

**Electoral structure review - Hume City Council - Response Submission**  
**Hume City Council - Broadmeadows - 22 November 2023, 04:36 pm**

Please find attached Hume City Council's submission.

An officer would value an opportunity to speak to the submission at the online process next week.

Thank you,

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22 November 2023

Victorian Electoral Commission

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: HUME CITY COUNCIL SUBMISSION TO THE ELECTORAL REVIEW**

The City of Hume welcomes the opportunity to provide information to the Panel conducting the electoral review for Hume City.

Council is particularly concerned that the future electoral structure supports the application of good governance within the municipality. Council welcomes the opportunity to highlight areas of key importance to the Panel included its intention that the proposed electoral structure:

- recognises the communities of interest within the Hume municipality and existing suburb boundaries and their growth fronts
- the need for the electoral structure to enable effective representation to communities experiencing unprecedented growth and
- the need for single member wards to also be practical and workable for elected representatives to ensure that they can effectively represent the rights and interests of their constituents.

The submission of Council is that the Panel seek to maintain as far as possible existing suburbs intact and or aggregations of adjacent suburbs as required to develop wards to the target size. Using a suburb-based approach provides the best chance to create meaningful wards that are united by an existing identity, similar development patterns and community interests.

Council has responded to the Preliminary Report and has made recommendations for the Panel's consideration on the number of wards, the ward names and the ward boundaries.

We look forward to working with the Panel and providing any assistance necessary to the review process.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]  
**CR NAIM KURT  
MAYOR**

# Submission to the Local Government Electoral Review

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Hume City Council

November 2023

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## Introduction

Council is committed to ensuring that the future electoral structure supports the application of good governance within the municipality. Council welcomes the opportunity to highlight areas of key importance to the Panel including its intention that the proposed electoral structure:

- More fully recognises geographic communities of interest within the Hume municipality and existing suburb boundaries and their growth fronts
- the need for the electoral structure to enable effective representation to communities experiencing unprecedented growth
- the need for single member wards to also be practical and workable for elected representatives to ensure that they can effectively represent the rights and interests of their constituents and
- related to this that the ward names are meaningfully connected to place and can be readily understood by the community.

This submission speaks to these issues in the order in which they are addressed in the preliminary report.

Council's position on and recommendations around each of these matters are boxed included in **bold font**.

## Growth rate

Hume's population is expected to grow to 388,891 by 2041 from its current (2023) estimate of 259,962 (source: id forecast™). Over the next five to twenty years, urban growth, densification of established areas, and changes in population and household structures will drive an increase in the complexity of the role of local government.

The combination of growth particularly within the Urban Growth Boundary alongside large tracts of land of low voter population makes establishing single member wards which will last more than one electoral cycle quite difficult.

The longevity of the proposed electoral structure will as much be influenced by localised growth and how quickly land is brought to market as it is by growth across the municipality overall. While Panels will seek to propose structures that will have longevity, it is understood priority will still be given to compliance for the 2024 elections.

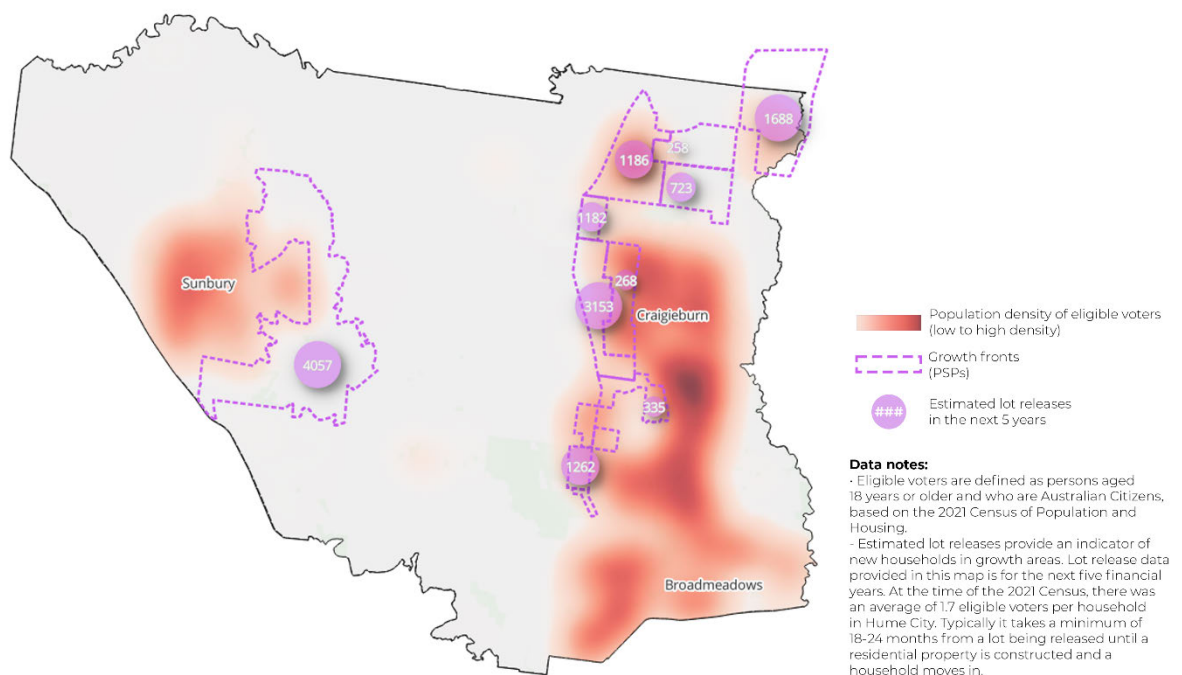
## Land use strategy

There are a range of strategic land use planning documents which are relevant to settlement patterns, growth and infrastructure planning including the Hume City Council Community Infrastructure Plan and the Hume Corridor Integrated Growth Area Plan Infrastructure and Delivery Strategy December 2015. These

documents are relevant to the growth and settlement patterns which may be useful to in looking to establish structures that will have some longevity.

The map below highlights key population centres within the Hume municipality and growth frontiers for consideration by the Panel.

This map shows the population spread of eligible voters from the state roll, with the dotted areas being growth fronts. The number in the circles is the expected number of residential lot releases within the next five years – for example in the East and South-East of Sunbury, there will be 4,057 lots released in the next five years.



## The number of councillors/number of wards

It is understood that the spread of councillor numbers will be largely determined by voting age population and achieving a similar level of voter representation across different councils within a single category.

The table below summarises the 2021 voter population for councils of this type and shows that Hume is and will remain in the near future (to 2031) marginally behind the majority of growth area interface Councils in terms of voter numbers per councillor under current councillor numbers. This provides a slightly longer time horizon than in the Panel's Preliminary Report. If the Panel were to contemplate increasing the number of councillors Hume would have a councillor to voter ratio that is relatively high within the category. It would be reasonable to assume that at least a couple of the growth area interface Councils may see an increase in councillor numbers.



Municipality	Current Structure	Number of Councillors	2021 Population 2021	2021 Voters	2021 Voters per councillor	2031 Projected population	2031 Estimated Voters	2031 Likely voters per councillor
Growth Areas								
Hume	Multi member Wards	11	243,901	140,330	12,757	315,128	191,886	17,444
Cardinia	Single member Wards	9	118,194	72,806	8,090	163,331	104,902	11,656
Casey	Administrators (previously Multi member Wards)	11	365,239	209,149	19,014	481,318	290,596	26,418
Melton	Multi member Wards	9	178,960	100,858	11,206	276,428	170,960	18,996
Mitchell	Multi member Wards	9	49,460	32,550	3,617	78,766	53,730	5,970
Whittlesea	Administrators (previously Multi member Wards)	11	229,396	138,824	12,620	327,471	202,759	18,433
Wyndham	Multi member Wards	11	292,011	140,391	12,763	406,651	210,718	19,156
Non-growth Areas								
Mornington Peninsula	Multi member Wards	11	168,948	120,653	10,968	189,730	145,206	13,201
Nillumbik	Single member Wards	7	62,895	44,619	6,374	68,410	50,993	7,285
Yarra Ranges	Single member Wards	9	156,068	108,477	12,053	176,032	127,725	14,192

**Sources:**

Interface council websites,

ABS 2021 Census of Population and Housing

Note these voter numbers do not include an estimate of voters who will register under the property franchise.



Based on a comparison of Hume's total voter population with that of other growth-oriented interface councils there does not appear to be a compelling argument to increase or decrease the councillors within the statutory limits. Taking the ward number to the maximum allowable of 12 would limit the ability of the structure to continue to evolve with population growth. Reducing councillor numbers on the other hand does not appear to be arguable based on growth projections and where Hume sits alongside other growth-oriented interface councils.

**Council notes however the acknowledged uncertainty surrounding the take up of the property-based voter entitlements. Should these numbers be significantly different from the numbers used for modelling which underpins the Panel's work, Council may take a different view. The Preliminary Report does not provide the basis of the current estimates and whether these are based on a conservative or more optimistic scenario of voluntary take-up of entitlements and Council advocates for full transparency on these estimates in the publication of the final report. Therefore it is difficult to arrive at a position with great certainty. This issue is further addressed below in a discussion on the ward boundaries.**

**Hume City Council is of the view that in the context of Councils in the growth category and noting the above caveat around the voter number uncertainty, the current number of Councillors is justified. Council also notes that maintaining an eleven-councillor structure for a reasonable length of time will require ward boundaries which are very finely tuned to allow for highly localised growth rates in the growth intensive parts of the municipality.**

## The names of the wards

In the context of applying mandatory single member wards the most likely community of interest consideration is expected to relate to suburb and location identification. The naming of wards is therefore very important to the successful implementation of a new electoral structure.

Council notes the Panel recognition that there should be meaningful consultation with local communities before a ward is named using Aboriginal language. Council notes that the Panel has used Aboriginal names where they are currently in use in the proposed ward, be that in the form of a name of a school or natural feature. Council has advised its own First Nations Working Group however the timelines set for Council's submission are so narrow as to make a firm recommendation or position untenable.

The mix and match pick and mix approach to ward names is problematic. Council considers there should be a consistent basis for naming of wards and that the

ward names should meaningfully connect to communities and their understanding of their local geography.

**Council is of the view that all usage of Aboriginal names even those that are registered should be subject to meaningful consultation and would urge additional consultation be undertaken with the Wurundjeri Cultural Consultations Unit in the lead up to making any recommendations to the Minister in January 2024.**

**Council recommends a consistent basis and methodology for naming which connects geographic communities of interest to their ward rather than a mix of known locations and names that are not known and used locally.**

**In addition it is further suggested that given substantial new ward boundaries are being drawn, ward names should be developed taking into account the following local priorities:**

- The names should logically connect to a significant location (such as a township where possible) within that ward that residents identify and recognise as 'local' and sufficiently important to define the area for election purposes;**
- Where major townships are divided into parts (which ideally should be avoided where possible) that the naming selected does not service to alienate important parts of a major township by providing access to that name only to a different ward. As one example, in model 2 much of Broadmeadows is in the 'Merlynston Creek Ward' and a small portion of Broadmeadows is in the 'Broadmeadows Valley Ward'. The naming of these two wards would lead to confusion for Broadmeadows residents and seems counter-intuitive and counter productive to embedding meaningful names to which residents connect; and**
- That names which have connotations around or are more aligned to features in other municipalities should not be utilised. Calder Ward is one such example that would not have strong local recognition.**

## The boundaries of the wards

It is a priority for Hume Council that the proposed boundaries maintain or enhance a meaningful connection of voters to their suburbs.

Council notes there exists considerable uncertainty regarding the number, potential take up and geographic distribution of the ratepayer/occupier based franchise.

Council notes that the Panel has not provided information regarding the derivation of its total voter estimates. In particular it is not known on what scenario the 'Council enrolled' voters are estimated and specifically whether the panel is utilising a model based on full take up of potential entitlements or a more conservative (lower) take up of those entitlements. Council has been advised that the numbers may include past enrolments which were valid in past elections under the previous Act with a slightly different franchise. While this may be a working solution, Council notes that under the new Act the franchise is different and its uptake uncertain.

**Council recommends transparency around the estimates of 'Council enrolled' voters, the assumptions underpinning the scenarios which are modelled and the scenario used for proposing these specific boundaries in the preliminary and/or final report. In the interests of transparency Council would argue that the basis of these estimates be highlighted in the panel's final report.**

**Further Council would also recommend sensitivity analysis of those numbers be undertaken and the results published so that the public is aware of how sensitive its boundaries are to the assumptions utilised.**

With that caveat in mind Council would highlight the following key issue.

In low voter population areas, such as the central spine in Hume running from south to north as shown in the voter population map above, the wards must be comparatively geographically vast to capture a sufficient voter population. There are a few problems with this, one being constituents across such vast geographical areas may not feel part of a 'community' with common interests. Another is that it presents a very significant challenge for a councillor representing constituents spread across such a large geographical area.

**Council considers using a suburb-based approach provides the best chance to create meaningful wards that are united by an existing identity, similar development patterns and community interests.**

**Council notes that in each of the scenarios the one ward in the north-west of the municipality is both geographically vast and complex its terms of its constituency. The ward/s to the north on the eastern side of the municipality is also significant in geographic size and complexity. Council has concerns about how workable geographically large and complex wards will be into the future.**

**Council considers that of the models presented model 3 is more likely to support good governance and effective representation than the alternatives with some key caveats noted below:**

**- Given its historical connection, Bulla township in full should be retained in either of the Sunbury based wards (named alternatively Emu Creek ward or Mount Holden ward in the preliminary report. The panel should avoid cutting off a small number of Bulla township residents from the Bulla township and associated ward.**

**- Should other adjustments be required to redistribute voters between wards for parity to enable Bulla to be retained with the Sunbury based ward, Council would also suggest looking for alternative boundaries to Reservoir Road such as a natural boundary like Blind Creek or a suitable road such as Riddell Road.**