

**Electoral structure review - Greater Geelong City Council - Response Submission  
Anthony Aitken - North Geelong - 26 July 2023, 10:50 am**

Dear: Panel - Greater Geelong City Council electoral structure review 2023.

Background:

My name is Anthony Aitken, I am currently a sitting councillor and Deputy Mayor of the City of Greater Geelong. I have a long association with community service and have served under several different electoral models for Geelong local government area. These include: Pre-amalgamation with Shire of Corio; Single-councillor; Multi-member councillor; and split regional/single ward councillor based electoral models in Greater Geelong council. All of these models have benefits and disadvantages. I also acknowledge that the Panel must develop an electoral model based on parliamentary legislation which has deemed the City of Greater Geelong must return to single-councillor ward-based model for the 2024 elections.

I provide the following comments on the areas the Panel must consider, and the draft models presented. If the opportunity arises, I would also like to make a presentation in person to the Panel.

The Appropriate Number of Councillors and Wards for the Council:

I support the proposition of 12 ward councillors for Geelong, the maximum number under the local government act. This figure also reflects the historic number of councillors Geelong has had when operating under single-councillor wards structure since its inspection in 1993. Geelong is already one of the largest councils in Victoria based on population and covers a significant and diverse land mass compared to metropolitan councils, comprising urban, coastal and rural communities of interest.

Geelong has an estimated population growth of around 11% from current forecast figures this would see an increase in number of voters in 2028 to over 21,000 voters per councillor based on the 11-councillor model. Even with 12 councillors this may still reach to 20,000 voters per councillor by 2028. Appendix 1 of the submission supports the 12-ward structure as Casey and Greater Geelong City Council have the highest number of voters per Councillor in Victoria. It is appropriate the largest populated councils in Victoria should have the maximum number of councillors under the legislation. To adopt 11 councillors only, would disenfranchise Geelong residents compared to neighboring and other councils in Victoria. It must be remembered that councillors in Victoria are part-time unlike State and Federal elected representatives who are fulltime and have electoral offices to support larger population-based electorate numbers.

The model adopted should also maximise the opportunity for residents to be elected and support diversity of representation to a local council. Less councillors with larger populated electoral wards require more financial and resources to be successfully elected, disenfranchising those members of the community without wealth, political party or strong community group affiliation. Women have historically not been able to match males access to funds, political parties and community group affiliations.

The Location of Ward Boundaries:

Based on my local knowledge and representation experience as a local councilor all 3 draft models present ward boundaries which do not reflect the unique communities of interest that exist in the Geelong local government area. In fact, the proposed boundaries are artificial and group significantly different and opposing communities of interest, instead of trying to group like-minded communities of interest. This will make representation by a single ward councillor difficult to manage and represent. An example is the proposed northern based wards, all draft models have

significant rural land mass and urban areas combined. The rural communities have limited to no shared community of interest with the urban areas, the urban area population will dominate the electoral results and disenfranchise the small rural vote. Where possible rural communities of interest should be grouped not split. To further demonstrate this point the suburb of Rosewall has strong common interests with the suburbs of Corio and Norlane, not Lara. Anakie township has a strong common interest with Lara more than the urban suburban areas of Geelong that the draft boundaries currently combine it with.

The existing draft models should be scrapped and started again. Options to consider would be the last 12 single-councillor member wards boundaries in Geelong from 2016 and modify those boundaries based on population growth and 10% rule or alternative use the existing 4 based multi-member model boundaries and split those boundaries into 11 wards, if 11 total councillors is the Panels preference adjusting for the 10% rule.

The Name of each Ward:

The Victorian State Government and Geelong council have a strong reconciliation agenda with our First Nations people. It will be a missed opportunity if the proposed names of all new wards did not reflect indigenous or anglicized existing indigenous locality names that already exist in Geelong local government area.

I acknowledge that the preliminary report states that there was insufficient time to consult with Local Aboriginal communities, however you would consider using Aboriginal names if: It is the name of a place within a ward, It is currently in common use or the name is registered under the Geographic Place Names Act 1998.

I support some of the indigenous names in the draft and provide the following suggested wards names but it is not exhausted there are others not mentioned that fit the categories above and you may wish to explore those:

You Yangs (Wurdi Youang) , Barwon (Parwan), Barrabool, Moorabool, Connewarre, Djilang for the cbd based ward, Kardinia, Murradoc, Bellarine, Beangala (Previous ward name in Bellarine), Malop (Maloppio), Corio (Coraiyo).

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