

ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION REVIEW
Maribyrnong City Council
Final Report



26 October 2011

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Recommendation

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) recommends that the Maribyrnong City Council consist of seven councillors elected from three wards: two two-councillor wards and one three-councillor ward.

This is a change from the current structure of seven single-councillor wards and was Option B in the Preliminary Report.

The recommended ward boundaries are illustrated in the map at the back of this report (Appendix 2).

Background

Legislative basis

The *Local Government Act 1989* (the Act) requires the VEC to conduct an Electoral Representation Review of each municipality in Victoria at least every 12 years. The Act specifies that the purpose of a representation review is to recommend to the Minister for Local Government the number of councillors and the electoral structure for a municipality, which will provide '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, as part of an Electoral Representation Review, to consider:

- the number of councillors in a municipality;
- whether a municipality should be unsubdivided or subdivided;
- if it should be subdivided, whether ward boundaries:
 - provide for fair and equitable division of the municipality;
 - ensure equality of representation through the number of voters being represented by each councillor being within 10 per cent of the average number of voters represented by all councillors; and,
- if it should be subdivided, the number of councillors that should be elected for each ward.

The VEC and Electoral Representation Reviews

The VEC has conducted Electoral Representation Reviews since 2004 on appointment by local councils. The Act was changed in 2010 to define the VEC as the only agency authorised to undertake the reviews.

The VEC drew on its experience in mapping and boundary modelling and also engaged consultants with experience in local government to provide advice on specific local representation issues during the review.

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

Profile of Maribyrnong

Maribyrnong is situated in Melbourne's inner west and comprises the suburbs of Braybrook, Kingsville, Footscray, West Footscray, Maribyrnong, Maidstone, Seddon, Tottenham and Yarraville.

Maribyrnong is a multicultural city, covering 31 square kilometres and recording a population of 77,896 at the 2006 census. Forty per cent of residents were born overseas, arriving from 135 different countries and speaking 80 languages. In addition, one in five residents does not speak English well or at all. According to SEIFA² the City of Maribyrnong is the third most disadvantaged municipality in the metropolitan area, behind Brimbank and Dandenong.

The State Government has recognised Footscray as one of its six 'Activity Centres'³ marking it as the focus for major urban change over the next 30 years and attracting a substantial proportion of future employment, growth and public investment from Melbourne's CBD.

Maribyrnong is expected to grow by 10.66 per cent over the next ten years,⁴ with the most significant increases in population expected in the suburbs of Footscray, Braybrook, Maidstone and Maribyrnong.

Current electoral structure

The last electoral representation review for Maribyrnong City Council took place in 2004–2005. Following the review, the Minister for Local Government determined that the structure of Maribyrnong City Council would be:

- seven councillors;
- divided into seven wards — Bluestone Ward, Ironbark Ward, River Ward, Saltwater Ward, Sheoak Ward, Stony Creek Ward, and Wattle Ward;
- with one councillor for each ward.

Before the 2004–2005 representation review, the Council comprised seven single-councillor wards. The VEC considered that seven was the appropriate number of councillors for this small but culturally diverse metropolitan municipality. At that time the VEC's preferred option in its preliminary report was for a multi-councillor ward structure. However, the VEC's final report recommended retention of single-councillor wards, in light of the perceived need for dedicated local representation for disadvantaged communities and because the multi-councillor ward model did not comply well with communities of interest. The VEC recommended

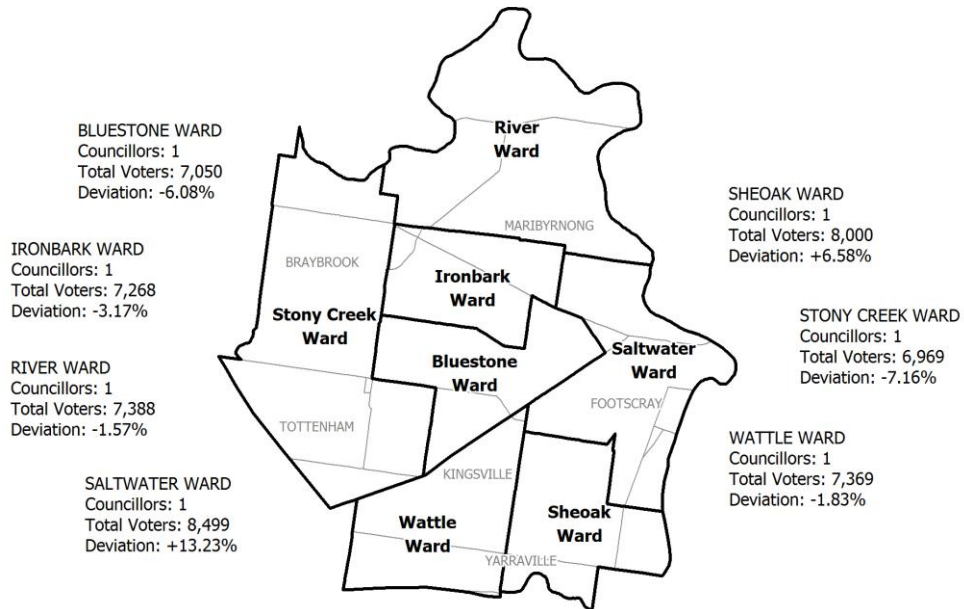
² SEIFA Australian Bureau of Statistics, Socio Economic Disadvantage Index for Areas

³ [Dpcd.vic.gov.au/planningandpolicies/activitiesareas](http://dpcd.vic.gov.au/planningandpolicies/activitiesareas)

⁴ DPCD, *Victoria in Future*, 2nd release 2011-2021

adjustments to the ward boundaries to split growth areas and prolong the life of the recommended boundaries.

As at 6 May 2011, the wards in the City of Maribyrnong were comprised as follows⁵:



⁵ Note that voter numbers are subject to variation and are regularly being updated.

The electoral representation review process

The VEC proceeded 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.

Populations are continually changing. Over time these changes can lead to some wards having larger or smaller numbers of voters. As part of the review, the VEC corrected any imbalances and also took into account likely population changes to ensure these boundaries provide equitable representation until the next review.

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

The VEC was guided by its comparisons of municipalities of a similar size and category to the council under review. The VEC also considered any special circumstances that may warrant the municipality to have 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 and, where practicable, the electoral structure should be designed to take these into account. This allows elected councillors to be more effective representatives of the people in their particular municipality or ward.

The recommendation is based on:

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

Public submissions were an important part of the process, but were not the only consideration during the review. The VEC seeks to combine the information gathered through public submissions with its own research and analysis of other factors, such as the need to give representation to communities of interest. The recommendation is not based on a 'straw poll' of the number of submissions supporting a particular option.

VEC research

In addition to the information provided in submissions, the VEC created a profile of the municipality based on population trends, development projections and demographic indicators. The VEC used the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006 census community profiles, the Department of Planning and Community Development projections and voter statistics from the Victorian electoral roll. The VEC also undertook field work to view current and possible boundaries for each of the options presented in the preliminary report to evaluate their effectiveness.

Public involvement

The VEC values the local knowledge and perspectives presented by the public in written submissions. The public were given two opportunities to provide submissions during the review. Their input was considered by the panel in forming the options in the preliminary report and they were also invited to respond to these options. In addition, a public hearing was held to enable people to speak in support of their submissions and supplement them with further information.

To ensure transparency in the process, all written submissions were published on the VEC website and all verbal submissions were heard in a public environment.

To raise awareness of the review and encourage the public to engage with the process, a public information campaign was undertaken.

Advertising

In accordance with sections 219F(4) and 219F(7) of the Act, the VEC ensured public notices were placed in local newspapers.

Notification of the review appeared in the *Maribyrnong Leader* and the *Star Footscray, Yarraville and Braybrook* on Tuesday, 12 July 2011 and the *Maribyrnong Weekly* on Wednesday, 13 July 2011. The notice detailed the process for the review and called for public submissions. A general notice covering several reviews was printed in *The Age* and the *Herald Sun* on Tuesday, 5 July 2011.

Notification of the release of the preliminary report appeared in the *Star Footscray, Yarraville, Braybrook* and the *Maribyrnong Leader* on Tuesday, 30 August and *Maribyrnong Weekly* on Wednesday, 31 August 2011. The notice detailed the options contained in the preliminary report, including a map of each option, instructions on how to access a copy of the preliminary report and how to make a submission in response to the report.

Media releases

The VEC produced two media releases for this review. The first release provided information on the review and overall process. A second release detailed the options in the preliminary report and how to make a submission in response to the report.

Public information session

The VEC held a public information session for people interested in the review process on Wednesday, 27 July 2011 at the Maribyrnong City Council Offices for people interested in the review process.

Information brochure and poster

An information brochure was provided to the Council to be distributed to residents through the Council's network, including libraries and service centres. A poster was provided to the Council as an extra publicity tool.

Helpline

A dedicated helpline was established to assist with public enquiries concerning the review process.

VEC website

All submissions were posted on the VEC website and an online submission tool was created to facilitate the submission process. The preliminary report was also available on the website.

Guide for Submissions

A guide for submissions was made available on the VEC website and from the dedicated helpline. Copies were also provided to Council and handed out at the information session.

Preliminary report

In accordance with the Act, the VEC produced a preliminary report outlining its proposed options for Maribyrnong City Council. The report was released on Tuesday, 30 August 2011.

Preliminary submissions

By the close of preliminary submissions at 5.00pm on Wednesday, 10 August, the VEC had received four submissions.

All four submitters argued for Maribyrnong City Council to be divided into three wards with three councillors representing each ward.

The President of the Footscray Traders Association outlined a three three-councillor ward structure that he believed would give residents 'better access to their elected representatives'.

The Proportional Representation Society favoured three wards with three councillors on the grounds that future elections in Maribyrnong City Council would be counted by the proportional representation method.

The Australian Greens (Vic) Inner West Branch highlighted Maribyrnong's unique position of having 'arguably the greatest cultural diversity of any Victorian Council' and being one of the most disadvantaged councils on socio-economic indicators. They argued that an increase to nine councillors would better accommodate the substantial increase in population and help with the extraordinary language and cultural diversity. They also believed that three wards would provide good representation to diverse communities in contrast to the current single-councillor ward system, which they stated, 'cuts across suburbs and splits widespread minority communities of interest'. In their view, 'having fewer than nine councillors with twelve years before the next review would be 'short-sighted and lead to an impossible workload for councillors'. Their submission included two possible electoral structures for consideration.

The fourth submitter, Mr Gunter, also outlined the diversity of the City and the increasingly divergent variety of socio-economic groups. In addition he pointed to the intense gentrification and transitions brought about by the State infrastructure projects as reasons for Maribyrnong to increase to nine councillors. Mr Gunter also outlined one of the same electoral structures put forward by the Australian Greens (Vic) Inner West Branch.

A list of submitters is available in Appendix One. Copies of the submissions can be viewed on the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au.

Preliminary options

The VEC began the process of determining an appropriate electoral structure by conducting an assessment of the existing seven single-councillor ward structure. Taking into consideration the potential growth areas from data provided by the Department of Planning and Community Development, Maribyrnong City Council and the public submissions, the VEC made the most minimal adjustments possible to the existing structure. This structure complied with the requirements of legislation by ensuring the number of voters represented by each councillor would remain within 10 per cent of the average number of voters for Maribyrnong over the next 12 years (in accordance with current projections). However, due to the vagaries of the population growth, it was necessary to redefine some of the wards. The changes were most noticeable in the south of the city with changes to Wattle Ward, Stony Creek Ward, Sheoak Ward, Saltwater Ward and Ironbark Ward. After attempting numerous permutations of the seven single-councillor ward structure, the VEC considered that this model most effectively captured the communities of interest in Maribyrnong and this structure was put forward as the preferred option in the preliminary report (Option A).

All four of the preliminary submissions argued for an increase to nine councillors and a three ward structure. The President of the Footscray Traders Association proposed a three ward structure in his preliminary report, which used logical boundaries and clearly grouped communities of interest together. However, when the VEC modelled the structure it became clear that the structure would not withstand the projected population shifts, making it very likely that the boundaries would have to be redrawn prior to the next review. The VEC tried various permutations of this model and discovered that with some minor adjustments, the model could absorb the growth with seven councillors. This option was therefore offered as an alternative option in the preliminary report (Option B).

The Australian Greens (Vic) Inner West branch and Mr Gunter also proposed a three three-councillor ward structure that worked well at containing the future population growth, had clear boundaries and also ensured the suburbs were not split by ward boundaries. The VEC put this option forward as another alternative option in the preliminary report (Option C) and invited feedback from the public to help evaluate the effectiveness of these options.

Summary of Recommended options

Option A (Preferred Option)

Maribyrnong City Council should remain with seven, single-councillor wards. Modifications should be made to the existing ward boundaries to accommodate future population growth.

Option B (Alternative Option)

Maribyrnong City Council should consist of three wards, two two-councillor wards and one three-councillor ward.

Option C (Alternative Option)

Maribyrnong City Council should consist of three three-councillor wards.

Public response

Response submissions

Response submissions on the Electoral Representation Review of Maribyrnong City Council opened on Wednesday, 30 August 2011 and closed at 5.00pm on Tuesday, 28 September 2011. Twenty-three response submissions were received.

Table 1: Preferences expressed in response submissions for each option

Option A (Preferred Option)	Option B (Alternative Option)	Option C (Alternative Option)	Other
0	11	15	7

Analysis of submissions

The majority of submitters favoured multi-member wards and indicated preferences for both Option B and Option C; as shown in the table above.

There was no support for the VEC's preferred option, although many submitters still expressed a preference for single-councillor wards. Several submitters perceived that the VEC was only interested in balancing the numbers of voters per ward rather than the communities of interest and requested the single-councillor option be re-examined. Opposition was particularly strong in relation to redrawing the boundaries to include Kingsville in Bluestone Ward instead of Wattle Ward and the proposed changes to Sheoak Ward, which would be redefined to encompass Seddon, parts of Yarraville and parts of Footscray.

The submissions conveyed a clear sense that Kingsville identifies as a community of interest and that Kingsville residents use Yarraville for their shopping and services, not West Footscray, and that they face different issues to residents in Bluestone Ward. Submitters considered the boundaries to be arbitrary and were also concerned that Yarraville would be divided which would impact on community cohesion.

Three submitters made reference to the communities of Seddon, Kingsville and Yarraville as the 'SKY community', stating these suburbs share similar aspirations and would be disrupted by the change in boundaries.

The State electoral boundaries were also mentioned by several people. Yarraville is already divided between two State Members of Parliament and residents expressed concern about also having to deal with two councillors.

The submitters that favoured a change to multi-member wards generally cited the ethnic and cultural diversity in Maribyrnong and argued that a change in structure to a multi-councillor ward system would achieve greater diversity in representation of the community. There was also a concern that with sweeping gentrification, disadvantaged constituents would risk becoming a minority in most of the single-councillor wards as proposed in Option A. Several submitters furthered this proposition, arguing it could lead to homogenisation 'with the communities that make Maribyrnong so richly diverse pushed out.'

There was a further call for Maribyrnong City Council to increase to nine councillors, particularly in the light of Footscray becoming a major activity centre and 'Capital of the West'. The Greens reiterated their concern that the VEC was underestimating the surge in residential development and that any one of the proposed large developments could cause an imbalance in the voter numbers and lead to a sub-divisional review.

A list of submitters, by name, is available in Appendix 1. Copies of the submissions can be viewed on the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au.

Public hearing

A public hearing was held at Maribyrnong City Council on Wednesday, 5 October 2011 at 6.30pm. Everyone who made a submission in response to the report was invited to speak and six people accepted. Members of the public were invited to attend and 12 people, including the speakers, were present.

To clarify the process undertaken by the VEC to reach the options outlined in the preliminary report, the VEC tabled a selection of maps at the hearing. The maps showed the models that were drawn up, but rejected for failing to absorb the projected growth or failing to adequately capture the communities of interest. Diagrams of these maps can be seen on pages 23-25.

The first speaker, Mr Maddern, spoke about Kingsville as a unique community of interest and explained how the triangle of roads that make up Kingsville have created an 'island wedge' and formed an active community that identifies with Yarraville for its shopping and services and not across Geelong Road, which he believed forms a physical barrier between Kingsville and West Footscray. He argued that Kingsville had been part of Bluestone Ward in the past and, in his opinion, it suffered from being at the bottom of that ward and did not receive adequate representation. When questioned by the panel about the multi-member wards, both of which group Kingsville with Yarraville, Mr Maddern argued that representation by single councillors is working well in Maribyrnong City Council and that it is easier to judge the performance of councillors in these structures because they cannot shelter behind each other and become more exposed.

Councillor Clarke of Wattle Ward asked the panel to consider the qualitative data not just the quantitative data and furthered his argument for the most minimal changes to be made. He stressed that the growth in Maribyrnong might not be easy to predict while we are 'living in uncertain times'. Councillor Clarke also shared his experience of the issues in these wards, explaining that Kingsville Primary School draws its children from Yarraville, Kingsville residents do their day-to-day shopping within Wattle Ward and not in West Footscray and that the sporting clubs were all a celebration of the Yarraville community. He could not think of any relationship Kingsville residents would have with West Footscray or north of the railway. He went on to explain that the issues faced by Kingsville residents related to trucks and the environment, particularly odours from Brooklyn and these were the same issues faced by Yarraville residents. He suggested a six to eight year time frame would be more realistic to fit in with the electoral cycle and urged the panel to see if a model that swept the growth anti-clockwise might work. The panel pointed out that the time period for the representation reviews was set out in legislation to be conducted every 12 years. The Electoral

Commissioner agreed to revisit the single-councillor ward models with the caveat that he was sure this has already been attempted and he was not optimistic it would work.

Janet Rice (a former Mayor of Maribyrnong) spoke for the Greens (VIC) Inner West Branch and argued that the difficulties posed by the uneven population growth meant that a multi-member ward structure was the only sensible structure. She made reference to the benefits of proportional representation and used the example of the last election to show that although there was widespread support for the Greens, the party was not elected. Ms Rice also made reference to the last review stating that she did not accept the arguments put forward to justify the decision of single-councillor wards, namely that minorities would be overshadowed by the more organised groups. She made the case that multi-member wards are more diverse and should therefore mean that minority voices are more easily heard.

When questioned by the panel about the proposed increase to nine councillors, Ms Rice explained that she worked on average 30 hours a week on council business when she was a councillor and that an increase in councillor numbers would make the workload more manageable, particularly as Footscray is benefiting from so much State Government support as one of the six main activity centres. She also argued that although the wards would be larger they would still be effective due to the compact communities and the ward boundaries would be easier to understand and more meaningful to the community.

Mr Gunter also spoke about the benefits of proportional representation and explained that the disadvantaged residents risked becoming a minority in the single-councillor wards due to the sweeping gentrification. He argued against the VEC taking a consistent State-wide approach and pointed to the fact that this was not a requirement set out in legislation under the *Local Government Act 1989*. Mr Gunter drew the panel's attention to the special circumstances described in the Electoral Representation Reviews of Greater Dandenong City Council and Yarra City Council and he argued the VEC could apply the same reasoning to Maribyrnong City Council with a clear conscience. He also argued that nine councillors could provide representation for residents when councillors are on leave, in ill health or have business commitments overseas. Mr Gunter concluded that for a community undergoing rapid change, nine was the minimum number of councillors that could offer good governance and the larger wards would broaden horizons of the councillors.

The Mayor of Maribyrnong, Councillor Sarah Carter, outlined the enormous amount of change and growth that was happening across the municipality. She

described the great disparity between the wards and the remarkable diversity that can be seen by just walking for ten minutes in one direction and also stressed Council's commitment to protecting Maribyrnong's diversity in the face of gentrification. She explained that gentrification brought about a new set of issues for the council to resolve and that council business now ranged from native vegetation to the vandalism of the Braybrook Sports Centre. She argued that Maribyrnong was a small council that benefited from the single-councillor wards as they enabled each councillor to have an intimate knowledge of their municipality with councillors drawn from the area that reflected their ward. She urged the panel not to break up any of the established communities of interest and reiterated Councillor Clarke's argument that the communities of interest should be the VEC's overarching concern.

The final speaker, Alexandra Marriott, spoke on behalf of Future Footscray, a newly established residents group. Ms Marriott spoke about their preference for options B and C and her frustration with the current model. She argued that communities of interest are complex and not just geographic and echoed Mr Gunter's argument that state-wide consistency should not overwhelm good decisions, pointing to the nexus of demographic and socio-economic disadvantage in Maribyrnong to argue that nine councillors would be able to offer better and more consistent representation. She furthered her argument by stating most residents would identify as 'constituents of Maribyrnong' and that multi-member wards allow councillors and constituents to have a more holistic approach and a broader identification with the entire City of Maribyrnong.

Findings and Recommendation

The VEC considered all the information from the written submissions and was pleased to be able to gain further insight from the six speakers who generously gave up their time at the public hearing.

Number of councillors

There was a clear perception in the submissions that the VEC was placing emphasis on the number of voters in each ward in preference to communities of interest and to some extent this is true. Legislation states that the number of voters represented by each councillor must be within 10 per cent of the average number of voters represented by all councillors. There is no deviation from this requirement and it must be the first consideration for all Electoral Representation Reviews. However, the VEC is also guided by its over-arching principle of keeping communities of interest together where possible and places a high priority on seeking to balance both issues.

The VEC accepts Mr Gunter's argument that taking a state-wide approach to the number of councillors for each municipality is not set out in legislation, the Act allows for a municipality to have between five and 12 councillors but does not specify how to decide the appropriate number. The VEC applies these provisions of the Act in a logical way, with those municipalities that have the largest numbers of voters having the most councillors, and those municipalities that have the least numbers of voters having fewer councillors.

Several submitters called for an increase in councillor numbers to nine, making reference to the special circumstances in Greater Dandenong City Council and Yarra City Council and emphasizing the similarities between these councils and Maribyrnong City Council. The VEC considered this argument carefully but believes that Yarra and Greater Dandenong are different cases with particular and unique needs. Although Yarra is a smaller municipality, it has significantly more voters than Maribyrnong and a very dense population that results in a concentration of inner urban issues, particularly the high number of licensed premises which involve amenity issues.

Greater Dandenong is one of the largest metropolitan municipalities and second in the SEIFA Index of disadvantage ahead of Maribyrnong City Council. At the time of the last representation review in 2008, over half the municipality's population was born overseas from 156 different countries. In addition, the municipality was absorbing a quarter of metropolitan Melbourne's immigrant humanitarian intake (over 900 people) each year.

The VEC recommended that both these councils would benefit from extra councillors in recognition of the levels of complexity that these special circumstances may bring to the responsibilities of the Council.

While the VEC accepts the arguments put forward in the submissions and at the public hearing that Maribyrnong has particular circumstances - a mobile and diverse population including large numbers of public housing tenants, a high proportion of people who do not speak English as their first language, an increasing number of highly educated residents, large industrial areas and significant redevelopment and investment – the VEC notes that Maribyrnong already has a very low ratio of voters to councillors (the second lowest in the metropolitan area) and as it stands with seven councillors it already compares favourably to Yarra City Council. Although Yarra has nine councillors it only has 315 extra voters per councillor than Maribyrnong.

The table below shows the metropolitan councils that have seven councillors, and includes Greater Dandenong and Yarra, for comparison:

Municipality	Area (Sq Km)	Number of councillors	Estimate of voters	Voters per councillor
Greater Dandenong	129	11	91,806	8,346
Banyule	63	7	92,755	13,251
Port Phillip	21	7	76,769	10,967
Bayside	37	7	70,456	10,065
Yarra	20	9	64,722	7,191
Hobsons Bay	65	7	63,042	9,006
Maribyrnong	31	7	52,543	7,506

If Maribyrnong were to increase to nine councillors it would have a disproportionately low voter to councillor ratio of 5,838. The VEC was not persuaded by the arguments at the public hearing or in the submissions that Maribyrnong has such extreme special needs to warrant this exceptional decrease to the voter ratio.

The VEC considers that seven councillors should be able to deal with the diversity, disadvantage and the future investment in the City and still offer fair and equitable representation to the growing population.

Electoral Structure

Once the VEC decided that the seven is the appropriate number of councillors for Maribyrnong City Council, the electoral structure became a decision between seven single-councillor wards and the multi-member ward structure of two two-councillor wards and one three-councillor ward.

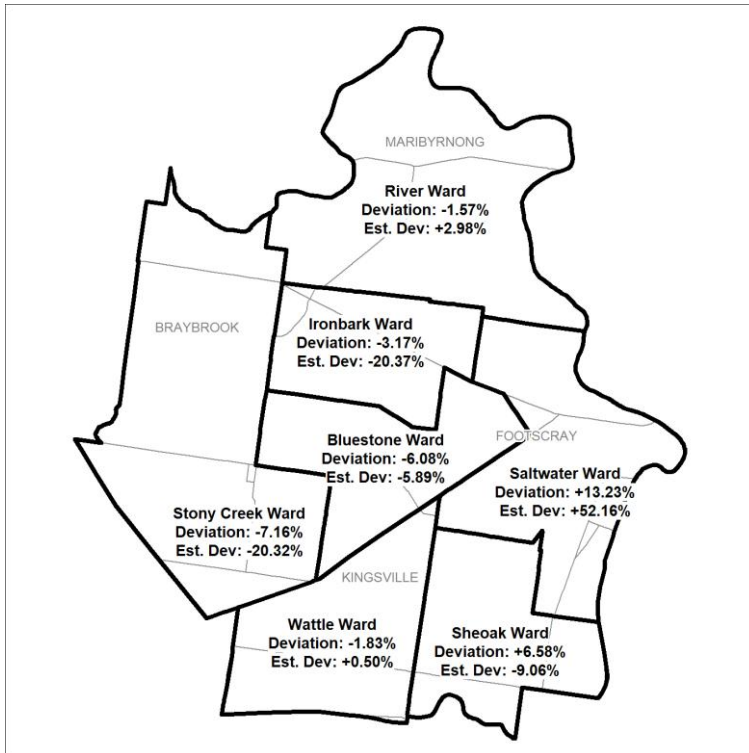
The VEC's preferred option in the preliminary report was for single-councillor wards based on the most minimal adjustments to the existing structure. This option aimed to balance the requirements of the legislation with the needs of the communities of interest. Numerous permutations of this model were prepared, and the preferred option was chosen as the model that most closely reflected the current structure and its communities of interest however, even this option would affect 13,864 voters by placing them in different wards.

Following the public hearing, the VEC revisited all the single-councillor models including the model suggested by Councillor Michael Clarke of pushing the growth westwards. Each of these options resulted in significant changes to every ward. The majority of the growth is in the east and each ward would have to be significantly altered to accommodate this growth.

The diagrams on the following pages show the maps tabled at the public hearing. The extreme deviations in voter numbers illustrate the difficulties of balancing the numbers amongst the seven wards to keep them within the 10 per cent tolerance level required by legislation.

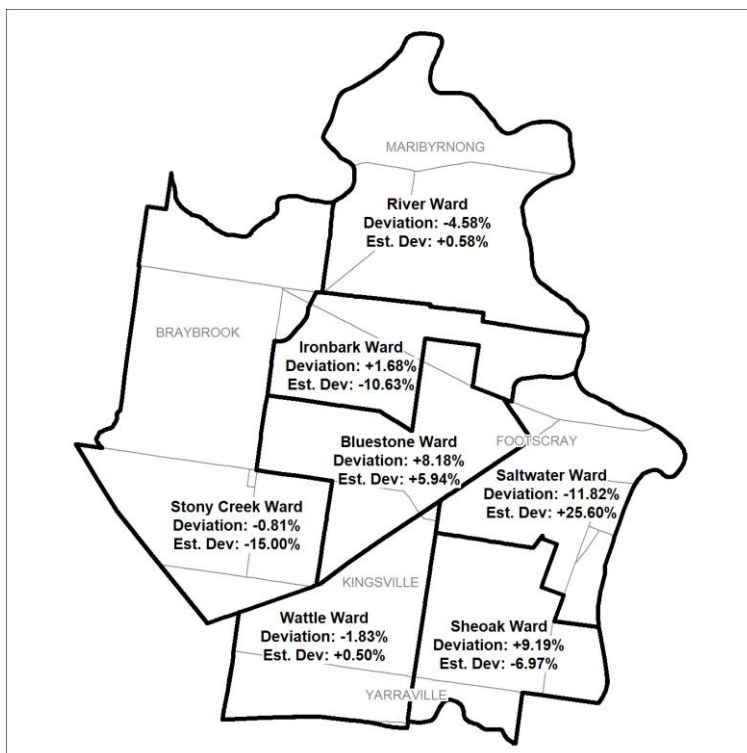
All maps use data projected to 2021

Map 1: Current ward structure



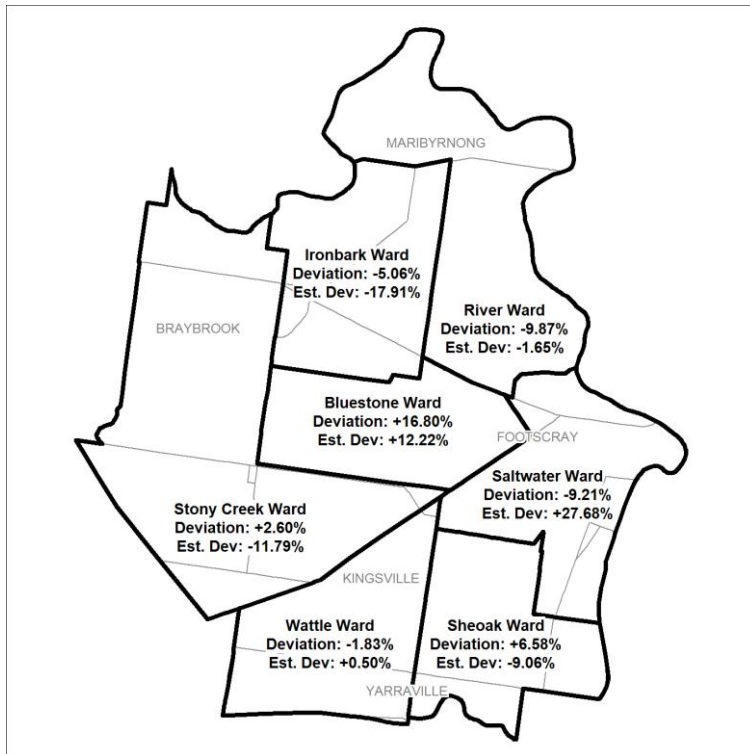
The current structure would quickly become unbalanced. In the east, Saltwater Ward would have an estimated deviation of +52.16% while in the west, Stony Creek Ward is estimated to have a deviation of -20.32%.

Map 2: Single-councillor ward option with minimal changes (Kingsville in Wattle Ward)



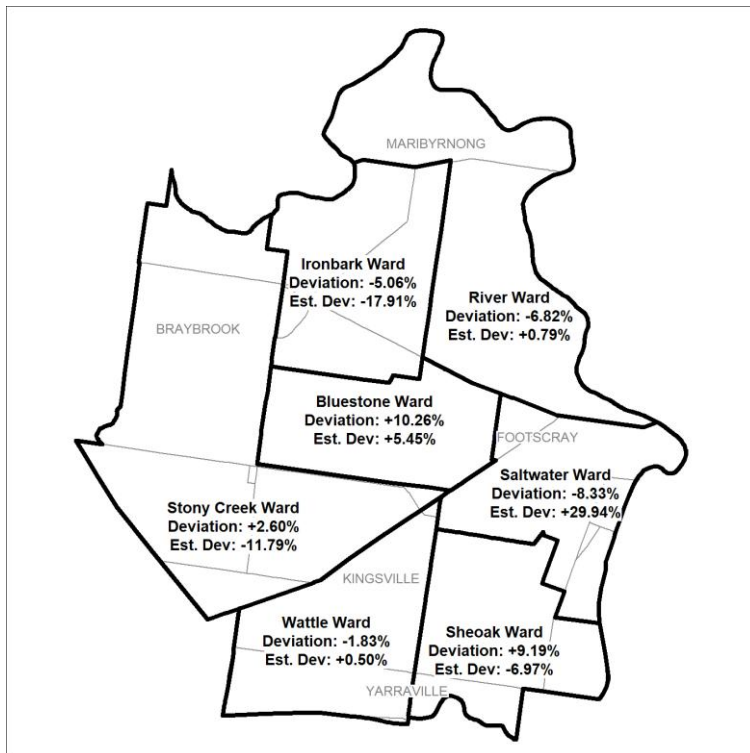
This model reflects significant deviations in Saltwater Ward of +25.60% and -15.00% for Stony Creek Ward

Map 3: Setting Saltwater deviation as low as possible

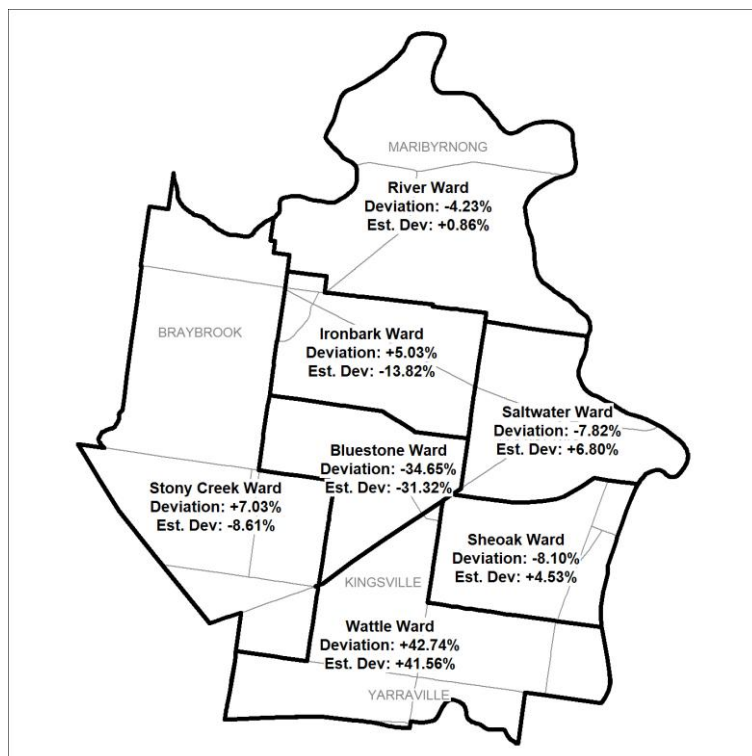


Trying to balance the numbers by setting Saltwater Ward very low still results in a projected deviation of -11.79% for Stony Creek Ward and a projected deviation of +27.68% for Saltwater Ward over the next ten years.

Map 4: Keeping Kingsville in Wattle Ward



This version results in significant deviations for Saltwater Ward of +29.94% and 17.91% for Ironbark Ward.

Map 5: Single councillor ward variation grouping Kingsville and Yarraville

This option would result in huge deviations for Bluestone Ward of -31.32% and +41.56% for Wattle Ward.

The issue of the uneven growth across the municipality cannot be ignored; despite the VEC's efforts to find an acceptable single ward structure it proved impossible to balance the wards and the communities of interest. The evidence provided in the submissions persuaded the VEC that although the preferred option was the only viable option that would conform to the legislation, it did not reflect the communities of interest. The VEC acknowledges the views expressed in the response submissions and at the public hearing that Kingsville is a unique community of interest that identifies strongly with Yarraville and that it is not ideal to centre Sheoak Ward on the small community of Seddon, with parts of Yarraville and Footscray.

The VEC now considers that a multi-councillor ward structure is the appropriate structure for Maribyrnong City Council.

The larger wards will be less susceptible to changes caused by the uneven population growth, which is especially important in Maribyrnong City Council, where, as Councillor Clarke pointed out, the growth is particularly difficult to predict. It will therefore offer better protection against subdivision reviews over the next 12 years.

The larger wards are also the most effective way of grouping large communities with similar interests together with the added advantage of offering clear and easily identifiable ward boundaries.

As one of the smallest metropolitan councils in area, the VEC is confident that councillors will still be accessible to residents and that local issues will not be overridden, which can be a concern in geographically large wards.

Under a multi-councillor ward structure, councillors will be elected by proportional representation. This allows for candidates representing large minorities and candidates representing majorities to generally have a reasonable expectation of becoming elected and in turn encourages the election of a diverse council. The VEC notes the concerns of the Proportional Representation Society that having two two-councillor wards might result in the issue of the majority support not electing a majority of councillors within that ward but, the VEC does not establish structures and boundaries on these principles. It determines the number of councillors needed to provide fair and equitable representation to the voters within the municipality and then establishes the structure and boundaries that best represent the communities of interest. The VEC also notes the Proportional Representation Society did select Option B as their second choice in preference to the single-councillor ward option which they stated 'entrench majority support in certain areas and often lead to councils not reflecting the range of views of voters as a whole'.

Mr Gunter also referred to this issue in his response submission and suggested that the two two-councillor wards could be combined into one four-councillor ward. Whilst the VEC recognises some merit in this concept, it formed the view that it could lead to a north/south divide.

Having considered all the submissions and a wide range of ward configurations, the VEC now considers that Option B (based on an original recommendation in a preliminary submission from the Footscray Traders Association) offers the fairest and most equitable representation for Maribyrnong City Council.

Two original ward names and one suburb name have been used for the purposes of this report. The only suggestion of ward names received during the submission process was for a change of names to reflect the aboriginal heritage of the City. A wide consultation process with the community and aboriginal groups would need to be undertaken for this change to be effected and it would fall outside the timelines of this review. The VEC considers it appropriate for Maribyrnong City Council to consult further with the community about potential ward names if required.

Recommendation

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) recommends that Maribyrnong City Council should consist of seven councillors to be elected from three wards - two two-councillor wards and one three-councillor ward.

This is a change to the existing structure of seven single-councillor wards.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. H. Tully', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

S. H. Tully

Electoral Commissioner

Appendix 1: List of submitters

Preliminary submissions were received from:

Name
Australian Greens (Vic) Inner West Branch
Footscray Traders Association
Gunter, A
Proportional Representation Society of Australia

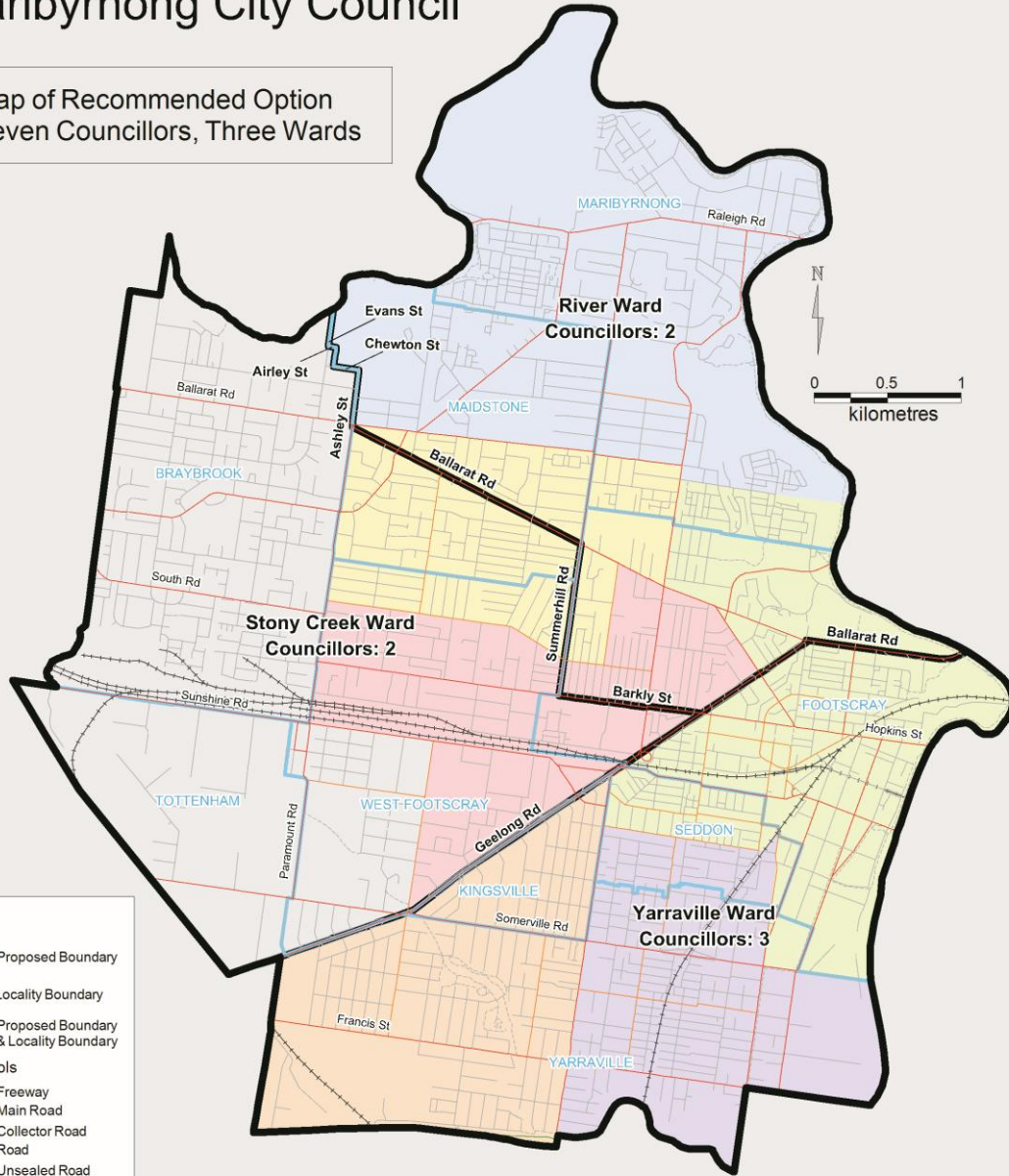
Response submissions were received from:

Australian Greens (Vic) Inner West Branch
Ashley Chiew, A
Black, L
Clarke, M
Footscray People for Reasonable Development
Future Footscray
Gaitia, A
Gunter, A
MacFarlane, L
Maddern, F
Maribyrnong City Council
Marsden J
McQueen, J
Proportional Representation Society of Australia
Quinn, T
Robinson, A
Symons, J
Terrill, V
The Yarraville Club
Thomas, L
Yarraville ALP
Yarraville Community Centre of Management
Zakharoz, M

Appendix 2: Map

Maribyrnong City Council

Map of Recommended Option
Seven Councillors, Three Wards



Legend

- Proposed Boundary
- Locality Boundary
- Proposed Boundary & Locality Boundary

Map Symbols

- Freeway
- Main Road
- Collector Road
- Road
- Unsealed Road
- River/Creek
- Railway Line
- Lake

Existing Wards

- Bluestone Ward
- Ironbark Ward
- River Ward
- Saltwater Ward
- Sheoak Ward
- Stony Creek Ward
- Wattle Ward

Ward	Councillors	Voters	Deviation	area_sqkm
River	2	15,010	-0.02%	9.77
Stony Creek	2	15,734	+4.81%	11.6
Yarraville	3	21,799	-3.19%	9.86
Totals for all Electorates	7	52,543	-3.19% to +4.81%	31.23
Average		7,506		10.41



Map prepared by the Victorian Electoral Commission
Vicmap spatial data provided by Department of Sustainability and Environment
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