

Electoral structure review - Greater Geelong City Council - Response Submission

Sarah Hathway - Corio - 15 July 2023, 10:54 am

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Background of submission:

For full disclosure I am currently one of two elected Councillors for Windermere Ward, City of Greater Geelong, recently elected via VEC countback on Wednesday 28th June. I have lived in the current ward of Windermere for just over 5 years, I have also been working professionally in the area as a social worker in community mental health services for the last 9 months. Through various election and community based campaigns I have spent a number of hours either door knocking or letterboxing various suburbs in the existing Windermere Ward, and therefore feel sufficiently familiar with the area, the various communities and suburbs in the area.

Regarding the number of Councillors

Given the large geographical area of the City of Greater Geelong and significant growth in population expected, particularly in the North and West Growth Areas, I believe there is a justifiable argument for 12 Councillors to accommodate this. According to the VEC's own fact sheet, Greater Geelong has a fast-growing population and is forecast to reach about 400,000 people by 2041.

Geelong has previously had 12 Councillors to 12 single member wards and this did not present an issue for the Council in terms of even numbers and the Mayor needing to cast the deciding vote any more than occurs with the current system of 11 Councillors across 4 multi-member wards.

Location of ward boundaries – Model 1

The concept behind Model 1, to maintain the structure of the existing 4 wards of Bellarine, Brownbill, Kardinia and Windermere and further subdividing these wards to get to 11 or 12 wards would be far less confusing, I believe, than completely new boundaries.

However, I do not support the proposed sub-division of the existing Windermere Ward as is proposed in Model 1 as it seems like the principle of Communities of Interest has not been applied, which is grouping suburbs or areas based on shared/similar interests.

Model 1: Cowies Creek Ward & You Yangs Ward – Sub-division of existing Windermere Ward

It would make more sense to group North Shore, Norlane and all of Corio together in an "inner northern" ward, rather than separating North Shore and a small section of Corio off with Lara and Little River and group the more semi-rural/rural townships and areas together in an "outer northern" ward.

Using the VEC Map Submission tool, this does appear to create a deviation of -14+% however the population of Norlane, Corio and North Shore is likely to hold relatively steady, whereas the population growth in Lara and the new [Northern Growth Area](#) is forecast to grow which would then balance the two wards as per the +/- 10% goal. The Greater Geelong City Council electoral structure review document states that Lovely Banks, Batesford, and Moorabool are expected to grow in population by 470% or from 3,000 to up to 17,000 people by 2041.

*Projected Northern growth area shaded
In blue lines at top of map.*



Model 2 – Corio Bay Ward & You Yangs Ward

In apply the Communities of Interest principle this appears to be the most odd proposition for boundaries of the three models presented by the VEC.

Specifically, the concept of Corio Bay Ward, lumping some of Geelong’s most disadvantaged suburbs of Norlane and Corio in with far more affluent suburbs of Drumcondra and Rippleside does not appear to make much sense. Further this divide in the North would see the suburb of Corio divided, with Hendy St westward separated from the rest of the suburb.

Model 3 – Anakie Ward & You Yangs Ward

This division is also problematic as it again divides up the suburb of Corio between two wards.

Regarding names of wards

Cowies Creek Ward and You Yangs ward and favourable names after significant environmental features/landscapes in the north. Having said that, I am not opposed to further community consultation or consultation with mob as to whether there is a desire for First Nations ward names.