

Electoral structure review - Stonnington City Council - Response Submission
Polly Morgan - Malvern - 09 August 2023, 05:00 pm

To the review committee,

I'd first like to disclose that I'm a current Stonnington Councillor, 1 of 3 who represents East Ward, however I am making this submission in a personal capacity only.

It is genuinely a very difficult task to draw fair single ward boundaries based on the principle of each ward having equally weighted votes, while also having sensible ward boundaries based on main, and well-known wards.

it becomes an even harder task if attempting to also try to best align shared communities of interest within wards or to minimise the number of suburbs being split across multiple wards. I'm concerned that the committee has not being able to put forward a model that has all wards complying with the legislative requirements of being within +/- 10% of the average number of electors per ward based on the March 2023 enrolments while also being compliant (according to their projections) in October 2024. This is particularly because the ward in each model that exceeds the 10% threshold is based in South Yarra, which has experienced a disproportionate rapid population growth over the past 20 years compared to other parts of the municipality.

With the current extremely low rental vacancy rates in Melbourne, and future population growth still projected to be the highest in the municipality over the next 10-15 years, I'm concerned that there's a risk these non-compliant wards will not be compliant at the next election. I understand the committee has taken into account projected changes to the non-resident council roll, due to the need non-resident voters to actively apply on the roll, but as the projected enrolment data for October 2024 hasn't been made publicly available (which is disappointing as the AEC and VEC do release projections for federal and state redistributions), it's hard to suggest alternative boundaries. However, if the following boundaries are compliant, I would suggest the boundaries in the map I've submitted as an improvement to Model 1. These boundaries reconfigure the 3 most west wards to have them follow main road boundaries where feasible, and also bring all wards to less than +/- 5% of the average enrolment.

A real strength of Model 1 is better aligning some shared communities of interest, particularly in the proposed Princes Gardens ward where there is a significant number of public housing residents.

Regarding Model 2, this model tries to have 3 single member wards aligning with each current multi-member ward, however this isn't really workable due to the unbalanced enrolment levels in the current South Ward. Stonnington had been due for redistribution review before the state government's decision to mandate single member wards, so there would have likely been significant changes to the current ward boundaries anyway.

If the committee decides to recommend model 2 as the final model, it should try to fix the boundary between Wattletree Ward and Hedgeley Dene Ward and have this be Toronga Road & not have it at Ewart St - it would be better to change a different boundary, as Toronga Road is a major road and a strong natural boundary.

I understand the intent of Model 3, and it works in a few wards (particularly the proposed Glenferrie Ward), however it creates very confusing boundaries, and some wards that don't have any real shared communities of interest. Although there are commercial shopping strips around the north south roads used in this model for the wards, it ignores some of the east west shopping strips, and Chapel St needs to be split across several wards anyway.

Thank you for your consideration of my submission

Best Regards
Polly