



Final Report

2015 Cardinia Shire Council Subdivision Review

Thursday 19 November 2015

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Contents

1 Recommendation	4
2 Review background	5
2.1 Legislative basis	5
2.2 Scope	5
2.3 The VEC's approach	6
3 Current review.....	7
3.1 Council background.....	7
3.2 Subdivision review preliminary report.....	7
3.3 Public response	10
4 Recommendation	11
4.1 The VEC's findings.....	11
4.2 The VEC's recommendation	11
Appendix 1: Public involvement.....	12
Appendix 2: Recommended ward boundaries map	13

1 Recommendation

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) recommends adjustments to the boundaries of the following wards within Cardinia Shire Council:

- Central Ward
- Port Ward.

This recommendation is submitted to the Minister for Local Government as required by the *Local Government Act 1989*.

Recommended ward boundaries are illustrated in the map in Appendix 2.

2 Review background

2.1 Legislative basis

The *Local Government Act 1989* (the Act) requires the VEC to conduct a subdivision review to ensure the equitable representation of all voters in a municipality.

A subdivision review considers adjustments to ward boundaries so that the number of voters represented by each councillor is within 10 per cent of the average number of voters per councillor for the whole municipality. This is known as the 'equality requirement'.

As population changes affect voter numbers and distribution in subdivided municipalities, one or more wards may be unlikely to meet this requirement at the next general election. A subdivision review considers adjustments to existing ward boundaries so the voter-to-councillor ratio in all wards meets the equality requirement.

Subdivision reviews only apply to subdivided councils:

- that are not scheduled for an electoral representation review before the next general election and
- where, two years before the council is to hold a general election, the VEC considers one or more wards are unlikely to meet the equality requirement at the time of the next general election.

The VEC notified the Minister for Local Government that Port Ward was unlikely to meet the equality requirement at the 2016 general election. The Minister then advised the VEC that a subdivision review of Cardinia Shire Council was required before the general election.

2.2 Scope

A subdivision review only considers the location of ward boundaries. A subdivision review cannot consider changes to the number of councillors or wards.

These changes are considered in a council's periodic electoral representation review. The next scheduled representation review for Cardinia Shire Council will be held before the 2024 general election. An earlier review may take place if required.

A subdivision review also cannot:

- change the external boundaries of the municipality
- divide municipalities or
- amalgamate municipalities.

These changes can only be made by an Order in Council.

2.3 The VEC's approach

Developing recommended changes

Recommended changes to ward boundaries are modelled using both population growth data provided by .id (Informed Decisions) Pty Ltd¹, and voter statistics prepared by the VEC.

Where possible, models are developed using a 'minimal change' approach, so recommended changes affect as few voters as possible.

The VEC also considers the following factors in developing its recommendation:

- relevant issues identified in the council's last representation review
- communities of interest
- geographic features
- means of transport and traffic routes and
- the likelihood of population changes before the next election.

Public involvement

Public input is accepted by the VEC via:

- written submissions to the subdivision review preliminary report and
- a public hearing for people to speak about their submission.

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 input, independent research, and analysis of all relevant factors.

¹ .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.

3 Current review

3.1 Council background

Cardinia Shire is located on the south-eastern fringe of the Melbourne metropolitan area, some 60 kilometres from the centre of Melbourne. Its population was estimated at 87,008 in 2014, making it one of the smaller metropolitan/rural fringe municipalities, but it is growing rapidly. The Shire's population is predicted to increase by some 64 per cent, to 142,791, by 2026. As in many growing municipalities, the Shire's median age (34) is lower than that for Victoria as a whole (37), and the population includes high proportions of couples with children and households with a mortgage.

In terms of physical size (1,282 square kilometres), Cardinia Shire is the second largest fringe municipality. The great bulk of the Shire's area is rural in character, but a large and growing proportion of the population live in urban areas. Broadly, the Shire falls into three main parts:

1. The urban growth corridor runs east from Beaconsfield through Officer to Pakenham. This area is growing rapidly, with a young age profile, and includes most of the Shire's residents who speak a language other than English. The area is socially disparate, including pockets of social disadvantage as well as affluent areas.
2. The northern hills cover the foothills of the Dandenong Ranges, and include Beaconsfield Upper, Emerald, Cockatoo, Gembrook and Maryknoll. This is a rural and semi-rural area, and its population is distinguished by an older age profile and generally low levels of social disadvantage.
3. The southern plains include the railway towns east of Pakenham (Nar Nar Goon, Tynong, Garfield and Bunyip) and the fertile plain in the south around Koo Wee Rup and Lang Lang. This area is strongly rural, has an older profile than the urban area, and has lower levels of tertiary education and lower average incomes.²

3.2 Subdivision review preliminary report

The VEC's subdivision review of Cardinia Shire Council commenced with the release of a preliminary report on Tuesday 22 September. The report contained proposed ward boundary changes based on analysis of enrolment information.

Cardinia Shire Council currently consists of nine councillors elected from one four-councillor ward, one three-councillor ward and one two-councillor ward. The 2011–12 representation

² Analysis derived from Cardinia Shire Community Profile <http://profile.id.com.au/cardinia>; and *Victoria in Future 2015* delwp.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/308265/Cardinia_VIF2015_One_Page_Profile.pdf

review of the municipality recommended an increase from seven to nine councillors to cater for the Shire's rapid growth, with associated development and planning pressures. The VEC recommended a new ward structure, with the two single-councillor wards combined in one two-councillor ward, aiming to absorb the differential growth patterns within the Shire.

Diagram 1 details this structure and voter statistics by ward as at 29 June 2015.

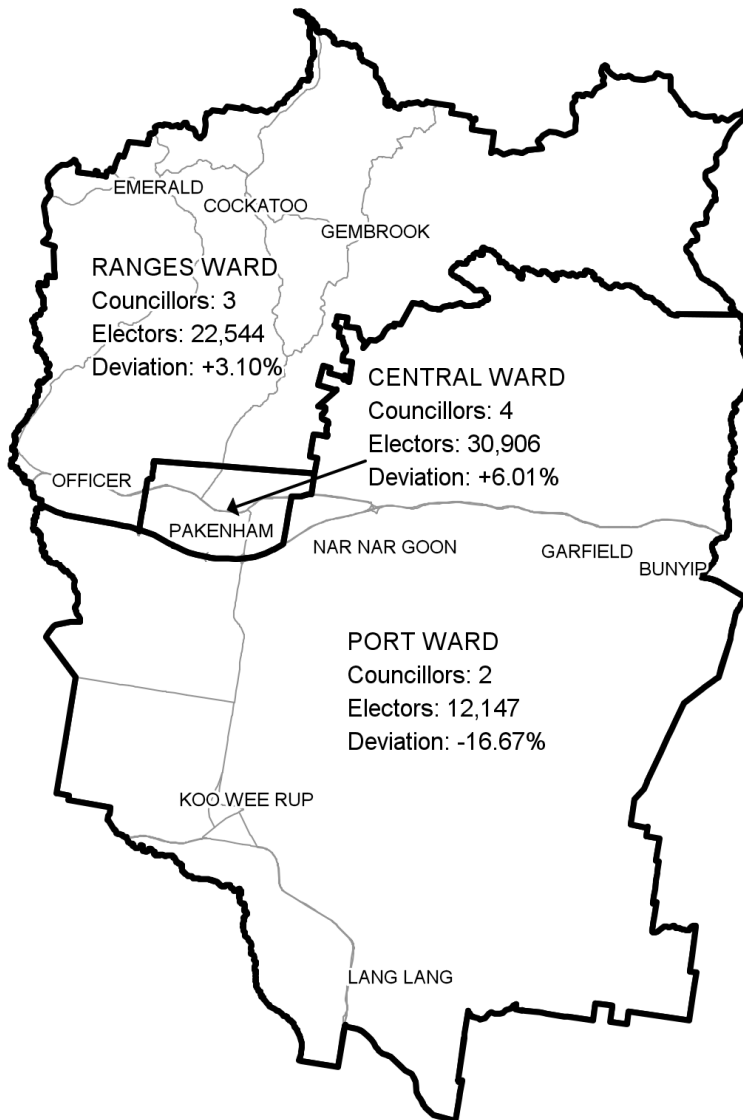


Diagram 1: Cardinia Shire Council electoral structure and voter statistics.

Port Ward's enrolment is more than 10 per cent below the average for the Shire. Consequently, the ward boundaries needed to be adjusted, with Port Ward gaining voters from a neighbouring ward or wards, to ensure that the ward's enrolment would be within the 10 per cent tolerance at the 2016 Council election.

Cardinia Shire's rapid and uneven growth has made it difficult to devise enduring ward boundaries. In the 2005 representation review, the VEC recommended a change from seven

single-councillor wards to one three-councillor ward, one two-councillor ward and two single-councillor wards partly to increase the longevity of ward boundaries, while capturing communities of interest. Within three years of the 2005 representation review, enrolment for Port Ward (one of the single-councillor wards) had fallen to 10.96 per cent below average, and a subdivision review was required. The boundary between Port and Central Wards was adjusted, transferring voters into Port Ward to bring the ward within the 10 per cent threshold for the 2008 general election.

By 2011, three of the four wards were outside the 10 per cent tolerance. The 2011–12 representation review combined wards and included growth areas in each ward so that growth would be balanced and enrolments would stay within tolerance as long as possible.

The 2012 ward boundaries allowed for anticipated residential development in Port Ward south of the Princes Freeway at Pakenham. However, this development has not occurred, and is not likely to do so for some time. As a result, Port Ward's enrolment has relatively declined to well below the 10 per cent tolerance.

To bring its enrolment back within the 10 per cent threshold, Port Ward needed to absorb voters from one or both of the other wards. It would be undesirable to change Ranges Ward, which has very clear boundaries with Port Ward along the Princes Freeway and along locality boundaries north of Pakenham. As the rural area north of Pakenham is relatively sparsely populated, any transfer of voters from Ranges Ward in this area would involve an undesirably large boundary change.

The VEC considered that the boundary change should be with Central Ward. Central Ward's enrolment is 6.01 per cent above the average, which means that it could better afford the transfer of voters to Port Ward. Central Ward's southern boundary with Port Ward follows the Princes Freeway, but its eastern boundary, along Ryan Road, is less well defined. The VEC proposed to transfer part of the eastern edge of the Pakenham urban area from Central Ward to Port Ward.

Advertisements were placed in the following newspapers notifying the public of the proposed changes:

- *Ranges Trader Mail*, Tuesday, 22 September 2015
- *Pakenham Gazette*, Wednesday, 23 September 2015
- *Pakenham News*, Thursday, 24 September 2015

3.3 Public response

Public submissions

The VEC accepted submissions responding to the preliminary report from Tuesday 22 September until Thursday 22 October. The VEC received one public submission. The submission is discussed in Section 4.1.

A list of people who made a submission can be found in Appendix 1.

Public hearing

The VEC scheduled a public hearing for those wishing to speak about their submission at 7.00 pm on Tuesday 27 October at the Cardinia Shire Council Chamber Civic Centre, 20 Siding Avenue, Officer. There were no requests to speak so the hearing was not held.

4 Recommendation

4.1 The VEC's findings

Public submissions

The VEC received one public submission, from Cardinia Shire Council. The Council agreed with the VEC's proposal to transfer part of the eastern edge of the Pakenham urban area from Central Ward to Port Ward.

Proposed ward boundaries

The VEC takes a minimal change approach to subdivision reviews. The aim of the review is to ensure that the numbers of voters enrolled for the wards are within the allowable 10 per cent tolerance at the time of the following Council election. Within that overriding numbers requirement, the VEC takes into account community of interest and clear boundaries, as these assist with representation.

Under the proposed boundaries, a total of 2,498 voters (3.81 per cent of Cardinia Shire voters) would be transferred from Central Ward to Port Ward. The transfer would reduce Central Ward's enrolment to 2.57 per cent below the average, and increase Port Ward's enrolment to 0.49 per cent above the average. These deviations from the average allow for the diverging growth patterns being experienced by the two wards (rapid growth in Central Ward and relative decline in Port Ward). The VEC is confident that all wards will remain within the 10 per cent tolerance at least until the October 2016 general election.

Under the VEC's proposal, the eastern boundary of Central Ward is shifted to the west by some two kilometres. The proposed boundary, following the Princes Highway, Racecourse Road and Koo Wee Rup Road, is clear. Although the change would split Pakenham to a degree, part of the rural fringe of Pakenham is already in Port Ward. The bulk of the Pakenham urban area is still contained in Central Ward.

The VEC considers that the proposed boundaries should be adopted.

4.2 The VEC's recommendation

The VEC recommends adjustments to the boundaries of the following wards within Cardinia Shire Council:

- Central Ward
- Port Ward

Recommended ward boundaries are illustrated in the map in Appendix 2.

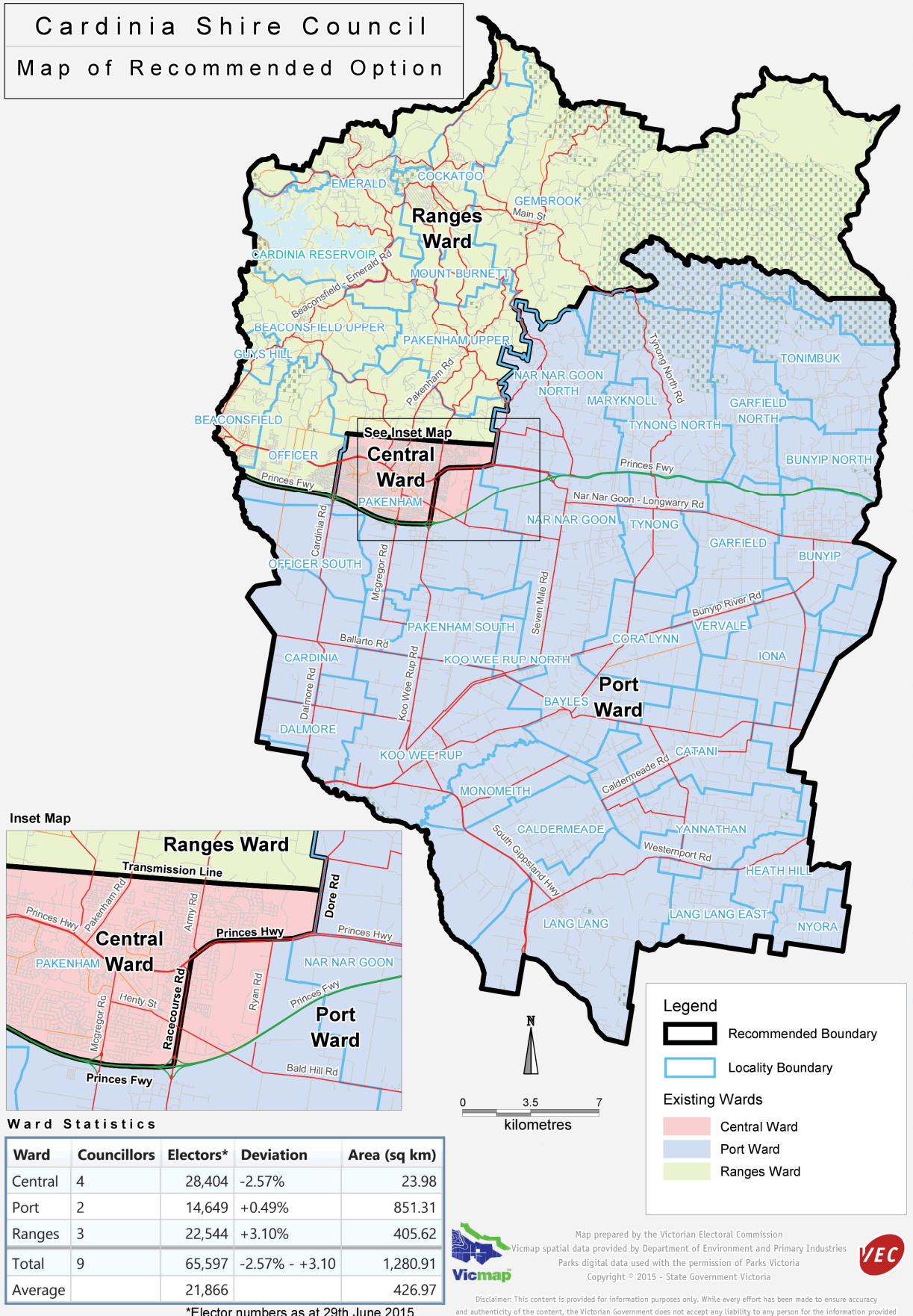
Appendix 1: Public involvement

Public submissions

A public submission was received from:

Cardinia Shire Council

Appendix 2: Recommended ward boundaries map



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