

**Ward boundary review - Greater Dandenong City Council - Response Submission
Peter O'Loughlin - Dandenong - 20 March 2024, 02:12 pm**

Dear V.E.C. decision makers,

I am writing to outline the significant impact which changes to the Yarraman Ward boundaries pose in Model 2. This Yarraman Ward boundary relocation would be highly disruptive to the community in Dandenong West.

The proposed change in Model 2 will exclude the popular Hemmings street shopping center. This popular local neighbourhood amenity is a physical feature which is easy to identify for local residents in Yarraman ward. As it serves as the local heart to the Dandenong West community. The Hemmings street shopping center is one which encourages small businesses run by local traders who work to serve the commercial needs of those who live close by in Dandenong West. A growing need to conserve this character has been identified by CGD council through community consultation and extensive investments have been made through projects such as streetscaping improvements. Coupled with a CGD Action Plan for the area, investments have been made to conserve a local community feel and to distinguish this community amenity from the Dandenong activity center.

The inclusion of this shopping strip and Hemmings street residential side (represented in model 1) is a more meaningful and effective ward boundaries consideration. As the Dandenong West community could be negatively impacted if this amenity is excommunicated from the Yarraman ward boundary. Dandenong ward is a large and complex ward which also encompasses the CGD district of Dandenong and large industrial zoned areas. The proposed fractured part of Dandenong West will be left to compete with the larger residential area in Dandenong South which is a distance away and has separate community needs if cut off from Yarraman Ward.

In more recent times, significant advocacy has been demonstrated to address challenges which are unique to inner Dandenong West with strong representation from the community within Yarraman ward taking part. In a recent move by the state government, funding has been allocated to a local community run action group. Which has led to CGD council focusing more resourcing and the involvement of collectively hundreds of hours of regular volunteer work by local community members has been an investment which deserves consideration. The proposed Yarraman ward in Model 2 could destabilise the momentum built through these programs, designed to build up Dandenong West community cohesion and restore local confidence.

I support Model 1 as it best reflects the needs of the already under pressure Dandenong West community. This said, Model 1 can also be improved on when considering boundary changes in other areas. In particular, as it poses a significant conflict of interest in the inclusion of the Green Wedge in the Dandenong Ward. This would present a compromising set of challenges for a single ward Councillor who would be tasked with managing the expectations of an industrial area as well as a growing CGD. The boundary alignment for the sensitive considerations needed when managing the Green Wedge is more appropriately represented in Model 2. It makes sense to take a hybrid approach between both models, based on feedback which highlights the complex needs at play in the interest of multiple communities.

Thank you for your consideration.