1. Introduction

Greater Dandenong City Council thanks the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) for this opportunity to submit a final submission into the Electoral Review of this Council.

In respect of Council’s preliminary submission lodged in July 2019, Council held two key positions which were:

1. That Council should retain its current Councillor representatives of eleven Councillors; and
2. That Council should continue to be structured using multi-member Wards.

It is therefore pleasing that the preliminary report issued by the VEC has supported both of these positions.

This submission will therefore limit its content to a discussion on the two options put forward by the VEC. The submission further does not consider any future impacts of the proposed Local Government Bill and instead bases its views on the current Local Government Act 1989.

Mayor Roz Blades AM
2. Review of Option A and B in preliminary VEC Report

This submission will focus on the two options presented by the VEC in its preliminary report.

2.1 Option A

Greater Dandenong City Council is generally supportive of Option A.

Council’s position is on the basis that this option provides the least disturbance to the current ward boundaries that residents associate themselves with. Under this option, as is noted in the Preliminary Report, only 5.38% of voters are affected by the proposed boundary changes. For residents that have become familiar with their Wards and Councillor representatives, minimising disruption is important to them.

Council does however have some concerns with Option A which are:

1. The proposed changes to the western boundary of Silverleaf Ward

Under the proposed Option A, the western border of Silverleaf Ward moves from the eastern boundary of the cemetery to Elonera and Jacksons Road. The cemetery acts as a natural boundary and the inclusion of these properties east of the cemetery into Lightwood Ward creates a pocket of properties that has no natural connection to the remaining areas of this Ward. Council is concerned that this has the potential to create almost a hidden component of the Lightwood Ward and that these Noble Park North properties better relate to remaining areas of Dandenong North.

In making these comments, Council acknowledges the difficult balancing act in both reducing the numbers of voters in Redgum Ward to an acceptable level whilst having a more distinguishable boundary between Redgum and Silverleaf Wards than has existed in the past.

2. The potential longevity of the proposed structure

Under this option, Redgum Ward is reduced to a variation of +0.05 which gives rise to some concern that continued residential development in the southern sections of Council will limit the valid lifespan of this electoral review. Ideally, Redgum Ward would be reduced to a negative variation which would allow natural growth to restore the variation over several years without requiring another review to occur.

Council again acknowledges the difficulties faced by the VEC in establishing strong and clear boundaries. One option that Council would suggest for further investigation is following the Yarraman Creek boundary (rather than Eastlink) from Heatherton Road through to Cheltenham Road. This would then allow small residential pockets north and south of the railway line to be included in Paperbark Ward thereby reducing Redgum Ward further.
2.2 Option B

Council is generally not supportive of Option B due to the significant disruption this option provides to existing Ward boundaries. As outlined in the preliminary report the proposed changes under Option B would result in 16,276 or 15.98% of all voters changing wards.

Council also does not believe there is an appropriate community of interest established between the areas of Noble Park (south of Princes Highway) and the remaining areas of Dandenong North that form the balance of Silverleaf Ward.

2.3 Conclusion

Greater Dandenong City Council is generally supportive of Option A subject to the concerns expressed in this submission. Council would request that the VEC continues to model slight amendments to the existing Option A in order to address these concerns.