

Electoral Representation Review
Hume City Council
Final Report



11 April 2012

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Recommendation

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) recommends that Hume City Council consists of eleven councillors elected from three wards. There should be two wards of four councillors (Aitken Ward and Meadow Valley Ward), and one ward of three councillors (Jackson Ward).

The recommended ward boundaries are illustrated in the map at the back of this report.

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 Hume

The City of Hume was formed in 1995 by the amalgamation of parts of the Shire of Bulla, the City of Broadmeadows, the City of Whittlesea and the City of Keilor. Hume is located on Melbourne's urban-rural fringe, 20 kilometres north-west of the CBD. It is bordered by the Macedon Ranges and Mitchell Shires in the north, the City of Whittlesea in the east, the Cities of Moreland, Moonee Valley and Brimbank in the south and the Shire of Melton in the west. The City's area is 504 square kilometres, of which approximately 65 per cent is rural land, 25 per cent urban land and 10 per cent is occupied by Melbourne Airport.

Hume City includes the suburbs and localities of Attwood, Broadmeadows, Bulla, Campbellfield, Clarkefield (part), Coolaroo, Craigieburn, Dallas, Diggers Rest (part), Gladstone Park, Greenvale, Jacana, Kalkallo, Keilor (part), Meadow Heights, Melbourne Airport, Mickleham, Oaklands Junction, Roxburgh Park, Somerton, Sunbury, Tullamarine (part), Westmeadows, Wildwood and Yuroke.

The main residential areas are Tullamarine, Broadmeadows, Campbellfield, Roxburgh Park, Craigieburn and Sunbury.

Hume is a multicultural city with a mix of 140 nationalities and 125 languages. It is also a very young city; almost a third of its residents are under 18 years old and the median age is 32 years.²

On average, the City of Hume is projected to grow by 24.35 per cent over the next ten years. The most significant projected population growth is forecast in the Craigieburn area with a rate of 45.79 per cent. The Sunbury area is anticipated to grow by 18.05 per cent while a significantly lower rate of 1.09 per cent is projected for Broadmeadows.³

² Hume City Council Website – hume.vic.gov.au

³ *Victoria in Future 2010-2011*, Department of Planning and Community Development

Current electoral structure

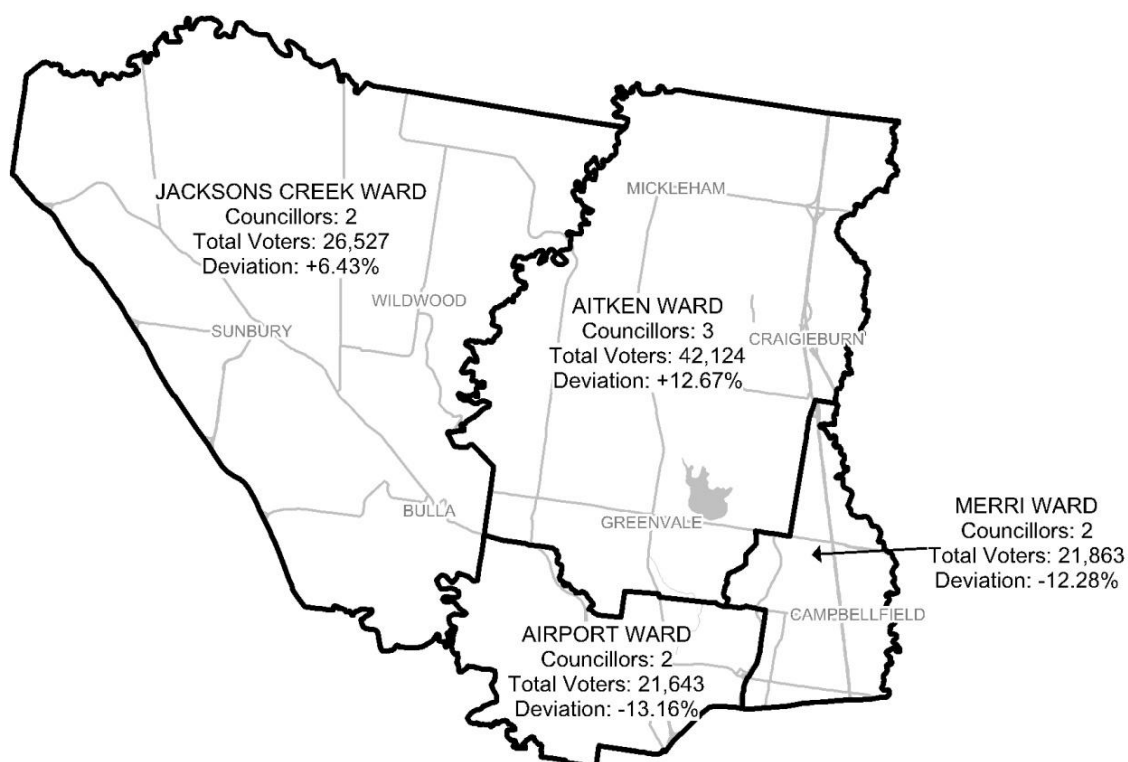
The last electoral representation review for Hume City Council took place in 2005. Following the last review, the Minister for Local Government determined that the structure of Hume City Council should be:

nine councillors; and

divided into four wards: Airport (two councillors), Aitken (three councillors), Jacksons Creek (two councillors) and Merri (two councillors).

Prior to the last representation review, Hume City Council consisted of nine single-councillor wards. The VEC considered nine an appropriate number of councillors for Hume City Council, in view of its size and characteristics. The VEC recommended a change to a multi-councillor ward structure because it believed that this structure fitted communities of interest better than single-councillor wards, and would be less vulnerable to population shifts.

As at August 2011, the numbers of voters in the wards were as follows:



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 it with information.

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

To raise awareness of the review and encourage the public to engage with the process, a full 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 *Sunbury Leader*, the *Hume Moreland Leader*, the *Sunbury Weekly* and the *Hume Weekly* on Tuesday, 15 November 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 Saturday, 22 October 2011.

Notification of the release of the preliminary report appeared in the *Sunbury Leader*, the *Hume Moreland Leader*, the *Sunbury Weekly* and the *Hume Weekly* on Tuesday, 14 February 2012. 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 and distributed these to the local media.

Public information session

The VEC held a public information session for people interested in the review process on Wednesday, 30 November at the Global Learning Centre, 1093-1097 Pascoe Vale Road, Broadmeadows.

Information brochure and poster

An information brochure and poster were provided to the Council to be distributed to residents through the Council's network, for example libraries and service centres.

Helpline

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

VEC website

All public submissions were published on the VEC website and an online submission tool was created to facilitate the submission process.

Guide for Submissions

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

Preliminary report

Preliminary submissions

By the close of preliminary submissions at 5.00pm on Tuesday, 13 December 2011 the VEC had received five submissions.

All of the submitters suggested retaining a multi-member ward structure and increasing the number of councillors. The reasons put forward included the ratio of voters to councillors, the great cultural diversity of the City, the heavy workloads of councillors, the enormous amount of new residential development and the subsequent increase to the population.

The Proportional Representation Society of Australia favoured retaining nine councillors but only in a three three-councillor ward structure. However, they also stated a 12-councillor structure would achieve parity between the wards.

Hume City Council put forward some principles for an electoral structure based on the division of the City into three main geographic areas – south-eastern Hume, north-eastern Hume, and Sunbury and Bulla. The council identified the key areas of Meadow Heights, Roxburgh Park, Greenvale, Craigieburn, Sunbury and Bulla as unique communities of interest and suggested that each community should be kept together and not split between wards wherever possible.

The desire not to have ward boundaries that split suburbs was the recurring theme throughout the five submissions. Councillor Jessop, a councillor for Aitken Ward, explained that each community ‘has their own unique desires and expectations’ and displays great loyalty.

One submitter outlined a four-ward structure that grouped the suburbs and another put forward a two-ward structure.

A list of submitters can be found in Appendix One and the full submissions can be read on the VEC website – vec.vic.gov.au

Preliminary Report

Hume's rapid and uneven population growth is the biggest challenge facing this review. In the north of the municipality, Aitken Ward is already above the 10 per cent tolerance allowed by legislation, with one suburb, Craigieburn, expected to expand by an exceptional rate of 45.79 per cent over the next decade. In contrast, Merri Ward and Airport Ward in the south of the municipality are well below the tolerance level and are not expected to experience such growth. A change to the current structure is therefore essential to ensure fair and equitable representation for the voters of Hume.

The urban growth boundary poses another challenge. There is a vast expanse of land between Sunbury and Craigieburn that cannot be used for development and has very few voters requiring representation. This area of land can be seen as a natural division in the municipality, and as pointed out in the Council's submission, this geographical distribution of electors adds to the complexity of representation.

Number of councillors

The VEC considers that similar types of municipalities should have the same number of councillors, unless special circumstances justify a variation. In order to take a State-wide approach to councillor numbers, the VEC compiled a table of all Victorian municipalities to facilitate easy comparison.

In this table (excerpt provided on the following page), Hume is rated third of all the metropolitan/rural fringe municipalities. However, with a forecast growth rate of 24.35 per cent across the municipality over the next 10 years making a projected total of 134,582 electors before another review is scheduled, Hume will become comparable with the councils that have 11 councillors.

In addition to its rapid expansion, Hume also has one of the highest rates of diversity in Victoria with a mix of 140 nationalities which can place extra demands on councillors, as highlighted by Councillor Jessop in his submission:

A greater cultural mix...also requires deeper understanding of a more diverse community and response to their needs. There are also a greater number of community groups that are specific to particular cultural or linguistic communities, again, which require greater time and effort in representing, compared to more established or stable growth communities.

The VEC believes therefore, that the combined factors of diversity, geographic spread and forecast growth mean that 11 councillors would be the most appropriate number of councillors for Hume City Council, despite the fact this growth may not be realised

for several years. This would reduce the number of voters per councillor to 10,058, which is comparable to many metropolitan and fringe councils.

Table of metropolitan/rural fringe municipalities

Municipality	Area (km ²)	Current Estimated Voters	Number of councillors
Casey	397	165,119	11
Mornington Peninsula	726	142,984	11
Hume	503	110,641	9
Yarra Ranges	2,466	108,197	9
Whittlesea	490	106,324	9
Wyndham	542	99,123	9
Melton	528	72,067	7
Cardinia	1,282	51,451	7
Nillumbik	432	46,197	7

Electoral Structure

The VEC tried various multi-councillor options, taking into account the valuable information provided in the preliminary submissions which outlined the communities of interest and how they relate to each other.

Option A

Hume City Council should consist of eleven councillors elected from three wards; two wards of four councillors and one ward of three councillors.

The VEC's preferred option – Option A – keeps the communities of Sunbury and Bulla together. However, it does incorporate Tullamarine Airport into the same ward. The VEC acknowledges this is not ideal as Sunbury and Bulla are set in rural areas and may not identify with the airport. Option A also splits the community of Greenvale between two wards.

Altering the municipality to a three-ward structure is a sensible way of absorbing the population growth. This model allocates the extra two councillors to the areas where the most growth is anticipated and the broader boundaries of Aitken Ward ensure that the exceptional growth forecast for Craigieburn will be contained.

The boundaries are also clearer than in any other option as they run along main roads, important watercourses and the railway.

Aitken Ward would commence the twelve year time period with a low voter to councillor ratio compared to the other two wards. However, the rapid growth in the Craigieburn area would ensure this was quickly rectified and essentially this is the only way to account for the future growth.

On balance, the VEC considered the benefits of this model to outweigh the drawbacks. For these reasons, the VEC recommended Option A as its preferred option

Option B

Hume City Council should consist of nine councillors and four wards, three two-councillor wards and one three-councillor ward.

The VEC always commences electoral representation reviews with a thorough assessment of the current structure and prefers to only make minor modifications in cases where the existing structure captures the communities of interest and can absorb population growth.

The uneven distribution of growth across Hume City Council, coupled with the urban growth boundary dissecting the municipality, made modelling 11-councillor structures very difficult. Paradoxically, the VEC discovered that with nine councillors, the structure could be made to work with some modifications.

In Option B Jacksons Creek Ward is narrowed and its boundary is altered to run along Deep Creek and Emu Creek. Although this is not a straight boundary and divides the suburb of Bulla, it is clear and easily identifiable.

Aitken Ward is extended to incorporate Wildwood and most of Greenvale becomes incorporated into Airport Ward, with a handful of voters north of Somerton Road remaining in Aitken Ward. Merri Ward is restricted to encompassing the suburbs of Broadmeadows, Campbellfield and Meadow Heights.

This structure works well at accommodating communities of interest, does not split the majority of suburbs and the VEC is confident it will absorb the future population growth. Nevertheless, the VEC did have reservations about recommending nine councillors in light of the exceptional growth and diversity issues. While, the VEC considers 11 to be the appropriate number of councillors for Hume, it does accept that the number of councillors in a municipality affects the options that become available. A

structure that is good at reflecting the communities of interest may only be possible with a certain number of councillors. Due to the fact this structure works so well at grouping the suburbs together, which was the overarching concern in all the submissions, the VEC puts this option forward as an alternative option.

Option C

Hume City Council should consist of eleven councillors and four wards: one four-councillor ward, one three-councillor ward and two two-councillor wards.

The VEC always prefers to put forward a range of options for public comment and this alternative option represents the most reasonable four-ward structure with eleven councillors.

In Option C, Jacksons Creek is used as a boundary for Jacksons Creek Ward and provides a strong, clearly identifiable natural boundary. The advantages of this model include balancing the voter numbers between the wards and accommodating future population growth. However, the drawback to this structure is that it divides the town of Sunbury between two wards and thus contravenes one of the VEC's guiding principles.

The VEC believes that towns should be considered as communities of interest and always endeavours to design ward boundaries that do not divide them. Residents of a town share services and facilities and tend to have similar concerns, so creating boundaries that encompass entire towns allows councillors to become more effective representatives of the voters in their particular ward.

This boundary places sections of Sunbury in the same ward as Craigieburn. The VEC accepts this is far from ideal. In addition to the geographic distance between these towns, they have different requirements from councillors. As the gateway to the Macedon Ranges, Sunbury is on the urban fringe and has a completely different focus to Craigieburn, which is undergoing rapid development and becoming increasingly urbanised.

This option illustrates the minimum realignment of the boundaries that is required to reflect the existing structure but with 11 councillors.

Recommendations

Option A

Hume City Council should consist of 11 councillors elected from three wards; there should be two wards of four councillors and one ward of three councillors.

Option B

Hume City Council should consist of nine councillors and four wards. There should be three two-councillor wards and one three-councillor ward.

Option C

Hume City Council should consist of 11 councillors and four wards. There should be one four-councillor ward, one three councillor ward and two two-councillor wards.

Public response

Response submissions

Ten submissions were received by the deadline of 5.00pm on Tuesday, 13 March 2012.

The table below outlines the first preferences expressed in response to each option.

Option A	Option B	Option C
11 councillors	9 Councillors	11 Councillors
3 wards	4 Wards	4 Wards
8	2	0

Most submitters supported the increase in councillor numbers due to the exceptional growth in the municipality and were pleased that Option A kept the suburbs of Sunbury and Bulla together. The addition of Tullamarine Airport within Jacksons Creek Ward was accepted from both a community of interest and representation perspective.

The Proportional Representation Society had reservations about all the structures because an even number of councillors can lead to stalemate in the decision making process. However Option A was stated as their preferred option.

The Council submission favoured Option B with an amendment to encompass Bulla in Jacksons Creek Ward. They argued that taking a long-term view was detrimental to the next elections and that a shorter term view should be taken, in consideration of the rapid growth in the municipality.

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 the Global Learning Centre in Broadmeadows on Wednesday, 21 March 2012.

Everyone who made a submission in response to the report was invited to speak to their submission and four people accepted.

Three people spoke in favour of Option A, stating that Hume City Council was on the way to becoming one of the largest municipalities in Victoria due to its exceptional

growth and that 11 councillors would be needed to accommodate this growth and to meet the higher expectations from ratepayers.

The speakers agreed that Sunbury and Tullamarine did share common interests and, although they acknowledged they are very different communities, all three speakers stated it was appropriate to group them together in the same ward. Their reasons included the fact that many people in Sunbury work or travel to the airport, while people in Tullamarine travel to Sunbury for the Homestead, Sunbury fairs and the wetlands. They also argued that the communities also share a connection via the Calder and Tullamarine Freeways.

One submitter suggested that increasing the number of councillors was more important than recognising the communities of interest because councillors have a duty to represent all constituents and would continue to do so, wherever the boundaries were drawn. He argued that the boundaries would not have any effect on facilities or how people relate to the facilities in their area.

Mr Isola, CEO of Hume City Council, took the opposite view and argued on behalf of Council that the communities of interest should be the overriding basis for the electoral structure. He stated the case for Option B, even though it offers fewer councillors. He criticised Option A for incorporating Tullamarine in Jacksons Ward and argued that residents from Tullamarine access services and facilities in Gladstone Park, Broadmeadows and Airport West while Sunbury residents shop and access services within Sunbury and Watergardens shopping precinct.

He pointed to the distance between the communities and argued that the distinct communities would get better representation if they were grouped with communities that shared a commonality.

He also explained the differences between the new community of Craigieburn and the older community of Campbellfield and argued that these communities would also not share any commonality and therefore would not be effectively represented under Option A.

He argued that it made more sense to group the communities that shared facilities and 'everything that makes them a community' rather than 'creating differences in communities'.

Findings and Recommendation

The VEC took all written submissions into consideration and was pleased to be able to gain further insight from the four speakers who generously gave their time at the public hearing.

To create boundaries that would provide fair and equitable representation for the electors of Hume City over the next 12 years, the VEC had to consider whether it was more important to increase the number of councillors or to ensure the best reflection of communities of interest.

Of the three options put forward for public consultation, only two were supported. Option A increased the number of councillors but may have compromised the communities of interest by grouping Sunbury with Tullamarine and the established community of Campbellfield with Craigieburn. Option B grouped the communities of interest more effectively but the boundaries were only workable by retaining nine councillors.

In the Preliminary Report, the VEC acknowledged that Option C was included to illustrate the minimum realignment of the boundaries that would be required to reflect the existing structure with 11 councillors. To ensure the elector numbers balanced between the wards it was necessary to divide both Craigieburn and Sunbury between two wards, which is far from ideal. As expected, it did not garner any public support. One submitter, a life long resident of Craigieburn stated:

Dividing this catchment area into two separate wards would undermine the Craigieburn Community Renewal project and make it more difficult for the whole of Craigieburn to come together and articulate their concerns when they are divided by wards.

The VEC accepts these arguments and discounted this option from its deliberations.

The arguments put forward by the Council in their submission and at the public hearing that communities of interest should be respected were understandable.. Indeed this was the theme running through all the submissions. It echoes the VEC's own principles for ensuring that communities of interest are as fairly represented as possible by taking them into account, when practicable, because people who share interests are more easily represented by the councillor in their ward and this allows for more effective representation.

However, the VEC has serious concerns about whether nine councillors is an appropriate number for a municipality of this size with expected significant growth over the next 10 years.

According to the Department of Planning and Community Development, the planned changes to the urban growth boundary will see Hume grow by 31,000-35,000 people which will create a need for 19,000-21,000 new homes.⁴

The Growth Areas Authority (GAA), state that Hume has a strong capacity for long-term growth due to its position as a gateway city. Their website states:

Over time we expect Hume will continue to play a key role in contributing to the national economy and Australia's global position, with an expectation that employment will grow to between 90,000 and 95,000 jobs.

In addition to representing a significantly larger amount of voters, councillors will have a great deal of input in these new communities to ensure that they have the facilities and services required. The VEC is mindful of the remarks made by Councillor Jessop in his preliminary submission that it is not just the number of electors that should be considered but also 'the type and number of issues that are raised.' He wrote:

It is not simply growth in numbers that is the concern, but more the change in demographics and lack of knowledge by new residents of their new community, and the increased diversity of residents, that increases the workloads on councillors.

Hume has a rich cultural diversity with over 140 different nationalities and 125 languages other than English spoken at home, The VEC understands that a diverse community will have more demands on councillor time than a community made up of people who share similar concerns and that new residents are likely to have different needs from the Council than established residents.⁵ The VEC also notes that Hume is the fourth most disadvantaged Local Government Authority in metropolitan Melbourne⁶ which indicates high levels of special needs within the City. It has great social and economic inequality with lower levels of education and employment than the average for metropolitan Melbourne. A larger percentage of people have no qualifications (57.3 per cent in comparison to 45.9 per cent across metropolitan Melbourne), a larger proportion of the population are unemployed (7.1 per cent compared to the average of 5.4 per cent).⁷

Aside from the growth issues of a city undergoing rapid change, and the diversity issues, the geography of the municipality also presents challenges to representation. The three main population centres of Sunbury, Broadmeadows and Craigieburn are all separated by vast tracts of rural land and rivers which increase travel time between these areas.

⁴ Hume Growth Area Plan, Department of Planning and Community Development, dpcd.vic.gov.au

⁵ *City Profile*, Hume City Council website – hume.vic.gov.au

⁶ SEIFA (Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA))

⁷ Profile.id *Hume Community Profile* – hume.vic.gov.au

In light of these special factors, the VEC recommends that 11 is an appropriate number of councillors.

The VEC recognises that its 11-councillor structure, Option A, does split the community of Greenvale between Aitken Ward and Meadow Valley Ward and acknowledges the public submissions that stated communities have a strong sense of identity and loyalty and should not be divided. However, the VEC considers the benefits of increased representation to outweigh these drawbacks.

The VEC notes also that the major projects being undertaken by Hume City Council are in the three principal population centres of Sunbury, Broadmeadows and Craigieburn, as listed on Council website and confirmed by Mr Isola at the public hearing.

Option A is based on each of these major centres and therefore has the added advantage of reflecting the council's decision making process by capturing each of these areas in a different ward.

Recommendation

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) recommends that Hume City Council should consist of 11 councillors elected from three wards. There should be two wards of four councillors and one ward of three councillors.



S. H. Tully

Electoral Commissioner



Liz Williams

Deputy Electoral Commissioner

Appendix 1: List of submitters

Preliminary submissions

Collier, B.

Hume City Council

Jessop, D.

Nicholson, E.

Proportional Representation Society of Australia

Response submissions

Cheers, C.

Collier, B.*

Dance, T.*

Hume City Council *

Jessop, D.

Nicholson, E.*

Nunn, C.

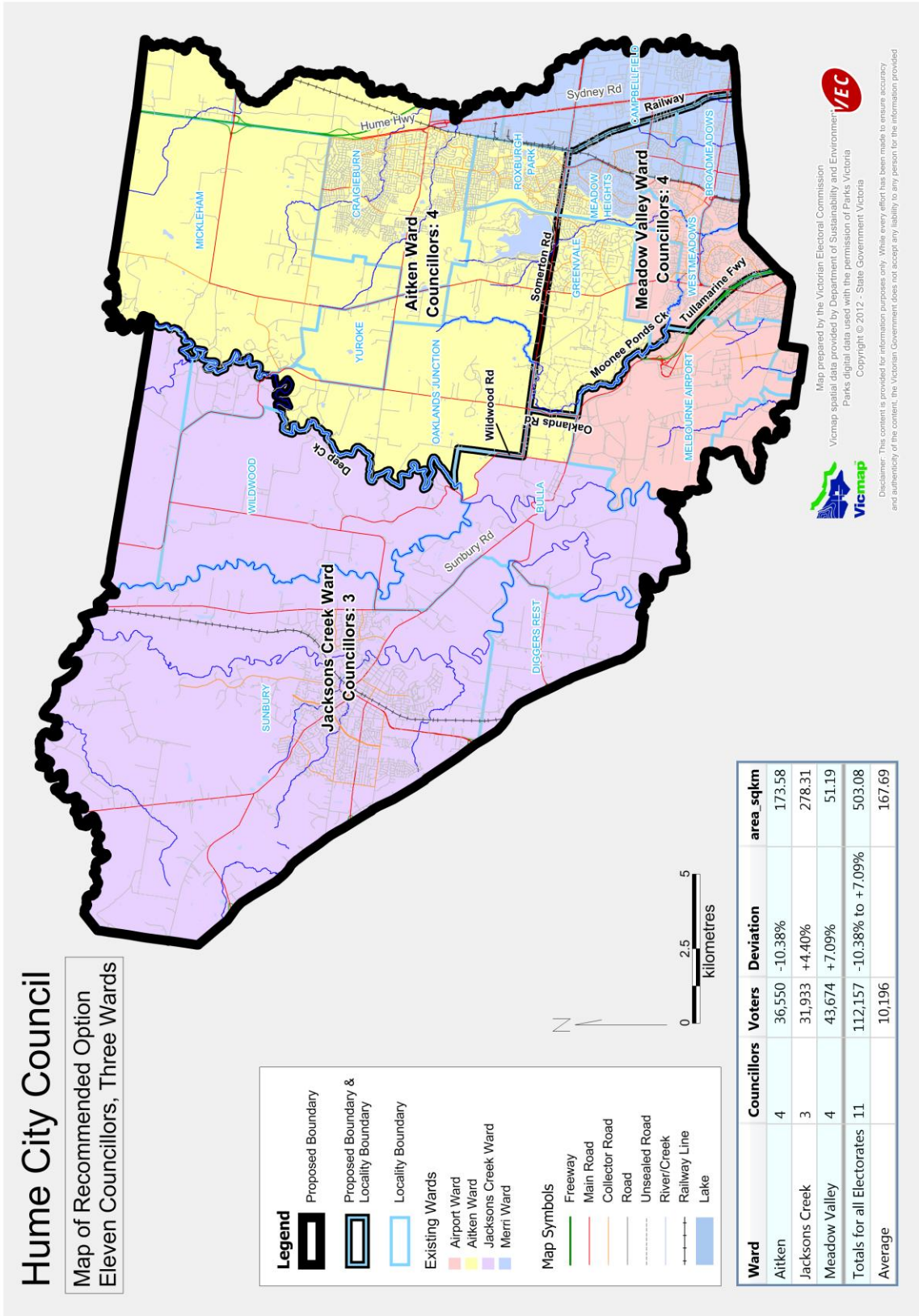
Proportional Representation Society of Australia

Sunbury Business Association

Sunbury Maribyrnong Valley Green Wedge Defenders and Green Wedges Coalition

- * Submitters who spoke in support of their submission at the public hearing held on 21 March 2012

Appendix 2: Map of recommended boundaries



Victorian Electoral Commission

Level 11, 530 Collins Street
Melbourne, Vic 3000

131 VEC (131 832)
hume.review@vec.vic.gov.au
vec.vic.gov.au