

**Electoral structure review - Merri-bek City Council - Response Submission
Marion Attwater - Pascoe Vale - 08 November 2023, 04:59 pm**

I am making this submission as a long-time resident of Pascoe Vale.

I am strongly in favour of the Panel's proposed model 1, with a qualification that I disagree with the restructure to single-member wards.

Model 1 has a better boundary between the Pascoe Vale ward and Pascoe Vale South wards, where it runs all the way along Gaffney Street until Sussex Street. Whilst this doesn't quite match up with the suburb boundary, it is pretty close.

Regarding proposed names for wards - I strongly favour the names in model 1, where the wards are named after the suburbs. This is so much more transparent and easy to explain, than the suggested names in models 2 and 3. This municipality is a diverse community of many nationalities, many languages, and varying levels of English. From a CALD perspective, naming the wards after the suburbs is logical.

Regarding the proposed number of Councillors - I think there should be an odd number, and as model 1 roughly matches to the suburbs in Merri-bek, then 11 councillors seems the reasonable option.

However, regarding the restructure to single-member wards, I would like to suggest that this is based on flawed reasoning. The Constitution Act 1975 (Vic) section 74A clearly states that "A council is responsible for the governance of the area designated by its municipal boundaries". The Local Government Act 2020 section 28(1) clearly states that the role of EVERY COUNCILLOR is to represent the interests of the MUNICIPAL COMMUNITY in the decision making of the council. Single-member wards assigns one councillor to one ward, which will give the voters and residents in that ward the false impression that they should contact only one councillor with their concerns. If that councillor goes on a leave of absence, there is no ward office or electorate office to maintain the role of the councillor until they return. It is not the same as a State MP or Federal MP. If that councillor has strong political party affiliations which do not resonate with a resident or ratepayer, then they might feel unrepresented. And regardless of being assigned to only one ward, Councillors will still be required to make their decisions based on the needs of the entire municipality.

Merri-bek Council currently has 3 councillors who promote themselves as "Greens Councillors". The Mayor's facebook page has an email address for the Victorian Greens, and not the assigned council email address. These councillors constantly promote themselves as "Greens Councillors" thus putting offside numerous residents and ratepayers who want impartial independent representation. In my opinion it is a gross mistake to switch to single member wards.

Thank-you