

**Electoral structure review - Frankston City Council - Response Submission
Darren McSweeney - Carrum Downs - 13 July 2023, 11:24 am**

Please find my submission attached.

Local council electoral structure review

Darren McSweeney



Frankston City Council 2023

This Public Suggestion was lodged 13 July 2023 by

Darren McSweeney

an Australian Citizen, resident of Victoria, and member of the Australian Public Service.

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The author acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which this report was written, the Bunurong people of the Kulin nation, and pays respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present. The author acknowledges their custodianship for many thousands of years and their continuing living culture.

Political disclaimer

The views, opinions, arguments and recommendations presented in this submission are the author's own and in no way reflect the views of Services Australia, the Australian Public Service or Australian Government.

My right to hold and express views as an Australian Citizen is [protected under Australian law](#).

Exercising this right to participate in public and political debate by lodging this public submission in no way affects my capacity to fulfill my duties in a professional, impartial, and apolitical manner.

This submission complies with conditions of employment in the Australian Public Service (APS) in accordance with the *Public Service Act 1999*, the [APS Values Code of Conduct and Employment Principles](#), and [Social media: Guidance for Australian Public Service Employees and Agencies](#)

I hold no interest in, and do not stand to receive any benefit or advantage resulting from the outcome of this redistribution. I have written this submission as a private citizen taking a personal interest in psephology and the electoral redistribution process. I am not now, nor at any time in the past been a member of any political party or similar associated organisation.

This submission is lodged claiming political neutrality. No political bias or partiality is implied within this submission and none should be inferred. This submission is lodged in accordance with [guidelines for making a submission](#). The political implications – if any – of the recommendations have not formed part of the recommendation and should not be inferred.

Criticism of submissions or decisions taken as part of this redistribution is based solely on the merit of the arguments and recommendations presented therein and serves solely to improve electoral representation for residents of the Frankston City Council. It is not in any way a reflection upon the character or abilities of any individual, government or community group or organisation participating in this process, nor any member of the electoral representation advisory panel, Victorian Electoral Commission, Frankston City Council, any government agency, department or member of Parliament.

Introduction

I am submitting this suggestion for the local council electoral structure review for the Frankston City Council.

I am a resident of the Frankston City Council and have been for several years. I was born and raised in the former City of Chelsea, now part of the neighbouring Kingston City Council. I have worked within Frankston City Council areas and I have now, and previously have had, friends and family live in Frankston City Council. I have a life-long attachment to the greater southern bayside region and often used the shopping, dining, community, entertainment and recreation facilities within Frankston City Council.

In the past, I have submitted proposals for electoral reviews for the Victorian state electoral districts as well as Commonwealth electoral division redistributions for every state and territory. I believe that this positions me well to provide a reasoned opinion that the panel can take under consideration.

The *Local Government Act 2020* made unfortunate changes to the requirements for local council representation. Frankston City Council can no longer be comprised of proportional multi-member wards and is required to have only single-councillor wards. This obviously reduces proportionality of the Council. This is a matter that should not be considered a good thing; however, I acknowledge that commentary on this matter is beyond the scope of the review.

Reviewing the Preliminary Report, I was disappointed to notice it contains mainly descriptions of what the review is required to examine, what decisions were taken, and the outcome of those decisions taken.

There seems to be scant details of the more important reasoning for why some of these decisions were taken, why certain decisions were made over other choices, or why the decisions taken are the best or most logical outcome. The preliminary report certainly reads as though conclusions have been drawn already. The fact that some ward names and boundaries seem to be used across all three models gives the rather unfortunate impression that the panel may have already determined at least part of the outcome.

Methodology

In drafting my proposal, I endeavour to keep communities of interest intact. This includes, social, economic and community interests, means of communication and travel and physical features and geography. I attempt to use clear boundaries wherever possible to ensure that residents can easily identify the ward in which they live.

I often disregard suburb and locality boundaries, as these divisions can sometimes split united communities. At other times, locality boundaries follow hard to identify property lines, minor side streets or other ambiguous lines. There are even times where a suburb boundary will follow a street the entire length except it will incorporate one single house on the 'wrong' side. In these cases, locality boundaries are not helpful and should be ignored.

Likewise, the notion that maintaining 'whole' localities is optimal is a fallacy and does not necessarily lead to better outcomes.

For instance, Seaford is comprised of several distinct pieces. The area of Seaford and Seaford North between the coast and Edithvale-Seaford wetlands is an entirely different character than the area east of the freeway. This eastern area even has a locally used name: Belvedere. The area south of Seaford Road is usually considered to be Kananook and is different again in nature to the other areas. Finally, the area east of the freeway but south of Klauer Street is more closely related to Frankston North in character and demographics.

Similarly, the suburb of Frankston contains several separate areas. The areas north of the central business district are distinct from the areas to the south. The areas around Karingal, and Heatherhill have their own distinct identities. I have known friends and colleagues from these areas, and they would identify that they lived in Karingal or Heatherhill instead of Frankston. These areas can be easily split and done so using clear boundaries. The proposed models from the panel using minor, often unaligned side streets, seemingly to bring the exact numbers into tolerance have not only defeated the purpose of the intention to keep localities whole but have led to some very poor outcomes for residents. In fact, the panel's reliance on uniting whole suburbs appears as though the proposed models were constructed by someone with zero local knowledge and simply looked at lines on a map.

Overall, I think the better of the three models is the third one with nine councillors and what has been described as alternative boundaries. In this regard, I will categorically dismiss the first and second models as overall inferior. Hence, the third model is the only model I will evaluate in my submission. Even still, some of the boundaries proposed in the third model simply unacceptable. I have therefore submitted a proposal of my own ward boundaries.

Review of preliminary report

Number of councillors

The option to reduce representation for council struck me as surprising, and for this to be considered the first model was almost alarming. I am not sure what grounds the panel have determined this, as there is little to explain why this was given as an option. The closest that I can read of an explanation is that reducing councillors will ensure that existing ward boundaries could be better retained. This hardly seems like a reason to reduce representation.

The Frankston City Council comprises the equal largest area of all similar councils. The other council with an area as large – Greater Dandenong – has 11 councillors. From the tables, retaining nine councillors would keep Frankston at the third highest ratio of voters per councillor, behind only Knox and Darebin. If this were to reduce to eight councillors, Frankston would have 13,297 voters per councillor. This would immediately rocket Frankston to the top of the list and therefore mean Frankston becomes the least representative council from the list of similar councils.

For this reason, I cannot in any way agree to a reduction in councillors. In addition to the fact that traditionally, an odd number of councillors is preferred for breaking deadlocks, I propose than Frankston City Council retaining nine councillors.

Suggested ward boundaries

The third model's boundaries for Carrum Downs and Skye are logical. Ideally, a boundary spanning Lathams and Hall Roads would be preferable, but the number of voters in each ward would be quite disparate. Therefore, I agree with the third model's proposed Banyan and Wilton Bushland wards. For Lloyd Park ward, I agree mostly, however I have used Southgateway, Centre and McKays Roads rather than Cranhaven Road and Francis Crescent. The panel's proposed ward removes a large chunk of Langwarrin from the middle. My proposal confines the movement to the north and east of the suburb. I have also resisted crossing Peninsula Link to maintain the freeway as a strong consistent boundary.

My proposal also changes the additional voters for the Mount Grand ward. In the third model, Mount Grand ward crosses the railway line and Peninsula Link and takes part of the residential areas of Frankston in Heatherhill. This is obviously only to make up the numbers, but by doing this, splits a distinct locality in Frankston and joins it to a disparate community in Langwarrin. The boundary proposed in the model – Franciscan Avenue, Heatherhill Road, Aquarius Drive, Schooner Bay Drive, a property boundary, Aquarius Drive again and then I presume either another property boundary or a simple line of sight – will be extremely confusing and unclear for residents. My proposal eliminates this entirely by exchanging all of this area for part Frankston South, east of the Moorooduc Highway and south of Robinsons

Road. This area is more similar in nature to the outer areas of Langwarrin, at least it is more similar than the areas to the north. This is the only place in my proposal that a ward spans Peninsula Link.

Using Moorooduc Highway as a boundary, Paratea ward can then move westward to include all the remaining parts of Frankston South in the one ward. While the boundaries between Paratea and Yamala wards are comparatively strong, combining them both together in the one ward would be better. This also then prevents a further split of Heatherhill, and again means not having to rely on the small unaligned side streets and ambiguous property boundaries as in the proposed model. Owing to this, in my proposal Yamala ward is dissolved entirely.

However, dissolving Yamala means there is a new ward available to be assigned. Uniting all of the Heatherhill area in one ward means that Worland Park ward can be split in two. While the railway line would probably be a better boundary, using Cranbourne Road – a single, major, divided road – for almost the entire boundary is clear and logical. Further north, my proposal then makes use of Skye Road as a boundary for the entire length. This clearly delimitates the entire Karingal area. However, additional voters are needed for both the Heatherhill and Karingal sections. The Heatherhill section gains the area around the Frankston Hospital and the Towerhill area using Yuille Street, Overport and Towerhill Roads as a strong boundary. This area remains connected to the rest of the Heatherhill section through residents' use of the Towerhill shopping centre and local amenities.

The Karingal section of Worland Park then claims the area bound by the Frankston Freeway-McMahons Road corridor and the railway line. While this area is distinct from the Karingal area in characteristics, they both share similarities. The several shopping strips along Beach Street are used by residents in both areas and major thoroughfares of Skye Road, Beach Street and Cranbourne Road make the area accessible.

Using Skye Road as a clear boundary for the Karingal section of Worland Park ward means that the area around John Paul College and McMahons Road is no longer part of Telopea Reserve ward. Using only Frankston North and the area of Seaford east of the Frankston Freeway almost gives enough voters. The addition of the unattached area in Frankston north of Skye Road makes up the numbers. This is less than ideal as this area is not attached to the remaining areas of the ward, however the model proposed similarly uses the aforementioned unattached John Paul College area, and I believe my proposal is more optimal than other solutions as it makes use of clear boundaries and does not cause unnecessary impacts elsewhere.

With Telopea Reserve ward using all of Belvedere in Seaford, Seaford Reserve ward is left with everything east of the Frankston Freeway down to the Frankston-Dandenong and Skye Road freeway exit. The boundary then continues along the railway line into Frankston commercial centre and part of the southern Frankston suburbs to make up numbers. I notice the report

makes mention of the railway line splitting the commercial centre, but in reality, it does not. by Chisholm Institute and the Peninsula Aquatic and Recreation Centre are situated to the east of the railway station opposite the commercial centre. There is virtually no similarity between these areas and the commercial centre to the west. The small shopping area on Beach Street is separate, and very few people would consider them one contiguous shopping or commercial district. Furthermore, the railway line serves as a real boundary in this area with limited places to cross, for both pedestrians and vehicles.

In the south I would probably suggest using a strong straight boundary in the area like Williams Street, however the online tool did not break residents along this line so I can only estimate. Transferring too many residents to Paratea ward would send Seaford Reserve ward outside tolerance, so I have elected to use Williams and Kars Streets and Warringa Road, which at least gives a relatively straight boundary. Although Warringa Road west of Cliff Road is not much more than a small, unpaved laneway, it also serves as the locality boundary between Frankston and Frankston South, so at least residents on each side would be able to rather easily identify in which ward they live.

Seaford Reserve can therefore maintain a coastal focus, but unlike in the second model it does not make it the sole focus. Having lived in Kingston City Council during the time a single ward stretched the entire length of the bay was detrimental to the needs of beachgoers who did not live in the ward, while the – often competing – needs of various beaches distracted the attention of the local councillor from other important issues within the ward. As such I do not think having one thin coastal ward is a good idea.

Ward names

The proposed names for wards in all models in the Carrum Downs area suitable. The names selected are well-used and established in the area.

I must confess to being confused as to some of the other choices of ward names selected by the panel.

Crystal Park, Telopea Reserve and Worland Park are named for tiny local parks that, outside the absolute immediate local area, residents would hardly recognise. Indeed, I had to look up the location of all of these parks. Similarly, Yamala is also a local park, except at least in this case, there are sports clubs that share the name. Paratea and Lloyd Park are at least larger, with some local name recognition. Seaford Reserve, if referring to the actual park on Seaford Road between the railway and Kananook Creek is oddly specific, and even then, the panel could have made use of another park in the area instead. I had to look up Mount Grand to see where it was and still cannot determine if the name is used for anything more than just an otherwise unremarkable hill.

Given the panel have provided no justification for using the names apart from the fact they are “based on natural features, roads or localities found within each ward” I can only use my

own local knowledge of the suitability of these names. The fact I didn't even know some of them, seems to indicate these are not names that accurately represent the greater wards to which they would be assigned. There are far more suitable names for wards that actually represent the overall feel of each ward. I have provided details of the ward names I have selected instead and some reasoning for why I have selected these names.

I have no issue with **Banyan** or Lyrebird for wards in Carrum Downs. Boggy Creek is also acceptable, although I feel probably less so in boundaries using the third model. I think Wilton Bushland could be shortened to just **Wilton** and still make sense. I have used **Banyan** and **Wilton** in my submission.

I considered using either McClelland or **Centenary Park** for the ward named Lloyd Park. **Centenary Park** after the parklands and golf course. McClelland after the road and the sculpture park and gallery in the area. I have used **Centenary Park**, however I have no objection to using Lloyd Park instead.

I selected **Cruden** as the name for Mount Grand. This is after the large and well-known Cruden Farm. I believe this is far more prominent than Mount Grand and would honour the legacy left by Dame Elisabeth Murdoch.

I had originally considered Sweetwater for **Paratea** ward, as Sweetwater Creek runs through the entire ward. I have no objection to the name **Paratea** and have decided to adopt this name. Although I am unsure if it should be pronounced or "Para-tee" "Para-tee-ah". I suspect similar confusion could become an issue with residents not knowing how to say the name of their own ward, so would need to be addressed.

Yamala would not be used as there is no longer a ward in the area.

Instead of Worland Park, Telopea Reserve and Seaford Reserve as ward names, I have used **Ballam, Belvedere, Kananook** and **Heatherhill**. These names are all recognised by local residents. They are named after localities (but not suburbs): **Belvedere** named for the area of Seaford, including, Belvedere Park, Belvedere Primary School and the general name for the shopping strip, as well as specifically for several business names in the area. **Heatherhill** being a local name for the area of east of Frankston-Flinders Road, named after Heatherhill Road which runs right through the area. **Ballam** is named for Ballam Park, Ballam Park Homestead, Ballam Park Primary School, and the former Ballam Park Secondary College. Sports clubs and some businesses are also named after Ballam Park. Finally, **Kananook** is named for the locality within Seaford, Kananook Reserve, Kananook Primary School, but most importantly, Kananook Creek which runs right through the area, through the Frankston commercial centre to Port Phillip.

Conclusion

Overall, I believe my submission builds on the third model, making some much-needed improvements. Local side streets are generally not used as boundaries in my proposed solution and the communities are coherent and logical. I have used ward names that are easily recognisable, unique and give a sense of the locality being represented.

I would like to thank the panel for accepting this submission. I hope the panel sincerely and genuinely considers the points I have raised in my submission and the final report sees some improved outcomes for the voters and residents of the Frankston City Council.

I do not intend to speak at a public hearing.