Executive summary

The *Local Government Act 1989* (the Act) requires the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) to conduct an electoral representation review of each local council in Victoria at least before every third council general election.

The purpose of a 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.’¹ The matters considered by a review are:

- the number of councillors
- the electoral structure of the council (whether the council should be unsubdivided or divided into wards and, if subdivided, the ward boundaries and the number of councillors per ward).

The VEC conducts all reviews based on three main principles:

1. taking a consistent, State-wide approach to the total number of councillors
2. if subdivided, ensuring the number of voters represented by each councillor is within plus-or-minus 10% of the average number of voters per councillor for that local council
3. ensuring communities of interest are as fairly represented as possible.

Current electoral structure

Greater Dandenong City Council currently comprises 11 councillors elected from four wards (three three-councillor wards and one two-councillor ward). More information on Greater Dandenong City Council and the current electoral structure is available in the council fact sheet on the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au.

Prior to the last representation review in 2008, Greater Dandenong City Council was comprised of 11 councillors elected from 11 single-councillor wards. Visit the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au to access a copy of the 2008 review final report.

Preliminary submissions

The VEC invited preliminary submissions from the commencement of the Greater Dandenong City Council review on Wednesday 19 June 2019. The VEC received 22 submissions by the deadline for submissions at 5.00 pm on Wednesday 17 July 2019. These submissions can be viewed on the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au and a list of people or organisations who made a submission is available at Appendix 2.

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

The VEC is considering the following options for further consultation:

- Option A (preferred option)
  
  Greater Dandenong City Council consist of 11 councillors elected from four wards with adjustments to the current ward boundaries (three three-councillor wards and one two-councillor ward).

- Option B (alternative option)
  
  Greater Dandenong City Council consist of 11 councillors elected from four wards with adjustments to the current ward boundaries, different to Option A (three three-councillor wards and one two-councillor ward).
Background

Legislative basis
The Act requires the VEC to conduct a representation review of each local council in Victoria before every third general council election, or earlier if gazetted by the Minister for Local Government.

The Act specifies that the purpose of a representation review is to recommend the number of councillors and the electoral structure that provides ‘fair and equitable representation for the persons who are entitled to vote at a general election of the Council.’

The Act requires the VEC to consider:

- the number of councillors in a local council
- whether a local council should be unsubdivided or subdivided.

If a local council should be subdivided, the VEC must ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is within plus-or-minus 10% of the average number of voters per councillor for that local council. On this basis, the review must consider the:

- number of wards
- ward boundaries
- number of councillors that should be elected for each ward.

Public engagement

Public information program
The VEC conducts a public information program to inform the community of the representation review, including:

- public notices printed in local and state-wide papers
- a public information session to outline the review process and respond to questions from the community
- a media release announcing the commencement of the review
- sponsored social media advertising geo-targeted to users within the local council area

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2 Section 219D of the Local Government Act 1989.
3 Ibid.
• an information email campaign targeted at known community groups and communities of interest in the local council area
• a submission guide and fact sheet to explain the review process and provide background information on the scope of the review
• ongoing information updates and publication of submissions on the VEC website.

Public consultation
Public input is accepted by the VEC in:
• preliminary submissions at the start of the review
• response submissions to the preliminary report
• a public hearing that provides an opportunity for people who have made a response submission to expand on their submission.

Public submissions are an important part of the review process but are not the only factors considered during a review. The VEC ensures its recommendations comply with the Act and are formed through careful consideration of public submissions, independent research, and analysis of all relevant factors.

The VEC’s principles
Three main principles underlie all the VEC’s work on representation reviews:

1. **Taking a consistent, State-wide approach to the total number of councillors.**
   
   The VEC is guided by its comparisons of local councils of a similar size and category to the council under review. The VEC also considers any special circumstances that may warrant the local council having more or fewer councillors than similar local councils.

2. **If subdivided, ensuring the number of voters represented by each councillor is within plus-or-minus 10% of the average number of voters per councillor for that local council.**
   
   This is the principle of ‘one vote, one value’, which is enshrined in the Act. This means that every person’s vote counts equally.

3. **Ensuring communities of interest are as fairly represented as possible.**
   
   Each local council contains a number of communities of interest. Where practicable, the electoral structure should be designed to ensure they are fairly represented, and that geographic communities of interest are not split by ward boundaries. This allows elected councillors to be more effective representatives of the people and interests in their particular local council or ward.
Developing recommendations

The VEC bases its recommendations for particular electoral structures on the following information:

- internal research specifically relating to the local council under review, including Australian Bureau of Statistics and .id data; voter statistics from the Victorian electoral roll; and other State and local government data sets
- small area forecasts provided by .id for relevant local council areas
- the VEC’s experience conducting previous electoral representation reviews of local councils and similar reviews for State elections
- the VEC’s expertise in mapping, demography and local government
- careful consideration of all input from the public in written submissions received during the review
- advice from consultants with extensive experience in local government.

Deciding on the number of councillors

The Act allows for a local council to have between five and 12 councillors but does not specify how the appropriate number of councillors is to be decided. In considering the number of councillors for a local council, the VEC is guided by the Victorian Parliament’s intention for fairness and equity in the local representation of voters under the Act.

The starting point in deciding the appropriate number of councillors for a local council is comparing the local council under review to other local councils of a similar size and type (Principle 1). Generally, local councils that have a larger number of voters will have a higher number of councillors. Often large populations are more likely to be diverse, both in the nature and number of their communities of interest and the issues of representation.

However, the VEC also considers the particular circumstances of each local council which could justify more or fewer councillors, such as:

- the nature and complexity of services provided by the Council
- geographic size and topography
- population growth or decline
- the social diversity of the local council.

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4 .id is a consulting company specialising in population and demographic analysis and prediction information products in most jurisdictions in Australia and New Zealand.
5 Section 5B(1) of the Local Government Act 1989.
Deciding the electoral structure

The Act allows for a local council to be unsubdivided, with all councillors elected ‘at-large’ by all voters or subdivided into a number of wards.

If the local council is to be subdivided into wards, there are three options available:

1. single-councillor wards
2. multi-councillor wards
3. a combination of single-councillor and multi-councillor wards.

A subdivided electoral structure must be developed with internal ward boundaries that provide for a fair and equitable division of the local council.

The Act allows for wards with different numbers of councillors, as long as the number of voters represented by each councillor is within plus-or-minus 10% of the average number of voters per councillor for that local council (Principle 2). For example, a local council may have one three-councillor ward with 15,000 voters and two single-councillor wards each with 5,000 voters. In this case, the average number of voters per councillor would be 5,000.

Over time, population changes can lead to some wards in subdivided local councils having larger or smaller numbers of voters. As part of the review, the VEC corrects any imbalances and takes into account likely population changes to ensure ward boundaries provide equitable representation for as long as possible.

In considering which electoral structure is most appropriate, the VEC considers the following matters:

- the VEC’s recommendation at the previous representation review and the reasons for that recommendation
- the longevity of the structure, with the aim of keeping voter numbers per councillor within the 10% tolerance for as long as possible (Principle 2)
- communities of interest, consisting of people who share a range of common concerns, such as geographic, economic or cultural associations (Principle 3)
- the number of candidates in previous elections, as outcomes from previous elections indicate that large numbers of candidates can lead to an increase in the number of informal (invalid) votes
- geographic factors, such as size and topography
- clear ward boundaries.
Public submissions (preliminary)

The VEC received 22 preliminary submissions by the deadline at 5.00 pm on Wednesday 17 July 2019. These submissions can be viewed on the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au and a list of people or organisations who made a submission is available at Appendix 2.

Most submissions were from residents within the City of Greater Dandenong. There were 10 submitters from Dandenong (including Greater Dandenong City Council), three submitters from Keysborough, three submitters from Noble Park, two submitters from Springvale, and one submitter from Dandenong North. One of the submitters (Noel Wyndom from Noble Park) made a supplementary submission that emphasised his support for 11 councillors and a multi-councillor ward electoral structure. There were also two submissions from outside the City of Greater Dandenong, including a submission from the Proportional Representation Society of Australia (Victoria-Tasmania) Inc. (PRSA) and an individual submission from Hawthorn East. The submitter from Hawthorn East commented that they work in Dandenong and grew up in the surrounding suburbs of Dandenong.

Number of councillors

Most submissions supported retaining the current number of councillors. Submitters commented that although 11 councillors are more than what the City of Greater Dandenong’s population size would currently warrant when compared to similar councils, there are special circumstances that justify continuing with 11 councillors. Submitters commonly stated that:

- the City of Greater Dandenong is ‘extremely socially diverse’ and it is also ‘exceptional’, as one of the most multicultural local government areas in Australia, with 64% of residents born overseas and many residents speaking languages other than English at home. In its submission, the Council wrote that this diversity creates ‘unique challenges for Council in terms of representation and communication’ and justifies 11 councillors.

- the City of Greater Dandenong has more complex land-use for a metropolitan local council area, including the significant industrial area in Dandenong South, which Council described as “the manufacturing heartland of Victoria”, and the Green Wedge area in the southern part of the local council area, which has stricter planning controls. Parts of the City of Greater Dandenong designated Green Wedge areas comprise about 29% of the total local council area.6

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- the population is forecast to grow overall, and growth will be more significant in certain areas, including the area south of Keysborough and through high- and medium-density developments in Springvale, Noble Park and Dandenong
- the greater number of councillors continues to be warranted due to more social and economic disadvantage in the City of Greater Dandenong. There is a higher rate of unemployment in the local council area and generally lower level of education in the population.

The PRSA commented that proportional representation ‘works far better’ in local council areas and wards that have an odd rather than an even number of councillors. The PRSA also considered 11 councillors appropriate to avoid tied votes in council.

Two submitters expressed interest in increasing the number of councillors to 12. One of these submissions (Claire and Daniel Alvarez) supported more councillors if the population grows enough in the near future to warrant it. Another submission (Silvia Mastrogiovanni) preferred 12 councillors but stated that the current odd number of councillors is preferable to avoid tied votes at council meetings. Ms Mastrogiovanni considered that a larger number of councillors could be justified, based on the diversity in the City of Greater Dandenong as well as the social and economic disadvantage in the local council area.

**Electoral structure**

Most submissions, including Greater Dandenong City Council’s submission, supported the current electoral structure, focusing on the positives of multi-councillor wards and in some cases, highlighting the negatives of single-councillor wards. There was no support for returning to a single-councillor ward structure in the submissions.

**Support for multi-councillor wards**

Submitters described various advantages to multi-councillor wards. Submitters commonly noted that multi-councillor wards promote greater diversity in representation, which is important in a local council area that is culturally and socially diverse. Submitters also commented that the larger wards have continued to ensure geographic communities of interest are not divided. Some submitters noted that the current electoral structure has ensured the key activity centres in Dandenong and Springvale are kept intact in their own wards, rather than being split across two or more wards, which could be the case if the City of Greater Dandenong returned to a single-councillor ward structure.

Overall, submitters generally commented that the current electoral structure has been ‘working well’ and supported its continuation with the necessary changes to ensure that Red Gum Ward is returned to the required voter-to-councillor ratio. Submitters generally conveyed a sense that the four current wards captured communities of interest by grouping key suburbs together in the
same wards (for example, all of Springvale is in Lightwood Ward and all of Dandenong is in Red Gum Ward).

In her submission, Louisa Willoughby, commented that multi-councillor wards have helped to build the participation of people from non-Anglo backgrounds in politics in the City of Greater Dandenong, which is important given the increasing diversity in Australia. Dr Willoughby stated that within the City of Greater Dandenong there are sizeable ethnic groups dispersed across the local council area. She reasoned that returning to single-councillor wards would mean candidates from different ethnic groups would be competing against each other and it would be difficult for ethnic communities dispersed across the City of Greater Dandenong to elect a representative who can speak their language and understand their issues and concerns. Dr Willoughby’s and the Council’s submissions commented positively on the City’s councillors being of diverse ethnic backgrounds, noting the Council generally reflects the larger ethnic communities in the local council area.

Submitters commented that multi-councillor wards have provided voters with a wider choice of candidates at elections, and each resident or interest group is more likely to have a councillor elected who represents them. Greater Dandenong City Council’s submission stated that residents and ratepayers are more likely to be guaranteed representation, even when there are councillors on extended periods of leave. The Council also noted that this is presently the case in the Red Gum Ward, where there are two councillors on leave.

Submitters further commented that multi-councillor wards are more likely to encourage councillors to work collaboratively and enable councillors to share their workload. Greater Dandenong City Council’s submission stated that ‘having broader wards’ have encouraged councillors ‘to think more strategically and in the interests of the whole Council rather than a narrower geographic part of Council’. The Council explained one of its concerns with returning to single-councillor wards is the potential for councillors to focus on how to ‘split the available capital funding 11 ways’ instead of thinking more strategically about the best future for the City. One submitter expressed a similar concern when they stated that in single-councillor wards, ‘councillors may be elected on minor or parochial issues and may lack a Council wide perspective’.

Some submitters commented that there is more high- and medium-density developments planned for areas in Springvale, Noble Park and Dandenong, including ‘an upcoming Sandown Park redevelopment’. These submitters noted that multi-councillor wards are more likely to accommodate this population growth while single-councillor wards would require constant boundary adjustments to accommodate population changes.
Modifying the Red Gum Ward

Three submissions supported more substantial changes to the current Red Gum Ward. In a submission which came with a map, Nina Kelly of Keysborough commented that Red Gum Ward ‘is too large geographically and does not represent the very mixed demographics well’. Ms Kelly commented that the continued housing development in the area south of Keysborough indicates that the population will grow in this area and a shift in the ward boundaries is required to accommodate growth. Ms Kelly’s map illustrated her preference to split Red Gum Ward in half and extend the area encompassed by Paperbark Ward further south, to include the new developments south of Keysborough as well as the smaller suburb of Bangholme and the Green Wedge area. Ms Kelly acknowledged, however, that her proposed ward boundaries would not meet the legislated +/- 10% average number of voters per councillor.

Two other submitters from Keysborough requested that areas in the southern part of Keysborough be placed in a ward with the rest of ‘older Keysborough’ rather than stay in Red Gum Ward. They commented on the different communities of interest between southern Keysborough and Dandenong, stating that Dandenong ‘is increasingly urban’ and generally a ‘low socio-economic area’. In addition, Dandenong has ‘a large rental population and is a place of first settlement for new migrants’. In contrast, they commented that southern Keysborough and Keysborough generally is ‘largely middle class’, ‘suburban’ and ‘largely owner occupied’, and that ‘Dandenong residents rarely visit Keysborough and vice versa’.

Support for proportional representation

In its submission, the PRSA supported continuing with multi-councillor wards to enable the continued use of proportional representation. However, it noted that the current electoral structure includes one ward of two councillors. The PRSA commented that, as a general principle, ‘all wards should return the same number of councillors’ to ensure that all candidates need to reach the same quota of votes for election. Nevertheless, the PRSA acknowledged that the current arrangement in the City of Greater Dandenong is ‘probably the best that can be hoped for under current legislation, which provides for a maximum of twelve councillors in a municipality’. It concluded with the view that Greater Dandenong City Council should continue with 11 councillors, and it expressed strong opposition to single-councillor wards.
The VEC’s findings and options

Preliminary report findings

Number of councillors
The VEC considers that 11 is the most appropriate number of councillors for Greater Dandenong City Council.

Greater Dandenong City Council is in the metropolitan category of local councils. The local council area covers 130 square kilometres and currently has an estimated 101,846 voters. Based on its population size, Greater Dandenong City Council is within the range of nine-councillor local councils in Metropolitan Melbourne. It has the second lowest voter-to-councillor ratio of metropolitan local councils.

In some cases, special circumstances exist in a local council area that support a recommendation for fewer or more councillors. The VEC recognises that the City of Greater Dandenong has its own unique characteristics and challenges, and the VEC’s analysis and information provided in preliminary submissions identified a number of special circumstances.

### Comparable Metropolitan councils to Greater Dandenong City Council

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local council</th>
<th>Area (km²)</th>
<th>Population (2016 Census)</th>
<th>Number of voters at last review</th>
<th>Current estimate of voters</th>
<th>Number of councillors</th>
<th>Number of voters per councillor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moreland City</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>162,558</td>
<td>109,744</td>
<td>132,790</td>
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<td>120,779</td>
<td>123,695</td>
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<td>105,316</td>
<td>122,333</td>
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<td>36</td>
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<td>104,929</td>
<td>119,595</td>
<td>9^</td>
<td>13,288</td>
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<td>116,335</td>
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<td>90,094</td>
<td>99,158</td>
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<td>14,165</td>
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The City of Greater Dandenong is predicted to experience substantial population growth in the period to 2036. The City’s population is forecast to increase at an average annual rate of 1.5% between 2019 and 2036 – from a population of 166,090 to 218,560, representing an estimated 52,470 additional people.7 The VEC considers that there is no reason to reduce the number of councillors based on the forecast growth, which will bring the City of Greater Dandenong within the range of metropolitan local council areas with 11 councillors by the next scheduled review prior to the 2032 local council elections.

The VEC recognises that special circumstances exist in this local council area. A significant percentage of the City of Greater Dandenong’s population was born overseas (64%), with 21.4% of residents born overseas arriving into Australia in the last five years. Approximately 64.5% of residents speak a language other than English at home, which is significantly more than for Greater Melbourne generally (at 34.9%). Approximately 24.5%, have limited fluency in spoken English, which is distinctly higher than 13.3% for Greater Melbourne generally.8 The City of Greater Dandenong is also home to a large number of refugee arrivals compared to many other local council areas in Greater Melbourne and home to around 2,000 asylum seekers.9

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9 Greater Dandenong City Council, *Statistical Summary: Cultural Diversity*, [no date].
recognises that the significant cultural and linguistic diversity in the City of Greater Dandenong is a celebrated characteristic of the local council area, while also presenting unique challenges for the Council in terms of representation and communication. This would warrant continuing with the comparatively high number of 11 councillors.

The VEC also acknowledges the more complex land-use in the City of Greater Dandenong. The local council area is a mix of residential, commercial and industrial zones, with a major industrial precinct in Dandenong South and a section designated as Green Wedge in the southern part of the local council area. There are also major freeways that serve to connect areas across the whole of eastern Metropolitan Melbourne intersecting through the local council area, such as the Eastlink Tollway and Monash Freeway. The varied land-use in Greater Dandenong will continue to present additional challenges for the Council in terms of planning and development, and in representing community views.

The VEC’s research confirms submitters’ comments that residents in the City of Greater Dandenong are more likely to experience a higher level of social and economic disadvantage compared to many other local council areas in Melbourne, which is evident in key indicators such as a lower median weekly income, higher unemployment rate, and greater percentage of early school leavers.10 A Greater Dandenong City Council publication notes that in recent years, there have been a growing number of higher education enrolments, a decline in early school leaving rates, and a higher than average attendance of young people at TAFE.11 Despite this, the VEC considers that there are good reasons for continuing with 11 councillors based on the demographic profile of the local council area.

The VEC did not consider 12 councillors to be appropriate at present. The City of Greater Dandenong’s population size and forecast growth, while substantial, is moderate compared to local councils in Melbourne’s urban/rural interface and the City’s forecast growth is likely to bring it more comfortably within the 11-councillor range of metropolitan local councils in the period until the next scheduled review. It is possible then that an increase in the number of councillors should be considered at the next review. The VEC also acknowledges that most submissions supported retaining the current number of councillors, commenting that 11 councillors provided appropriate representation given the special circumstances in the City of Greater Dandenong.

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Electoral structure

Preliminary submissions demonstrated a strong desire to continue with the current multi-councillor structure. The VEC therefore focused its modelling on adjustments to the boundaries in the current electoral structure. As part of the review, the VEC considered the relevant election statistics for Greater Dandenong City Council’s last three general elections (2008, 2012 and 2016). These statistics indicate whether the current electoral structure has been providing for a healthy democracy since it was introduced at the 2008 election.

The VEC observed that there has consistently been between seven and 13 candidates in each ward at Greater Dandenong City Council’s past three elections. There have been no uncontested wards at these elections. In contrast, earlier election results show several uncontested wards under the previous single-councillor ward electoral structure. In 2005, two wards were uncontested (Dandenong North and Keysborough). Similarly, in 2003, two wards were uncontested (Lyndale and Noble Park). A few wards during the 2005 and 2003 elections also had a small number of candidates.12 Uncontested wards or a small number of candidates (two or three candidates) mean that voters have little or no choice at elections. Since 2008, the current multi-councillor ward structure has increased the choice of candidates for voters in the City of Greater Dandenong.

The VEC has observed that despite the numbers of candidates being quite manageable, the percentage of informal votes has been high over Greater Dandenong City Council’s last three elections. Informal votes were particularly high in wards with over 10 candidates. At the 2016 election, Silverleaf Ward had the largest number of candidates out of all four wards (13 candidates for two vacancies) and the highest percentage of informal votes at 12.06%. In contrast, Lightwood Ward had the smallest number of candidates (seven candidates for three vacancies) and the lowest informal vote rate at 5.74%. The VEC has generally observed that informal voting increases as more candidates are listed on the ballot paper. This is because longer ballot papers can be confusing for voters and more difficult to fill out correctly, leading to higher levels of informal voting through voter error.

Numbers of candidates tend to be smaller in single-councillor wards than in multi-councillor wards, providing an argument in favour of single-councillor wards. However, the VEC’s research indicates that there are also other factors contributing to the higher rate of informal voting in this council area. The City of Greater Dandenong has significantly more residents born overseas who are not proficient in English (about 24%). In addition, local councils can choose to conduct their elections by attendance voting or entirely by postal voting. Greater Dandenong City Council is

one of several Victorian councils that chooses to hold attendance elections. The VEC has consistently observed that informal voting is higher for local council elections with attendance voting, compared to local council elections using postal voting.\textsuperscript{13}

The VEC also observed that the percentage of voters turning out to vote at Greater Dandenong City Council’s elections has been lower than the Victorian average. At the 2016 election, Red Gum Ward had a voter turnout of 57.83%, Paperbark Ward had 68.69%, Silverleaf Ward had 69.62%, and Lightwood Ward had 70.8%. The average voter turnout for the council as a whole at each of Greater Dandenong City Council’s last three elections was 67% at the 2016 election, 69% at the 2012 election and 72% at the 2008 election. The VEC does not consider that the low voter turnout is necessarily a result of the electoral structure.

Generally, voter turnout in local councils with attendance elections is consistently lower than for those using postal voting. For example, at all Victorian local government elections in 2016, voter turnout for all those entitled to vote was 72.15%. The rate for postal elections (73.75%) was higher than that for attendance elections (61.49%).\textsuperscript{14} The variation in turnout between voting methods is even more significant when comparing between the different voting entitlements; turnout for voters enrolled through a ratepayer entitlement was 54.85% at postal elections in 2016 compared to 13.53% for attendance elections.\textsuperscript{15} In Greater Dandenong City Council, voter participation was lowest in Red Gum Ward, which has the largest concentration of voters enrolled through their ratepayer entitlement.

Overall, the VEC observed that Greater Dandenong City Council has had a high informal vote and comparatively low voter turnout at its last three general elections. However, the VEC considers that these characteristics are a result of demographic factors specific to the local council area and factors such as the use of attendance voting. Based on this finding and the fact that there was considerable support for the current electoral structure, the VEC did not consider other models with a greater number of wards, including single-councillor electoral structures.

The VEC therefore focused on modelling variations to the current electoral structure. It considered the following options to be the two strongest models to include for further consultation with the community.

Option A is a minimal change option that makes proposed boundary modifications to return Red Gum Ward to the legislated average number of voters per councillor.

Option B, on the other hand, considers three submitters’ requests to separate the area south of Keysborough from Dandenong and Red Gum Ward.


Option A: Retaining the current model with modified boundaries

Red Gum Ward has attracted more population growth compared to the other three wards since the last review and currently has an estimated 31,386 voters. At +13%, Red Gum Ward is outside of the legislated +/- 10% average number of voters per councillor. Option A modifies the boundaries in the current electoral structure to ensure Red Gum Ward is returned to within the legislated 10% tolerance from now until the next review.

In this option, the VEC proposes to modify the boundary between Red Gum and Silverleaf Wards using Heatherton Road as the new ward boundary. This would affect 3,596 voters who are currently in Red Gum Ward and as an outcome of the proposed boundary adjustment, will be in Silverleaf Ward. By making this boundary modification, Red Gum Ward would be returned to the legislated voter-to-councillor ratio.

The modification to the boundary between Red Gum and Silverleaf Wards necessitated one further boundary modification to ensure that Silverleaf Ward would remain within the legislated requirement of voters per councillor. The boundary between Silverleaf and Lightwood Wards was modified where it currently follows the perimeter of the Springvale Botanical Cemetery. The modification shifts this boundary from the perimeter of the cemetery into Noble Park North using Elonera Road and Jacksons Road as the new boundary. This change affects 1,885 voters who are currently in Silverleaf Ward and would be in Lightwood Ward as a result. The VEC reasoned that this adjustment to the boundary between Lightwood and Silverleaf Wards is minor as it affects a small number of voters while keeping Silverleaf Ward within the legislated requirement.

The VEC believes that there are potential benefits presented in this option for fair and equitable representation in the City of Greater Dandenong. Option A:

- is a minimal-change option that reflects community support for the current electoral structure (in total, 5,481 voters or 5.38% of the total enrolment would be affected)
- ensures that all wards comply with the legislated ratio of voters to councillor at present and in the period until the next scheduled review
- unites all of Dandenong North in Silverleaf Ward (Dandenong North is currently divided between Silverleaf and Red Gum Wards)
- improves the current boundary between Red Gum and Silverleaf Wards, which uses several roads (Monash Freeway, Stud Road, Carlton Road, Devira Street, Silvia Street, Gladstone Road and Heatherton Road) as the VEC’s proposed boundary would consist entirely of Heatherton Road, making it a clearer and more easily identifiable boundary.
A possible drawback of Option A is that it would move a small area in Noble Park North into Lightwood Ward, dividing Noble Park North between Silverleaf and Lightwood Wards. The VEC considered that this is a necessary modification to accommodate growth in the south.

**Option B: Retaining the current model with different boundaries**

Option B retains the fundamental elements of the current electoral structure. However, it places the growing residential area in the south of Keysborough in a larger Paperbark Ward with the rest of Keysborough. Option B groups all of Keysborough in one ward.

The most significant boundary change proposed in Option B is to increase the size of Paperbark Ward by extending it southwards to the southern boundary of the local council area. This would affect 8,376 voters in the southern part of Keysborough and in the suburb of Bangholme who are currently in Red Gum Ward. The proposed boundary change uses the Eastlink Tollway as the boundary between the two southern wards. Due to this change, other consequential changes were required to ensure that all wards in Option B remained within the legislated voter-to-councillor ratio:

- The VEC proposes to change the northern boundary of Red Gum Ward so that more of Dandenong North is included in Red Gum Ward. This would affect 2,962 voters in Silverleaf Ward as the proposed boundary change would mean that they are in Red Gum Ward.

- As a result of the above adjustment, Silverleaf Ward would need more voters to stay within the legislated tolerance. The VEC proposes changing the northern boundary of Paperbark Ward from the current Princes Highway boundary to Heatherton Road and a part of the railway line. This would affect 4,938 voters who are currently in Paperbark Ward. As a result of the boundary change, these voters would be in Silverleaf Ward.

- In Lightwood Ward the only change is to alter the northern boundary between Lightwood and Silverleaf Wards; the proposed new boundary is the western property boundary of the Springvale Botanical Cemetery.

The VEC considers that there are several potential benefits in Option B. Like Option A, this option returns Red Gum Ward to the legislated voter-to-councillor ratio and ensures that all wards meet the legislated requirement in the period until the next scheduled review. Option B also:

- potentially better reflects different communities of interest for Keysborough and Dandenong

- uses clearer boundaries – the Eastlink Tollway and Heatherton Road
• potentially reduces the workload for Red Gum Ward councillors who currently represent 68% of the area within the City of Greater Dandenong.

The VEC considers that there are also potential drawbacks to this option:

• Option B necessitates more boundary adjustments and affects a greater number of voters compared to Option A (16,276 voters or 15.98% of all voters)

• it splits Noble Park and places part of Noble Park in a ward north of Princes Highway

• Leaves Dandenong North still divided between Red Gum and Silverleaf Wards.

Summary

The VEC believes that the current electoral structure continues to respond well to the communities of interest in the City of Greater Dandenong. The VEC has included two options in this report. Option A returns Red Gum Ward to the legislated average number of voters per councillor with minimal change to existing boundaries. Option B responds to some support in the submissions to better accommodate and reflect Keysborough’s growth and demographic differences from Dandenong. Options A and B have been included for further consultation.
Options

The VEC is required by the Act to include a preferred option and may include one or more alternative options for the electoral structure in the preliminary report. The VEC considers that all the options outlined below offer fair and equitable representation for voters in the local council. Please see Appendix 1 for detailed maps of these options.

Option A (preferred option)
Greater Dandenong City Council consist of 11 councillors elected from four wards with adjustments to the current ward boundaries (three three-councillor wards and one two-councillor ward).

Option B (alternative option)
Greater Dandenong City Council consist of 11 councillors elected from four wards with adjustments to the current ward boundaries, different to Option A (three three-councillor wards and one two-councillor ward).
Next steps

Response submissions
Any person or group, including the council, can make a submission to the VEC in response to the options contained in this report. Response submissions to the preliminary report should address the models proposed by the VEC within this report. Response submissions must be received by the VEC by 5.00 pm on Wednesday 11 September 2019. Late submissions will not be accepted.

Submissions must include the full name and address of the submitter. Submissions without this information cannot be accepted.

Submission methods
Submissions can be made via:

- The online submission form at vec.vic.gov.au
- Email at dandenong.review@vec.vic.gov.au
- Post to
  Victorian Electoral Commission
  Level 11, 530 Collins Street
  Melbourne VIC 3000

Public access to submissions
To ensure transparency in the electoral representation review process, all submissions will be available for public inspection at:

- the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au
- the VEC office at Level 11, 530 Collins Street, Melbourne.

The VEC will remove personal information such as the address, phone number, and signature, if applicable, of submitters from all public copies. However, the full name and locality of submitters will be displayed.
Public hearing

There is an opportunity for people or organisations who have made a response submission to speak about their submission at a public hearing. The public hearing is scheduled for:

- Time: 6.00 pm
- Date: Wednesday 18 September 2019
- Venue: Greater Dandenong Civic Centre, Level 2, 225 Lonsdale Street, Dandenong.

Participation in the public hearing is encouraged. If you wish to speak at the public hearing, you must indicate this on your response submission. If there are no requests to speak at the hearing, it will not be held. Visit the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au for more information on public hearings.

Final report

Following the public hearing, the VEC considers all the evidence it has gathered and publishes a final report for the Minister for Local Government containing a recommended electoral structure. The report is scheduled to be published on Wednesday 9 October 2019. Any changes resulting from the final report will apply at the October 2020 general election.

The final report will be available from the VEC by visiting vec.vic.gov.au or calling 131 832. It will also be available for inspection at the offices of Greater Dandenong City Council.
Appendix 1: Option maps

The following maps are included in this report:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Map</th>
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<tr>
<td>Option A (preferred option)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Option B (alternative option)</td>
<td>24</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: List of preliminary submissions

Twenty-two preliminary submissions were received in total.

Submissions were made by:
Alam, Syed Faraz
Alvarez, Claire and Daniel
Anderson, Luke
Birkett, Edith
Greater Dandenong City Council
Kelly, Nina
Kenny, Richard
Korb, Kevin
Mastrogiovanni, Charlie
Mastrogiovanni, Silvia
Paech, Matthew
Perera, Ryan
Proportional Representation Society of Australia (Victoria-Tasmania) Inc.
Puglisi, Amanda
Puglisi, Carmel
Rodriguez, Pablo
Sims, Nyssa
Sullivan, Michael
Westcott, Nataly
Willoughby, Louisa
Wyndom, Noel
Wyndom, Noel (Second Submission)
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