

Electoral structure review – Port Phillip City Council – Response Submission Serge Thomann – St Kilda – 09 August 2023, 12:35 pm

To: the Electoral Representation Advisory Panel
City of Port Phillip Electoral review

9 August 2023

Dear Members,

Electoral structure review - Port Phillip City Council.

I am writing to you as a long time resident of St Kilda and a former Councillor of the Catani Ward City of Port Phillip (covering most of St Kilda) and Deputy Mayor of the City of Port Phillip between 2008 and 2016.

Welcome change to single members wards

I would like to first fully support the decision made by the State Government through the new Local Government Act 2020 to introduce a preference for single members wards and I fully agree with the statement at the time as this voting system “support closer relationships between Councillors and their communities.”

As the Minister for Local Government said at the time: “Single member wards support accountability, equity and grassroots democracy.” “This is about giving people more confidence in local government, because strong councils build strong communities.”

I fully endorse this statement. Having been a Councillor as a single member for the ward for 8 years has given me a good understanding and I have got to say that the current system of 3 members per ward is definitely not satisfactory and does not serve the community as well as it should.

Support of Model 2

I support Model 2 and strongly recommend the Panel to adopt this option as it reflects in my view and in many others the best way to embrace the communities of interest in each district. The City of Port Phillip is a patchwork of smaller villages and this needs to be taken into consideration.

I will not redefine what unChain Inc stipulated in its submission about the principle of equal numbers of electors in each electoral district. This is of course critical. The boundaries of the various wards are to be slightly amended to reflect the communities of interests.

Suggested changes of boundaries for the St Kilda Ward

I am just going to elaborate on the proposed St Kilda Ward which is an area I know best and leave it to others in other parts of the municipality to argue their “patch”. I would just like to propose a couple of changes. I understand that Fitzroy Street is seen as a natural boundary. The question I raise is: should Mary Street be a boundary so one Councillor can be responsible for this important street?

I strongly urge the panel to include the small area between Fitzroy, Acland and Victoria streets and the Esplanade to be part of the St Kilda Ward. The constituents living in this part

of the city are definitely part of St Kilda and I fear that they would not be served well if they were part of the Catani Ward. To compensate and have wards with equal numbers, I suggest having Blessington Street at the boundary at the southern end of the ward instead of Dickens Street. This will give the Elwood Ward more constituents (at the moment, it has got less compared to the other wards).

Names of the wards

Regarding the names of the various wards, the suggested names reflect the various villages of our city but I would like to make just one suggestion and ask you to reconsider the name of the "Catani" Ward. First, it could be confusing as there was a Catani Ward but it covered a totally different area (it covered the area that the proposed St Kilda covers now). I assume that Catani refers to the Catani Gardens which are at the very end and maybe not that relevant to people who live in Middle Park or Albert Park. Maybe "Middle Park" is a better name. Definitely not Albert Park as it used to be - this created confusion with the State District.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Serge Thomann
Former Deputy Mayor of City of Port Phillip and Councillor (2008-16)

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