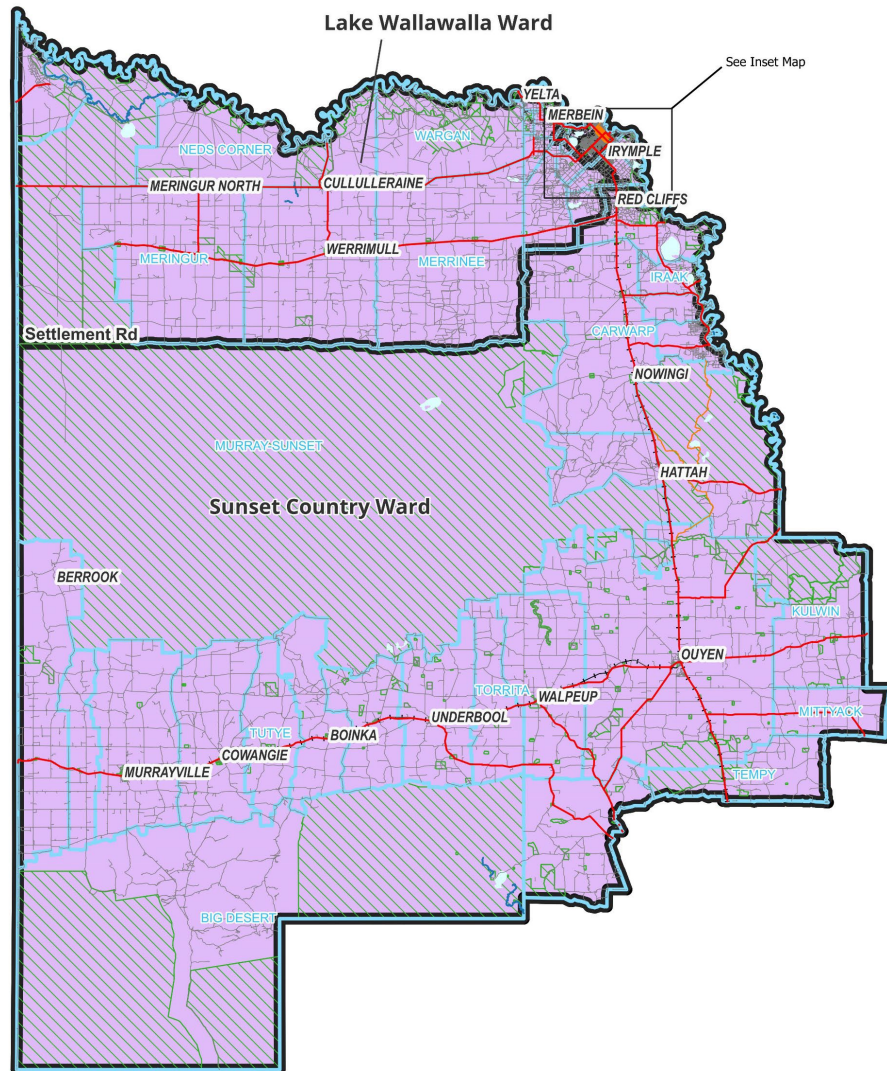
Map	Page
Model 1 – a single-councillor ward structure with 7 councillors – 7 wards with one councillor per ward.	Page 25
Model 2 – a single-councillor ward structure with 9 councillors – 9 wards with one councillor per ward.	Page 27
Model 3 – a single-councillor ward structure with 9 councillors – 9 wards with one councillor per ward (with boundaries different to Model 2).	Page 30















# Mildura Rural City Council

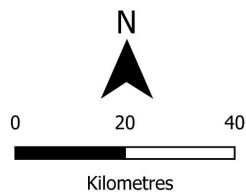
## Model 1

### 7 single-councillor wards



#### Legend

-  Proposed boundaries
- Existing wards**
-  Mildura Rural City
- 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
Kings Billabong	5,990	-2.33%	71
Lake Wallawalla	6,063	-1.14%	4,847
Mildura Central	6,464	+5.39%	6
Mildura North	5,999	-2.19%	29
Mildura South	6,108	-0.41%	12
Sunset Country	6,210	+1.25%	17,108
Walnut Park	6,098	-0.57%	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>42,932</b>		<b>22,080</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>6,133</b>		<b>3,154</b>

\*Elector numbers as at 30 March 2023

Map prepared by:



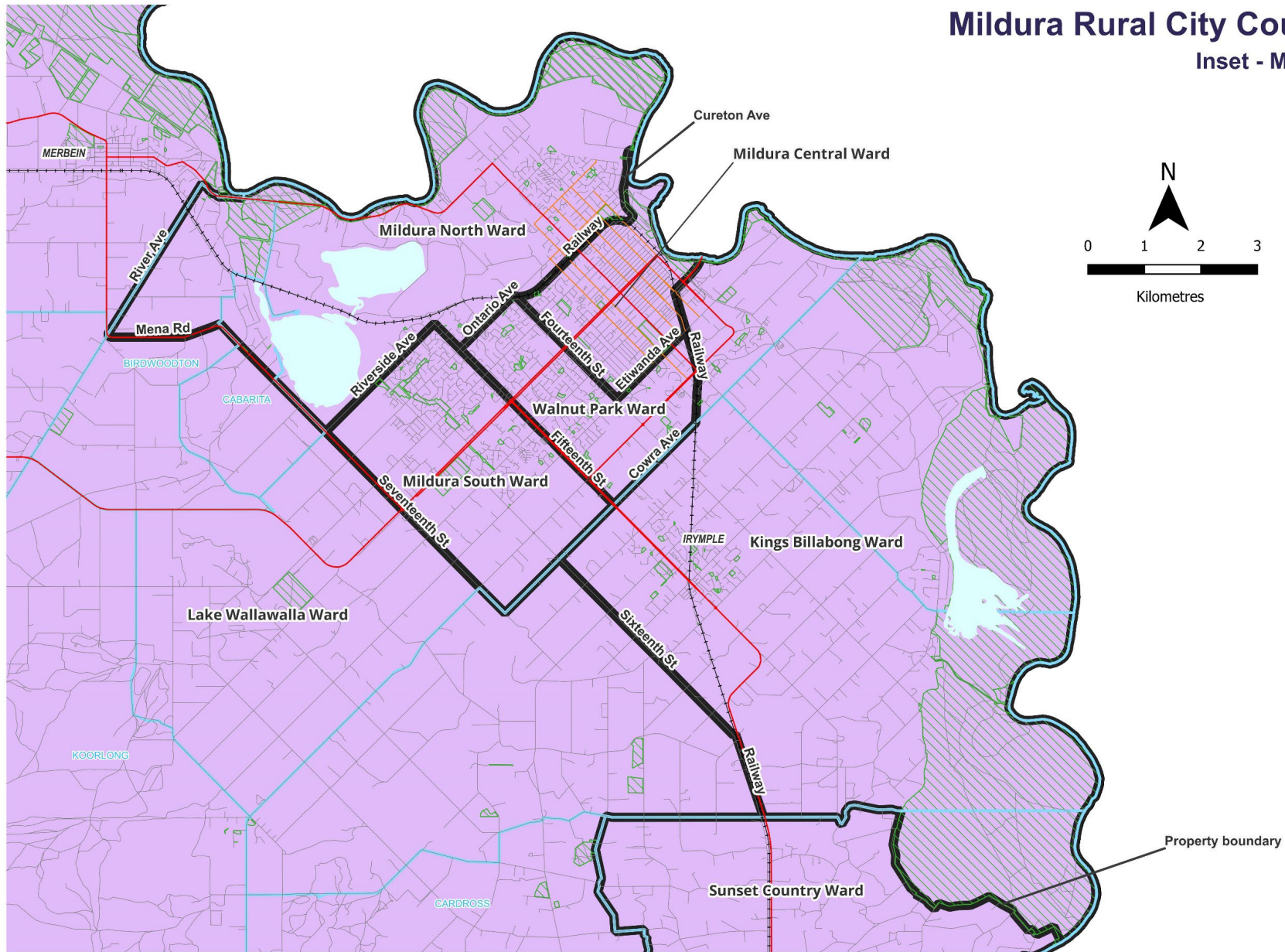
Data use:



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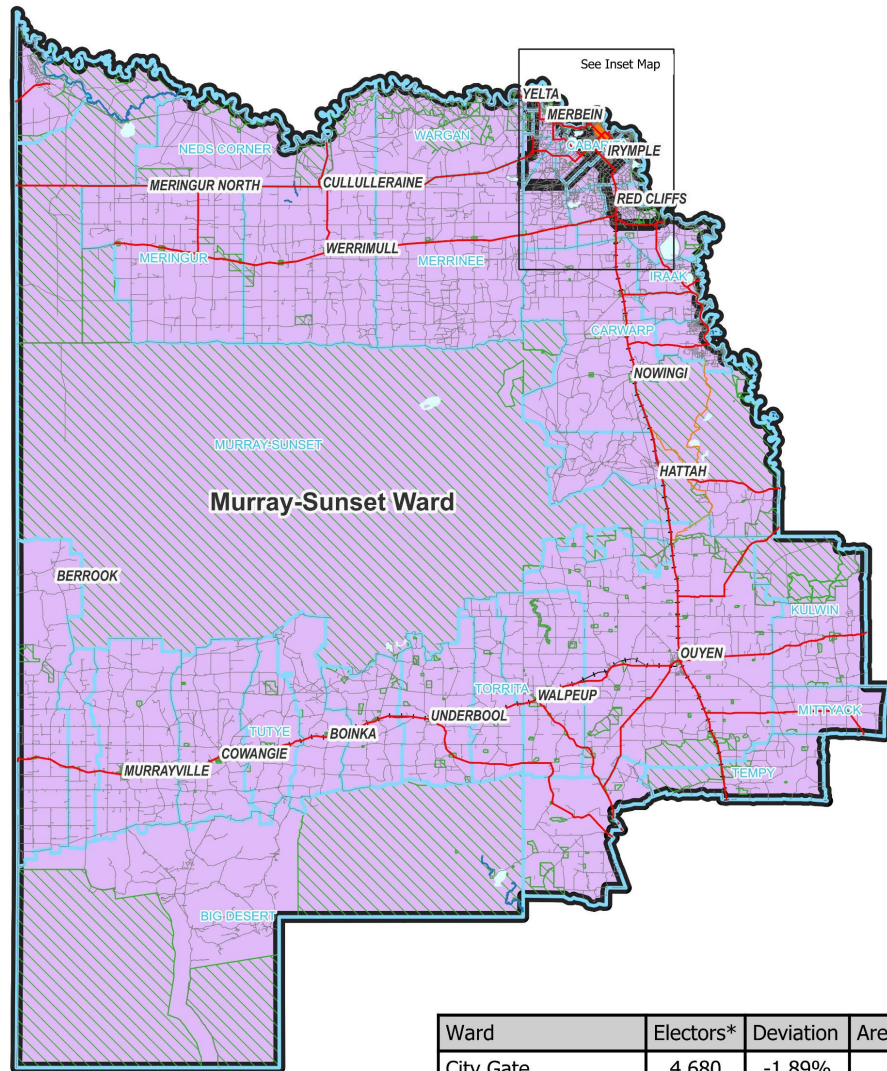
# Mildura Rural City Council Inset - Model 1



# Mildura Rural City Council

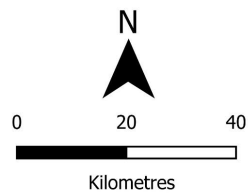
## Model 2

### 9 single-councillor wards



**Legend**

- Proposed boundaries
- Existing wards**
- Mildura Rural City
- 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
City Gate	4,680	-1.89%	5
Henderson Park	4,688	-1.72%	4
Kings Billabong	4,786	+0.33%	100
Lake Hawthorn	4,473	-6.23%	136
Lake Ranfurly	4,727	-0.91%	20
Mildura Central	5,031	+5.47%	6
Mildura Wetlands	4,858	+1.84%	4
Murray-Sunset	4,743	-0.57%	21,772
River Boulevard	4,946	+3.68%	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>42,932</b>		<b>22,080</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>4,770</b>		<b>2,453</b>

\*Elector numbers as at 30 March 2023

Map prepared by:



Data use:

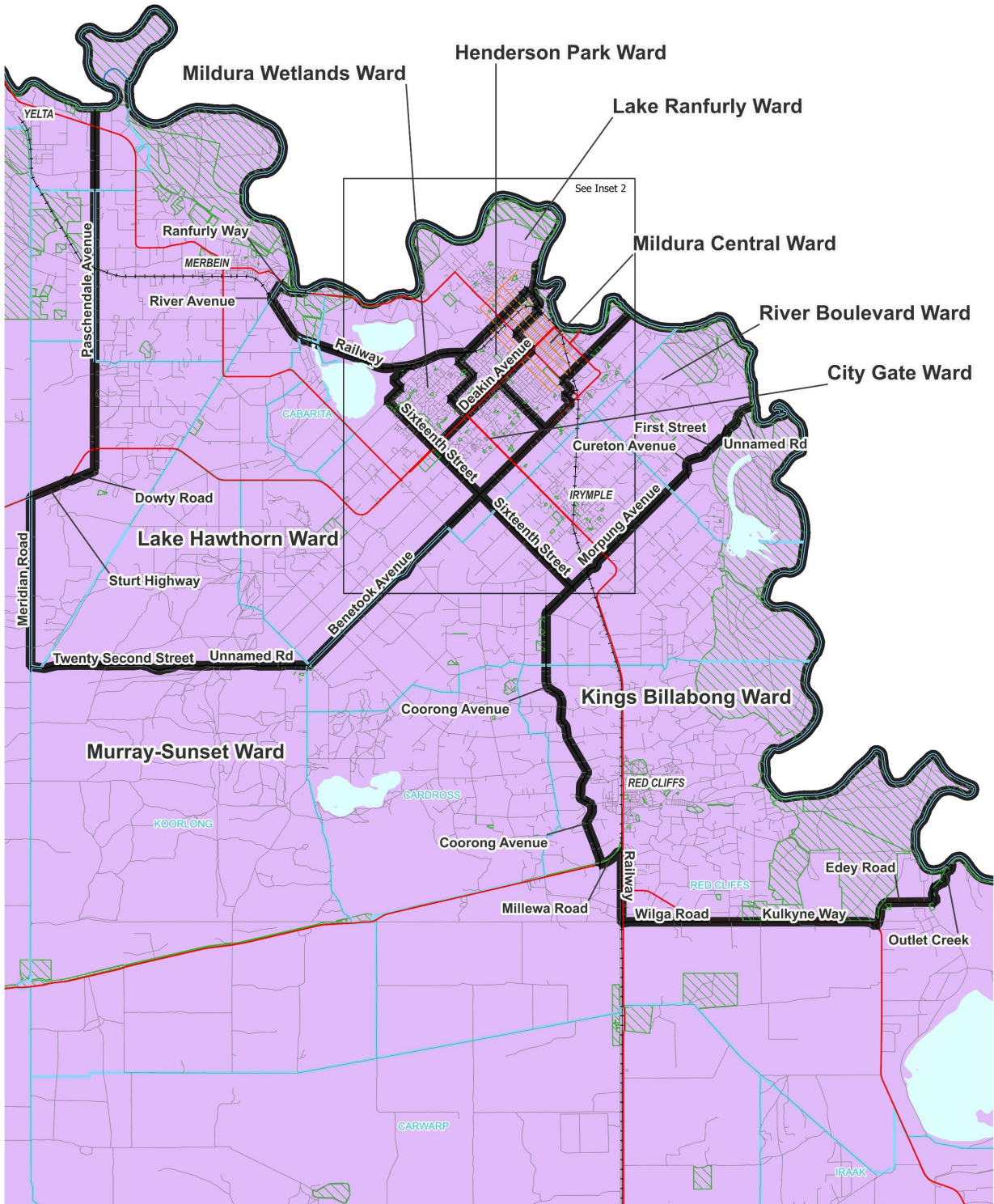
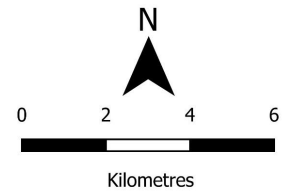


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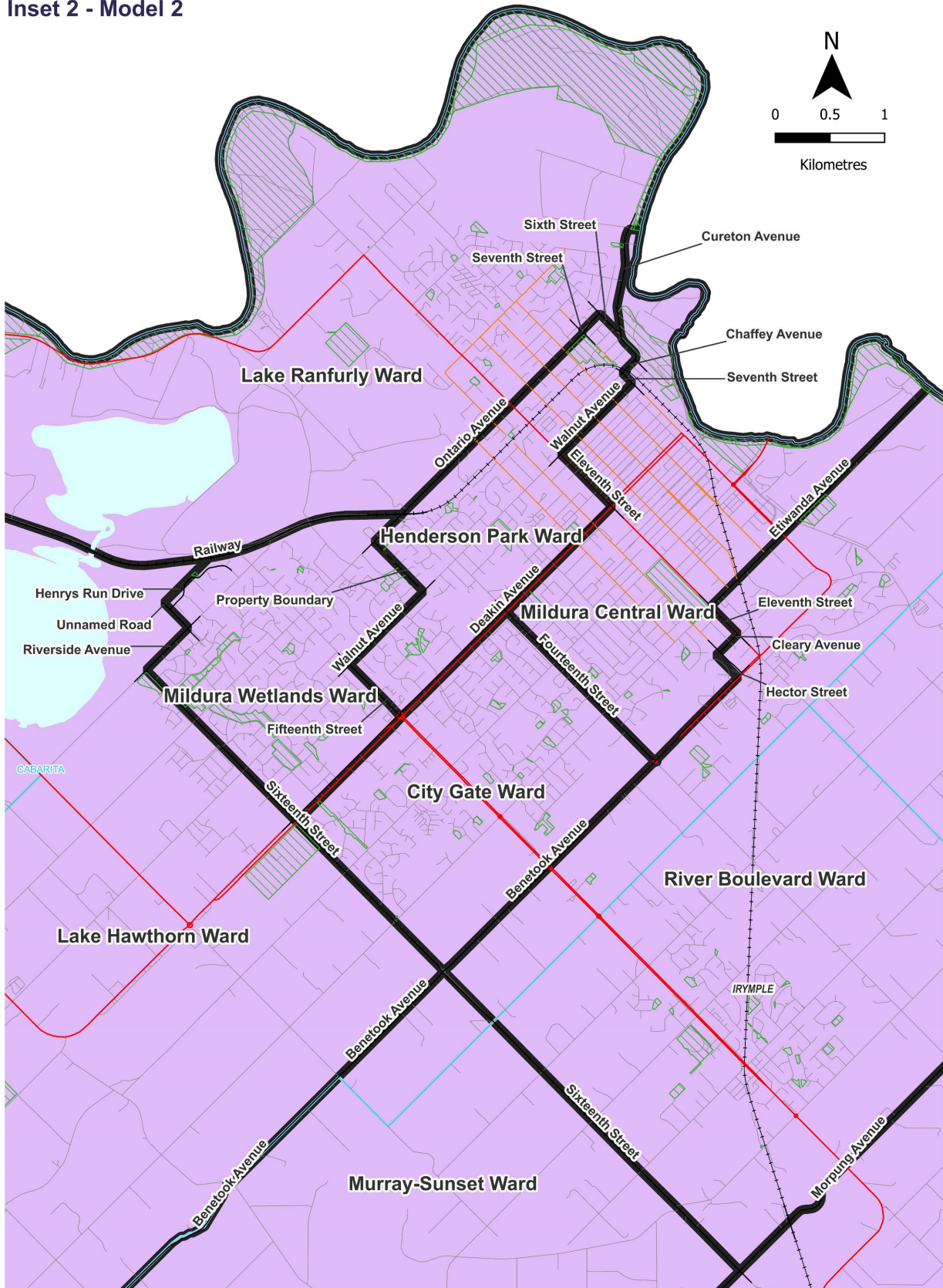
# Mildura Rural City Council

## Inset - Model 2



# Mildura Rural City Council

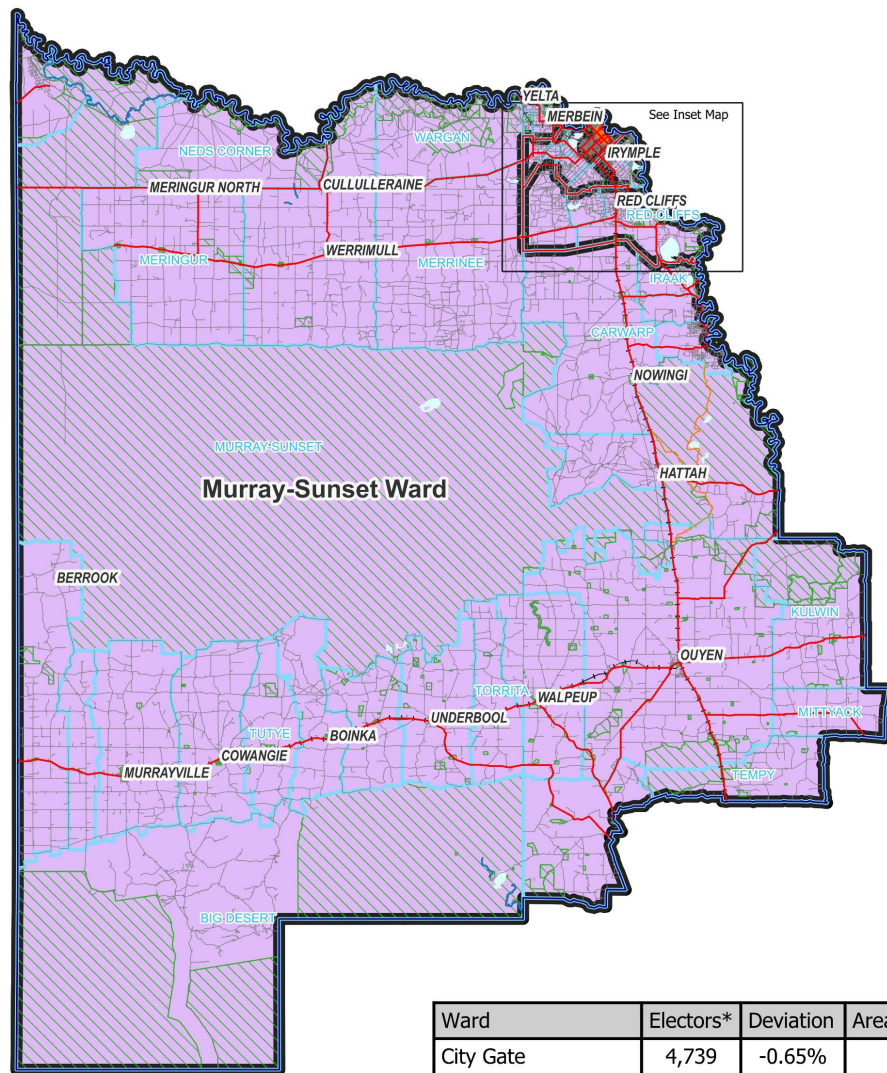
## Inset 2 - Model 2



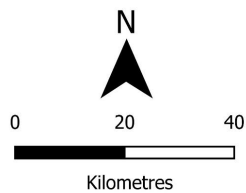
# Mildura Rural City Council

## Model 3

### 9 single-councillor wards



- Legend**
- Proposed boundaries
  - Existing wards**
  - Mildura Rural City
  - 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
City Gate	4,739	-0.65%	7
Etiwanda Wetland	4,706	-1.35%	9
Kings Billabong	4,641	-2.71%	66
Lake Hawthorn	4,728	-0.89%	122
Mildura Central	4,739	-0.65%	5
Murray-Sunset	5,166	+8.3%	21,487
Red Cliffs	4,756	-0.3%	370
Walnut Park	4,905	+2.83%	4
Washington Park	4,552	-4.57%	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>42,932</b>		<b>22,080</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>4,770</b>		<b>2,453</b>

\*Elector numbers as at 30 March 2023

Map prepared by:



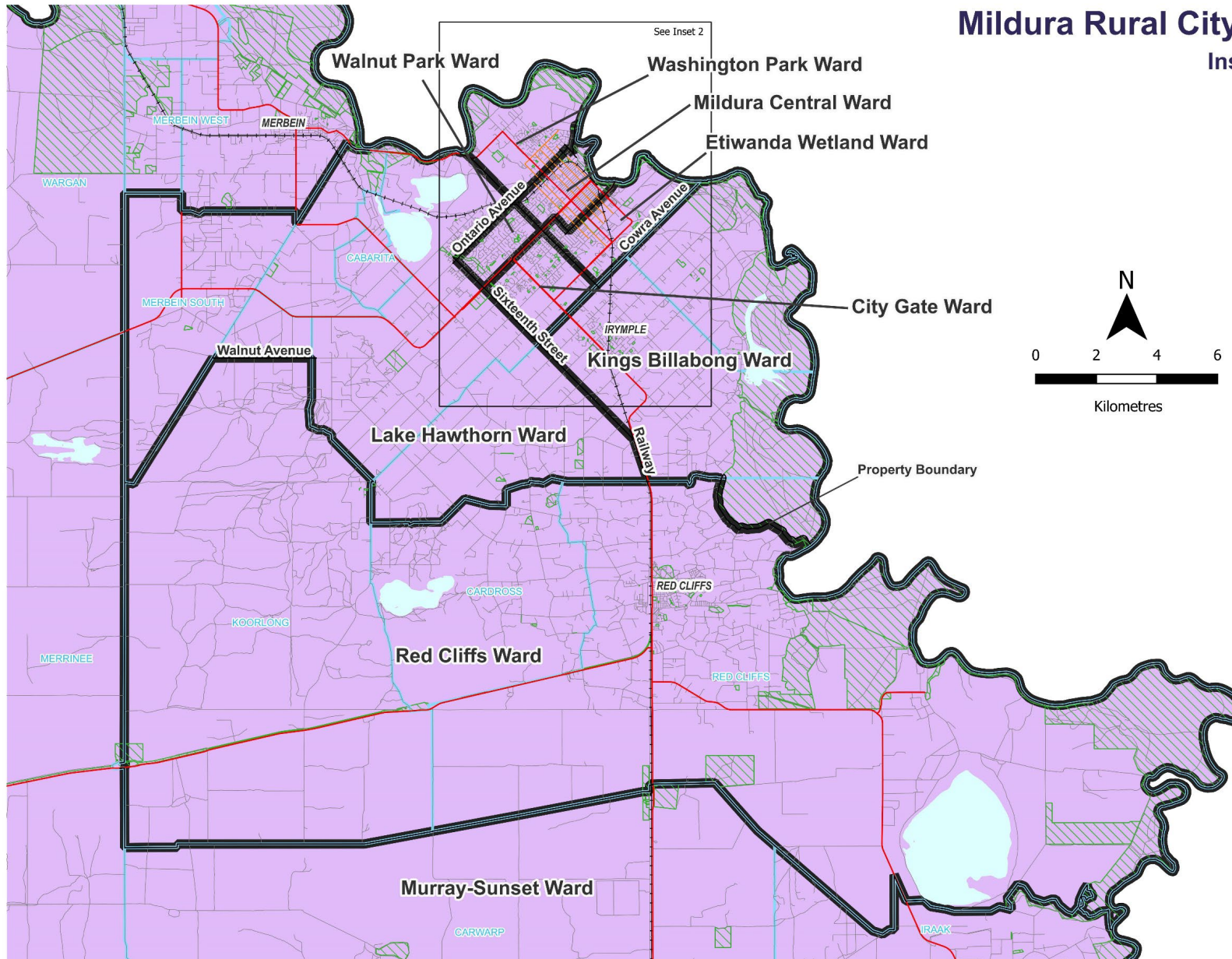
Data use:



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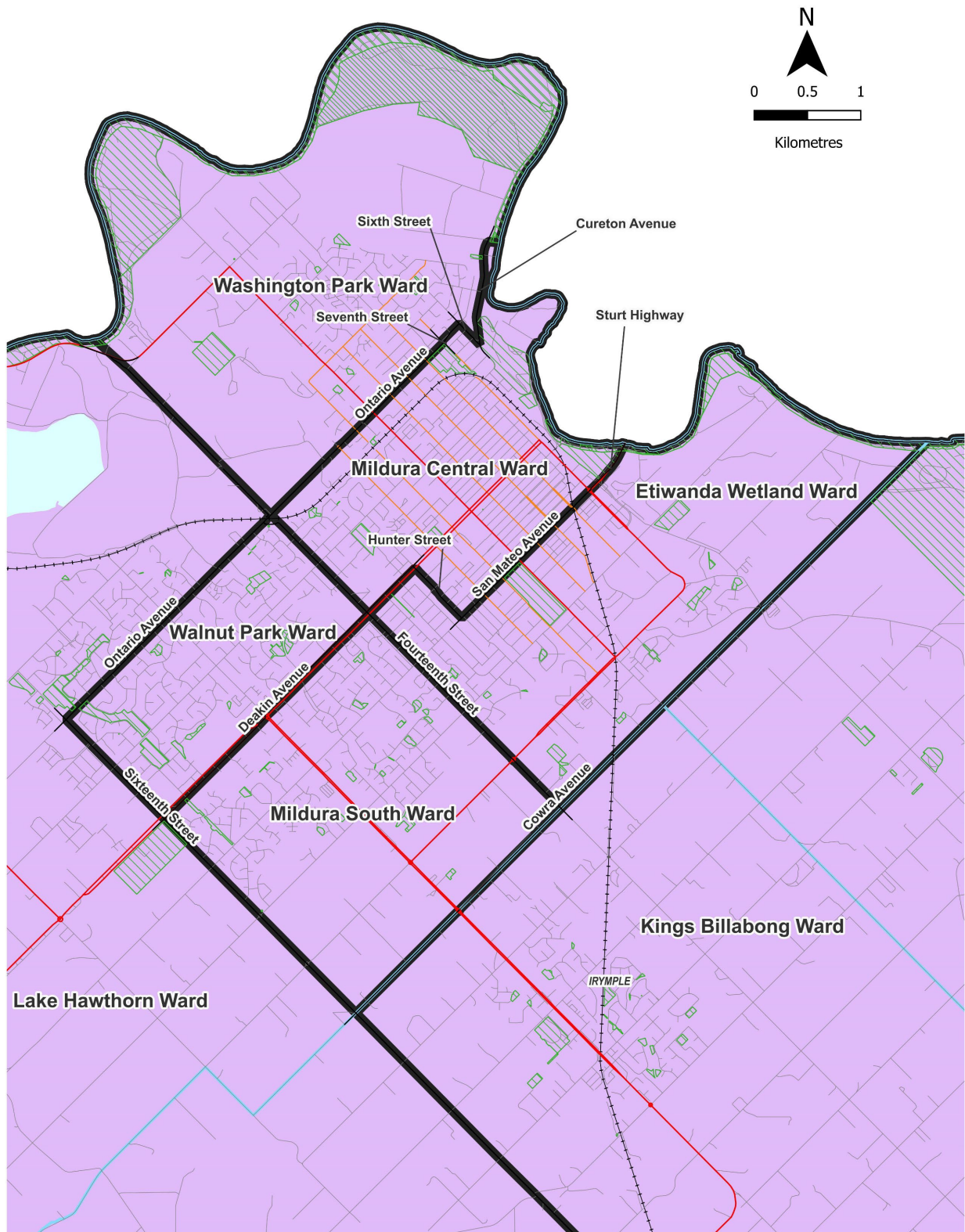
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# Mildura Rural City Council Inset - Model 3



# Mildura Rural City Council

## Inset 2 - Model 3





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