FINAL REPORT
Electoral Representation Review for the Bass Coast Shire Council

26 May 2008
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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 provides fair and equitable representation for the voters of the Shire of Bass Coast (s.219D Local Government Act 1989).

The VEC recommends that the Bass Coast Shire Council consist of seven councillors to be elected from seven single-councillor wards.

This recommended structure is indicated in the map at the back of this Report. This structure is the same as the VEC’s second preliminary alternative structure.

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 Bass Coast Shire Council 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 Shire of Bass Coast. The notice appeared in the Victoria Government Gazette on 19 March 2007.

Under the legislation, a council is required to appoint an electoral commission to conduct an electoral representation review. The Bass Coast Shire Council 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 municipality (whether the municipality should be unsubdivided or divided into wards; and, if the municipality 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 municipality to be divided into wards, boundaries for the wards that will:
   i. provide for a fair and equitable division of the municipality; 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 The VEC and electoral representation reviews

The VEC has ten years’ experience in working on municipal ward boundaries, being contracted by councils to prepare options for their consideration. VEC staff have also worked for the Electoral Boundaries Commission in State redivisions. In doing this work, the VEC has used sophisticated mapping software, conducted field research and has developed expertise in preparing electoral boundaries that both comply with the
approximate equality requirements of the legislation and respect communities of interest.

The VEC has engaged Mr Vern Robson to provide expertise in the field of local government. Mr Robson has worked in local government since 1955, and has been the Town Clerk and Chief Executive Officer of the City of Warrnambool, the Chief Commissioner of the City of Ballarat, the Administrator of the Mansfield Shire Council and the Director of the Local Government Branch of the former Department of Infrastructure.

2.3 Municipality profile

Bass Coast Shire is located about 130 kilometres south-east of Melbourne and covers an area of 865 square kilometres. It is predominantly a coastal municipality with a unique coastline complemented by a beautiful hinterland.

The major population centres are Wonthaggi, Cowes and Inverloch, with a number of other towns and villages spread throughout the Shire.

The major industries are agriculture, manufacturing, tourism and retail trade. Cattle and dairy farming are the area’s agricultural backbone, with growing interest in boutique farming such as venison and vineyards.

Bass Coast has one of the highest population growth rates for a rural municipality in Victoria. A permanent population of around 26,500 swells during peak holiday periods to in excess of 70,000. Major attractions include Phillip Island and the annual Motorcycle Grand Prix.

Bass Coast has a higher proportion of people on low incomes than in Victoria as a whole. This is partly a result of the large number of people who have retired and are living on a pension or other retirement income. Over 38% of the resident population is over the age of 55.

The Shire’s strength is strongly related to its proximity to metropolitan Melbourne in the west, prospects for economic and employment growth in neighbouring areas, and tourist growth in nearby coastal and mountain regions.

Population growth in Bass Coast will be fuelled by the desire to live and retire in popular coastal areas that are relatively close to Melbourne.

(Sources: Bass Coast Shire Council website; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006 Census)

2.4 Current electoral structure

Bass Coast Shire is a subdivided municipality with seven councillors elected from seven single-councillor wards.

3 Electoral representation review process

Section 219D of the Local Government Act 1989 specifies that the purpose of an electoral representation review is to achieve “fair and equitable representation for the persons who are entitled to vote at a general election of the Council.” To achieve this, the VEC proceeds on the basis of three main principles:
1: to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is within 10% of the average number of voters per councillor for that municipality

Populations are continually changing – they grow in some areas and decline in others. Over time, these changes can lead to some wards having larger or smaller numbers of voters. As part of an electoral representation review, the VEC needs to correct any imbalances that have come about. The VEC also tries to make sure that the boundaries it sets will continue to provide equitable representation until the next review is due in eight years, by taking account of likely future changes.

2: to take a consistent, State-wide approach to the total number of councillors

Regarding the number of councillors, the VEC has adopted as a guide the numbers of councillors in similar-sized municipalities of similar categories within Victoria. In addition, the VEC considers any special circumstances that warrant the municipality having more or fewer councillors than similar municipalities.

3: to ensure that communities of interest are as fairly represented as possible

Every municipality contains a number of communities of interest. The electoral structure should be designed to take these into account where practicable. This is important for assisting the elected councillors to be effective representatives of the people in their particular municipality.

The VEC bases its recommendations on a number of factors, including the following:

- internal research specifically relating to the municipality under review;
- the VEC’s experience from its work with other municipalities and in similar reviews for State elections;
- the VEC’s expertise in mapping, demography and local government; and
- careful consideration of all input from the public in both written and verbal submissions made during the course of the review.

Input from the public is an important part of the process, but it is not the only factor considered. The VEC seeks to ensure fair and equitable representation for all voters of the municipality. This means carefully considering all views expressed in submissions from the public, and also considering other factors, such as the best possible representation for the various communities of interest in the municipality under review.

In considering public submissions, the VEC values the local knowledge and local perspectives that are presented. The VEC believes it important to consider the issues and information presented in submissions, as well as the arguments for particular structural models. In reaching its recommendations, the VEC seeks to combine the information gathered through public submissions with its own research in order to achieve what it considers to be a fair and equitable result until the next review period. The VEC does not make its recommendations based on a “straw poll” of the number of submissions supporting a particular option.

Further details about issues considered by the VEC can be found in Sections 8.1 and 8.2 of this Report and in the Guide for Submissions (Appendix 9.4).
4 Public involvement

4.1 Public information

The VEC informed the community about the electoral representation review through:

- advertising in newspapers;
- conducting information sessions in Wonthaggi and Cowes on 25 February 2008, to outline the review process and to respond to questions from members of the community;
- communicating with the Bass Coast Shire community through the use of media releases and the VEC website;
- developing an information leaflet to be distributed through service centres and local libraries;
- publishing an article in the March 2008 edition of the Council newsletter;
- publishing all preliminary submissions on the VEC website;
- establishing a helpline for responding to community questions;
- distributing a Guide for Submissions;
- releasing a Preliminary Report on 8 April 2008 and making the Report available at the Bass Coast Shire Council offices, at the VEC office and on the VEC website;
- publishing all submissions in response to the Preliminary Report on the VEC website; and
- conducting a public hearing in Wonthaggi on 5 May 2008.

4.2 Advertising

In accordance with s.219F(4) of the Act, the VEC published the following advertisements for the electoral representation review:

- a public notice of the review, detailing the process, appeared in the *South Gippsland Sentinel Times* and the *Phillip Island & San Remo Advertiser* between 12 February and 13 February 2008;
- a general advertisement covering several electoral representation reviews, including the Bass Coast Shire Council review, appeared in the *Herald Sun* and *The Age* on 29 January 2008; and
- a notice that the Preliminary Report had been released appeared in the *South Gippsland Sentinel Times* and the *Phillip Island & San Remo Advertiser* between 8 April and 9 April 2008.

See Appendix 9.1.

4.3 Media releases

Media releases designed to supplement the paid advertising were distributed to the *South Gippsland Sentinel Times* and the *Phillip Island & San Remo Advertiser* newspapers. See Appendix 9.2.

4.4 Information leaflet

An information leaflet about the review was developed and distributed to service centres, libraries and community groups within the Shire. See Appendix 9.3.
4.5 VEC website

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

4.6 Helpline

The VEC established a helpline to assist with public enquiries concerning the electoral representation review process.

4.7 Guide for Submissions


5 Preliminary Report

In accordance with s.219F(6) of the Act, the VEC produced a Preliminary Report containing its preferred and alternative options for Bass Coast Shire. In developing these options, the VEC considered preliminary submissions made by various people and groups, as well as various other relevant factors.

5.1 Preliminary submissions

The VEC received 28 preliminary submissions by the closing time (11 March 2008 – 5.00 pm). Of those submissions:

- nineteen supported seven single-councillor wards;
- one preferred seven councillors elected from multi-councillor wards;
- one supported seven councillors elected from an unsubdivided municipality;
- two supported nine councillors elected from an unsubdivided municipality;
- one supported either nine councillors elected from three three-councillor wards or seven councillors elected from an unsubdivided municipality;
- one supported nine councillors elected from three three-councillor wards;
- two supported nine councillors elected from either three three-councillor wards or an unsubdivided municipality; and
- one advocated that twelve councillors be elected from twelve single-councillor wards.

Regarding the number of councillors, there were numerous arguments presented in favour of maintaining seven councillors. Some submitters argued that as Bass Coast has a high proportion of non-resident ratepayers, it does not need as many councillors as other municipalities in the same category because there is less direct contact between these ratepayers and councillors. It was contended that seven councillors are adequate for the Shire, and that an increase to nine would ignore this special circumstance of the high number of ratepayers who do not permanently reside in the Shire.

Other submitters argued that the Shire is relatively small in area (it is one of the smallest rural municipalities in Victoria, the only exception being the Borough of Queenscliffe), and as most of the population is clustered in small townships, it is easy for councillors to travel across the municipality and interact with constituents.
A number of submitters contended that the relatively high growth rate of the Shire is overstated, due to past inaccuracies with population projections. They argued that projected population growth was therefore not a significant reason to increase the number of councillors. Bass Coast was compared by some submitters to other municipalities; it was argued that Cardinia Shire and the City of Greater Shepparton, for example, have more voters than Bass Coast and cover larger areas, yet only have seven councillors.

Finally, it was argued that seven councillors do a good job of representing the diverse needs of the Shire at present, and have been doing so since the current structure was adopted in 1996. It was claimed that more councillors would mean increased costs for ratepayers, many of whom are already stretched financially, and as there is no obvious push by ratepayers for more councillors, it is appropriate to maintain seven councillors in the Shire.

Five submitters wrote in support of nine councillors, and one submitter was of the view that either seven or nine would be appropriate. It was contended that in comparison to other rural municipalities, Bass Coast is within the nine-councillor range. One submitter noted that if Bass Coast had nine councillors there would be 4,276 voters per councillor, which is similar to other rural municipalities such as the Shires of Wellington and East Gippsland. It was also pointed out that at present, Bass Coast has more voters per councillor than any other rural municipality.

Regarding the number of non-resident ratepayers, two submitters advocated that this should not be a factor as all ratepayers are entitled to the same level of democratic representation. The same submitters said that more councillors could actually lead to reduced costs per councillor due to shared workloads, and noted that the issue of costs associated with councillors is not as important as the core issue of voter representation.

It was also argued that more councillors would enable the rural sector to be better represented, and give the public a greater say in local government matters.

One submitter wrote in support of twelve councillors so that Phillip Island and the mainland could each be represented by six councillors.

In terms of the municipality's electoral structure, the majority of submitters wrote in favour of single-councillor wards. Reasons for the support of this structure mentioned in submissions included:

- the Shire is very diverse with approximately 40 separate localities spread across urban, rural and coastal environs;
- community needs differ greatly – some are focused on basic services and infrastructure, others on tourism and others on planning and local amenity. There is also a wide range of socio-economic circumstances, and some towns have expanding populations while others are experiencing negative growth;
- an unsubdivided Shire could confuse voters, fail to adequately represent diverse community views, lead to duplication of councillors’ efforts, result in a very large number of candidates on the ballot paper, diminish councillor accessibility and make it difficult for voters to assess the performance of individual councillors;
- residents identify strongly with their local communities;
- small communities may lose representation if larger wards are created;
ward councillors are powerful tools in building local communities and work to unite the community rather than exploiting differences for political ends;

local councillors can be held accountable more easily (voters know where “the buck stops”), are more clearly identifiable and are more aware of their responsibilities;

multi-councillor wards force councillors to compete against each other at election time when they need to work together on council business;

subdivision into single-councillor wards guarantees representatives will be elected from across the Shire rather than just from the major towns of Wonthaggi, Inverloch and Cowes, which would disadvantage the significant rural population (who make a strong contribution to the economy of Bass Coast);

multi-councillor wards might recreate former municipality boundaries and reignite former tensions;

it would be more expensive (perhaps beyond financial capacity) for candidates to contest election in multi-councillor wards or unsubdivided municipalities;

single-councillor wards keep local democracy within the reach of all voters and discourage party tickets and single-issue candidates;

local councillors understand the needs and priorities of local communities, and residents enjoy having a councillor they are personally in touch with;

councillor workload is manageable in single-councillor wards;

single-councillor wards encourage direct interaction between constituent and representative – local government needs to maintain this “grass roots” facet;

there is no community agitation for any change from the current structure;

councillors in single-councillor wards have close empathy with community issues and concerns, and are the focus for individuals and community groups;

local issues might be overlooked within larger ward structures;

Phillip Island may dominate in an unsubdivided Shire (the prevention of which was a consideration in the development of the current electoral structure); and

residents (particularly those in less advantaged communities) need their representatives to be locally available due to lack of public transport, little internet access and inadequate private transport.

There was also some support for multi-councillor wards and an unsubdivided municipality. Reasons articulated in submissions for these points of view included the following:

councillors in single-councillor wards are more susceptible to minority influence;

at present the Thompson, McHaffie, Hovell and Townsend Wards dominate to the detriment of the Churchill, Leadbeater and Anderson Wards, and so a three-ward structure would better represent communities of interest;

the Council in an unsubdivided Shire is more likely to consider the interests of the entire community and councillors are less likely to be parochial;
there will be more candidates for voters to choose from in an unsubdivided Shire (at the last election there were only two candidates in Churchill Ward and three in Anderson Ward);

Shire-wide councillors are more likely to be better informed on broader issues;

Bass Coast is effectively the smallest rural shire by area in the State, making it easy for councillors to cover and become aware of issues;

non-geographical communities of interest are not accommodated or represented in the current structure;

the ward represented by the Mayor may be under-represented in a single-councillor ward structure;

proportional representation, as applies in a multi-councillor ward structure or an unsubdivided municipality, reduces the chance of minority interests controlling the Council;

ward boundaries can arbitrarily split communities of interest;

candidates can avoid scrutiny from the broader electorate in single-councillor wards;

proportional representation allows for more votes to be effective;

single-councillor wards exaggerate majorities and under-represent minority views;

there is a greater risk of “dummy candidates” running in single-councillor wards;

proportional representation in an unsubdivided municipality would deliver Phillip Island and the mainland representation in line with the level of support received from voters;

rural voters can elect their own representative(s) under proportional representation;

due to the limited numbers of candidates at previous elections, the ballot paper would not be likely to be too big if the municipality were unsubdivided or had multi-councillor wards;

voters have a greater choice of councillors to approach in a multi-councillor ward structure or an unsubdivided municipality, and single-issue candidates are less likely to be elected;

other larger rural municipalities such as the Shires of Wellington, Surf Coast and East Gippsland and the Rural City of Mildura are unsubdivided; and

the assigning of portfolios to councillors means that diversity can be catered for in an unsubdivided Shire, and voters with environmental concerns (for instance) will know who represents them, regardless of where they live.

One submission raised the issue of Phillip Island being reinstated as a separate municipality, which is outside the scope of this review.

Appendix 9.5 contains details of those people and groups making preliminary submissions. Copies of the submissions can be downloaded from the VEC website, www.vec.vic.gov.au

5.2 VEC research

In addition to information provided in submissions, the VEC conducted its own research. This included research into the demographics of the municipality, using a
number of sources including the 2001 and 2006 Census data. The VEC also took into account changes predicted by the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the Department of Infrastructure. Summaries of some of this research were published in the Guide for Submissions, the Preliminary Report and in Section 2.3 of this Report.

Development projections based on information presented by the Council were also taken into consideration. Fieldwork was conducted throughout the municipality by the VEC.

5.3 **Recommended options**

Having considered the issues outlined in the preliminary submissions and all other relevant factors, the VEC proposed three preliminary options for public comment.

The preferred option was:

- that the Bass Coast Shire Council consist of nine councillors, to be elected from an unsubdivided municipality.

The first alternative option was:

- that the Bass Coast Shire Council consist of nine councillors, to be elected from one four-councillor ward, one three-councillor ward and one two-councillor ward.

The second alternative option was:

- that the Bass Coast Shire Council consist of seven councillors, to be elected from seven single-councillor wards.

It was noted in the Preliminary Report that the preferred structure could also operate successfully with seven councillors. Although nine councillors was preferred, the VEC was prepared to consider an unsubdivided municipality returning seven councillors if strong evidence and arguments were presented in support of this option in response submissions.

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 received 27 response submissions by the closing time (30 April 2008 – 5.00 pm).

Of the response submissions received:

- eight supported the preliminary preferred option of an unsubdivided Shire (four preferred the model with nine councillors, while four preferred seven councillors);
- three supported the first preliminary alternative option of nine councillors elected from three wards;
- fourteen supported the second alternative option of seven councillors elected from seven single-councillor wards; and
- two did not support any of the preliminary options – one supported an independent Phillip Island municipality, while the other supported five single-councillor wards.

Regarding councillor numbers, opinion still differed as to whether the Shire should have nine or seven councillors. Those wanting the Shire to increase the number of councillors
to nine argued that seven councillors may be adequate at present, but as the outcome of the review is expected to last for eight years, nine councillors are likely to be required before the next scheduled review. Additionally, with increased access to communication, it is more likely that non-resident voters will contact councillors, therefore the residential location of a voter does not limit their ability to contact their representative.

Submitters supporting seven councillors for the Shire largely based their view on the following arguments:

- Bass Coast is geographically a very small shire, which makes it relatively easy for voters to access councillors and for councillors to travel around the Shire;
- there is no evidence that the number of non-resident voters increases the workload for councillors – these residents do not generally have a high level of contact with councillors;
- a belief that population growth expectations have been overstated;
- seven councillors are adequate, and can adequately cover absenteeism; and
- nine councillors would add financial burden on the ratepayers, and would be an unwarranted imposition on ratepayers for little gain.

Opinion also differed on which of the preliminary alternative options would be most appropriate for the Shire. Arguments presented for the preliminary preferred option, that of the Shire being unsubdivided, included the following:

- single-councillor wards divide both geographic and non-geographic communities of interest, and are unstable from an enrolment perspective;
- the present structure fails to maximise the prospect that a majority view in the community will elect a majority of the councillors;
- an unsubdivided structure provides scope for alternative points of view to be expressed, and there is a greater opportunity for a diversity of groups to be represented;
- voters can still vote for a local candidate in an unsubdivided Shire, but have a choice not to if they prefer;
- local “well-known” candidates can still run in an unsubdivided Shire;
- a system of single-councillor wards allows candidates to be elected with low levels of support and maximises the number of votes that do not count towards the election of a candidate;
- single wards are adversarial in nature, and elections are viewed as attempts to unseat the sitting councillor, rather than the emphasis being on the more positive motive of being elected;
- in an unsubdivided municipality, every councillor should take the view that his or her decision-making is based on benefit for the whole community – not on factional or micro-regional interests;
- the ballot paper is unlikely to be too big given the number of candidates at recent elections, and uncontested elections are less likely;
- proportional representation is more likely to see rural councillors elected than any single-councillor ward structure;
- single-councillor wards leave voters with no representative when a vacancy arises or when councillors cannot attend meetings;
- significant non-geographic interests might not be represented in single-councillor wards;
- non-resident voters might determine election outcomes in single-councillor wards to the detriment of resident voters;
- in an unsubdivided Shire, people would be more likely to approach portfolio holders who are familiar with particular issues, rather than their ward councillor;
- councillors are more likely to have a broader focus, and can share workloads effectively in an unsubdivided Shire; and
- the first alternative option is undesirable given the Shire’s history as it recreates old boundaries and would exacerbate the call for Phillip Island to be a separate municipality from the mainland.

There was some support for the first alternative option, which was nine councillors elected from one four-councillor ward, one three-councillor ward and one two-councillor ward. Reasons given for this position included that:
- currently, voters not only approach their ward councillor but other councillors too in the knowledge that the Council as a whole will make the decision on an issue;
- all councillors should have a sound knowledge of issues in the Shire;
- multi-councillor wards reduce the potential for a majority of councillors to come from one geographic area (as might occur in an unsubdivided Shire), who might give a preference to that area at the expense of other parts of the Shire;
- the option provides for a balance of power between the wards;
- travel distances would be a problem in an unsubdivided structure – multi-councillor wards reduce this potential problem;
- the option will deliver more influence to Phillip Island residents, which is important as the Island is “the critical component” of the Shire;
- the current structure is ineffective and problematic, as it is evident that some councillors are unaware of issues in wards apart from their own; and
- poor decision-making is a result of a lack of understanding about the differences between Phillip Island and the mainland.

A number of submitters maintained support for seven single-councillor wards, presented as the second preliminary alternative option. Amongst other things, it was contended that:
- neither the preferred or first alternative options will best serve the needs of the people of Bass Coast Shire, and will not represent the views and interests of the diverse communities;
- if an unsubdivided or multi-member ward structure were put in place, then the Council could be dominated by the major towns in the Shire – this is not a good outcome for democracy or good government;
- there is no evidence to show that the voters in towns mentioned in the Preliminary Report are being split by ward boundaries (Wonthaggi, Newhaven, Cowes) have not had effective representation;
- voters are not constrained by exact ward boundaries when seeking representation – any perceived problems with the alignment of ward boundaries may therefore not be a problem on the ground;
- there are clear geographic communities of interest across the Shire and it is important that these diverse communities are represented;
- the option resembles the present arrangement which has community support and is working reasonably well;
- the needs of the local community are best served by a representative who is responsive and knowledgeable of the needs of that local community;
any system other than single-councillor wards would see the needs of the different Council wards sacrificed to dominant factions, whether they be based on a political party or a local single issue;

at election time, selecting one candidate out of perhaps three is a viable proposition – to select seven or nine councillors from a field of thirty or so, drawn from all parts of the Shire, would not be a matter of rational choice;

publicity in an unsubdivided Shire costs money – “unfortunately the most likely external source of funds may well be a developer who considers that a councillor who owes him a favour is a good thing”;

the preferred and first alternative option would result in most of the councillors being based away from the farming sector;

Shire-wide considerations can still be taken into account by a councillor representing a single ward, but councillors representing the whole Shire may find it difficult to take into account the local issues and concerns of those townships remote from their location and experience and with different communities of interest;

rivalry between different parts of the shire will always exist, no matter the structure;

a multi-councillor ward option is disagreeable because residents will have to contact more councillors, residents will not know who is accountable, councillors may give contradictory advice and multi-councillor wards may turn into de facto single-councillor wards;

councils with single-councillor wards are more likely to be accessible and aware of local issues, but are able to learn about and implement Shire-wide issues;

very local issues might be overlooked and significant communities of interest and points of view might be unrepresented in an unsubdivided municipality;

local councillors are recognisable, accessible and accountable, and needs to make sure they represent local interests rather than a political party line;

local councillors act as an effective conduit between community groups and the Council;

party politics is discouraged in single-councillor wards;

Phillip Island may dominate in an unsubdivided Shire;

it will be difficult for councillors to manage the number of meetings of community groups and local organisations in an unsubdivided Shire and keep abreast of local issues;

Mornington Peninsula has experienced a multi-councillor ward structure which wasn’t successful and confused residents – since moving to single-councillor wards the Council’s performance as monitored in annual surveys has improved;

small communities will be denied representation in an unsubdivided Shire, as the focus will be on citizens residing in heavily populated areas – it will be unlikely that a candidate from the northern half of the municipality will be elected;

there is an area of disadvantage in Leadbeater Ward which will be ignored in an unsubdivided Shire and attention will be given to the more affluent areas of higher population;

the voters of Phillip Island will be able to elect the whole Council in an unsubdivided municipality – this segment has very different needs and aspirations from other citizens as its voters are predominantly affluent and elderly; and

single-councillor wards were supported in Mornington Peninsula due to the presence of distinct geographic areas which have unique concerns and needs from Council. “With both semi-urban and rural areas, transient populations of visitors
and holidaymakers, Bass Coast Shire is very similar in many respects and should be afforded the same consideration”.

Limited comment was made regarding ward names. One submitter suggested that the current names mean little and more up-to-date names should be used instead, while another submitter suggested using the names “Coastal”, “Rural”, “Wonthaggi” and “Inverloch” for the four mainland wards.

A list of those people and groups who made response submissions is provided in Appendix 9.5. Copies of the submissions can be downloaded from the VEC website, www.vec.vic.gov.au

7 Public hearing

A public hearing was held in Wonthaggi on 5 May 2008 at 6.30 pm. All people and groups who had made submissions in response to the VEC’s Preliminary Report were invited to speak to their submissions, and five chose to do so. Members of the public were invited to attend, and there was a total audience of sixteen people (including those making presentations).

All speakers at the hearing spoke in support of seven single-councillor wards. The Council contended that there is community support for the current structure and that nine councillors are not required because the Shire is unusually small in area and has a very high proportion of non-resident voters. In addition, it was claimed that population projections have in the past been overstated, and that Bass Coast is in fact unlikely to grow as much as figures suggest.

The Council argued that the municipality’s structure is more important than the number of councillors, and that the Shire is very diverse in terms of demography, infrastructure levels and the different nature of the various townships, amongst other things. It was mentioned that local representation is therefore very important, which was communicated via the many submissions in support of single-councillor wards. Single-councillor wards were also viewed to maximise accountability, make candidacy affordable and keep councillors’ workloads to a manageable level.

On the question of non-resident voters, the Council argued that non-resident voters do participate in elections, but in general councillors receive much less contact from non-resident voters, thus they do not have a significant impact on councillor workloads. The Council described many of the different townships as being quite independent, with differing needs from the Council and their own local identities. It was contended that Phillip Island is quite different to the mainland but integral to the Shire, and that a multi-councillor ward encompassing the entire Island would be a backward step reminiscent of the municipal structure prior to amalgamation.

Overall, the Council contended that the community was happy with the current structure and that single-councillor wards best reflected the nature of the Shire’s townships. Other submitters agreed with this point, noting that Bass Coast is a diverse municipality from the hills to the sea, and that there is little interdependence between many of the towns. For some towns tourism is the main focus, for others issues associated with rural issues are important, while coastal environs have concerns pertaining to development and environmental protection. Various submitters said that they had little cause to travel often to other parts of the Shire, and that their contact with the Council was largely to do with local issues.
Submitters made a number of points related to the relationships between councillors and voters in single-councillor wards. It was variously contended that single-councillor wards give voters an opportunity to personally lobby a representative (rather than all representatives), that councillors work hard on behalf of constituents, and that councillors for the rural areas listen to rural concerns and are knowledgeable about local issues. Some concern was expressed that in an unsubdivided Shire, voters would be confused as to whom to approach, and that councillors would have trouble keeping in touch with local issues.

On the issue of councillor choice, one submitter said that if they were not satisfied with a response from their local councillor, they would approach the Council administration directly, so having more councillors to approach would be of little potential benefit. It was mentioned that political parties or interest groups would dominate in an unsubdivided Shire, and that the needs and interests of local communities would not be supported. It was also suggested that councillors would all come from the more populous areas, leaving some areas with little or no representation.

8 Findings and recommendation

The Act states that the purpose of the electoral representation 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 conducting electoral representation reviews, the VEC follows an extensive process of consideration as required by legislation. At the preliminary stage, the VEC considers preliminary submissions along with a wide variety of other information in order to develop a preferred and (in most circumstances) one or more alternative electoral structure options for the municipality in question. The VEC then makes the options available in its Preliminary Report, to be assessed by the public in response submissions and at the public hearing. Having considered the feedback, the VEC then makes a recommendation.

8.1 Number of councillors

Issues considered by the VEC

The legislation provides that a council must consist of between 5 and 12 councillors (s.5B(1)). It does not, however, 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.

In terms of voter numbers, Victorian municipalities vary from approximately 4,000 to almost 160,000. The VEC applies the legislative provisions relating to numbers of councillors 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 the fewest councillors.

In most cases, the electoral structure and the number of councillors were 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 for their respective municipalities. The result was a degree of disparity in councillor numbers for similar types of municipalities. The VEC has produced a table that lists each municipality and the
number of councillors. The table differentiates between rural, regional and metropolitan councils in recognition of the different circumstances and needs between these categories of councils. The table has been a valuable reference point in considering the appropriate number of councillors and was made available to the public in the Guide for Submissions. The information has enabled the VEC to compare a council being reviewed to councils with similar voter numbers and areas.

The VEC also considers whether the number of voters in the municipality is anticipated to increase or decline in the period between reviews (approximately eight years). Population forecasts produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment 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 or fewer councillors than would otherwise be the case. Public submissions provide valuable information regarding any such issues or circumstances.

**The VEC’s findings**

**The VEC’s preliminary options**

In its Preliminary Report, the VEC found nine to be the most appropriate number of councillors for Bass Coast Shire Council. It was considered, however, that seven councillors could also provide fair and equitable representation for voters, and so a second alternative option consisting of seven councillors was put forward.

It was noted in the Preliminary Report that when compared to other rural municipalities, Bass Coast appears to fit within the nine-councillor band. With 20,391 voters at the time it was reviewed, the Shire of Moorabool is the largest rural municipality (in terms of voter numbers) with seven councillors; Bass Coast has substantially more voters than this with 38,488. The numbers of voters in rural municipalities with nine councillors range from 22,428 (in the Shire of Moira) to 41,980 (in Wellington Shire), so Bass Coast seems to fit more appropriately into this group of municipalities.

However, special factors can sometimes warrant a recommendation for more or fewer councillors for a municipality than would be considered suitable based on voter numbers alone. In the case of Bass Coast, it was strongly argued by some submitters that the high proportion of non-resident ratepayers, combined with the fact that the Shire covers a very small geographic area, constitute special circumstances which should be taken into account, and make it reasonable for seven councillors to represent the voting population. It was contended that non-residents are generally less demanding of councillors’ time and attention than permanent residents. On the other hand, two submitters contended that the number of non-resident ratepayers should not be a factor as all eligible voters are entitled to the same level of representation.

In terms of area, Bass Coast is indeed comparatively small. At 865 km², it is the second-smallest rural municipality in Victoria (the smallest being the Borough of Queenscliffe). The area of other rural municipalities ranges from 1,472 km² (Hepburn Shire, which has seven councillors) to 20,930 km² (East Gippsland Shire, which has nine councillors).

The VEC therefore included a second preliminary alternative option with seven councillors, and while the preferred option was for nine councillors elected from an
unsubdivided Shire, it was pointed out that that model could also work with seven councillors.

In the preliminary stage, however, the VEC determined that, on balance, nine councillors would be more appropriate for Bass Coast Shire. While it was acknowledged that many voters do not reside permanently in the municipality, it was pointed out that such voters still utilise Council services and may also equally have concerns about local issues as permanent resident voters. Average voter turnout across the Shire at the last Council election was 73.46%, which is comparable to the overall voter participation rate for postal elections across Victoria (75.66%). Voting is not compulsory for non-residents, so it was viewed that the voter turnout rate for Bass Coast Shire indicates a reasonable level of interest on behalf of non-resident voters.

Another important factor noted in the Preliminary Report supporting nine councillors is that the population in Bass Coast Shire is anticipated to increase by a substantial 15.6% between 2008 and 2016. This population projection makes Bass Coast the second-fastest growing rural municipality in Victoria, and the sixth-fastest growing municipality in the State overall. Some submitters pointed out that population estimates in the past have been inaccurate, and thus this growth figure is overstated. While this could be the case, significant growth is nonetheless anticipated, and this growth may have consequential effects on councillor workloads. It was determined that nine councillors may therefore be more able to provide fair and equitable representation to voters than seven councillors over the next eight years that this review is expected to accommodate.

Taking into account communities of interest is important for the VEC in reaching recommendations. Notwithstanding the arguments in support of an increase to nine councillors (discussed above), the VEC was of the view that if a seven single-councillor ward structure was perceived to fit communities of interest particularly well, it may be persuaded to recommend seven councillors as its preferred number of councillors.

It was observed however that the current seven single-councillor ward structure has some disadvantages in this respect: Wonthaggi is split between two wards; Newhaven (on Phillip Island) is included in a ward which includes part of Wonthaggi; and the Thompson Ward boundary encloses Cowes quite tightly, thus excluding residents living on the outskirts of the township. Additionally, in the present structure the number of voters in one ward (Townsend Ward) exceeds the legislative tolerance of ±10%.

Given these issues with the current seven-councillor structure, and the additional factors discussed above, the VEC was of the view that nine councillors would be more suitable for Bass Coast Shire. The preliminary preferred option and first alternative option were therefore both nine-councillor models. However, in recognition of the various reasons and arguments presented for seven councillors, the VEC also included a seven single-councillor ward option, with the additional possibility that the preferred option may be modified so that it has seven councillors instead of nine. Further evidence was invited from submitters as to which option would be most appropriate for Bass Coast Shire.
The options are tested

The VEC received mixed evidence in response submissions and at the public hearing regarding the appropriate number of councillors for Bass Coast, although the majority preferred the Shire to maintain seven councillors. Those in favour of nine councillors said that they accepted the VEC’s rationale for increasing the number of councillors, and that as the structure will be in place for the next eight years, nine councillors will most likely be required to accommodate the Shire’s expected population growth.

Some submitters who were supportive of the VEC’s preferred option (and thus were not just advocating that the status quo be maintained) said that seven councillors would be more appropriate, based on various factors: that Bass Coast is geographically a very small Shire; that there is no evidence that the number of non-resident voters increases councillors’ workloads; that population growth projections have been overstated; and that seven councillors can adequately manage community expectations.

While it is evident that there is a large proportion of non-resident voters in the Shire, and that if only the number of permanent residents was considered Bass Coast would appear to fit more within the seven-councillor band than the nine-councillor band when compared to similar municipalities, the VEC does not believe that non-resident ratepayers can simply be discounted. Non-resident voters are afforded the same legal right under the legislation to exercise a vote as those with permanent resident status, and may equally seek assistance from individual councillors or campaign for the Council to take a particular direction on an issue. The high proportion of non-resident voters in Bass Coast Shire is not, in the VEC’s view, a significant argument in determining the most appropriate number of councillors for the municipality.

Some submitters expressed the view that rates in the municipality would increase if more councillors were recommended. The VEC’s objective, however, is to recommend a structure which will provide the best opportunity for fair and equitable representation, rather than prioritising issues regarding governance costs. Submitters further suggested that there would not be any advantage in increasing the number of councillors, and that the current council structure with seven councillors is working well. Again, the VEC does not consider this a sufficient reason on its own to recommend that the number of councillors not be changed.

Other arguments for maintaining seven councillors were, however, viewed to have more merit. Bass Coast Shire is particularly small geographically; the VEC considers geography to be important as large areas can create barriers to councillor accessibility and can also impact substantially on councillor workloads. As such, the VEC is of the view that seven councillors may be more suitable for Bass Coast than for some other municipalities which have similar populations but cover much larger areas.

Population projections are also important to consider. In the Preliminary Report it was noted that Bass Coast is one of the fastest-growing rural municipalities. The Council argued, however, that population projections have in the past been overstated, and that this remains the case. While the VEC believes that current figures indicating significant permanent population growth are reliable, it acknowledges that projections based on planning developments are only estimates, and the timeframes for such developments can vary.
After taking all the factors above into consideration, the VEC was still undecided as to whether seven or nine councillors should be recommended for Bass Coast. The VEC therefore looked to the representation of communities of interest to determine which number of councillors and electoral structure to recommend. On this basis, the VEC believes that seven councillors are more appropriate. The VEC’s findings are presented in Section 8.2 below.

8.2 Electoral structure

Issues considered by the VEC

Provisions within the Act allow for a municipality to be unsubdivided, with all councillors elected “at large” by all voters, or for a municipality to be subdivided into a number of wards. If wards have only one councillor, councillors are elected using preferential voting. Under an unsubdivided or a multi-councillor ward structure, councillors are elected through proportional representation. With each system, voters mark their ballot papers the same way.

If the municipality is subdivided into wards, there are three options available:

- single-councillor wards;
- multi-councillor wards; and
- a combination of both single-councillor and multi-councillor wards.

Boundaries for wards must:

- provide for a fair and equitable division of the municipality; and
- ensure equality of representation, through the number of voters represented by each councillor being within 10% of the average number of voters per councillor for the municipality.

In addition to the legislative requirements, a number of other factors were considered when evaluating subdivided structures. These factors included:

- communities of interest (communities of interest are groups of people who share a range of common concerns – they may occur where people are linked with each other geographically, economically or through having particular needs);
- spreading developing areas over a number of wards;
- using logical boundaries such as main roads, physical features and existing boundaries for easy identification of wards; and
- taking account of likely population changes.

In developing ward boundaries, the VEC aims to achieve the best possible balance between these criteria.

The VEC’s findings

The initial stages of consideration resulted in a preferred and two alternative electoral structures, which were put to the public in the VEC’s Preliminary Report.

Communities of interest

The population of Bass Coast Shire is generally older than many other municipalities – it has a median age of 46, which is higher than the rural municipality average of 43. Inverloch and San Remo have the highest proportion of residents aged 65 years and over, while Newhaven and Wonthaggi have the highest proportion aged 19 years and under. The Shire has a lower proportion of two-parent families with dependent
children than Victoria as a whole, but a significantly higher proportion of couple families without children. It has a slightly lower proportion of one-parent families than the Victorian average.

Bass Coast Shire has a low degree of ethnic diversity; 77.2% of the population was born in Australia, while 5.8% was born in England, 1.1% in New Zealand, 1% in Italy, 0.9% in the Netherlands and 0.9% in Scotland. Census data indicate that of overseas-born people who have arrived in the Shire since 2001, the highest proportions have settled in Cowes, San Remo, Inverloch and Wonthaggi. The overwhelming majority of residents in the Shire are fluent in English.

The Shire has numerous small townships which are quite varied in nature. Some are popular tourist destinations, others are small coastal communities, while the rural hinterland makes up a significant part of the Shire. Wonthaggi is a major service centre for the region.

In responding to the 2006 Census, 0.6% of the municipality identified themselves as Indigenous, which is identical to the proportion of Indigenous residents in Victoria as a whole. The Indigenous residents of Bass Coast Shire reside mainly in Kilcunda, Ryanston and in the western half of Phillip Island.

As indicated previously, incomes in Bass Coast Shire are lower than in Victoria generally. Data from the 2006 Census indicate that the median weekly household income in Victoria is $1,022, while in Bass Coast Shire it is $636. In the major population centres of Wonthaggi, Cowes and Inverloch, the median weekly household incomes are $562, $600 and $641 respectively. There is a relatively high level of full home ownership in the municipality (44.3%), while 26.1% of private dwellings are being purchased and 20.8% are being rented.

Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006 Census; Statistical Profile Bass Coast Shire (prepared by Gippsland Research and Information Service, Monash University, December 2007); Bass Coast Shire Council website; Department of Planning and Community Development Victoria in Future 2004

The VEC’s preliminary options

In its Preliminary Report, the VEC presented three options. The preferred option was an unsubdivided structure returning nine (or seven) councillors. In the Preliminary Report the VEC expressed the view that the present electoral structure is unable to capture communities of interest particularly well. Wonthaggi is split between two wards, Newhaven is included in a ward which includes part of Wonthaggi, and the Thompson Ward boundary separates residents living in Cowes from those on the periphery of the township. Additionally, in the present structure the number of voters in one ward (Townsend Ward) exceeds the legislative tolerance of ±10%.

An unsubdivided shire was ultimately recommended for a number of reasons. The Shire has a number of significant townships as well as a substantial rural area; this means that voters within wards are likely to have varying needs from the Council, and as suggested by a submitter, some residents may feel disenfranchised if their particular ward councillor does not share their views. In an unsubdivided shire, all voters can make a choice of councillor when dealing with issues of interest or concern, rather than relying on the representation from a single ward councillor. One submitter suggested that a system of portfolio-based responsibilities could be adopted by the Council, so that voters across the Shire would know to approach specific councillors with particular issues.
It was also viewed that councillors in an unsubdivided structure may be more representative of the diversity of interests that exist within the Shire. This is because candidates with majority support as well as those with significant minority support can expect to be elected due to the application of proportional representation. Non-geographic communities of interest may gain specific representation, as constituents from across the Shire, not just those who live in a particular ward, can choose to vote for a candidate who they feel will effectively represent them. Such a community of interest may include the significant population across the Shire with rural interests.

Submissions indicated that a certain amount of rivalry is present between various parts of the Shire, which may stem from past municipal structures. It was thought that an unsubdivided Shire may encourage councillors to take a “whole of municipality” approach to issues and consider entire community interests when making decisions. A submitter noted that as the Shire is very small in terms of area and travel within the Shire is relatively easy, all councillors should be able to be informed on issues across the whole municipality.

In addition, it was considered that proportional representation would be more likely to deliver a truer reflection of voter sentiment, so that Phillip Island, towns on the mainland and the rural area will receive representation in line with the level of support received from all voters.

An unsubdivided municipality would also enable all voters to vote for all candidates, thus giving voters a greater choice of candidates at election time. A submitter noted that there has been little contest in some wards at recent elections. An issue sometimes encountered in an unsubdivided municipality is that the ballot paper is too big and unwieldy due to the number of candidates. Bass Coast Shire does not have a history of large numbers of candidates nominating (29, 24 and 19 candidates stood across the Shire at the last three Council elections respectively). The VEC was confident that high numbers of candidates would not become an issue should the preferred option for an unsubdivided municipality be ultimately recommended.

The first alternative option proposed by the VEC was a multi-councillor ward structure returning nine councillors. The wards in the model were designed so that communities of interest were captured reasonably well, and voter numbers were projected to stay within the acceptable tolerance until at least 2012. “Leadbeater Ward” was a largely rural ward, which also took in Newhaven due to the commonalities between Newhaven and San Remo. Although largest in area, it had the fewest councillors due to being less populated than other areas of the Shire. “Hovell Ward” contained the populous areas of Inverloch and Wonthaggi as well as some rural surrounds, while “McHaffie Ward” was essentially Phillip Island excluding Newhaven.

This model retained a ward structure, while presenting voters with some of the positive aspects of an unsubdivided municipality through having multi-councillor wards: a greater diversity of interests may be represented on the Council; voters will likely have a wider choice of candidates at election time; voters can choose which of their representatives to approach with particular matters; and councillors may be encouraged to take a broader, less parochial, approach to municipal issues.

On the other hand, some submitters expressed concern about multi-councillor wards in preliminary submissions. It was contended that small communities may lose their opportunity for representation if larger wards are created, and that councillors would need to cooperate with each other and then compete at election time. Concern was
also expressed that multi-councillor wards may re-create former municipal boundaries and reignite past tensions. The first preliminary alternative option avoided this situation on the mainland, however the McHaffie Ward in the model was obviously very similar to the former Shire of Phillip Island.

A single-councillor ward option, returning seven councillors, was the second alternative option presented. The model was based on the current structure, with adjustments made so that the number of voters in the revised wards would all be within the ±10% deviation limit, and would be anticipated to remain so until at least after the 2012 election.

This option responded to opinions presented in submissions that many voters are satisfied with the current level and structure of electoral representation. Submitters argued that residents identify strongly with their local areas, and that ward councillors are knowledgeable about local issues and influential in building strong communities. It was argued that single-councillor wards encourage direct interaction between constituent and representative, which residents both require and enjoy, and that local government needs to maintain this “grass roots” facet.

Some submitters mentioned that councillors in single-councillor wards can be held accountable more easily, as voters know where “the buck stops”. The performance of individual councillors may also be easier to assess.

It was viewed however that the ward boundaries in the single-councillor ward option may present some issues in terms of communities of interest. Due to the sizeable population in Cowes and the need to maintain parity of voter numbers, the ward boundary cut very close to the main town, thus excluding those voters on the outskirts of Cowes despite the fact that they may utilise services there. Likewise with Inverloch, the ward boundary enclosed the town quite tightly, potentially splitting those in the broader area from their main communities of interest.

Additionally, Wonthaggi had to be split between Hovell Ward and Anderson Ward, leaving part of Wonthaggi in a largely rural ward and the other part included with Newhaven and San Remo.

These issues regarding the placement of ward boundaries led the VEC to view this option as the least preferred.

The options are tested

As previously mentioned, the VEC did not find the decision as to whether seven or nine councillors would be most appropriate for Bass Coast Shire to be clear-cut. It therefore looked to the nature of communities of interest to assist in determining an ultimate recommendation.

The VEC considers keeping communities of interest together as far as possible to be a very important criterion. Substantial further evidence was provided to the VEC in response submissions and at the public hearing, particularly regarding communities of interest and the dynamics of voter representation in the Shire. It was argued that the various townships are quite independent; that voters have particularly local interests and concerns, and have only limited involvement with other parts of the Shire.

The diverse nature of the different areas was also emphasised. It was argued that, although Phillip Island is integral to the Shire, it is quite different to the mainland,
and has its own localised identity. Even within the Island, it was mentioned that although most voters have some association with Cowes due to it being the Island’s major town, there are still local geographic communities of interest based around Cowes, the broad 3925 post-code area including Woolamai, and also the rural hinterland. Regarding communities on the mainland, it was contended that these too are quite individual and distinct. While the rural community has concerns largely related to agricultural pursuits and rural living, coastal towns such as Inverloch have other priorities including planning, tourism and environmental issues. Other smaller coastal areas, however, such as Corinella and Coronet Bay, are more concerned about infrastructure provision and transport facilities. It was also noted that people living in the major town of Wonthaggi have interests more related to urban living and regional services.

Particularly at the public hearing, concern was expressed that in an unsubdivided Shire, certain communities and areas would be left with little representation, as councillors would be more likely to be elected from the Shire’s more populous major towns. It was argued that residents, particularly those in the rural areas and in the small coastal townships, need a local councillor who is knowledgeable about their particular area, and who can effectively represent their local community on the Council.

Submitters also suggested that in smaller wards containing fewer voters, the costs of candidacy are more reasonable. They argued that this encourages candidacy which leads to greater choice for voters and a higher quality of representation. These submitters also suggested that, once elected, councillors under a single-councillor ward model are more accessible, can be held to account more easily and have more reasonable workloads. At the public hearing it was mentioned that there has not been a by-election since the Shire’s inception, thus vacancies in single-councillor wards are not a particular problem.

There was limited evidence presented of the existence of non-geographic communities of interest. Such communities are often a reason that the VEC may recommend an unsubdivided structure, so that such communities may have a greater opportunity to elect a councillor to represent them. Submitters appeared generally satisfied with the level of representation they were receiving from their current seven councillors, and did not suggest that a greater choice of candidates at election time or councillors to approach would be beneficial. Submitters stated that they are able under the present system to contact other councillors or the Council administration if they have the need. There was also limited comment that a more diverse Council was needed or desired, which is another reason that an unsubdivided structure may be appropriate for particular municipalities.

The multi-councillor ward option did receive some support in response submissions, as it was viewed that councillors should have a broader outlook and be knowledgeable about issues affecting the whole Shire, rather than focussing on ward-based issues. The VEC was concerned, however, that such a structure may be somewhat regressive in recreating a pre-amalgamation electoral structure.

For these reasons, the VEC has decided to recommend that the Bass Coast Shire Council maintain a structure of seven single-councillor wards, in recognition of the “place-based” nature of representation in the Shire where people strongly identify with their local townships and pay close attention to local issues. In the preliminary stages of the review, the VEC attempted models consisting of nine single-councillor
wards, but found it difficult to create wards which both reflected communities of interest to some degree and adhered to legislative voter number requirements. As the VEC considered that voters in Bass Coast could be fairly represented by either seven or nine councillors, a seven single-councillor ward structure was therefore viewed as preferable and likely to separate communities of interest to a lesser extent than nine single-councillor wards.

It should be noted however that by the time of the next representation review in 2016, development projections will be able to be more fully and accurately assessed, and if high growth is still evident in the Shire it may be viewed that nine councillors will be necessary to equitably represent the Shire’s voters.

In the Preliminary Report, the VEC noted some of its concerns with a single-councillor ward structure, including boundaries that might potentially split communities of interest or draw seemingly unrelated areas of the Shire together. Submitters in the response phase of the review did not seem concerned with this situation, and most submitters maintained that councillors elected in single-councillor wards would provide the most effective level of representation.

The VEC is still of the view that an unsubdivided structure or multi-councillor wards could bring some positive features to electoral representation in Bass Coast Shire, but on balance accepts that communities are more concerned with local interests which may be better accommodated in single-councillor wards. While some concern was expressed in submissions that wards create a parochial focus for councillors, it is important to note that the Local Government Act requires councillors to act in the interests of the whole municipality, not just on an individual ward basis. In addition, the presence of ward boundaries should not prevent councillors adopting a “portfolio” approach to council responsibilities if this form of governance is desired.

One submitter suggested another single-councillor ward structure in their response submission. The VEC modelled this suggestion, and very much appreciates the submitter’s efforts. However, a few alterations needed to be made to the model to ensure that all wards would be within the legislated voter number tolerance level. Such alterations meant that Cape Paterson would have to be included in a central rural ward extending all the way up to the top of the Shire, amongst other changes, as shown in the diagram on the following page. While the VEC considered the model to have some merit, it concluded it should be canvassed at another time.
Diagram 1: seven single-councillor wards (revised version of submitter’s model)

If Bass Coast Shire experiences significant growth in the near future, particularly growth which is not evenly dispersed throughout the different wards, a subdivision review may be required prior to the 2012 council elections if it is found that voter numbers in one or more wards do not adhere to legislative provisions. If this is the case, the subdivision review may provide the opportunity for the submitter’s suggestions to be re-examined, and features of the model may be more broadly considered and discussed.

With respect to ward names, the VEC received limited feedback from submitters. Given that the recommendation is for the present electoral structure to remain, although with some boundary alterations, the VEC has decided to retain the current ward names.

The VEC has therefore used the following ward names:

- Anderson;
- Churchill;
- Hovell;
- Leadbeater;
- McHaffie;
- Thompson; and
- Townsend.

In conclusion, the VEC considers that a structure with seven single-councillor wards is most likely to provide the best balance between the criteria it considers for the
electoral representation review. The VEC is satisfied that this structure will best provide fair and equitable electoral representation to voters.

8.3 **Recommendation**

Having taken into account all relevant factors, including the submissions and presentations at the public hearing, the VEC recommends that the Bass Coast Shire Council consist of seven councillors to be elected from seven single-councillor wards.

Steve Tully
Electoral Commissioner
9 Appendices

9.1 Public notices of the electoral representation review

Electoral Representation Review
Bass Coast Shire Council

The Bass Coast Shire Council has appointed the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) to conduct an electoral representation review following notice given by the Minister for Local Government under section 219C of the Local Government Act 1989.

What does a review achieve?
The purpose of an electoral representation review is to provide fair and equitable representation for all voters. At the end of the review the VEC will recommend the electoral structure that it considers will provide the best opportunity for voters' interests to be represented on the Council.

What will the VEC consider?
The VEC will look at the number of councillors, the number of wards and the ward boundaries in the municipality. It will consider the electoral structures of comparable municipalities, communities of interest, demographics and growth potential. Arguments and information presented in submissions, from any person or group, will also be considered during the review (see the VEC Guide for Submissions).

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Step 1 Information sessions:
- Monday, 25 February 2008 – 5.30 pm
  Council Chamber, Civic Centre, 76 McBride Avenue, Wonthaggi (enter via Baillieu Street)
- Monday, 25 February – 7.30 pm
  Meeting Room 1, Cowes Cultural Centre, 98 Thompson Avenue, Cowes

Step 2 Preliminary submissions close: Tuesday, 11 March 2008 – 5.00 pm

Step 3 Preliminary Report released: Tuesday, 8 April 2008

Step 4 Response submissions close: Wednesday, 30 April 2008 – 5.00 pm

Step 5 Public Hearing: Monday, 5 May 2008 – 6.30 pm
- Council Chamber, Civic Centre, 76 McBride Avenue, Wonthaggi (enter via Baillieu Street)
- Those wishing to speak must request to do so in their response submission.

- The VEC will lodge its recommendation in a Final Report with the Minister for Local Government.

For a Guide for Submissions or further information, call 13 18 32 or visit www.vec.vic.gov.au

Electoral representation review publications are available in large print on request.
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:

- Greater Geelong City Council
- Queenscliffe Borough Council
- Melton Shire Council
- Moonee Valley City Council
- Maroondah City Council
- Nillumbik Shire Council
- Boroondara City Council
- Bass Coast Shire Council
- Greater Dandenong 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 municipalities. For each municipality, the VEC will recommend to the Minister for Local Government:

- the appropriate number of councillors;
- whether the municipality should be unsubdivided or divided into wards; and
- if the municipality is to be divided into wards, how many wards there should be, the number of councillors per ward and the ward boundaries.

Under an unsubdivided or a multi-councillor ward structure, councillors are elected through proportional representation. Under a single-councillor ward structure, councillors are elected using preferential voting. With each system, voters mark their ballot papers in the same way.

What will the VEC consider?

The VEC will consider the electoral structures of comparable municipalities, communities of interest, demographics and growth potential. Arguments and information presented in submissions, from any person or group, will also be considered during the review.

Making a submission

Further information about making a submission can be found in the Guides for Submissions. Submissions can be made by mail, fax or email and must reach the VEC by 5.00 pm on the following dates:

- Greater Geelong City Council 25 Feb 2008
- Queenscliffe Borough Council 25 Feb 2008
- Melton Shire Council 26 Feb 2008
- Moonee Valley City Council 3 Mar 2008
- Maroondah City Council 4 Mar 2008
- Nillumbik Shire Council 5 Mar 2008
- Boroondara City Council 11 Mar 2008
- Bass Coast Shire Council 11 Mar 2008
- Greater Dandenong City Council 12 Mar 2008

For a Guide for Submissions or further information, call 13 18 32 or visit www.vec.vic.gov.au

Electoral representation review publications are available in large print on request.
Electoral Representation Review
Bass Coast Shire Council

Preliminary Report
The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) has released the Preliminary Report for the electoral representation review, detailing three possible electoral structures for the municipality. Feedback on these options is encouraged and will assist the VEC to recommend the structure it considers will provide the best opportunity for fair and equitable representation for voters.

The Bass Coast Shire is currently a subdivided municipality with seven councillors elected from seven single-councillor wards.

The maps to the right detail the preliminary options put forward for the Bass Coast Shire.

Response submissions, Wednesday, 30 April 2008 – 5.00 pm
Feedback should be provided in response submissions, which will be made available to the public on the VEC website. The VEC recommends obtaining a copy of the Preliminary Report and consulting its Guide for Submissions. These documents can be obtained free of charge from the VEC. Submissions can be:

- posted to the VEC at Level 8, 505 Little Collins Street, Melbourne Vic. 3000;
- emailed to basscoast.review@vec.vic.gov.au; or
- faxed to (03) 9629 9330.

Submissions must include the following information:

- name;
- address;
- telephone contact number; and
- whether you wish to speak at the public hearing in support of your submission.

Submissions must reach the VEC by Wednesday, 30 April 2008 – 5.00 pm.

Late submissions will not be accepted.

Public hearing, Monday, 5 May 2008 – 6.30 pm
The hearing will be held at:

- Council Chamber, Civic Centre, 76 McBride Avenue, Wonthaggi (enter via Baillieu Street)

You must indicate in your response submission if you would like to speak at the public hearing.

Where is the Report available?
Copies of the Preliminary Report are available from:

- the Bass Coast Shire Civic Centre, 76 McBride Avenue, Wonthaggi;
- the VEC website, www.vec.vic.gov.au; and
- the VEC on 13 18 32.

Final Report, Monday, 26 May 2008
A variety of information, including arguments presented by the community, will be considered when compiling the VEC’s recommendation which will then be sent to the Minister for Local Government.

Electoral representation review publications are available in large print on request.

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

Victorian Electoral Commission
9.2 Media releases

Media Release

For release from 12 February 2008

REPRESENTATION REVIEW BEGINS FOR
BASS COAST SHIRE COUNCIL

Which electoral structure do you think will best serve the needs of your community?

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) is conducting an electoral representation review in Bass Coast Shire and is asking the public to get involved.

The purpose of a representation review is to provide fair and equitable representation for all voters. After looking at the number of councillors, the number of wards and the ward boundaries, the VEC will recommend the electoral structure that it considers will provide the best opportunity for voters’ interests to be represented on the Council. The VEC will consider comparable municipalities, communities of interest, demographics and growth potential.

Any changes resulting from the review will apply at the local council elections in November 2008.

“Anyone interested in the review should attend one of the public information sessions on 25 February,” said the Victorian Electoral Commissioner, Mr Steve Tully.

The information sessions, explaining the process of the review and public submissions, will be held on:

- Monday, 25 February 2008 at 5.30 pm
  Council Chamber, Civic Centre, 76 McBride Avenue, Wonthaggi (enter via Baillieu Street)
- Monday, 25 February 2008 at 7.30 pm
  Meeting Room 1, Cowes Cultural Centre, 98 Thompson Avenue, Cowes

“Public feedback is an important part of the process and the VEC will consider all evidence and arguments provided in written submissions,” said Mr Tully. A letter is perfectly acceptable, as long as it deals with the matters covered by the review. “If you are unable to attend an information session, contact the VEC for a Guide for Submissions.”

Preliminary submissions, which can be mailed, faxed or emailed, must reach the VEC before 5.00 pm on Tuesday, 11 March 2008. The VEC’s Preliminary Report will be released on 8 April, and further feedback will be invited on the preliminary options contained in the report. These submissions must be received by Wednesday, 30 April, 5.00 pm.

A public hearing will be held on Monday, 5 May. The hearing is open to the public, but those wishing to speak must request to do so in their response submission. The Final Report will be lodged with the Minister for Local Government on 26 May 2008.

For more information, call the VEC on 13 18 32 or visit www.vec.vic.gov.au

--------ENDS--------

Monday, 25 February 2008 - 5.30 pm – information sessions
Tuesday, 11 March 2008 - 5.00 pm – close for preliminary submissions
Tuesday, 8 April 2008 – the VEC’s Preliminary Report released containing its preliminary options
Wednesday, 30 April 2008 - 5.00 pm – close for response submissions about the Preliminary Report
Monday, 5 May 2008 - 6.30 pm – public hearing
Monday, 26 May 2008 – the VEC will lodge its Final Report with the Minister for Local Government
Media Fact Sheet

Media releases are available from the VEC website http://www.vec.vic.gov.au/rrreleases.html

For further media information:
Claire Macdonald
Victorian Electoral Commission
Tel: 9299 0757

Map of Bass Coast Shire

The map below shows the current ward boundaries and the voter numbers and deviations from the average number of voters per councillor as at 16 January 2008.
HAVE YOUR SAY ON YOUR COUNCIL

The Victorian Electoral Commission is now asking for feedback on its Preliminary Report for the electoral representation review of Bass Coast Shire. The review looks at the number of councillors and the number of wards required to provide fair and equitable representation for all voters.

Bass Coast Shire is currently a subdivided municipality with seven councillors elected from seven single-councillor wards. The VEC’s preliminary preference is for nine councillors to be elected from an unsubdivided municipality.

An additional two options have also been provided in the Report for consideration and public comment.

The VEC encourages public input on the options and will be accepting written submissions until Wednesday, 30 April, 5.00 pm.

At the Public Hearing, to be held on 5 May at 6.30 pm, submitters who have requested to speak in support of their submissions will be able to do so. The hearing will take place at the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, 76 McBride Avenue, Wonthaggi (enter via Baillieu Street) and is open to the public.

For a copy of the Preliminary Report, visit the VEC website at www.vec.vic.gov.au.

Copies are also available at the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, 76 McBride Avenue, Wonthaggi, and at the VEC office, Level 8, 505 Little Collins Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000. Further information is available by calling the VEC on 13 18 32.

The VEC’s Final Report, containing a final recommendation, will be lodged with the Minister for Local Government on Monday, 26 May 2008.

– ENDS –

For further media information:

Claire Macdonald
Victorian Electoral Commission
Tel: 9299 0757
MAPS OF PRELIMINARY OPTIONS FOR BASS COAST SHIRE COUNCIL

PRELIMINARY PREFERRED OPTION:
nine councillors to be elected from an unsubdivided municipality

FIRST PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVE OPTION:
nine councillors to be elected from one four-councillor ward, one three-councillor ward and one two-councillor ward
SECOND PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVE OPTION:
seven councillors to be elected from seven single-councillor wards.
9.3 Information leaflet

Current structure of the Shire of Bass Coast
The Shire of Bass Coast is currently a subdivided municipality with seven councillors elected from seven single-councillor wards. Below is a map showing the ward boundaries, voter numbers and voter deviations from the average as at 16 January 2008.

Where to send your submission
Send your submissions to any of the following VEC addresses:
• Level 8, 505 Little Collins Street, Melbourne, Vic. 3000;
• email to basscoast.review@vec.vic.gov.au; or
• fax on (03) 9629 9330.

HAVE YOUR SAY ON COUNCIL STRUCTURE

Electoral Representation Review of the Bass Coast Shire Council

Conducted by the Victorian Electoral Commission

Key steps in the review

Step 1 Information Session
Monday, 25 February 2008, 5.10 pm
Council Chamber, Civic Centre, 76 McBride Avenue, Wonthaggi
(enter via Baillieu Street)
or
Monday, 25 February 2008, 7.10 pm
Meeting Room 3, Cowes Cultural Centre, 98 Thompson Avenue, Cowes

All interested people and groups are invited to attend the information session to find out more about the review process.

Step 2 Preliminary Submissions
Close: 5.00 pm
Tuesday, 11 March 2008

Any person or group may make a submission to the VEC. The VEC recommends consulting the Guide for Submissions.

Step 3 Preliminary Report
Tuesday, 8 April 2008

The VEC will release a Preliminary Report containing its preferred option(s).

Step 4 Response Submissions
Close: 5.00 pm
Wednesday, 30 April 2008

Any person or group may make a submission to the VEC about the Preliminary Report.

Step 5 Public Hearing
Monday, 5 May 2008
Council Chamber, Civic Centre, 76 McBride Avenue, Wonthaggi
(enter via Baillieu Street)
6.30 pm

People will be able to speak in support of their response submissions.

Step 6 Final Report
Monday, 26 May 2008

The VEC will lodge a Final Report, containing its recommendations, with the Minister for Local Government.

For more information and for copies of the Guide for Submissions, Preliminary Report or Final Report contact the VEC:
www.vec.vic.gov.au 13 18 32

Victorian Electoral Commission

Page 35
CHECKLIST:

Before you send in your submission:

☑ Have you included your name, address and telephone contact number?
☑ Do you understand that your submission will be made public?
☑ Have you given reasons for the model(s) you are suggesting?

If you are making a response submission to the Preliminary Report:

☑ Have you focused your discussion on the models proposed in the Preliminary Report?
☑ Have you indicated whether or not you would like to speak to the submission at the public hearing?

In writing your submission, you might like to consider the following questions (you do not need to answer every question in order to make a useful submission):

The number of councillors:

☑ Have you suggested a number between 5 and 12 (as required by legislation)?
☑ If the number of councillors you have suggested varies substantially from the numbers in similar-sized municipalities of a similar type, have you explained why?

The electoral structures:

☑ Have you indicated whether you want the municipality to be subdivided or unsubdivided?
☑ Have you explained why your preferred structure would best suit your municipality?

If you think that the municipality should be subdivided into wards:

☑ Have you indicated whether you want single-councillor wards, multi-councillor wards or a combination of both?
☑ Have you suggested ward names and given reasons for those names?
Background

What is an electoral representation review?

An electoral representation review examines the electoral structure of a local council. It considers:

- the number of councillors in a municipality;
- whether a municipality should be unsubdivided or subdivided into wards; and
- if it should be subdivided, what the ward boundaries should be.

In addition, the review must make sure that, within each municipality, the number of voters represented by each councillor in each ward is within 10% of the average number of voters per councillor. That way, each person’s vote has the same value.

Another important element to these considerations is that, according to the Local Government Act 1989 (the Act), wards with only one councillor must elect that councillor using preferential voting, and wards with two or more councillors must elect them via proportional representation. If a municipality is unsubdivided, then all of its councillors must be elected using proportional representation.

When do representation reviews take place, and who conducts them?

The Local Government Act specifies that:

- electoral representation reviews must be conducted before every second council election; and
- a council must appoint an Electoral Commission to undertake the review.

On completion of the review, the Electoral Commission makes a recommendation to the Minister for Local Government, who then has the power to act on it.

This system of electoral representation reviews came into effect at the end of 2003 as a result of amendments to the Act. The first representation review for each municipality under this system takes place at a time specified by the Minister for Local Government by a notice in the Victoria Government Gazette. The first representation reviews to be carried out under the amended Act took place in 2004.

On 19 March 2007 the Minister for Local Government gave notice under section 219C of the Local Government Act that an electoral representation review is to be conducted for the Bass Coast Shire. The Bass Coast Shire Council has appointed the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) to conduct the review.

How did the current electoral structures come about, and on what were they based?

Most of Victoria’s councils have undergone reviews by the VEC. The majority of unreviewed municipalities still operate under structures established by the commissioners appointed during the restructures of the 1990s. The commissioners did not have any State-wide reference available to them when considering the appropriate number of councillors and electoral structures for the municipalities. As a consequence, there remain substantial differences between similar municipalities across Victoria. Subsequent to these reforms, individual councils conducted electoral reviews.
What is the purpose of a representation review?

Section 219D of the Local Government Act 1989 specifies that the purpose of a representation review is to achieve “fair and equitable representation for the persons who are entitled to vote at a general election of the Council.”

To achieve this, the VEC proceeds on the basis of three main principles:

1: to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is within 10% of the average number of voters per councillor for that municipality

Populations are continually changing – they grow in some areas and decline in others. Over time, these changes can lead to some wards having larger or smaller numbers of voters. As part of a representation review, the VEC needs to correct any imbalances that have come about. The VEC also tries to make sure that the boundaries it sets will continue to provide equitable representation until the next review is due in eight years, by taking account of likely future changes.

2: to take a consistent, State-wide approach to the total number of councillors

Regarding the number of councillors, the VEC has adopted as a guide the numbers of councillors in similar-sized municipalities of similar categories within Victoria. In addition, the VEC considers any special circumstances that warrant the municipality having more or fewer councillors than similar municipalities.

3: to ensure that communities of interest are as fairly represented as possible

Every municipality contains a number of communities of interest (see page 8). The electoral structure should be designed to take these into account where practicable. This is important for assisting the elected councillors to be effective representatives of the people in their particular municipality.

What can't a representation review do?

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

On what does the VEC base its recommendations?

The VEC bases its recommendations on a number of factors, including the following:

- internal research specifically relating to the municipality under review;
- the VEC's experience from its work with other municipalities and in similar reviews for State elections;
- the VEC's expertise in mapping, demography and local government; and
- careful consideration of all input from the public in both written and verbal submissions made during the course of the review.

Input from the public is an important part of the process, but it is not the only factor considered. The VEC's recommendations are not made by a “straw poll” of the number of submissions supporting particular models. The VEC seeks to ensure fair and equitable representation for all voters of the municipality. This means carefully considering all views expressed in submissions from the public, but also considering other factors, such as giving representation to communities of interest (including those communities of interest which may not be particularly vocal).

About the VEC

The Victorian Electoral Commission is an independent statutory authority established under Victoria's Electoral Act 2002. The VEC is not subject to ministerial direction or control in the performance of its responsibilities. The VEC's main functions include:

- conducting parliamentary elections and by-elections;
- conducting local government elections and by-elections (when appointed by council);
- conducting representation reviews for councils;
- maintaining an accurate and up-to-date register of electors and preparing rolls for elections; and
- contributing to public understanding of elections and electoral matters through information and education programmes.

In performing these functions, the VEC acts as an independent, impartial authority, acting transparently and with integrity.

About the panel

The VEC's recommendations are ultimately made by the Electoral Commissioner, Steve Tully. In reaching a decision, he is aided by the Deputy Electoral Commissioner, the manager of the Electoral Enrolment Branch (who is the manager responsible for the review process), and a number of VEC staff. These include teams with expertise in mapping and boundary modelling, and in policy and public consultation. He also receives advice from a consultant with expertise in local government - Mr Vern Robson.

The public hearing following the Preliminary Report will be attended by at least two representatives from the VEC and Mr Robson.
## The review process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14 January 2008</td>
<td>The review begins</td>
<td>The VEC begins conducting research and preparing material for the public.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 January 2008</td>
<td>Notification of the public</td>
<td>A notice detailing the process for the review and calling for submissions is placed in the Herald Sun, The Age, the South Gippsland Sentinel Times and the Phillip Island &amp; San Remo Advertiser.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, 25 February 2008</td>
<td>Information sessions</td>
<td>Information sessions on the review process are held at:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Council Chamber, Civic Centre, 76 McBride Avenue, Wonthaggi (enter via Ballieu Street) (5.30 pm)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Meeting Room 1, Cowes Cultural Centre, 98 Thompson Avenue, Cowes (7.30 pm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, 11 March 2008</td>
<td>Closing date for preliminary submissions</td>
<td>Preliminary submissions are your chance to contribute your views and local knowledge about any issues relevant to the review. See details in the next section. Late submissions will not be accepted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, 8 April 2008</td>
<td>Preliminary Report released</td>
<td>Based on the VEC's research, including information presented by the public, the VEC formulates a series of different models for how the electoral structure of Bass Coast Shire could be arranged. The models that best fit the VEC's aim of fairness and equity of representation are presented and explained in the Preliminary Report. For details of how to get a copy of the Report, see below.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, 30 April 2008</td>
<td>Closing date for response submissions on the Preliminary Report</td>
<td>Any person or group, including the Council, may make a response submission to the VEC about the Preliminary Report. This is your chance to present any additional arguments regarding which of the VEC's models you believe best represents the voters of Bass Coast Shire. Late submissions will not be accepted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, 5 May 2008</td>
<td>Public hearing</td>
<td>A public hearing is held at:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Council Chamber, Civic Centre, 76 McBride Avenue, Wonthaggi (enter via Ballieu Street)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>People who state in their response submissions to the Preliminary Report that they want to speak in support of their submissions may do so at this public hearing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, 26 May 2008</td>
<td>Final Report</td>
<td>After considering any written submissions relating to the Preliminary Report, and information provided at the public hearing, the VEC prepares a Final Report making recommendations to the Minister for Local Government. For details of how to get a copy of the Final Report, see page 15.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Minister for Local Government considers the VEC's recommendations and may make a determination. Any determination will take effect at the next Council election.</td>
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</table>

## Making a submission

Any person or group, including the Council, may make a submission to the VEC. Submissions do not have to be elaborate documents; a short letter is perfectly acceptable, as long as it addresses matters within the scope of the review (see the checklist inside the front cover of this document).

### When can people make submissions?

The VEC accepts submissions at two stages of the review process:

- **Preliminary submissions** should address matters relating to the number of councillors and the electoral structure of the municipality. At this stage, people can suggest any possible models within the constraints as explained in the "Matters to consider" section of this document. The most helpful submissions are generally those that provide clear explanations or evidence for particular viewpoints. Preliminary submissions must be received at the VEC by Tuesday, 11 March 2008 — 5.00 p.m. Late submissions will not be accepted.

- **Response submissions** on the Preliminary Report can comment on any issues relating to the review, but are more helpful if they comment on the preferred option and/or the alternative option(s). Alternative models will not generally be considered at this stage, as there is no further opportunity to put those models to the public for comment. Response submissions should indicate whether the person making the submission wishes to speak at a public hearing in support of his or her submission. Response submissions must be received at the VEC by Wednesday, 30 April 2008 — 5.00 p.m. Late submissions will not be accepted. There will be a public hearing for people who want to speak in support of their response submissions on Monday, 5 May 2008 — 6.30 p.m. People wishing to speak must request to do so in their response submissions.

### Where should submissions be sent?

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

- posted to Level 8, 505 Little Collins Street, Melbourne, Vic. 3000;
- emailed to basscoast.review@vec.vic.gov.au; or
- faxed to (03) 9629 9330.

Submissions must include the name, address and telephone contact number of the person making the submission. Without this information, the submission will not be accepted.

### Public access to submissions

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

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

The VEC will publish all submissions received by the due date on its website. The name and locality of the person making the submission will also be published. The person’s telephone number, street address and signature will not be published. The reason for making submissions available to the public is to ensure transparency in the electoral representation review process.
Matters to consider when preparing submissions

There are many matters to be considered when determining the electoral structure of a municipality. In your submission, you might try to take all of the issues into account, or you might just concentrate on one issue that you wish to bring to the VEC’s attention. The VEC’s job is to look at all of the relevant matters and to reach the best overall solution, based on its own research and submissions received from the public.

Below are some of the main matters you might like to consider.

How many councillors should there be?

Under the Local Government Act 1989, the number of councillors in every municipality must be between five and twelve inclusive (s.5B(1)). The Act does not specify how to decide what is the appropriate number, but the VEC has identified the following matters to consider.

Parliament has provided a range for the number of councillors to allow for municipalities with large numbers of voters and municipalities with smaller numbers. The numbers of voters in each municipality vary across Victoria from approximately 4,000 to almost 160,000. The VEC applies these provisions of the Act in a logical way, with those municipalities that have the largest numbers of voters having the most councillors, and those municipalities that have the least numbers of voters having fewer councillors.

The VEC has produced a table that lists each municipality and its area, number of voters and number of councillors (see the end of this document). The table differentiates between metropolitan municipalities, metropolitan/rural fringe municipalities, regional municipalities and rural municipalities in recognition of the different circumstances and needs of these categories of municipalities. This table is a valuable reference point in considering the appropriate number of councillors. This information enables the VEC to compare the municipality being reviewed to other municipalities with similar voter numbers and areas.

The VEC also considers whether the number of voters in the municipality is expected to increase or decrease in the period between reviews (eight years). Population forecasts produced by the Department of Infrastructure are used to assist the VEC in making its assessment.

In addition, the VEC considers any special issues or circumstances that may require a municipality to have more or fewer councillors than would otherwise be the case. These might include such issues or circumstances as:

- significant population growth within the municipality;
- an especially mobile or transient population;
- cultural and linguistic diversity within the community;
- a large proportion of older residents who may have special interests and needs;
- a wide geographic distribution of voters within a large municipality; or
- a large number of communities of interest (see below).

Although the legislation allows for any number of councillors between five and twelve, the VEC generally prefers to recommend an uneven number. With an even number of councillors, tied votes are generally more common. Often tied votes are resolved by a mayor casting a vote, which effectively gives one councillor two votes and the right to make determinations on evenly divided issues. The VEC does not consider that this provides fair and equitable representation. This situation may be further exacerbated if a council’s efforts to elect a mayor result in a tied vote. In such circumstances, the mayor may be selected by lot rather than through the support of a majority of the councillors.

The VEC has, however, recommended an even number of councillors in some reviews, where it believes that the possible ward boundaries with an even number of councillors better take account of communities of interest or other factors than the possible ward boundaries with an uneven number.

Should the municipality be unsubdivided or divided into wards?

A municipality can either be unsubdivided, with all voters, or it can be subdivided into a number of wards. Both electoral structures have advantages and disadvantages, and which structure is best for any individual municipality will depend on the municipality’s particular circumstances.

Bass Coast Shire is currently a subdivided municipality with seven councillors elected from seven single-councillor wards.

The tables at the end of this document list all of Victoria’s municipalities and their electoral structures.

Many factors must be taken into account in determining the most appropriate electoral structure for a municipality.

Communities of interest

An important part of achieving “fair and equitable representation” is making sure that communities of interest are appropriately represented. Communities of interest are groups of people who share a range of common concerns or aspirations. They are different from “interest groups” or “pressure groups” which may only have one issue in common (or a very limited number of issues). The communities of interest to which people belong are often also an important part of their self-identity.

Communities of interest may occur where people work in similar industries (e.g. fruit growers, transporters and canners). Communities of interest may also occur where people share a number of special needs because of similar circumstances (such as new immigrants, who may have little English, require assistance with housing and need help finding employment). Communities of interest may also include ethnic groups, retired people, the unemployed or many other groupings of people.

Communities of interest are important in electoral representation reviews when they have similar needs from their local government. In such cases, it is important to endeavour to ensure that communities of interest have the opportunity to be fairly represented on councils. There are a number of ways to take account of communities of interest, depending on how they are distributed geographically. For example:
If: then fair representation may best be achieved by:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Suitable Representation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a community of interest is compact geographically.</td>
<td>creating a ward with boundaries reflecting that community of interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a community of interest is a widespread minority.</td>
<td>creating multi-councillor wards with proportional representation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>there are numerous minority communities of interest within a municipality.</td>
<td>combining the communities of interest, so that any elected councillors would be responsible to all of these groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are also many other ways to take communities of interest into account.

**Other factors considered**

In developing options, communities of interest are not the only basis for determining boundaries. A range of other factors must also be taken into consideration. Often these factors are competing and the VEC must find an option that provides the best balance of all matters to be considered. These factors include:

- ensuring that the number of voters represented by each councillor meet the legislative 10% variation requirement;
- creating wards with manageable areas and taking account of geographic features, such as terrain and rivers;
- considering travel routes, modes of transport available and communication networks;
- anticipating likely changes to voter numbers in various locations over time; and
- governance related issues.

The following tables list characteristics that are commonly considered to be associated with the different possible electoral structures and may be of use in deciding which structure most suits your municipality. These opinions have come from a wide range of sources, including Local Government Victoria and submissions to previous reviews.

**Unsubdivided municipalities**

Unsubdivided municipalities must elect their councillors by proportional representation (see more on this point below).

Some commonly expressed views about unsubdivided structures are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Features</th>
<th>Less Positive Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promotes the concept of a municipality-wide focus, with councillors being elected by and concerned for the municipality as a whole, rather than parochial interests.</td>
<td>May lead to significant communities of interest and points of view being unrepresented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives residents and ratepayers a choice of councillors to approach with their concerns.</td>
<td>May lead to confusion of responsibilities and duplication of effort on the part of councillors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each voter has the opportunity to express a preference for every candidate for the Council election.</td>
<td>Large numbers of candidates might be confusing for voters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Removes the need to define internal ward boundaries.</td>
<td>May lead to councillors being relatively inaccessible for residents of parts of the municipality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results in a simple, less expensive voter roll for elections as compared with separate vote rolls for individual wards.</td>
<td>May be difficult for voters to assess the performances of individual councillors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Options for division into wards**

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

- single-councillor wards;
- multi-councillor wards; and
- combinations of single and multi-councillor wards.

The Local Government Act specifies that wards with only one representative must elect that representative via preferential voting, whereas multi-councillor wards and unsubdivided municipalities must elect their representatives via proportional representation. As far as voters are concerned on the day, it makes no difference. In practice, ballot papers look the same and are filled out in the same way, regardless of whether the candidates are being elected by proportional representation or by preferential voting. Whether a ward elects councillors via proportional representation or preferential voting can sometimes make a difference as to whether or not communities of interest are fairly represented.
Single-councillor wards

Some commonly expressed views about single-councillor wards are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Features</th>
<th>Less Positive Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Councillors are more likely to be truly local representatives, easily accessible to residents and aware of local issues.</td>
<td>Councillors may be elected on minor or parochial issues and lack a perspective of what policies benefit the municipality as a whole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major geographical communities of interest are likely to be represented.</td>
<td>Ward boundaries may divide communities of interest, and may be difficult to define.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voters may have a restricted choice of candidates in elections for individual wards.</td>
<td>Small populations in each ward may make ward boundaries more susceptible to change caused by demographic shifts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where major groups support candidates in multiple wards, it is possible that one group can dominate the council.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Multi-councillor wards

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

Some commonly expressed views about multi-councillor wards are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Features</th>
<th>Less Positive Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This structure supports the accommodation of a whole community of interest (such as a sizeable town or group of suburbs) within a ward.</td>
<td>Groups may form within the council based on multi-councillor wards, leading to possible division between councillors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on issues may be broader than for single-councillor wards (though councillors may be more locally focussed than in an unsubdivided municipality).</td>
<td>Very local issues may be overridden.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillors may be more accessible to residents.</td>
<td>In very large wards, councillors may not be accessible for residents in parts of the ward.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillors may share workloads more effectively.</td>
<td>Duplication or gaps may occur if councillors do not communicate or share their workloads effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward boundaries are likely to be easy to identify and less susceptible to change as a result of population growth or decline than for single-councillor wards.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Combination of single-councillor and multi-councillor wards

Some commonly expressed views about combined systems are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Features</th>
<th>Less Positive Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A large community of interest can be included within a multi-councillor ward, and a smaller community of interest can be included within a single-councillor ward. This structure accommodates differences in population across a municipality, and allows small communities to be separately represented.</td>
<td>Voters in single-councillor wards may expect that their councillors will be more influential than their numbers suggest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear ward boundaries are more likely.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Governance related issues

A number of governance related issues are also considered. The VEC notes, though, that there are advantages and disadvantages to all types of structure with respect to governance. The following table shows some of the directly conflicting points of view that have been expressed about governance related issues in single-councillor wards as opposed to multi-councillor wards and unsubdivided structures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Features</th>
<th>Less Positive Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Councillors are more accessible to residents.</td>
<td>Voters have a choice of which councilor to approach – they may choose one more akin to their interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillors are more aware of very local issues.</td>
<td>Councillors are more likely to have a broader focus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workloads for councillors are more manageable.</td>
<td>Councils may share workloads more effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillors are more accountable.</td>
<td>There is a greater opportunity for diversity of groups to be represented and different views on council can be beneficial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councils are more likely to reach consensus on issues.</td>
<td>Uncontested elections are less likely.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In conducting the reviews, the VEC’s goal is to provide fair and equitable representation for the voters. The VEC considers that the primary consideration in this is to provide structures that help people to elect a council that represents their views, interests and needs. Factors relating to governance issues, particularly those which apply after the election, are often given less weighting in the VEC’s considerations than factors leading to an appropriate spread of representation in the first instance (such as capturing diversity and communities of interest).
Victorian Electoral Commission

Vote counting systems

The vote counting system is another important factor to take into account when considering whether to have single-councillor wards, multi-councillor wards or unsubdivided municipalities. In single-councillor wards, councillors must be elected by preferential voting. In unsubdivided municipalities and multi-councillor wards, councillors must be elected by proportional representation. Under either system, people still vote in the same way. The only differences are the way that the votes are counted.

When there are single-councillor wards, the preferential system applies. 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, then 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 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 may negotiate with other candidates about the order of preferences. In some cases, candidates have informal “running mates” to help with the flow of preferences to them.

When there are multi-councillor wards or unsubdivided municipalities, proportional representation applies. 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 of 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 large minorities are likely to be represented as well as candidates representing majorities.

Proportional representation has a number of key differences to the exhaustive preferential system, which applied in unsubdivided municipalities and multi-councillor wards at elections prior to 2004. Proportional representation may return quite different results to the old system. Proportional representation should return candidates that are more representative of voters’ choices and makes it more difficult for candidates to be elected as part of a ticket.

How should ward boundaries be drawn?

Getting the numbers right

If Bass Coast Shire is to remain divided into wards, the ward boundaries must comply with legal requirements. Section 2190 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 per councillor for that municipality; and
• the ward boundaries must provide a fair and equitable division of the municipal district.

Where there are multi-councillor 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, if there are 3 councillors and 12,000 voters for a ward, the number of voters represented by each councillor will be 4,000, that is 12,000 divided by 3.

Ward boundaries must meet the approximate equality requirement set by the Act. The number of voters represented by each councillor cannot be more than 10% outside the average number for all councillors. At present Townsend Ward is outside the 10% limit.

Other considerations

The Act does not prescribe any more details to define what constitutes a fair and equitable division of the municipality. However, the following criteria are useful in considering and (where possible) 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;
• growing areas should not be concentrated in one ward, but should be spread over several wards; 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 with little growth potential somewhat above the average. This approach will help ensure that the boundaries stay within the 10% tolerance for a longer period, avoiding the need for frequent redrawing of boundaries.

In developing ward boundaries, the VEC aims to achieve the best possible balance among these criteria.
What should wards be called?

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

- **Place names:** A number of municipalities name their wards after localities in the wards. This approach is useful where ward boundaries closely align with localities. However, it can lead to people in 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, for example, the City of Whittlesea, where the wards are East, North and West. It is straightforward. 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 municipality’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; and

- **Indigenous names:** This is a way of recognising the municipality’s Indigenous heritage. However, the use of Indigenous names could be seen as being tolerant if the names are not relevant to areas within the municipality.

Getting copies of the Preliminary and Final Reports

Copies of the Preliminary and Final Reports will be available from the VEC website, www.vec.vic.gov.au, by contacting the VEC on 13 18 32, and at the Bass Coast Shire Council offices.

When the Preliminary Report is released, a notice in the South Gippsland Sentinel Times and the Phillip Island & San Remo Advertiser will specify how people can make a written submission in response to the Report.

The Preliminary Report will be available from Tuesday, 8 April 2008.

The Final Report will be released on Monday, 26 May 2008.

The Current Structure

Bass Coast Shire is a subdivided municipality with seven single-councillor wards. Councillors are elected through preferential voting.

The map below shows the current ward boundaries and the voter numbers and deviations from the average number of voters per councillor as at 16 January 2008.

A breakdown of voter numbers by locality will be available from the VEC website – www.vec.vic.gov.au – or by calling the VEC on 13 18 32. This can be used to see more precisely where voters are located within the municipality. A breakdown of voter numbers by Census Collector District is available on request.

Bass Coast Shire at a glance

Bass Coast is located about 130 kilometres south-east of Melbourne and covers an area of 865 square kilometres. It is predominantly a coastal municipality with a unique coastline complemented by a beautiful hinterland.

The major population centres are Wonthaggi, Cowes and Inverloch, with a number of other towns and villages spread throughout the Shire.

The major industries are agriculture, manufacturing, tourism and retail trade. Cattle and dairy farming are the area’s agricultural backbone, with growing interest in boutique farming such as venison and vineyards.

Bass Coast Shire has one of the highest population growth rates for a regional municipality without an urban area in Victoria. A permanent population of around 26,500 swells during peak holiday periods to in excess of 70,000. Major attractions include Phillip Island and the annual Motorcycle Grand Prix.
Bass Coast Shire has a higher portion of people on low incomes than in Victoria as a whole. This is partly a result of the large number of people who have retired and are living on a pension or other retirement income. Over 38% of the resident population is over the age of 55.

The Shire's strength is strongly related to its proximity to metropolitan Melbourne in the west, prospects for economic and employment growth in neighbouring areas, and tourist growth in nearby coastal and mountain regions. Population growth in Bass Coast will be fuelled by the desire to live and retire in popular coastal areas that are relatively close to Melbourne.

### Community profile

Trends in statistical data can assist with identifying and mapping communities of interest, which may be localised in a particular area or across larger parts of the municipality. The VEC's preliminary research indicates that there are observable differences across Bass Coast Shire that may indicate communities of interest.

Bass Coast Shire is expected to experience significant population growth in the near future: an increase of nearly 16% is anticipated in the years from 2008 to 2016. This is much higher than the rural municipality average, although similar to some other coastal retirement destinations such as Surf Coast Shire. It is expected that people aged 49 and over will account for the majority of the Shire's population growth over the next 8 years.

It is therefore not surprising that Bass Coast is relatively “old” in age in comparison to other municipalities – it has a median age of 46, which is higher than the rural municipality average of 43. Inverloch and San Remo have the highest proportion of residents aged 65 years and over, while Newhaven and Wonthaggi have the highest proportion aged 19 years and under. The Shire has a lower proportion of two-parent families with dependent children than Victoria as a whole, but a significantly higher proportion of couple families without children. It has a slightly lower proportion of one-parent families than the Victorian average.

Bass Coast Shire has a low degree of ethnic diversity; 77.2% of the population was born in Australia, while 5.8% were born in England, 1.1% in New Zealand, 1% in Italy, 0.9% in the Netherlands and 0.9% in Scotland. Census data indicate that of overseas-born people who have arrived in the Shire since 2001, the highest proportions have settled in Cowes, San Remo, Inverloch and Wonthaggi. The overwhelming majority of residents in the Shire are fluent in English.

In responding to the 2006 Census, 0.6% of the municipality identified themselves as Indigenous, which is identical to the proportion of Indigenous residents in Victoria as a whole. The Indigenous residents of Bass Coast Shire reside mainly in Kilcunda, Ryanston and in the western half of Phillip Island.

As indicated previously, incomes in Bass Coast Shire are lower than in Victoria generally. Data from the 2006 Census indicate that the median weekly household income in Victoria is $1,022, while in Bass Coast Shire it is $636. In the major population centres of Wonthaggi, Cowes and Inverloch, the median weekly household income is $562, $600 and $641 respectively. There is a relatively high level of full home ownership in the municipality (44.3%), while 26.1% of private dwellings are being purchased and 20.8% are being rented.

The VEC invites submitters to comment on these findings, and to identify communities of interest perceived within the municipality. Local knowledge and perspectives will be valuable in the development of recommendations for the VEC's Preliminary Report. Submissions may also include comments about whether or not these communities are well-represented under the current structure, and suggestions about whether and how the municipality could be structured so that they may be represented more effectively.

(Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006 Census; Statistical Profile Bass Coast Shire (prepared by Gippsland Research and Information Service, Monash University, December 2007); Bass Coast Shire Council website; Department of Planning and Community Development Victoria in Future 2004; Local Governance Association social statistics (available from VEGA website))
### Municipality size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bass Coast Shire</th>
<th>Regional municipalities without urban areas (medians)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area (square kilometres)</td>
<td>865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>26,548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population density (people/square km)</td>
<td>30.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voters (a)</td>
<td>38,488</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Economic profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bass Coast Shire</th>
<th>Regional municipalities without urban areas (medians)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major industries (percentages of workforce)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and food services</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, forestry and fishing</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and training</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care and social assistance</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail trade</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median household income ($/week)</td>
<td>636</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Population profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bass Coast Shire</th>
<th>Regional municipalities without urban areas (medians)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age groups (percentages of the population)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-14 years old</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-24 years old</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-54 years old</td>
<td>35.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55+ years old</td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age</td>
<td>46.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected population growth (2008-2016)</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Past reviews of similar municipalities

Regional municipalities without urban areas that the VEC has previously reviewed include Macedon Ranges Shire, Glenelg Shire and Wellington Shire. Mornington Peninsula Shire is classified as a metropolitan/rural fringe municipality, but has been included in the table below due to its high level of non-resident voters, a characteristic it shares with Bass Coast.

The VEC made the following recommendations at the completion of these reviews:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Before review</th>
<th>Final recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Macedon Ranges Shire</td>
<td>nine single-councillor wards</td>
<td>three three-councillor wards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenelg Shire</td>
<td>nine single-councillor ridings</td>
<td>seven councillors, unsubdivided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellington Shire</td>
<td>nine councillors, unsubdivided</td>
<td>nine councillors, unsubdivided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mornington Peninsula Shire</td>
<td>nine single-councillor wards</td>
<td>eleven single-councillor wards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Macedon Ranges Shire, the VEC considered a three-ward structure would suitably combine the positive features of multiple councillor representation with a recognition of the different needs of the Shire's distinct areas. In the shires of Glenelg and Wellington, unsubdivided structures were recommended due to the existence of non-geographic communities of interest which may be better represented under a system of proportional representation. In its recommendation for Mornington Peninsula Shire, the VEC reasoned that single-councillor wards were appropriate due to the presence of distinct geographic areas which have unique concerns and needs from council. The number of councillors was increased from nine to eleven as it was decided that the Shire met the criteria for representation by eleven councillors, despite a significant number of non-resident voters.

The reports from these and other reviews can be accessed at the VEC website – www.vec.vic.gov.au or by calling 13 18 32.

In conducting the Bass Coast Shire review, considerations such as these and the structures of similar municipalities will be the starting point. Through its own research and the submission process, the VEC will look carefully for factors specific to the municipality that makes its situation similar to or different from those other municipalities.

(a) statistics from VEC's enrolment data
(b) based on Department of Sustainability and Environment Know Your Area estimates
### Table: Profiles of municipalities
Voter estimates as at November 2007 - January 2008

#### Metropolitan Municipalities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Area (km²)</th>
<th>Number of voters</th>
<th>Number of councillors</th>
<th>Number of voters per councillor</th>
<th>Population (2006 Census)</th>
<th>Electoral structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maribyrnong</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>50,039</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7,148</td>
<td>63,141</td>
<td>Single-councillor wards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yarra</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>64,518</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7,169</td>
<td>69,330</td>
<td>3 three-councillor wards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobsons Bay</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>64,936</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9,277</td>
<td>81,459</td>
<td>Single-councillor wards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayside†</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>68,665</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9,809</td>
<td>87,916</td>
<td>1 three-councillor ward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Phillip</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>71,231</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10,176</td>
<td>85,096</td>
<td>Single-councillor wards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maroondah*</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>77,739</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11,105</td>
<td>90,200</td>
<td>Single-councillor wards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stonnington</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>80,056</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8,895</td>
<td>89,883</td>
<td>3 three-councillor wards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moonee Valley*</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>80,507</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9,809</td>
<td>90,907</td>
<td>Single-councillor wards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayside†</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>84,431</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9,383</td>
<td>112,695</td>
<td>3 three-councillor wards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whittlesea</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>94,010</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10,446</td>
<td>124,647</td>
<td>3 three-councillor wards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hume</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>105,225</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11,692</td>
<td>147,781</td>
<td>3 three-councillor wards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yarraville†</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>107,616</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11,957</td>
<td>134,626</td>
<td>3 three-councillor wards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moreland</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>111,194</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10,109</td>
<td>135,764</td>
<td>1 three-councillor ward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knox</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>111,194</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10,109</td>
<td>135,764</td>
<td>1 three-councillor ward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitehorse</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>112,287</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11,229</td>
<td>144,768</td>
<td>5 two-councillor wards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boroondara*</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>123,009</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12,107</td>
<td>154,450</td>
<td>3 three-councillor wards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monash</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>121,491</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11,045</td>
<td>161,241</td>
<td>1 three-councillor ward</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Metropolitan/Rural Fringe Municipalities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Area (km²)</th>
<th>Number of voters</th>
<th>Number of councillors</th>
<th>Number of voters per councillor</th>
<th>Population (2006 Census)</th>
<th>Electoral structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cardinia</td>
<td>1,282</td>
<td>43,473</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6,210</td>
<td>57,115</td>
<td>2 single-councillor wards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nillumbik*</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>45,659</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5,154</td>
<td>59,792</td>
<td>Single-councillor wards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melton*</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>60,054</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8,626</td>
<td>76,912</td>
<td>Single-councillor wards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyndham</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>84,431</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9,383</td>
<td>112,695</td>
<td>3 three-councillor wards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whittlesea</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>94,010</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10,446</td>
<td>124,647</td>
<td>3 three-councillor wards</td>
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<tr>
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<td>105,517</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11,724</td>
<td>140,217</td>
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<tr>
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<td>726</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>12,672</td>
<td>136,482</td>
<td>Single-councillor wards</td>
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<td>Casey</td>
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<td>150,231</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13,657</td>
<td>214,960</td>
<td>1 single-councillor ward</td>
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#### Regional Municipalities with Urban Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Area (km²)</th>
<th>Number of voters</th>
<th>Number of councillors</th>
<th>Number of voters per councillor</th>
<th>Population (2006 Census)</th>
<th>Electoral structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ararat</td>
<td>4,208</td>
<td>9,164</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1,309</td>
<td>11,255</td>
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<td>2,350</td>
<td>10,987</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1,570</td>
<td>13,523</td>
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<td>Swan Hill†</td>
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<td>14,503</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2,072</td>
<td>20,633</td>
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<td>16,832</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2,319</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>30,392</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wodonga</td>
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<td>24,809</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5,544</td>
<td>33,010</td>
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<td>Mildura</td>
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<td>40,843</td>
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<td>5,853</td>
<td>57,089</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>81,703</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9,078</td>
<td>93,252</td>
<td>Single-councillor wards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* under review
† structure to come into effect at 2008 municipal elections
‡ reviewed and pending Minister’s decision
### Rural Municipalities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Area (km²)</th>
<th>Number of voters</th>
<th>Number of councillors</th>
<th>Number of voters per councillor</th>
<th>Population (2006 Census)</th>
<th>Electoral structure</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Wimmera</td>
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<td>808</td>
<td>4,475</td>
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<td>583</td>
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<td>Hindmarsh</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>846</td>
<td>6,039</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5,404</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1,081</td>
<td>6,019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buloke†</td>
<td>7,998</td>
<td>6,056</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>865</td>
<td>6,853</td>
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<td>Yarrambiack</td>
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<td>6,563</td>
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<td>936</td>
<td>7,520</td>
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<td>1,428</td>
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<td>1,573</td>
<td>7,836</td>
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<td>Strathbogie</td>
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<td>9,295</td>
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<td>Mansfield‡</td>
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<td>1,912</td>
<td>7,191</td>
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<td>1,513</td>
<td>11,912</td>
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<td>1,585</td>
<td>12,323</td>
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<td>1,970</td>
<td>13,672</td>
<td>Single-councillor wards</td>
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<td>Hepburn‡</td>
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<td>1,975</td>
<td>13,732</td>
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<td>Mount Alexander†</td>
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<td>14,980</td>
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<td>17,066</td>
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<td>5,498</td>
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<td>41,980</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4,664</td>
<td>40,080</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* under review
† structure to come into effect at 2008 municipal elections
‡ reviewed and pending Minister’s decision
9.5 List of people and groups making submissions

**Preliminary submissions**

- 3925 Group
- Lyle Allan
- Bass Coast Shire Council
- Jeff Bennett
- Andrea Bolch
- Robert & Melva Brewster
- Bill & Joy Brown
- Coronet Bay Ratepayers’ and Residents’ Association
- Christopher Eastman-Nagle
- Grantville and District Business and Tourism Association
- Grantville Ratepayers and Residents Association Inc
- Andrew Gunter
- Robert Hannah
- Barry & Chris Hutton
- Anwyn Martin
- Des McRae
- Len McRae
- Noel Nicol
- Proportional Representation Society of Australia (Victoria-Tasmania) Inc
- Mr & Mrs C Siaboulis
- Kelly Simrajh
- Australian Greens (Victoria) - South Gippsland Branch
- Sunset Strip Estate Progress Association Inc
- Margot Taylor
- E Thomason
- Bob Thompson
- Meryl & Hartley Tobin
- Marion & Cam Walker

**Response submissions**

- 3925 Group
- Lyle Allan
- Bass Coast Shire Council
- Bill & Joy Brown
- Neville & Pam Chapman
- Coronet Bay Ratepayers’ and Residents’ Association
- Peter Foden
- Friends of Bass Valley Bush Inc Landcare Group
- Andrew Gunter
- Robert Hannah
- Anne Herb
- Greg Hewett
- AJ & DN Holland
- John Hulley
- Loretta Leslie
- Andrew Marston
- Anwyn Martin
- Des McRae
- Len McRae
- Sarah Myhill
- Noel Nicol
- Proportional Representation Society of Australia (Victoria-Tasmania) Inc
- Pauline Taylor
- Robert Taylor
- Tenby Point Residents Association
- Bob Thompson
- Meryl & Hartley Tobin
Bass Coast Shire Council

Map of Recommended Option
Seven Councillors, Seven Wards

Legend

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed Boundary</th>
</tr>
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<td>Locality Boundary</td>
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Map Symbols

- Freeway
- Main Road
- Collector Road
- Road
- Unsealed Road
- River/Creek
- Railway Line
- Lake
- Parks and Reserves

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward</th>
<th>Councillors</th>
<th>Voters</th>
<th>Deviation</th>
<th>Area (sq km)</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Churchill</td>
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<td>-3.69%</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>McHaffie</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Townsend</td>
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<tr>
<td>Totals for all Electorates</td>
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<td>38,488</td>
<td>-4.07% to +7.15%</td>
<td>864.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average per Councillor: 5,408, 123.55