



Port Phillip City Electoral Structure Review

Progressive Port Phillip Inc Submission

Progressive Port Phillip Inc (PPP) invites local residents to imagine and deliver a better future for our community, to encourage each one of us to think more deeply about what our neighbourhood and the larger City of Port Phillip could become.

PPP comprises local people from all walks of life, including many with experience in childcare, the environment, housing, heritage, planning, transport, local business, women's rights, LGBTIQ rights, education and more.

Our goal is greater community engagement in the issues, culture and future facing people in Port Phillip and we do this through hosting community conversations, producing newsletters, making submissions to Council and staging community events, such as a neighbourhood music festival in 2021. Recent conversations, attended by 50 to 100 people face to face at a time, have ranged from the future of the arts in the municipality to growing community gardens to the economic choices facing our local government. During the worst stages of the pandemic and in the lead up to the 2020 Council Election, we hosted numerous online events, published many essays on local issues and invited residents and electors to support progressive ideas and candidates. We have close to 1,000 subscribers and followers.

We welcome the opportunity to make this submission. Progressive Port Phillip Inc is pleased to provide feedback on the issues that the Electoral panel will consider namely:

- the appropriate number of councillors and wards for the council
- the location of ward boundaries
- the name of each ward.

Number of Councillors

The review recommends nine Councillors. PPP agrees that this number is appropriate but requests that the Panel consider an additional Councillor representing First Nations Peoples.

Our city is changing with increased population expected as Fishermans Bend/Montague areas experience more intensive residential development. It is possible some additional growth may occur around the new Anzac metro station when it is completed. Medium scale development at the southern and eastern end of the municipality could be encouraged by mooted State Government planning changes.

These trends mean that the number of councillors for the Port Phillip community should be regularly reviewed.

First Nations Peoples see the area south of the Yarra/Birrarung which includes the City of Port Phillip as significant to their culture. Significant physical features such as waters and rivers of Naarm and the Corroboree Tree/Ngargee Tree which help define our city are crucial elements of Kulin Nation life and Country.

PPP requests that the Review Panel consider the best and most effective means to ensure a First Nations voice to local government in Port Phillip following consultation with First Nations Peoples, most especially the Yalukit Willam clan of the Kulin Nation.

The Victorian Government has established a First Nations Assembly to advise on matters affecting Indigenous people in the state and to progress negotiations towards a Treaty or Treaties. The Federal Government, after a decade of consultations with First Nations Peoples, is proposing that a Voice to Parliament and executive government be enshrined in the Australian Constitution; the Federal Opposition is proposing that a Voice to Parliament be legislated.

However, there is currently no proposed mechanism for First Nations Peoples to have direct representations to local governments in Victoria and so the Panel should consider how this might best happen. One option might be to allow for an additional councillor representing First Nations Peoples.

The number of Councillors recommended in this review should be further considered in five years' time.

Location of ward boundaries

We agree with the Panel that there are several important principles underpinning how ward boundaries should be determined, most especially:

- community of interest
- ease of recognition by voters
- ensuring as few deviations as reasonable from the average number of electors while allowing for population growth and decline
- fitness of application for use at the 2024 Council Election.

The task at hand is not just about drawing lines on maps, this is a key process in how the idea of community is articulated and how common interests are represented in the local government of Port Phillip and advocated to other levels of government and the broader society.

It is fundamental that wards are shaped by geographic features, landmarks and activities (such as shopping, sport, transport and more) that help to define a sense of belonging.

Future Councils must also be configured with an eye to climate change risks in the city, which are likely to be especially felt in Elwood, St Kilda and Port Melbourne as a result of flooding risks, and sea level rise in areas such as Port Melbourne, Albert Park and Middle Park. It is important that local representatives are in touch with residents about these issues and can respond and advocate appropriately.

Areas such as East St Kilda, Balaclava and Ripponlea are underserved in a range of ways, including open space and tree canopy cover. The interests of these communities must be considered.

Model 1

Taking all this into account, Model 1 is the least coherent option. It lacks elegance, logic and meaning. It seems to have been devised to fit into the existing three member ward boundaries and the result is a mish mash to fit a round peg into a square hole.

- By using Park Street as a boundary, it divides Middle Park into three, placing some voters into a ward that reaches across Albert Park Lake to Kings Way, others into a ward that reaches down to Dickens Street and the rest into a ward that reaches up to Port Melbourne. It splits up a unique community of interest that in real life is naturally defined by the Lake (effectively Canterbury Road), the Bay and Fitzroy Street.
- It extends an essentially St Kilda based ward up to McGregor Street in Middle Park while placing residents in a core St Kilda area (including Dalgety, Burnett and Fitzroy Streets) into a ward centred on Queens Road.
- It chops up South Melbourne, which is not recognisable in this model as a unique and historic community, most especially by using Clarendon Street as a boundary rather than a mutual focus and by applying bits of Park Street as a boundary but not others. This will be most confusing for voters. Clarendon Street is a north-south gateway, not an east-west divider.
- It fuses Port Melbourne with a key Fishermans Bend development zone, while pushing other Port Melbourne residents into a ward centred on Albert Park.

It's not just that communities of interest have gone missing in action, think of the councillors seeking to represent these wards. Rather than the coherence that this single member local government reform is meant to deliver, in this model councillors will struggle to adequately represent and govern for quite divergent groups of voters artificially jammed together by these boundaries.

Most importantly, this model is not fit for purpose. It features wards with extreme deviations from the average – Gateway East and Lake South with variations of between 10 and 15 percent of the average and Lake West and Gateway Central with variations between eight and eleven percent below the average. This creates a 20 percent gap between the largest and smallest wards. Only two proposed wards (Canal Central and Canal South) are reasonably close to the average.

Overall, it is unfair and should not be applied in the 2024 Election.

Model 3

Model 3 is better but still fails. In this model:

- St Kilda is chopped up and not recognisable – pushing half the community into a Middle Park based ward and the other half into a ward encompassing key parts of Elwood.
- It chops Port Melbourne into two wards, one aligned with part of Fishermans Bend and another that would be subsidiary to Albert Park.
- It uses small Raglan Street arbitrarily as a boundary rather than the natural feature of Albert Road.

- It is difficult to argue that Charnwood Road in East St Kilda should divide this community; rather the St Kilda hill is united by this road and the synagogue there.
- The boundaries applied in East St Kilda and between St Kilda and Elwood are extremely messy and will be difficult for residents to interpret and understand.

Again, the deviations from the average across these wards means that they are not workable even for the next election, never mind the longer term. It creates an immediate 3,000 voter gap between the largest and smallest wards, when a key part of the VEC process should be to bring wards into closer alignment.

On the tests that the Panel applies and as a proposal with unfairness inbuilt at the 2024 Council Election, Model 3 has significant flaws.

Revised Model 2 - attached

Therefore, we propose a variation of Model 2, which better meets the criteria outlined by the Panel. Our revised model is fair and is fit for purpose at the next 2024 Council Election. This Model has several important advantages:

- All nine wards suggested are close to the average and the model provides scope for growth and decline over time.
- It unites rather than divides communities. Communities of interest are clear and respected, both historical and emerging.
- It predominately uses major roads and transport links as ward boundaries.
- Wards will be easily recognisable to voters and coherent to councillors and officers of the Council. Unlike the other models, our revised proposal will help facilitate representation and Council administration.

Four wards are created in a linear way that orientate to the bay (Port Melbourne, Beaconsfield, St Kilda and Elwood).

Our model provides for future growth in Fishermans Bend (Montague) and recognises that new residents will have common issues and will need common representation.

It aligns the major Queens Road and St Kilda Road boulevards that lead into St Kilda Junction with new development occurring in this area and along Wellington Street/Dandenong Road.

It uses Dickens Street, which is recognised locally and by the VEC, as the St Kilda/Elwood boundary.

It takes a holistic view of the villages that make up Port Phillip and on which the council amalgamation in the 1990s was based. In this way, Port Melbourne, South Melbourne, Albert Park/Middle Park/West St Kilda (Beaconsfield), St Kilda, Elwood, East St Kilda (Alma) and Balaclava (Carlisle) are all recognised as distinctive communities of interest.

Naming of Wards

PPP supports easily recognisable and commonly understood names as outlined in our revised Model 2. We do not agree with artificial names, particularly in Model 1 which no resident will relate to.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Review.

We would appreciate the opportunity to speak at the Hearing on Tuesday 15 August.

John Spierings, Simon Kosmer and Ann Byrne

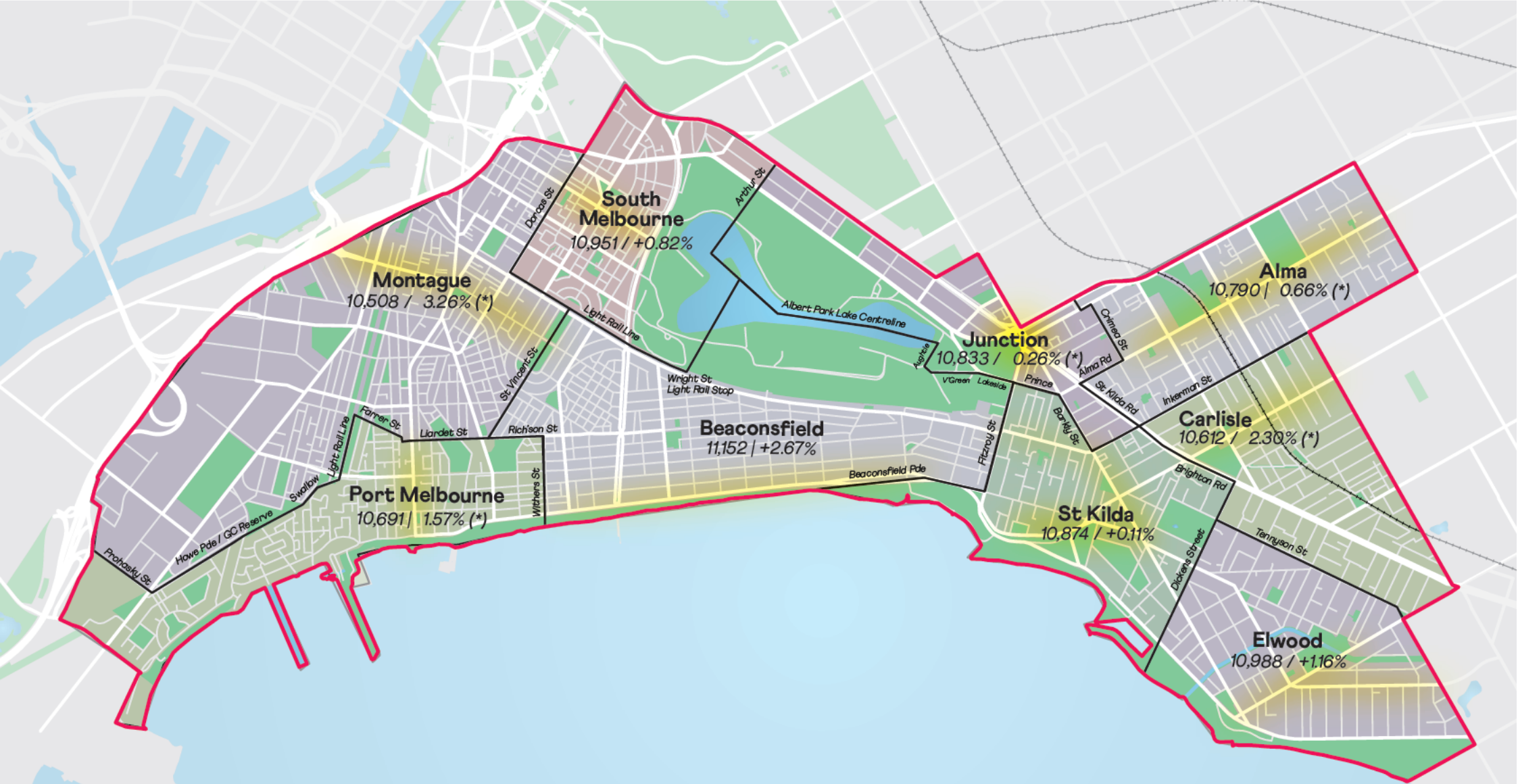
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**City of Port Phillip
Proposed Council Wards
Submission Map PPP-2023-2**

- City of Port Phillip Boundary
- Proposed Ward Boundary
- Name** Proposed Ward Name
- 10,790 | 0.66% Voters | Deviation (*) Projected Growth Zone
- Naming Activity Zone