

Electoral structure review - Merri-bek City Council - Response Submission Michael Stanley - Brunswick West - 03 November 2023, 05:11 pm

To the Electoral Advisory Panel,

I am a local resident and data analyst who lives in Brunswick West. I have followed Merri Bek council initiatives and politics for over a decade since being involved in a fossil fuel divestment campaign in 2013/14. I am not a member of any political party, though I am an inactive member of Climate Action Merri Bek.

I would like you to consider my thoughts below as you prepare a final recommendation for the minister.

Naming of Wards

Option 1 maintains geographically simple names much like state electorates (e.g. Brunswick North Ward, Glenroy East Ward), while options 2 and 3 use a mix of names based on Indigenous, historical and notable place names (e.g. Bulleke-bek ward, Thomson Ward, Pentridge Ward).

Given the low level of engagement with local politics, the simpler geographic naming system of Option 1 should be used whatever the final boundaries adopted. It's straightforward and more intuitive to anyone trying to understand the boundaries (I've certainly found that myself looking at the data the last few days). Most of the Indigenous/notable person names being suggested in options 2 or 3 are already used for parks or other features in the municipality and I feel that is a more meaningful way to confer some recognition regardless.

Ward Boundaries

Of the three options presented I believe Option 1 is overall the best of the three by a considerable margin. It's most significant drawback is the way it gives the small slice of Eastern Glenroy and Hadfield to the Fawkner Ward, separated by the cemetery and Sydney road. That said it has many advantages over options 2 and 3 that balance this out

- The configuration of the central wards over Pascoe Vale and Coburg (and PV South/Coburg North) is vastly superior in Option 1, it mirrors the layout of these suburbs much better than options 2 and 3, and is more likely to align with local communities of interest. Furthermore the wards are more likely to be delineated by significant local roads, and their shape is more compact.
- None of the Northern ward proposals easily line up with suburbs and major roads/railways/natural features, there are tradeoffs in all three. In aggregate I think Option 1 gets the balance better. Unlike Option 3 it keeps Hadfield (largely) intact and unlike Option 2 Glenroy's (necessary) partition is along a more prominent line through the community that people are likelier to intuitively understand. Some communities or groups could be negatively impacted in different ways by each proposal and this should be carefully considered.
- The configuration of the Brunswick Wards in the south in option 1 (Identical to option 2) is the superior configuration compared to option 3's vertically configured wards. A given resident or business in Central Brunswick is likely to have more in common with others on the other side of Sydney road, compared to those the same distance further up or down it. Even if the panel decides Option 3 is superior for the central/Northern wards, it should maintain this structure for the Brunswick wards regardless, as it has no effect on the configuration of wards North of Moreland Road.

Good luck with your further deliberations, and thankyou for taking the time to review my submission,

Regards

Michael Stanley