



GLEN EIRA
CITY COUNCIL

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Response submission to the Electoral Representation Advisory Panel

LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTORAL STRUCTURE REVIEW, AUGUST 2023

BENTLEIGH

BENTLEIGH EAST

BRIGHTON EAST

CARNEGIE

CAULFIELD

ELSTERNWICK

GARDENVALE

GLEN HUNTLY

MCKINNON

MURRUMBEENA

ORMOND

ST KILDA EAST

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Glen Eira City Council welcomes the opportunity to provide this response submission to the Electoral Representation Advisory Panel (ERAP) regarding the local council electoral structure review.

In Glen Eira, our residents passionately believe that those who may be impacted by a Council decision should contribute their views, while ensuring representative participation. It's a passion we share — the first principle of our *Glen Eira 2040 Community Vision* is to always work together in collaboration to ensure fair and equitable decision-making. We pledge to continue bringing diverse voices to the table to help shape the direction of the municipality.

Getting the electoral structure of our municipality right is not just important to Council — it's vital to the ongoing good governance of our City and delivering our *Community Vision*. It is the foundation which will allow us to continue to govern for the benefit and wellbeing of our community, which is our responsibility under the *Local Government Act 2020*.

An effective, proportional electoral structure which is in tune with the needs and aspirations of the community ensures strong democratic representation. It underpins and enables well informed and transparent decisions and highly valued services, in line with the first strategic direction of the *Glen Eira Council Plan 2021—2025*.

While we recognise the requirement enshrined in the *Local Government Act 2020* to move to a single-member ward structure, Council's preference would be to maintain the current three-ward and three-councillor-per-ward model. We believe that this satisfies the objectives of good governance, being strong local representation and appropriate councillor-to-voter balance, while at the same time encouraging collaboration and teamwork between elected representatives.

Despite this preference, we acknowledge that the purpose of this current round of consultation is to seek input on the three proposed options outlined in the ERAP's preliminary report. With this in mind, Council supports:

- the ERAP's view that the total number of councillors should remain unchanged at nine councillors;
- Model 1 as the most appropriate model for fair and equitable representation;
- changing some of the proposed ward names to better reflect First Nations history and continuing connection to Country, particularly where Glen Eira place names (such as suburbs, streets and areas of significance) are already derived from Indigenous languages; and
- appointing Glen Eira Mayor, Cr Jim Magee as spokesperson for our submission at the public hearing

We look forward to the release of the ERAP's final report. In the meantime, we would welcome the opportunity to speak at an online public hearing to support our submission and expand on the points we have raised.

COUNCIL'S POSITIONS

Number of councillors

Council welcomes and supports the ERAP's preliminary view that our municipality would continue to be best served by nine councillors.

Our view is that this will afford a fair and equitable level of democratic representation and accessibility to Council for our community, given its geographic area of 39km² and its voting population of 106,181 voters.

Continuing with a nine-councillor model will enable localised consultation, a healthy councillor-to-voter balance, and be consistent with the model that residents of Glen Eira have come to know and understand. It will ensure continued good governance for our City.

Electoral structure and models

Council supports a single-councillor ward structure with nine councillors (Model 1) as the most effective model for continued good governance in Glen Eira.

We note that the model:

- uses existing boundaries of the three wards, further divided to create nine new wards;
- creates compact and roughly even wards in shape and size;
- meets the requirement that wards be within +/-10% deviation of the average number of voters;
- does not change the level of representation for geographic areas; and
- follows major roads for electoral boundaries.

We believe that as major changes to our electoral structure are proposed, continuity where possible is important to ensure the community understands and can actively participate in the governance of their community.

Local government is the closest level of government to the community, and enabling a strong level of continued familiarity with the ward structure should be a major priority in determining the electoral structure of the City.

Council's view is that Model 1 will provide the Glen Eira community with a sense of continuity and surety in its local representation, with the added benefit of localisation of ward boundaries.

Ward names

First Nations history

In the *Glen Eira Reconciliation Action Plan March 2022—March 2024 Innovate*, Council committed to the aim of consolidating Glen Eira as a culturally safe place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to live, work and visit and acknowledge that our City resides on Country that always was and always will be, Aboriginal land.

Glen Eira has a strong connection to three Traditional Owner groups on the lands that are now called Glen Eira, which are the:

- Boon Wurrung Land and Sea Council;
- Bunurong Land Council; and
- Wurundjeri Tribe Land Corporation.

We note the ERAP's preliminary report fails to acknowledge the Boon Wurrung peoples as Traditional Owners and we call for this significant omission to be rectified in the ERAP's final report.

We believe the Victorian Government should prioritise Glen Eira's First Nations history in the naming of new wards. It was disappointing to note that the ERAP did not ensure that this occurred in the drafting of their preliminary report before it was issued for community consultation.

Because the timeframe for Council to consider and respond to the ERAP's preliminary report was limited to just three weeks, Council unfortunately did not have the opportunity to conduct this necessary consultation with our Traditional Owners.

The Boon Wurrung Land and Sea Council has made a native title claim. The Boon Wurrung and the Bunurong Land Council are involved in legal proceedings. Pending the outcomes of these processes, we believe the Victorian Government should consult the most appropriate Traditional Owner group to ensure ward names reflect the continuing connection to country of our First Nations peoples.

In Glen Eira, many local suburbs, streets, and areas of significance are derived from Indigenous languages and believe these should be prioritised in the names of wards. This would enable an acknowledgment of our Indigenous cultural heritage while also maintaining a strong connection to place names already in use.

Ward name change recommendations

Following this research and noting Council's preference for ward names to reflect First Nations history, we suggest an amendment to the proposed ward names which have been put by the ERAP under Model I.

Council's preference is to rename 'Greenmeadows Ward', proposed under Model I, to be called 'Orrong Ward'. Orrong reflects First Nations language and is a well-known street name in our municipality.

COUNCIL CONTACTS

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