

FINAL REPORT
Electoral Representation Review
City of Greater Bendigo



3 May 2004

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1 Recommendation

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) is required under the legislation for the electoral representation review to make a recommendation to the Minister for Local Government as to the number of councillors and the electoral structure that provide fair and equitable representation for the voters of the City of Greater Bendigo (s.219D *Local Government Act 1989*).

The VEC recommends that the City of Greater Bendigo consist of nine councillors to be elected from nine single-councillor wards.

This recommended structure is indicated in the map on the back page of this report.

2 Background

2.1 Legislative basis

The *Local Government (Democratic Reform) Act 2003* which amended the *Local Government Act 1989* (the Act), was passed by the Parliament in Spring 2003. The amendments included provisions for independent electoral representation reviews of all Victorian councils. In accordance with this new legislation, the City of Greater Bendigo received notice pursuant to s.219C of the Act from the Minister for Local Government that an electoral representation review was to be conducted for the City of Greater Bendigo. The notice appeared in the *Victoria Government Gazette* on 15 December 2003.

Under the legislation, a council is required to appoint an electoral commission to conduct an electoral representation review. On 21 January 2004 the City of Greater Bendigo appointed the VEC to conduct the review.

The purpose of an electoral representation review is to recommend an electoral structure that provides fair and equitable representation for the persons who are entitled to vote at a general election of the Council. Matters to be considered by the review are:

- a) the number of councillors;
- b) the electoral structure of the City (whether the City should be unsubdivided or divided into wards; and, if the City is to be subdivided, the number of wards and the number of councillors to be elected for each ward); and
- c) if the recommendation is for the City to be divided into wards, boundaries for the wards that will:
 - i. provide for a fair and equitable division of the City; and
 - ii. ensure equality of representation, through the number of voters represented by each councillor being within 10% of the average number of voters represented by all councillors.

2.2 Municipality profile

The City of Greater Bendigo was formed in 1994 following the amalgamation of the former Shires of Huntly, Strathfieldsaye, Marong and McIvor, the Borough of Eaglehawk and the City of Bendigo. Encompassing 3000 square kilometres, it is geographically one of the largest municipalities in Victoria and is the State's third largest urban centre.

The City of Greater Bendigo is a dynamic municipality with a considerable population growth rate. Since the City was proclaimed in 1994, the population has increased

from 82,950 to 93,073 in 2003. This increase represents a growth of 12% over nine years. Similarly, since the first elections for the City of Greater Bendigo Council in 1996, the number of enrolled voters for the seven single-councillor wards has increased from 63,545 to 77,291 in 2004. This represents a growth in the number of electors of 22% over the nine year period.

2.3 Current electoral structure

At present, the City of Greater Bendigo has seven wards with one councillor representing each ward.

3 Electoral representation review process

3.1 Public consultation

The VEC developed a community consultation framework for the electoral representation review that focussed on:

- creating an awareness of the review process through an advertising and public relations strategy;
- conducting a public meeting to outline the review process and to respond to questions from members of the community;
- communicating with the City of Greater Bendigo community through the use of media releases and the VEC website;
- ensuring the review process remains transparent by publishing all preliminary submissions and making them available to the public;
- releasing a Preliminary Report on 22 March 2004 and making the Report available at the Council offices, the VEC and on the VEC website;
- conducting a public hearing at the Council offices on 22 April 2004; and
- providing information for those persons or organisations with an interest in the review process, by establishing a help line for responding to community questions and distributing a guide to assist those persons who decided to make preliminary submissions for consideration by the VEC.

3.2 Advertising

The VEC published the following advertisements for the representation review:

- A public notice of the review (in accordance with s.219F(4) of the Act), which detailed the process for the review and called for public submissions, appearing in the *Bendigo Advertiser* on 31 January 2004 and 2 February 2004, in the *Bendigo Weekly* on 4 February 2004 and in the *Heathcote McIvor Times* on 5 February 2004;
- A general advertisement covering several electoral representation reviews and including the City of Greater Bendigo review, appearing in the *Herald Sun* on 13 February 2004;
- A notice of the Preliminary Report, appearing in the *Bendigo Advertiser* on 22 March 2004 and in the *Heathcote McIvor Times* on 24 March 2004; and
- A notice of the public hearing, appearing in the *Bendigo Advertiser* on 19 April 2004 and in the *Heathcote McIvor Times* on 21 April 2004.

The VEC also publicised the representation review by:

- Broadcasting radio advertisements over Bendigo regional radio stations, 3BO FM and Star FM 91.9, during the week commencing 1 February 2004; and
- Providing information during an interview on ABC regional radio on 13 April 2004.

See Appendix 9.1.

3.3 Media releases

Media releases designed to supplement the paid advertising were distributed to the *Bendigo Advertiser* on 6 February 2004 and 22 March 2004 and to the *Heathcote McIvor Times* and the *Bendigo Weekly* on 22 March 2004. See Appendix 9.2.

3.4 VEC website

The VEC used its website to deliver information and to provide transparency in the review process. All preliminary submissions were posted to the website to facilitate public access to this information. The VEC website can be viewed at www.vec.vic.gov.au

3.5 VEC support for public enquiries regarding the review

The VEC established a help line to assist with public enquiries concerning the process for the electoral representation review. In addition the VEC developed and distributed a guide for those persons and organisations wanting to make a submission. A copy of the guide is attached. See Appendix 9.3.

4 Consideration of the number of councillors

The electoral representation review provisions of the *Local Government Act 1989* provide that the purpose of the review is to consider two matters. The first matter is the number of councillors for the municipality and the second matter is the electoral structure of the municipality.

In regard to the number of councillors, the legislation provides that a council must consist of not fewer than 5 councillors and not more than 12 councillors (s.5B(1)).

The legislation does not prescribe the matters to be considered by the reviewer in recommending the number of councillors for a municipality.

The VEC has therefore been required to identify the appropriate matters to take into account when considering the number of councillors.

Parliament has provided for a range of councillors from 5 to 12 that can constitute a council. The range of councillors was to provide for those councils that have large numbers of voters and those that have a smaller number of voters. The size of councils in terms of voters varies from 4,131 to 155,000. The VEC has formed the view that Parliament intended these provisions to work in a logical way, with those councils that have the largest number of voters having the most councillors, and those councils that have the least number of voters having fewer councillors.

In most cases, the electoral structure and the number of councillors was established by the Commissioners when local government was restructured between 1993 and 1995. Commissioners did not have the benefit of a State-wide reference when considering the

appropriate number of councillors. The result was a degree of disparity in councillor numbers for similar types of councils. The VEC has produced a table that lists each council and the councillor to voter ratio. The table differentiates between rural, regional and metropolitan councils. The table has been a valuable reference point in considering the appropriate number of councillors by recognising the different circumstances and needs between these categories of councils. This information was made available to the public in the information guide. The information has enabled the VEC to compare a council being reviewed with councils with similar voter numbers and size.

The VEC also considers whether the number of voters in the municipality is anticipated to increase or decline in the period between reviews (8 years). Population forecasts produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Victorian Department of Infrastructure have been used to assist the VEC in making its assessment.

In addition, the VEC considers any special issues or circumstances that may require a council to have more councillors than would otherwise be the case. The public consultation process provides valuable information regarding any such issues or circumstances.

In considering representation options for each council, the VEC takes into account submissions received. Submissions are not weighed up in numbers, as this would constitute a "straw poll" but rather, the arguments and local knowledge and perspectives they present are taken into consideration in coming to a view on the most appropriate number of councillors.

The VEC is implementing the approach outlined above as the way to fulfil its legislative obligation to make its recommendation to the Minister on the appropriate number of councillors.

5 Preliminary Report

In accordance with s.219F(6) of the Act, the VEC produced a Preliminary Report containing the VEC's proposed options for the City of Greater Bendigo. In developing these proposed options, the VEC considered preliminary submissions made by various individuals and organisations, as well as various other relevant factors.

5.1 Preliminary submissions

By the closing time for submissions (5.00 pm Monday, 1 March 2004), the VEC had received 13 preliminary submissions.

Among the submissions, opinion regarding the number of councillors varied. Support ranged from a total of five to 12 councillors. Opinion regarding the electoral structure and voting system options also varied. Some submissions favoured the municipality remaining subdivided into wards, with either single or multiple councillor representation for each ward. Other submissions preferred an unsubdivided municipality and a system of voting by proportional representation.

See Appendix 9.4 for details of those persons and organisations making preliminary submissions. Copies of the submissions can be downloaded from the VEC website, www.vec.vic.gov.au

5.2 Other relevant factors

In formulating its recommendations for the Preliminary Report, the VEC took into account such other relevant factors as:

- The requirements of the Act regarding the number of councillors permitted;
- Fairness and equity of representation;
- The total number of voters and their geographical distribution;
- Anticipated changes in the total number of voters;
- The level of representation of councillors for similar sized Victorian municipalities;
- The workload and responsibilities of councillors including council business requirements;
- Communities of interest within the municipality;
- Spreading developing areas over a number of wards; and
- Using logical boundaries such as main roads, physical features and existing boundaries for easy identification of wards.

5.3 Recommended options

Having considered the preliminary submissions made by various individuals and organisations and all other relevant factors, the VEC proposed two options for public comment.

The VEC's preferred option was:

- **That the City of Greater Bendigo consist of nine councillors to be elected from nine single-councillor wards.**

The VEC's alternative option was:

- That the City of Greater Bendigo consist of seven councillors to be elected from seven single-councillor wards.

Detailed maps of these two options, showing recommended ward boundaries, were included in the Preliminary Report.

6 Response submissions

In accordance with s.219F(7) of the Act, the VEC invited written submissions in response to the Preliminary Report. The VEC required that these submissions be limited to commenting on the proposals set forward in the Report.

By the close of submissions at 5.00 pm on Tuesday 13 April, the VEC had received 14 response submissions.

As with the preliminary submissions, opinion regarding the number of councillors varied. Support ranged from a total of five to 12 councillors. Opinion regarding the electoral structure and voting system options also varied. Of the 14 response submissions received, four preferred an unsubdivided municipality and a system of voting by proportional representation while the remaining 10 supported the municipality remaining subdivided into wards.

Options proposed in these response submissions which were not recommended in the Preliminary Report were considered to be outside the scope of the final stage of the review.

See Appendix 9.4 for details of those persons and organisations making response submissions. Copies of the submissions can be downloaded from the VEC website, www.vec.vic.gov.au

7 Public hearing

A public hearing was held at the City of Greater Bendigo Council offices on Thursday, 22 April 2004. All persons who had made submissions in response to the VEC's Preliminary Report were invited to speak to their submissions and seven individuals chose to do so. Members of the public were invited to attend and 13 people, including those speaking at the hearing, were present.

8 Findings and recommendations

In formulating the most appropriate electoral structure for the City of Greater Bendigo, the VEC has been concerned to provide fair and equitable electoral representation for the persons who are entitled to vote at a general election of the Council. The VEC has also been conscious of the need to generate a forward thinking model that will serve the City of Greater Bendigo through the next eight years. In coming to its recommendation, the VEC has been guided by several crucial issues but consideration has not been dominated by any single factor.

In making its recommendation the VEC has taken into account the City of Greater Bendigo's growing population. As has been previously noted, the population of the City of Greater Bendigo has risen considerably in the past 10 years. Following amalgamation in 1994, seven councillors were elected to represent 63,545 voters in seven wards. Now, a decade later, the same number of councillors represent almost 14,000 more voters. In comparison with other regional cities, the voter/councillor ratio in the City is second only to that of the City of Greater Geelong, which currently has the maximum number of councillors allowed under the legislation. Under the present seven-councillor system, each councillor in the City of Greater Bendigo represents an average of 11,042 voters compared to the State average for regional cities of 3,717. Under the proposed nine-ward structure, each councillor would represent an average of 8,588 voters (see table below).

Municipality	Area (Kms.)	No. on Roll	No. of Crs.	No of voters Per Cr.	Electoral Structure
Ballarat	739	66468	9	7385	9 single Cr. wards
Greater Bendigo (current)	2995	77291	7	11042	7 single Cr. wards
Greater Bendigo (proposed)	2995	77291	9	8588	9 single Cr. wards
Greater Geelong	1275	155034	12 (max.)	12920	12 single Cr. wards
Greater Shepparton	2420	39740	7	5677	Unsubdivided
Latrobe	1405	58131	9	6459	9 single Cr. wards
Mildura	22092	36333	9	4037	Unsubdivided

Submissions in response to the Preliminary Report were split on the issue of councillor numbers and views expressed at the public hearing were similarly divided. Support for the VEC's preferred option of a nine single-councillor ward structure was evident but was slightly outweighed by the support for the VEC's alternative option of seven single-councillor wards.

Arguments in favour of increasing councillor numbers were based heavily on the proposition that the City of Greater Bendigo's significant population growth has necessitated additional electoral representation. Tied in with this was the suggestion that since councillor workload is based not only on voter numbers but also on levels of commercial and industrial development, growth in areas like Strathfieldsaye has contributed to this need for increased representation.

In contrast, those opposed to an increase in councillor numbers argued that since the City is functioning well under the current seven-councillor system, the Council structure should not be altered.

It was claimed in various submissions that the City of Greater Bendigo Council is operating successfully with seven councillors. Those in favour of retaining the status quo also suggested that, since the voter/councillor ratio in the City is currently almost 2000 voters per councillor below the ratio for the comparable City of Greater Geelong, the City of Greater Bendigo could afford to maintain its current councillor numbers until at least the next election. The VEC acknowledges these arguments but notes the difficulties in comparing the City of Greater Bendigo with the City of Greater Geelong. The City of Greater of Geelong is a special case in that it has reached the maximum number of councillors allowed under the legislation and so, is experiencing a continuously expanding voter/councillor ratio. The City of Greater Bendigo is not in this position.

This electoral representation review is not about whether the City of Greater Bendigo is operating effectively with seven councillors but is about whether there is fair and equitable representation for voters in the City. On the basis of there being an additional 14,000 voters on the roll, the VEC is of the view that an increase in councillors is warranted in order to provide such representation. The VEC has come to this view having had regard to the enormous diversity within the City and by reference to similar sized regional municipalities.

In preparing its recommendation for the City of Greater Bendigo, the VEC has also maintained an awareness of the strong communities of interest that exist within the City. Various suburban areas of the City of Greater Bendigo boast a strong sense of identity such as Eaglehawk, Heathcote, Huntly, Kangaroo Valley and Marong.

A small minority of submissions in response to the Preliminary Report supported the implementation of an unsubdivided structure for the City of Greater Bendigo. Since this structure was not proposed in the Preliminary Report, these submissions were outside the scope of the final stage of the review. The majority of submissions acknowledged the existence of strong communities of interest and valued the manner in which ward boundaries serve to reflect them.

Similarly, at the public hearing, some ambivalence was expressed towards the importance of ward boundaries, but the majority of speakers referred to existing communities of interest and noted the importance of having ward boundaries. Those who spoke in support of the current seven-ward structure did not express discontent with the current ward divisions. Some suggested that if the VEC was to recommend its preferred nine-ward option, adjustments should be made to proposed ward boundaries to better reflect communities of interest. Unfortunately, these suggestions could not be accommodated due to the effect on voter numbers within each ward. Legislation requires the number of voters in each ward to be within 10% of the average number of voters per councillor. The changes that were suggested either put the ward outside the 10% tolerance or had a flow-on effect that put other wards outside the 10%.

The VEC has made a number of minor changes to ward boundaries presented in the preferred option to remove (where possible) obscure boundaries such as lines of sight, fence lines and property boundaries. The new boundaries use roads where appropriate and will make it easier for voters, councillors and the community to identify the boundaries. The following wards' boundaries were adjusted: Epsom Ward; Whipstick Ward; Grassy Flat Ward; Eppalock Ward; Diamond Hill Ward; Flora Hill Ward; and Golden Square Ward.

It is noted that the change to the boundary between the Grassy Flat Ward and the Flora Hill Ward has put the Grassy Flat Ward outside the 10% legislative tolerance based on the enrolment as at February 2004. In accordance with s.219D(2) of the Act, taking into account the projected number of voters, the VEC is confident that as at the entitlement date for the next general election, this ward will be within the 10% tolerance required by legislation.

During the course of the public consultations, the issue of the names of wards was also raised. A number of suggestions were made in relation to the names of the wards presented in the VEC's preferred option. The VEC agrees with many of the suggestions presented and has made changes to the names of the following wards:

-
- Central Ward renamed Sandhurst Ward;
 - Grassy Flat Ward renamed Strathfieldsaye Ward;
 - Diamond Hill Ward renamed Kangaroo Flat Ward; and
 - Whipstick Ward renamed North West Plains Ward.

The VEC is satisfied that the City of Greater Bendigo will be well served over the next eight years by a council of nine councillors, elected from nine single-councillor wards. The VEC is confident that such a structure will provide for fair and equitable representation of a steadily growing population in this municipality.

Electoral Representation Review City of Greater Bendigo

The Minister for Local Government has given notice under section 219C of the *Local Government Act 1989* that there is to be an electoral representation review of the City of Greater Bendigo. The Greater Bendigo City Council has appointed the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) to conduct the review.

What is the review about?

The aim of the review is to achieve fair and equitable electoral representation for the voters of the City of Greater Bendigo. The review will consider:

- the number of councillors;
- the electoral structure of the City (whether the City should be unsubdivided or divided into wards, how many wards there should be, and how many councillors per ward); and
- the ward boundaries (if the City is to be divided into wards).

Do I have a say?

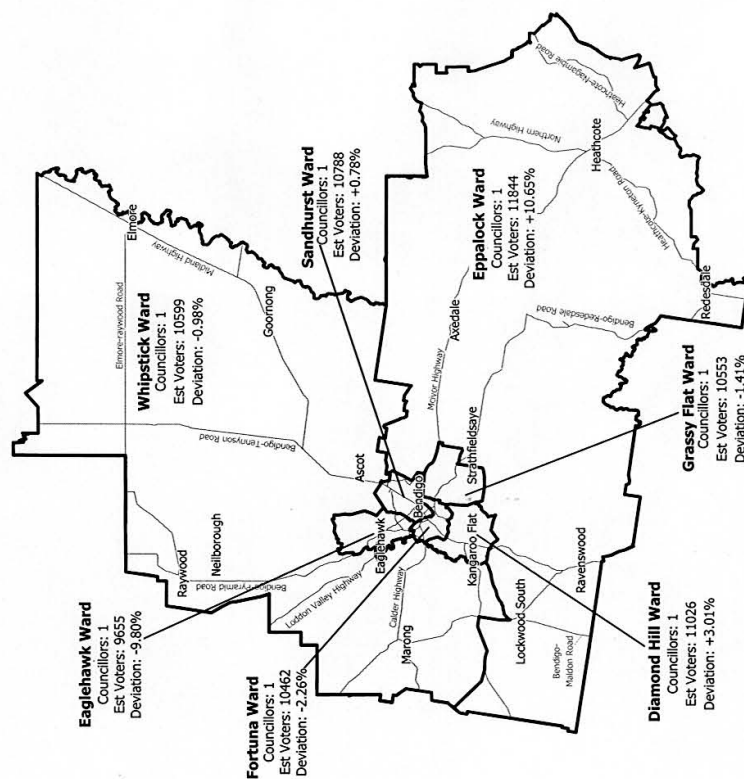
Consultation with the Bendigo community is an important part of the review. The VEC welcomes input from the public. Any person or group can make a submission to the VEC, and can also speak in support of their submission at a public hearing. The VEC will take public opinion into account in preparing its reports on the review.

The review process

- Step 1: Information session, Tuesday, 10 February 2004**
8.00 pm at the Reception Room, 1st Floor, Council Offices, Lyttleton Terrace, Bendigo. Anyone interested in making a submission should attend.
- Step 2: Preliminary submissions. Deadline, 5.00 pm, Monday, 1 March 2004**
Any person or group may make a submission to the VEC by mail, fax or email.
- Step 3: Preliminary report, Monday, 22 March 2004**
After considering public submissions, the VEC will release a preliminary report containing its preferred option(s).
- Step 4: Submissions. Deadline, 5.00 pm, Monday, 12 April 2004**
Any person or group may make a submission to the VEC about the preliminary report.
- Step 5: Public hearing. Week commencing Monday, 19 April 2004**
People will be able to speak in support of their submissions about the preliminary report.
- Step 6: Final report. Monday, 3 May 2004**
The VEC will lodge a final report containing its recommendations with the Minister for Local Government. The report will be publicly available.

Current structure of the City of Greater Bendigo

The City of Greater Bendigo currently has seven wards, with one councillor representing each ward. The map shows the current ward boundaries, the estimated number of voters for each ward, and the deviation from the average as at 22 January 2004.



Further information 13 18 32 or visit www.vec.vic.gov.au

Electoral Representation Reviews

The Minister for Local Government has given notice under section 219C of the *Local Government Act 1989* that there are to be electoral representation reviews of the following councils:

Corangamite Shire Council
Greater Bendigo City Council
Hobsons Bay City Council
Moorabool Shire Council
Moreland City Council
Pyrenees Shire Council
Stonnington City Council
Warrnambool City Council
Yarra City Council.

The councils have appointed the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) to conduct the reviews.

What are the reviews about?

The aim of the reviews is to ensure fair and equitable electoral representation for the voters of these councils. The reviews will consider:

- the number of councillors;
- the electoral structure of the councils (whether the Council should be unsubdivided or divided into wards, how many wards there should be, and the number of councillors per ward); and
- the ward boundaries (if the councils are to be divided into wards).

Do I have a say?

Consultation with the community is an important part of the reviews. The VEC welcomes input from the public. Any person or group can make a submission to the VEC. The VEC will take submissions into account in preparing its recommendations to the Minister for Local Government.

Making a submission

Submissions can be made by mail, fax or email. Submissions must reach the VEC by 5.00 pm on the following dates:


Corangamite: 8 March 2004	Pyrenees: 1 March 2004
Greater Bendigo: 1 March 2004	Stonnington: 15 March 2004
Hobsons Bay: 22 March 2004	Warrnambool: 8 March 2004
Moorabool: 1 March 2004	Yarra: 15 March 2004
Moreland: 22 March 2004	

What happens next?

After considering submissions, the VEC will release a preliminary report for each council for public comment.

After considering submissions on the preliminary reports, the VEC will make recommendations to the Minister for Local Government by 24 May 2004. The Minister will consider the VEC's recommendations and may make determinations, which would take effect at the council elections in November 2004.

**For further information or a guide to making submissions call
13 18 32 or visit www.vec.vic.gov.au**

Victorian Electoral Commission 

Electoral Representation Review

City of Greater Bendigo

Preliminary Report

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) is conducting an electoral representation review for the City of Greater Bendigo. Having considered submissions from the public, the VEC has now released a preliminary report including recommendations to achieve fair and equitable electoral representation for persons who are entitled to vote at the City's general election.

What are the recommendations in the report?

The City of Greater Bendigo is currently divided into seven wards, with one councillor representing each ward.

Preferred option

The report recommends that the City of Greater Bendigo be divided into nine wards, with one councillor representing each ward.

Alternative option

The report also outlines an alternative option of a Council divided into seven wards, with one councillor representing each ward.

The maps on the right show the options.

Where is the report available?

Copies of the preliminary report are available from:

- The Greater Bendigo City Council offices, Lyttleton Terrace, Bendigo;
- The VEC's website, www.vec.vic.gov.au; and
- By telephoning the VEC on 13 18 32.

Submissions on the report

Any person or group may make a submission to the VEC about the preliminary report. A submission should comment only on the preferred option and/or the alternative options. Submissions can be:

- Posted to the VEC at Level 8, 505 Little Collins Street, Melbourne Vic. 3000;
- Emailed to greaterbendigo.review@vec.vic.gov.au; or
- Faxed to 9629 9330.

Submissions must include the name, address and telephone contact number of the person making the submission. Submissions will be available to the public at the VEC and the VEC website.

Submissions should indicate whether the person making the submission wishes to speak at a public hearing in support of their submission.

Submissions must be received at the VEC by **5.00 pm, Monday, 12 April 2004**. Late submissions will not be accepted.

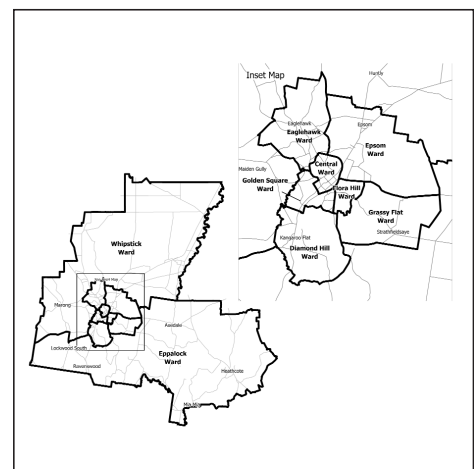
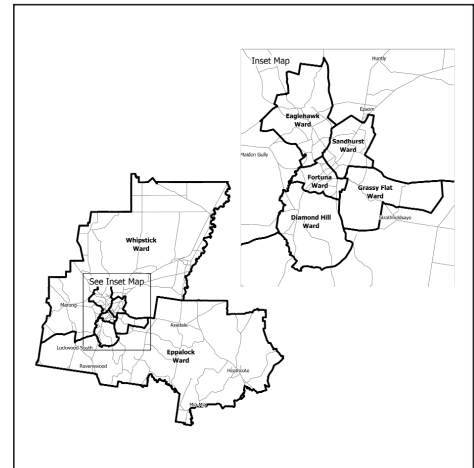
Public hearing, Thursday, 22 April 2004

The hearing will be at the Reception Room, Greater Bendigo City Council offices, 1st Floor, Lyttleton Terrace, Bendigo. The hearing is open to the public, but only those people who have indicated in their submission that they would like to speak in support of their submission will be heard at the hearing.

Final report, 3 May 2004

After considering any submissions on the preliminary report and information provided at the public hearing, the VEC will prepare a final report making recommendations to the Minister for Local Government.

Further information 13 18 32 or visit www.vec.vic.gov.au



Electoral Representation Review City of Greater Bendigo

Public hearing

A public hearing for the City of Greater Bendigo electoral representation review will be held:

- When: 7.30 pm, Thursday 22 April 2004
- Where: Greater Bendigo Council, Reception Room, 1st Floor, Lyttleton Terrace, Bendigo.

The hearing is open to the public, but only those people who have indicated in their submission that they would like to speak at the hearing will be able to do so.

Further information
13 18 32 or visit www.vec.vic.gov.au

Victorian Electoral Commission

Media Release

Victorian Electoral Commission 

For immediate release

REPRESENTATION REVIEW GETS UNDERWAY

The electoral representation review for the City of Greater Bendigo has begun. The review, conducted by the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC), is concerned with the number of councillors for the City and the City's electoral structure.

The Victorian Electoral Commissioner, Mr Colin Barry, will speak at a public information session next week. The information session will cover the process for the reviews, and anyone interested in making a submission should attend.

The details for the information session are:
Tuesday, 10 February, at 8.00 pm
Reception Room, 1st Floor, Council Officers, Lyttleton Terrace, Bendigo

"All interested persons and organisations are welcome to participate in this review", said Mr Barry. "By making their views known through written submissions to the Victorian Electoral Commission, it will be possible for electors to help in shaping the future basis of electoral representation for their City".

Submissions do not have to be elaborate documents. A letter is perfectly acceptable, as long as it deals with the matters covered by the review.

Key dates for the Greater Bendigo representation review are:

Monday, 1 March, at 5 pm – Deadline for preliminary submissions. Submissions can be mailed, faxed or emailed to the VEC.

Monday, 22 March – The VEC's preliminary report will be made public after consideration of the preliminary submissions received.

Monday, 12 April, at 5 pm – Deadline for submissions about the preliminary report.

Week commencing Monday, 19 April – Opportunity for those persons who have made submissions on the preliminary report to speak publicly in support of their views.

Monday, 3 May – The VEC will lodge a final report with the Minister for Local Government.

Mr Barry pointed out that the deadlines for lodgement of submissions are fixed. Late submissions cannot be accepted.

"The outcomes from this reviews will have a lasting impact on the City of Greater Bendigo. The new electoral arrangements, once approved by the Minister for Local Government, will apply at the next Council elections", he said.

For additional information, telephone the VEC on 13 18 32.

– ENDS –

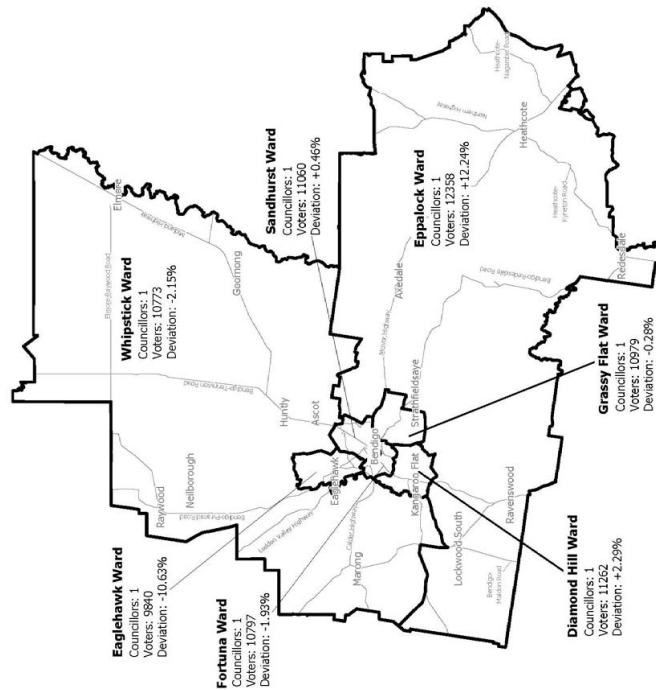
For further media information:

Paul Thornton-Smith
Victorian Electoral Commission
Tel: 9299 0732

Media Release

City of Greater Bendigo

The map below shows the current riding boundaries and voter numbers for the City of Greater Bendigo.



Media Release

Victorian Electoral Commission 

For release from Monday 22 March 2004

GREATER BENDIGO ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION REVIEW: PRELIMINARY REPORT RELEASED

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) today released its preliminary report on electoral representation for the City of Greater Bendigo. The VEC's preferred option is to increase the number of councillors from seven to nine, to take account of Bendigo's growing population, while retaining a single-member ward structure. An alternative option is also presented for public comment.

The report has been released and is available on the VEC's web site at www.vec.vic.gov.au. The report is also available at the City of Greater Bendigo Council offices, Lyttleton Terrace, Bendigo and at the VEC, Level 8, 505 Collins Street, Melbourne, Vic., 3000.

People have until Monday, 12 April 2004 to lodge submissions with the VEC regarding the preliminary report.

People who wish to speak publicly in support of their submissions will have an opportunity to do so at a public hearing at the City of Greater Bendigo Council offices, Lyttleton Terrace, Bendigo on Thursday, 22 April 2004.

A final report and recommendations from the VEC will be lodged with the Minister on Monday, 3 May 2004.

Any person who requires additional information can visit www.vec.vic.gov.au, contact the VEC on 13 18 32, or write to the VEC at Level 8, 505 Collins Street, Melbourne, Vic., 3000.

- ENDS -

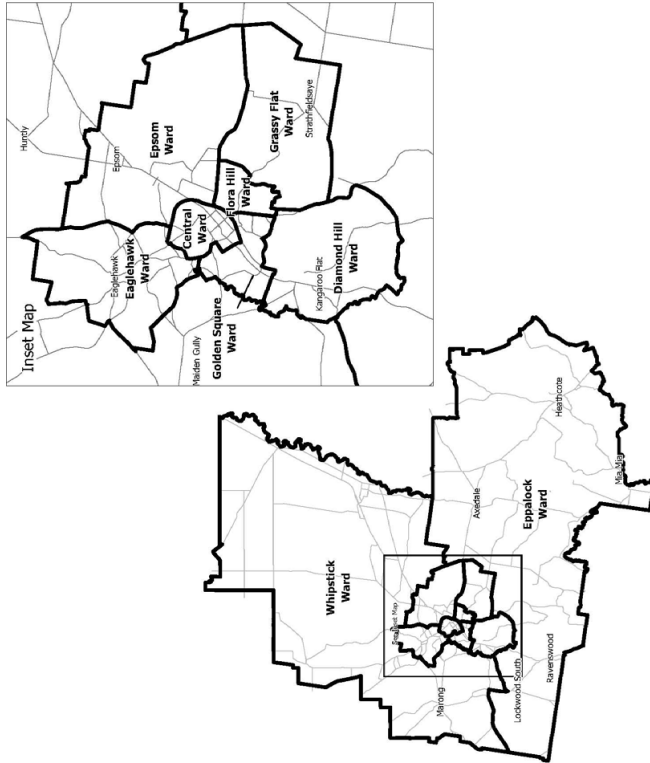
For further media information:

Paul Thornton-Smith
Victorian Electoral Commission
Tel: 9299 0732

Media Fact Sheet

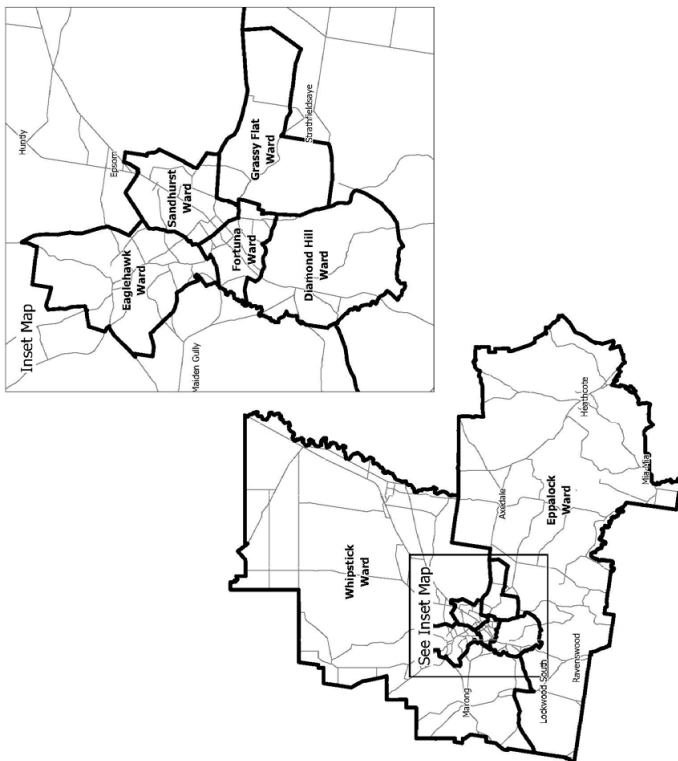
MAPS OF RECOMMENDED OPTIONS FOR THE CITY OF GREATER BENDIGO

PREFERRED OPTION: NINE SINGLE-COUNCILLOR WARDS



Media Fact Sheet

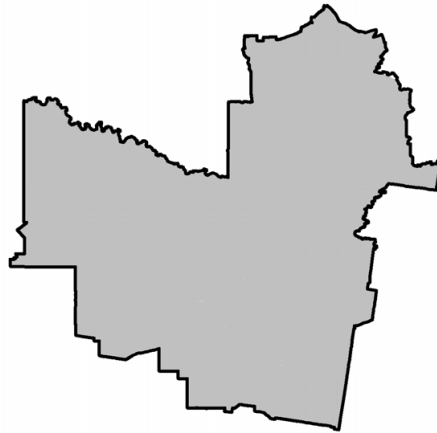
ALTERNATIVE OPTION: SEVEN SINGLE-COUNCILLOR WARDS



9.3 Guide for submissions

Electoral representation review for the City of Greater Bendigo

Guide for submissions



Conducted by the
Victorian Electoral Commission
Level 8, 505 Little Collins Street, Melbourne Vic. 3000
Telephone: 13 18 32
Fax: 9629 9330
Email: greaterbendigo.review@vec.vic.gov.au
Website: www.vec.vic.gov.au

Victorian Electoral Commission 

Why this review is being undertaken

The *Local Government Act 1989* requires regular, independent electoral representation reviews of Councils. Electoral representation reviews must be conducted by an Electoral Commission, to ensure that reviews are carried out at arms length from the Councils.

This system of electoral representation reviews came into effect at the end of 2003 as a result of amendments to the Local Government Act. Previously, councils reviewed their own electoral representation arrangements.

The first representation review under this system takes place at a time specified by the Minister for Local Government by a notice in the Government Gazette. Future reviews will occur before every second Council election – that is, about every eight years.

On 15 December 2003, the Minister for Local Government gave notice under section 219C of the Local Government Act that there was to be an electoral representation review of the City of Greater Bendigo. The Greater Bendigo City Council has appointed the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) to conduct the review.

What is the review about?

The aim of the review is to ensure fair and equitable representation for the voters of the City of Greater Bendigo.

The review is considering:

- The number of councillors;
- The electoral structure of the City (whether the City should be unsubdivided or divided into wards, how many wards there should be, and how many councillors per ward); and
- The boundaries of the wards (if the City is to be divided into wards).

The review cannot deal with the external boundaries of the City, or such matters as whether the City should be divided into two separate councils or amalgamated with another council.

The review process

Notice, 31 January - 5 February 2004

A notice detailing the process for the review and calling for submissions has been placed in the *Bendigo Advertiser*, *Bendigo Weekly* and *Heathcote McIvor Times*.

Radio advertisement, 2-6 February 2004

An advertisement alerting residents to the review was broadcast on Radio 380 FM and 3 STAR FM.

Information session, Tuesday, 10 February 2004

An information session on the review process is being held at 8.00 pm at the Council Offices (Reception Room, 1st Floor), Lyttleton Terrace, Bendigo. Anyone with an interest in making a submission is advised to attend.

Preliminary submissions

Any person or group, including the Council, may make a preliminary submission to the VEC. Submissions should address matters relating to the number of councillors and the electoral structure for the City so as to provide fair and equitable representation for the voters of the City.

Submissions do not have to be elaborate documents; a short letter would be perfectly acceptable as long as it addresses matters within the scope of the review.

Submissions can be sent to the VEC in the following ways:

- posted to Level 8, 505 Little Collins Street, Melbourne, Vic. 3000;
- faxed to 9629 8624; or
- emailed to greaterbendigo.review@vec.vic.gov.au.

Submissions must include the name, address and telephone contact number of the person making the submission.

Once lodged, submissions will be available to the public at:

- the VEC at Level 8, 505 Little Collins Street, Melbourne; and
- the VEC website www.vec.vic.gov.au.

Preliminary submissions must be received at the VEC by **5.00 pm, Monday, 1 March 2004**.

Late submissions will not be accepted.

Preliminary report, Monday, 22 March 2004

After the VEC has considered all preliminary submissions, it will prepare a preliminary report containing the preferred option(s) for the number of councillors and the electoral structure, and, if it is proposed that the City is to continue to be divided into wards, the boundaries of those wards.

Copies of the preliminary report will be available from the VEC website, www.vec.vic.gov.au, by contacting the VEC on 13 18 32, and at the Greater Bendigo City Council offices, Lyttleton Terrace, Bendigo.

When the preliminary report is released, a notice in the *Bendigo Advertiser* and *Heathcote Mirror Times* will specify how people can make a written submission in response to the report.

Submissions on the preliminary report

Any person or group, including the Council, may make a submission to the VEC about the preliminary report. These submissions can be sent to the VEC in the same ways as the preliminary submissions, and will also be available to the public at the VEC and the VEC website.

Submissions on the preliminary report should indicate whether the person making the submission wishes to speak at a public hearing in support of their submission.

Submissions on the preliminary report must be received at the VEC by **5.00 pm Monday, 12 April 2004**. **Late submissions will not be accepted.**

Public hearing, week commencing Monday, 19 April 2004

There will be a public hearing for people who want to speak in support of their submissions on the preliminary report.

Final report, Monday, 3 May 2004

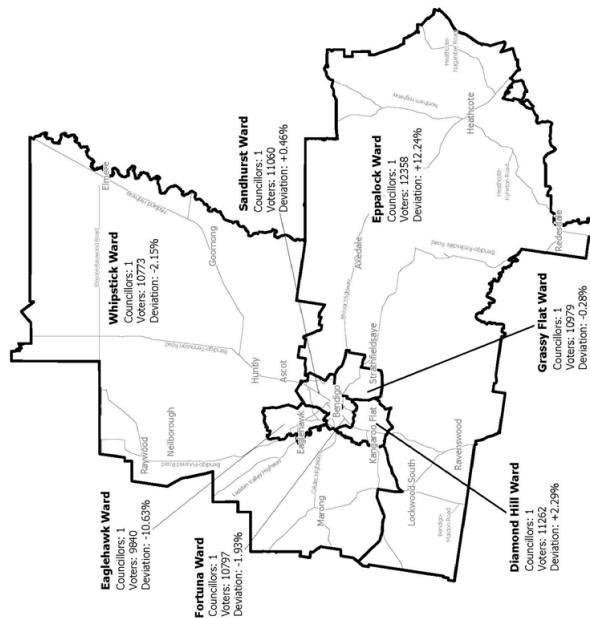
After considering any written submissions relating to the preliminary report, and information provided at the public hearing, the VEC will prepare a final report making recommendations to the Minister for Local Government. Copies of the final report will be forwarded to the Greater Bendigo City Council. The final report will be available for inspection at the Council offices and at the VEC during normal office hours and on the VEC website, www.vec.vic.gov.au.

Implementation

The Minister for Local Government may arrange for the implementation of the recommendations in the final report, to take effect at the next Council election.

Current structure of the City of Greater Bendigo

The City of Greater Bendigo currently has seven wards, with one councillor representing each ward. The map shows the current ward boundaries, the number of voters for each ward and the voter deviation from the average. These voter statistics will be used as the basis for the review.



Matters to consider when preparing submissions

How many Councillors should there be?

Section 10(1) of the Local Government Act requires that a Council is to consist of not fewer than 5 Councillors and not more than 12 Councillors.

A report issued by the Local Government Division in 1995, "Setting New Internal Boundaries for Councils Holding Elections in 1997" (which is still used by the Local Government and Regional Services Division), advised that in determining the number of councillors, the following factors should be considered:

- Total voter numbers and their geographic distribution;
- Equity of representation;
- The likely workload of councillors;
- Council business requirements, such as the allocation of portfolio responsibilities; and
- The costs associated with a larger rather than a smaller number of councillors.

The table at the end of this guide puts Greater Bendigo in context. The table shows, for each council in Victoria, the geographical size of the council, the latest number of voters, the number of councillors, the number of voters per councillor and the council's electoral structure. The table can be used for comparative purposes.

The number of councillors should enable representation for the various communities of interest across the City. Councillors should be accessible to their constituents.

Another factor to be considered is the workload of councillors. Councillor workload is affected by such matters as volume of business, diversity and complexity of issues, distances to be travelled and the number of separate communities of interest to be serviced.

The number of councillors can also affect how effectively and efficiently a council operates.

The current average annual cost of one councillor at the City of Greater Bendigo is approximately \$26,000. This is equivalent to 0.03% of the City's total annual operating budget.

Possible features of a small or a large number of councillors can be portrayed as follows:

	Positive Features	Less Positive Features
Small number of councillors	Council works cohesively and efficiently. Reduced cost.	Councillors are less representative and accessible. Increased workload deters people from becoming councillors.
Large number of councillors	Council is representative of communities of interest. Councillors are readily accessible. Reasonable workload for councillors. Diversity of views enriches council decision-making.	Council becomes unwieldy and divided. Increased cost.

Should the Council be divided into wards or be unsubdivided?

A council can either be unsubdivided, with all councillors elected "at large" by all the voters, or it can be subdivided into a number of wards. Of Victoria's 79 councils, 13 are unsubdivided. A local example is the Greater Shepparton City Council.

The City of Greater Bendigo is currently divided into seven wards, with one councillor representing each ward.

This review will consider all possible models of representation, taking into account the submissions received during the public consultation process.

The possible features of an unsubdivided council can be portrayed as follows:

Positive Features	Less Positive Features
Promotes the concept of a City-wide focus, with councillors being elected by and concerned for the City as a whole, rather than parochial interests.	Can lead to significant communities of interest and points of view being unrepresented.
Gives residents and ratepayers a choice of councillors to approach with their concerns.	Can lead to confusion of responsibilities and duplication of effort on the part of councillors.
Each voter has the opportunity to express a preference for every candidate for the council election.	Large numbers of candidates can be confusing for voters.
Removes the need to define internal ward boundaries.	
Results in a simple, less expensive voters' roll for elections as compared with separate voters' rolls for individual wards.	

Options for division into wards

If the Council is to be divided into wards, there are three options:

- Single-member wards;
- Multi-member wards; and
- Combinations of single- and multi-member wards.

Single-member wards

More than half (43) of Victoria's councils have single-member wards, including the City of Greater Bendigo.

The possible features of single-member wards can be portrayed as follows:

Positive Features	Less Positive Features
Councillors are more likely to be truly local representatives, easily accessible to residents and aware of local issues.	Councillors may be elected on minor or parochial issues and lack a perspective of what is to the benefit of the City as a whole.
Every community of interest is likely to be represented.	Ward boundaries may divide communities of interest, and may be difficult to define.
It is less likely that one particular point of view or sectional interest will dominate the council.	
	Voters may have a restricted choice of candidates in elections for individual wards.
	There may be problems if a councillor is not performing effectively or is clashing with some electors, as electors for that ward have no alternative councillor to approach.
	Small populations in each ward may make ward boundaries susceptible to change caused by demographic shifts.
	Population changes can lead to unequal workloads for councillors until ward boundaries are reviewed.
	Separate voters' rolls must be prepared for individual wards, which is more complex and costly than in an unsubdivided council.
	Some voters may be confused if they have multiple voting entitlements through owning or occupying property in more than one ward.

Multi-member wards

Eleven of Victoria's councils have multi-member wards. A local example is Moira Shire, which has three three-member wards.

A multi-member ward structure results in fewer but larger wards than a single-member ward structure.

The possible features of multi-member wards can be portrayed as follows:

Positive Features	Less Positive Features
This structure supports the accommodation of a whole community of interest (such as a sizeable town) within a ward.	Very local issues may be overridden.
Focus on issues may be broader than for single-member wards (though councillors may be more locally focussed than in an unsubdivided council).	Groups within the council based on multi-member wards may form, leading to division.
Councillors may be more accessible than in an unsubdivided council	In very large wards, councillors may not be accessible for residents in parts of the ward.
Electors have a choice of councillor to approach.	Duplication or gaps may occur if councillors do not communicate or share their workload effectively.
Councillors can more effectively share workloads.	
Ward boundaries are likely to be easy to identify and less susceptible to change than for single-member wards.	It is easier for candidates to be elected as part of a voting ticket than as individuals.

Combination of single- and multi-member wards

Twelve of Victoria's councils have a mixture of single- and multi-member wards. A local example is Campaspe Shire, which has one two-member ward and five single-member wards.

The possible features of a combined system can be portrayed as follows:

Positive Features	Less Positive Features
A large community of interest can be included within a multi-member ward, and a smaller community of interest can be included within a single-member ward. This accommodates differences in population across a City, and allows small communities to be separately represented.	Electors in single-member wards may expect that their councillors will be more influential than their numbers suggest.
Clear ward boundaries may be more likely.	The different voting systems for single- and multi-member wards may cause confusion.

Voting systems

The voting system is an important factor affecting election outcomes.

In single-member wards the voting system is **preferential**.

Under the preferential system:

- a candidate must achieve an absolute majority (50% plus one) of the formal votes to be elected;
- if a candidate obtains an absolute majority of the first-preference votes, that candidate is elected;
- if no candidate obtains an absolute majority of first-preference votes, preferences have to be distributed;
- the candidate with the lowest number of first-preference votes is declared to be a defeated candidate, and that candidate's votes are distributed to the remaining candidates according to the second preferences on the ballot papers;
- the process of excluding the lowest candidate and distributing that candidate's preferences to the remaining candidates continues until one candidate has an absolute majority of votes, and is declared elected.

Under this system, the way in which voters allocate their preferences can be just as important as where they place their first-preference votes. Candidates advise voters (through how-to-vote cards and candidate statements) about how to order their preferences, and negotiate with other candidates about the order of preferences. In some cases, candidates have had informal "running mates" to help with the flow of preferences to them.

In unsubdivided councils and multi-member wards the voting system is **proportional representation**, following legislative change at the end of 2003. The basis of proportional representation is that candidates are elected in proportion to their support.

Under the proportional representation system:

- to be elected, a candidate must obtain a "quota", which is calculated by dividing the total number of votes by one more than the number of vacancies, and then adding one (for example, in an election for 3 vacancies with 800 votes cast, the quota would be 201);
- when a candidate receives more votes than a quota, the surplus votes are distributed to the continuing candidates at a reduced value, calculated by dividing the surplus votes by the total votes for the candidate. (For example, if a candidate achieved 300 votes and the quota was 201 votes, the candidate's surplus would be 99, and ballot papers would be transferred to the remaining candidates at a value 99 divided by 300.);
- when all surplus votes have been distributed and there are still vacancies to be filled, preferences are distributed from the lowest-scoring candidates until a candidate has a quota.

This system means that any candidate who obtains a quota, either through first-preference votes or through the flow of preferences, is elected. In effect, candidates representing all large minorities are likely to be represented as well as candidates representing majorities.

In practice, this system encourages candidates to group together and advise their supporters to follow a ticket in their preferences. However, such a group is unlikely to win all the vacancies in a ward or unsubdivided council unless it has overwhelming support.

How should ward boundaries be drawn?

If the City of Greater Bendigo is to remain divided into wards, the ward boundaries must comply with legal requirements. Section 219D of the *Local Government Act 1989* requires that:

- the number of voters represented by each Councillor must be within 10% of the average number of voters represented by all Councillors; and
- the ward boundaries must provide a fair and equitable division of the municipal district.

Where there are multi-member wards, the number of voters represented by each councillor for such wards is taken to be the total number of voters for the ward divided by the number of councillors for the ward. For instance, there are 2 councillors and 2,712 voters for North Ward in Corangamite Shire. The number of voters represented by each councillor for North Ward is 2,712 divided by 2, which equals 1,356.

Ward boundaries **must** meet the approximate equality requirement set by the Local Government Act. In the City of Greater Bendigo at present, the number of voters in Eppalock Ward is 12.24% above the average, and the number of voters in Eaglehawk Ward is 10.63% below the average. If the City of Greater Bendigo were to retain the current structure, the number of voters for all wards would have to be brought back within the 10% tolerance by changing the current ward boundaries.

The Local Government Act does not prescribe any more details to define what constitutes a fair and equitable division of the City. However, the following criteria are useful in considering and then deciding on proposed ward boundaries:

- the boundaries should take account of communities of interest;
- the boundaries should follow clear lines, such as major roads, rivers and other natural features;
- as far as possible, the boundaries should follow census collector district (CCD) boundaries. This will assist in providing the Council with demographic information, and will also facilitate voters' roll administration; and
- the boundaries should take account of likely population changes, by setting the number of voters in wards with high growth potential somewhat below the average, and the number of voters in wards within little growth potential somewhat above the average. The approach will help ensure that the boundaries stay within the 10% tolerance for a longer period, avoiding the need for frequent redrawing of boundaries.

What should wards be called?

There is a variety of possible approaches to the naming of wards, including:

- **Place names:** This is largely the current approach in the City of Greater Bendigo, where most wards are named after a locality in that ward. This approach is useful where riding boundaries closely align with localities. However, it can lead to smaller localities within a ward feeling overlooked, and may cause confusion if the locality that a ward is named after cuts across a ward boundary;
- **Compass directions:** This is the current approach in Moira Shire, where the wards are East, Central and West. It is of most use where the location of the wards is closely aligned to compass directions;
- **Names of historic buildings:** This is a way of celebrating the City's heritage;
- **Names of natural features:** Using the names of natural features such as hills or streams can be a way of identifying wards without the complications of locality names. The features would need to be well known and relevant to the particular wards;
- **Names of pioneers and former prominent citizens:** This is a way of recognising important former residents. It is most appropriate when the person is closely associated with the area covered by the ward;
- **Aboriginal names:** This is a way of recognising the City's Aboriginal heritage. However, the use of Aboriginal names could be seen as being tokenistic if the names are not relevant to areas within the City.

TABLE: PROFILES OF MUNICIPAL COUNCILS - 2004

Metropolitan (including outer metropolitan)					
Council	Area (km ²)	Number on roll	Number of councillors	Number of voters per councillor	Electoral structure
Banyule	63	91,639	7	13091	Single member wards
Bayside	37	68,043	9	7560	Single member wards
Boroondara	60	124,245	10	12425	Single member wards
Brimbank	123	119,791	9	13310	Single member wards
Casey	389	130,368	11	11852	Single member wards
Darebin	53	100,680	9	11187	Single member wards
Frankston	130	90,611	7	12944	Single member wards
Glen Eira	39	96,259	9	10695	3 three member wards
Greater Dandenong	130	94,605	11	8600	Single member wards
Hobsons Bay	64	63,775	8	7972	4 two member wards
Hume	503	97,985	9	10887	Single member wards
Kingston	91	105,796	7	15114	Single member wards
Knox	118	110,006	9	12223	Single member wards
Manningham	113	86,847	8	10856	4 two member wards
Maribyrnong	31	48,844	7	6978	Single member wards
Maroondah	61	77,585	7	11084	Single member wards
Melbourne	37	64,000	9	7111	Unsubdivided
Melton	528	37,818	7	5403	Single member wards
Monash	81	122,865	8	15358	Single member wards
Moonee Valley	44	92,217	7	13174	Single member wards
Moreland	31	98,732	10	9873	Single member wards
Mornington Peninsula	721	136,358	9	15151	Single member wards
Nilumbik	430	43,736	9	4860	Single member wards
Port Phillip	20	73,812	7	10545	Single member wards
Stonnington	26	78,148	9	8683	Single member wards
Whitehorse	64	112,858	10	11286	5 two member wards
Whittlesea	490	84,676	9	9408	Single member wards
Wyndham	540	67,813	7	9688	Single member wards
Yarra	70	61,316	9	6813	1 single member ward, 4 two member wards
Yarra Ranges	2,464	105,900	9	11767	Single member wards
Average (median)	76	91,928	9	10872	

Regional Cities, Rural Cities and Boroughs

Council	Area (km ²)	Number on roll	Number of councillors	Number of voters per councillor	Electoral structure
Araat	3,701	9,586	7	1369	Unsubdivided
Ballarat	739	66,468	9	7385	Single member wards
Benalla	2,354	11,785	7	1684	Single member wards
Greater Bendigo	2,995	77,069	7	11010	Single member wards
Greater Geelong	1,275	155,034	12	12920	Single member wards
Greater Shepparton	2,420	39,740	7	5677	Unsubdivided
Horsham	4,253	14,614	7	2088	Unsubdivided
Latrobe	1,405	58,131	9	6459	Single member wards
Mildura	22,092	36,333	9	4037	Unsubdivided
Queenscliffe	11	4,131	7	590	Unsubdivided
Swan Hill	6,106	14,586	7	2084	1 single member ward, 3 two member wards
Wangaratta	3,628	21,525	8	2691	6 single member wards, 1 two member ward
Warrnambool	121	23,777	7	3397	Single member wards
Wodonga	434	23,373	5	4675	Unsubdivided
Average (median)	2,387	23,575	7	3717	

Regional Shires						
Council	Area (km ²)	Number on roll	Number of councillors	Number of voters per councillor	Electoral structure	
Alpine	4,837	11,074	5	2215	Unsubdivided	
Bass Coast	865	37,113	7	5302	Single member wards	
Baw Baw	4,030	30,399	9	3378	Single member wards	
Buloke	8,006	6,804	9	756	3 three member wards	
Campaspe	4,519	30,525	7	4361	5 single member wards, 1 two member ward	
Cardinia	1,282	36,473	7	5210	Single member wards	
Central Goldfields	1,532	11,415	5	2283	Single member wards	
Colac Otway	3,449	20,433	7	2919	2 single member wards, 1 two member ward, 1 three member ward	
Corangamite	4,356	13,962	10	1396	5 two member wards	
East Gippsland	20,942	36,769	8	4596	2 four member wards	
Gannawarra	3,736	9,949	7	1421	3 single member wards, 2 two member wards	
Glenelg	6,212	18,506	9	2056	Single member wards	
Golden Plains	2,705	13,192	9	1466	Single member ridings	
Hepburn	1,470	13,783	5	2757	Single member wards	
Hindmarsh	7,520	5,430	6	905	3 two member wards	
Indigo	2,046	11,457	7	1637	Unsubdivided	
Loddon	6,694	8,570	6	1428	Single member ridings	
Macedon Ranges	1,743	30,189	9	3354	Single member wards	
Mansfield	3,887	9,141	5	1828	4 single member wards, 1 two member ward	
Mitchell	2,864	21,955	7	3136	5 single member wards, 1 two member ward	
Moira	4,057	20,599	9	2289	3 three member wards	
Moorabool	2,110	20,328	7	2904	4 single member ridings, 1 three member riding	
Mount Alexander	1,528	15,377	7	2197	Single member wards	
Moyness	5,853	13,883	10	1388	5 two member ridings	
Murrindindi	3,987	13,725	6	2288	Single member ridings	
Northern Grampians	5,903	11,080	9	1231	1 three member ward, 1 six member ward	
Pyrenees	3,432	7,211	7	1030	Single member ridings	
South Gippsland	3,297	28,548	9	3172	7 single member wards, 1 two member ward	
Southern Grampians	6,800	13,195	7	1885	Unsubdivided	
Strathbogie	3,304	9,080	7	1297	Single member wards	

Council	Area (km ²)	Number on roll	Number of councillors	Number of voters per councillor	Electoral structure
Surf Coast	1,560	21,943	9	2438	3 single member wards, 2 three member wards
Towong	6,670	5,264	5	1053	Unsubdivided
Wellington	11,007	37,709	9	4190	Unsubdivided
West Wimmera	9,116	4,322	5	864	Unsubdivided
Yarriambiack	7,163	7,251	9	806	3 single member wards, 2 three member wards
Average (median)	3,987	13,783	7	2197	

9.4 List of people and organisations making submissions

Preliminary submissions

Meryl Birch

Leila Bryant

Dawn Colbourne

Anthony van der Craats

James V. Evans

Rod Fyffe

City of Greater Bendigo Council

John Kairn

Daryl McClure

Simon A. Mulqueen

Ronald F. Munro

Proportional Representation Society of Australia (Victoria-Tasmania Branch)

Cr Greg Williams

Response submissions

Joyce Ackerman

Barb Beattie

City of Greater Bendigo Council

Arthur D. Cowling

Anthony van der Craats

Leonie Edwards

James V. Evans

Evelyn M. Gordon

Bev Hanson

Daryl McClure

Ronald Fane Munro

Cr Bruce Phillips

Proportional Representation Society of Australia (Victoria-Tasmania Branch)

Cr Greg Williams

