

**Electoral structure review - Casey City Council - Response Submission
Stephen Capon - Narre Warren - 22 November 2023, 01:11 am**

From: Stephen Capon [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 22 November 2023 1:11 AM
To: Casey Submissions 2023
Subject: Casey City Council - Preliminary Report Opinions and Comments

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To The Honourable Frank Vincent AO KC, Ms Liz Williams PSM, and Mr Sven Bluemmel;

I am writing to you in relation to the current City of Casey electoral structure review, and the preliminary report released for comment.

I found the report to be informative, and had the following opinions to put forward (by order of topic in the report):

Number of Councillors

As suggested by other commenters, I believe that the City of Casey should have 11 councillors. In coming to this conclusion, for me, it was a case of weighing between having an odd number of councillors (therefore reducing any tied votes, and so hastening the speed of decision-making), versus having the maximum number of councillors allowed by law (12) to reduce the administrative load per councillor and ensure greater representation of local residents.

Of the two options, I believe that whilst it does place a greater burden on each individual councillor, it is better to have a council that can make a decision, than a council that constantly finds itself getting caught into tied votes, resulting in the Mayor casting deciding votes, which consequently gives the Mayor an unfair voting strength and threatens the democracy of the council.

However, I acknowledge and agree with many of the concerns raised with an 11 councillor model - namely that given the high ratio of residents per councillor, residents are not able to have their voice heard, and places a high burden on councillors (which is in theory a volunteer position, with an allowance to offset any costs associated with the role). To that end, given both the exceptionally high population in the City (365,239 in 2022), and that the population is estimated to increase by another ~85,000 to ~450,000 in 4 years time, this is a ridiculously high number of residents for any one local government to be responsible.

Therefore, I strongly recommend and request that as part of the recommendation to the Minister for Local Government, The Honourable Melissa Horne MP, that the panel stresses the need for the City of Casey to be divided into (at least) two local government areas, effectively undoing the amalgamation in 1994 of the City of Berwick with the Shire of Cranbourne.

This would result in a lower population in the new North city (and thereby improving resident access to councillors), whilst for the new South city, allowing proper ward creations

for population growth zones, including Clyde North and Clyde. This would also allow for councillors to be focused on these growing areas, rather than being torn between the conflicting needs of the already established suburbs of Endeavour Hills, Narre Warren, Hallam, Berwick, etc. compared to the developing suburbs of Cranbourne, Junction Village, Clyde, and Cranbourne South.

It is my firm belief that this split should occur before the next local government elections in 2024, nipping this problem in the bud before a potential 4 years of struggle for the newly elected councillors. I must also express my irritation that despite the City of Casey experiencing some of the largest growth (and therefore needing the biggest adjustment of ward boundaries) along with the largest disruption from the sacking of Councillors in 2020, along with Administrators for the past 4 years, was left as one of three last councils to have the review occur. Instead, had this been done earlier in the year, such a Local Government split could have been done in plenty of time with minimal issue to residents before the upcoming elections next year.

Model Structure

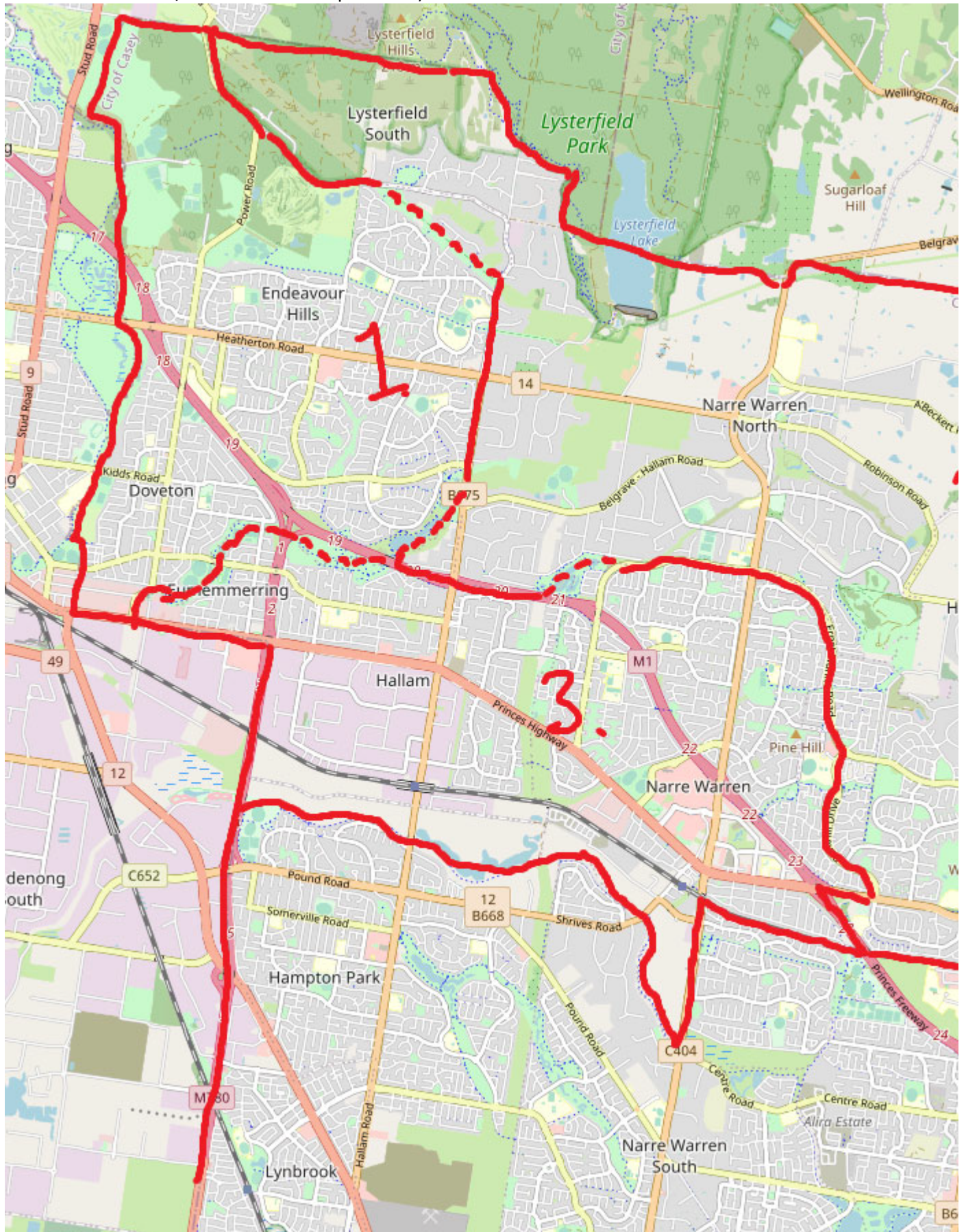
Given my belief in having 11 councillors, this leads me to offer my perspective on the proposed boundaries of any new wards. For myself, I have lived in Narre Warren for the past 20 years, and so feel sufficiently situated to comment on the boundaries around Endeavour Hills, Narre Warren, Narre Warren North, Hallam, and Berwick [North]/Harkaway.

However, I am much less intimately connected with Narre Warren South, Hampton Park, and Berwick [South] along with the more southern suburbs, so I will only limit my comments to these northern wards/suburbs.

In general, whilst I understand the boundaries that major roads can provide, I am more inclined to have boundaries based on suburbs (which are often delineated by natural boundaries - such as the Hallam creek separating Hallam and Hampton Park) rather than based off roads. This is especially the case for the Monash Freeway and South Gippsland Freeway, where bridges join together the community despite the 'major road' separating them. One such example would be Josephine Avenue bridging over the Monash Freeway, connecting the Maramba and Fountain Gate estates together.

Overall, I am slightly more in favour of Model 2 than Model 1 given its stronger emphasis on suburbs. Combining the models together, below is the model that I would advocate for (noting that I do not have the population data to confirm whether these divisions

would work for the +/- 10% deviation requirement).



In my model, Ward 1 is very similar to Churchill Ward. The only difference is shifting the boundary of Grasmere west, so that the suburb of Lysterfield South is within Grasmere rather than Churchill. This is in keeping with Lysterfield South being a Green Wedge area along with Narre Warren North. (The ward boundary does not go perfectly along the suburb division, instead using the power lines / green space as the separator).

Ward 2 is similar to Grasmere, however has the addition of Lysterfield South and the remainder of Narre Warren North that is in Maramba Ward in the Model 2 (between Troups Creek West, the Monash Freeway, and Eumemmerring Creek); whilst losing some of the houses on the west side of Parkhill Drive (which I believe to be a better boundary than the dog's leg it takes around Shinnars Avenue and Ryelands Drive in Model 2).

Finally, Ward 3 extends into Berwick Springs Ward, using the Hallam Creek, Narre Warren-Cranbourne Road, and the Pakenham railway as its southern boundary.

(I did not use the entire Pakenham railway, as this would split both Hallam and Narre Warren Station in two, including the residential area immediately around Narre Warren Station; rather the green space of the Hallam Creek gives an adequate boundary).

As mentioned before, I do not know how this affects population distribution; however assuming the distributions are within 10%, this would be the boundaries I would support.

Ward Names

Similar to the Ward distribution, I am only going to be focusing on the Ward names near the suburb where I live, commenting on the 11-councillor model names.

Model 1

Personally, I do not like the name Kalora Ward, principally because the park it is named after (Kalora Park) is right in the corner of the ward, and is likely unknown to Endeavour Hills / Lysterfield South residents. I feel that Churchill Park is both larger and more well known to the broader population area, and would be a better name; equally, Gleneagles would be another alternate name I would put forward.

Similarly, I am not the greatest fan of Kurrajong - noting that it is a minor road in this ward compared to Narre Warren North Road and Ernst Wanke Road, and so will have less impact on residents. That being said, I feel it is important to acknowledge the Aboriginal heritage in the area where it exists, and given that Kurrajong is an indigenous name for a tree, that balances out its faults. If an alternate were to be proposed, either Parkhill (for Parkhill Plaza) or Bayview or Kurll (for the respective parks) would be alternate names.

Equally, whilst noting the size of Waratah Park (for which Waratah Ward is named), I again note that the name of the park is quite isolated from the remainder of the ward.

However, noting that no other parks have an equally nice name, nor are there any other distinct localities (other than perhaps Fountain Gate), I cannot think of a better alternative.

Model 2

I think Churchill is a good name for a ward around Endeavour Hills (see above). Similarly, Model 2 has the Maramba estate (and Primary School), which I think makes it a viable ward name.

Finally, noting the boundary proposed in this model, Grasmere is not my favourite name, but given that Troups Creek (another prominent watercourse) is used as a boundary later on, I don't think there's a good alternative name.

My Proposed Model

For the Model above, for Ward 1, I would propose either Gleneagles, or (in reference to the terrain) a name like Viewpoint or Hilltop.

For Ward 2, I would nominate Troups Creek or Bayview as the ward name, whilst for Ward 3, I would suggest Maramba as the ward name.

Postscript

I would be interested in talking with the advisory panel on this upcoming Tuesday, particularly given the number of submissions that bear the similarity of an organised individual or group trying to drown out other submissions by repeating near-identical opinions.

Kind Regards,
Stephen Capon