

**Electoral structure review - Moonee Valley City Council - Response Submission
Rose Iser - Travancore - 30 October 2023, 03:09 pm**

Please find attached my written submission.

Cr Dr Rose Iser

Moonee Valley City Council

Submission to the Electoral Representation Advisory Panel

Cr Dr Rose Iser

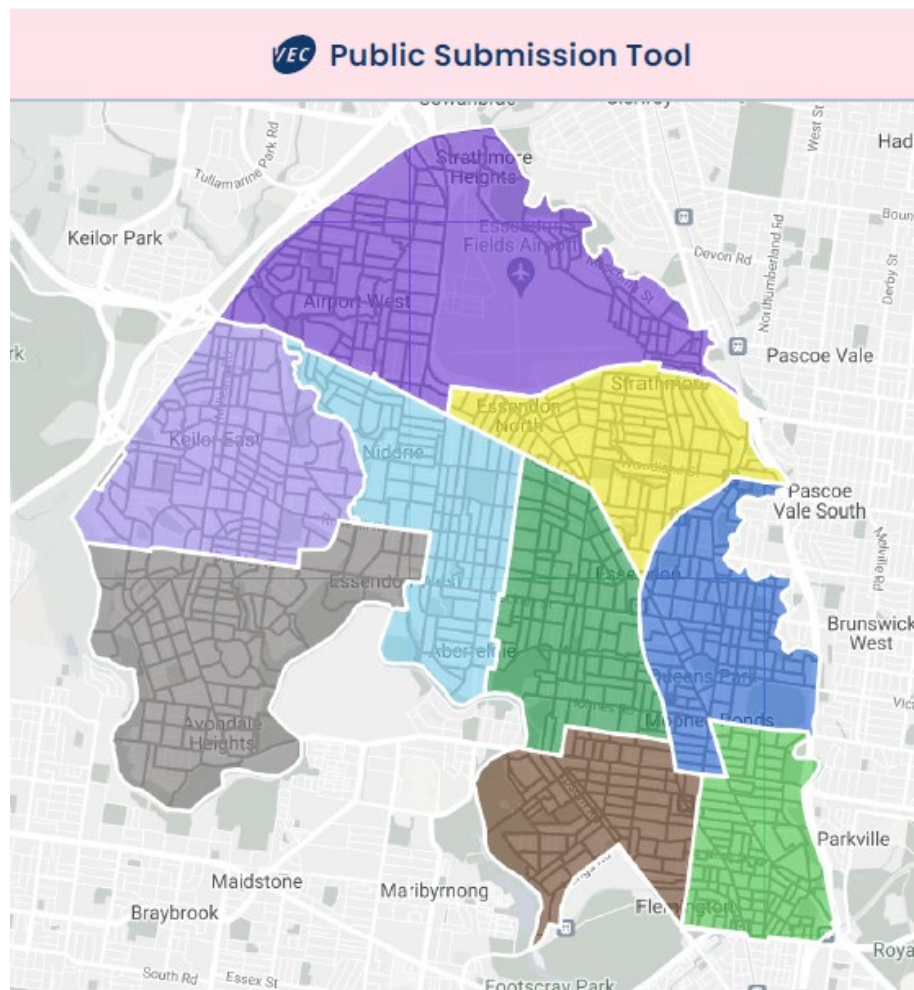
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1. This submission is an independent submission and represents my own views as a current Councillor at Moonee Valley City Council.
2. The division of Moonee Valley City Council (MVCC) into nine evenly populated wards presents challenges given the diversity of housing and population concentration across the municipality. The difficulty in creating coherent wards is compounded by the following factors:
 - a. Large suburbs, including Essendon, Ascot Vale, Moonee Ponds and Keilor East, must be split across wards, making it impossible to keep suburbs intact;
 - b. The densely populated suburbs closest to the CBD (currently in Myrnong Ward) do not split easily into evenly populated wards, and meaningful boundaries are difficult to delineate;
 - c. Intense population growth is projected for the Moonee Valley Racecourse, Moonee Ponds Activity Centre, Essendon North and Niddrie (following the *Housing Statement*), however, actual construction of housing and population numbers are uncertain;
 - d. The future population of the Flemington and Ascot Vale public housing estates is variable and uncertain;
 - e. Existing ward boundaries don't split evenly into nine equal wards;
 - f. Moonee Valley has distinct pockets of disadvantage and diversity and this raises questions about how to best provide fair and equitable representation for these areas;
 - g. Communities of interest are generally not in the form of nine equally distributed wards—the Council's MV2040 strategy illustrates this by focussing on 13 neighbourhood precincts of different areas and populations;
 - h. The high percentage of apartments, particularly in the existing Myrnong ward, potentially contributes to a high number of council-enrolled electors; and
 - i. State and federal boundaries have changed recently and there is an impermanence to boundaries that means meaningful and effective electoral boundaries are not easily defined.
3. Given these challenges, the best starting point for the delineation of nine new wards is not the existing ward structure. Approaching the ward division afresh is likely to lead to boundaries that have greater longevity and can accommodate the expected population growth in key areas of the municipality.

4. Additionally, past election results indicate that Myrnong Ward has had significantly lower voter turnout at the 2012, 2016 and 2020 elections (66%, 70% and 78% compared to voter turnout of up to 85% in other wards), such that wards closest to the CBD possibly have capacity for slightly higher deviations from the voter average.
5. The number of candidates has been reasonably high across all wards at all elections such that there is a likelihood of all new wards being contested at future elections.
6. I submit the following boundaries for the panel's consideration—based on Model 2:



With the following deviations from the average voter population of 10,357.

■ Airport	1	9,831	-5.08%
■ Avondale	1	10,319	-0.37%
■ Buckley	1	10,466	+1.05%
■ Djerring	1	10,840	+4.66%
■ Moonee	1	10,210	-1.42%
■ Myrnong	1	10,541	+1.77%
■ Rosehill	1	10,895	+5.19%
■ Steele Creek	1	10,292	-0.63%
■ Woodlands	1	9,823	-5.16%

Djerring Ward

7. The southern-most ward (Djerring Ward – light green) has an approximate population of 10,840 voters, +4.6%. This higher deviation is justifiable given the consistently lower voter turnout at elections from voters in this part of the municipality. Additionally, many of the residents currently living in the Flemington Housing Estate will shortly be relocated for the redevelopment of the housing estate (although new homes will be available soon through the Big Build program).
8. The proposed Djerring Ward takes in all of Travancore, nearly all of Flemington and Newmarket and a portion of Ascot Vale and Moonee Ponds. The ward keeps intact the community of interest of Flemington—a community with a very strong sense of self-identification. Keeping this community intact is advisable in any model determined by the panel.
9. Ascot Vale road as a boundary, instead of the train line or Mt Alexander Rd, is more meaningful to the community. The road is very busy with few crossing points and no shopping precincts, presenting a strong natural boundary for residents on either side. Residents to the west of Ascot Vale Rd connect with Union Rd shopping precinct, and those to the east more regularly frequent Mt Alexander Rd and Racecourse Rd precincts.
10. The area of Moonee Ponds included in this ward, to the north of Ormond Rd, is necessary to maintain the appropriate population of the ward, but is also connected through a shared use of open space at Ormond Park, Travancore Reserve and Moonee Ponds Creek. While not perfect, it is a better configuration of the southern-most ward than the proposed Myrnong Ward in either Model 1 or 2.

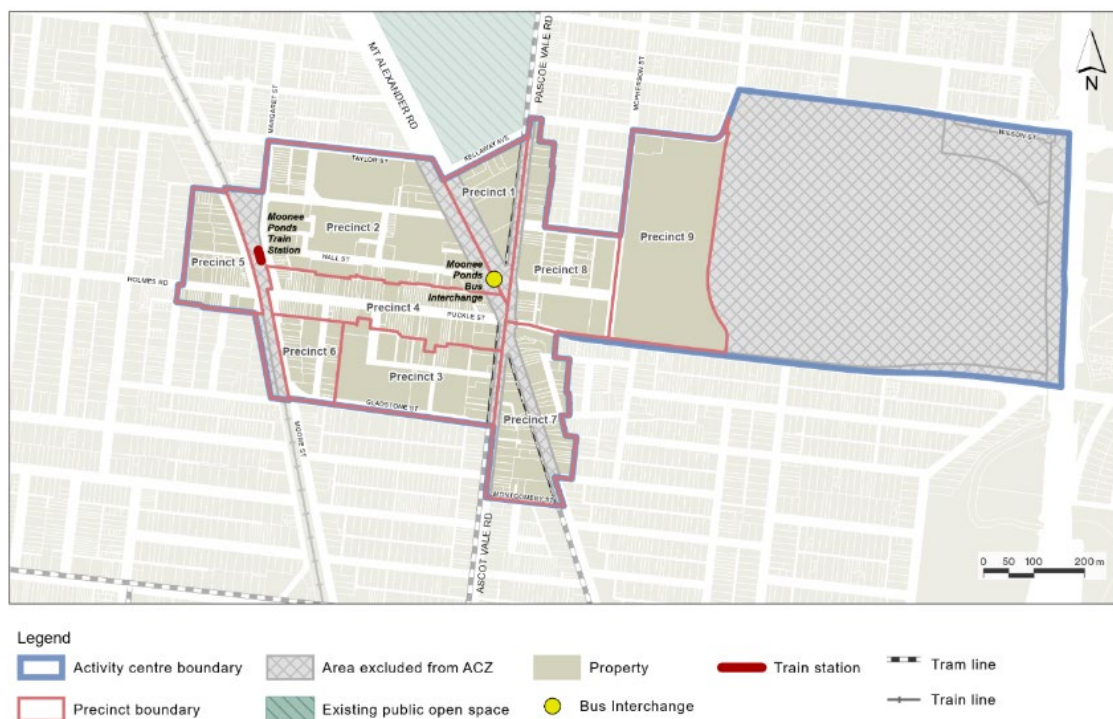
Myrnong Ward

11. The ward comprising the bulk of Ascot Vale (Myrnong Ward - brown) has a voter population of 10,541, +1.7% deviation.
12. The use of Ascot Vale Rd as the eastern boundary gives the ward greater definition than in either Models 1 or 2. The ward mainly comprises the community of interest of Ascot Vale in a meaningful way for residents.
13. The inclusion of part of Moonee Ponds (to Eglington St) is necessary for population numbers. Model 2 includes Argyle St and Maribyrnong Park. However, the inclusion of the area bounded by Edgar, Eglington and Argyle Streets is a better fit as this precinct is connected with the Union Rd shopping strip.
14. Additionally, many families in Ascot Vale south of Maribyrnong Rd attend Moonee Ponds West Primary School on Eglington St and there is a well-established community of interest that bridges Maribyrnong Rd in this area connected with the primary school.

Moonee Ward

15. The proposed Moonee Ward (dark blue) includes Puckle St, Moonee Valley Racecourse, Windy Hill and Queens Park (Queens Lake Ward in Model 2). It is bounded by Moonee Ponds Creek, the trainline, Woodlands Rd in the north and Dean St, Mt Alexander Rd and Maribyrnong Rd in the south. The estimated voter population is 10,210, with a deviation of -1.4%, giving scope for increased population at the Moonee Valley Racecourse and in the Moonee Ponds Activity Centre.
16. While the trainline is a new boundary, it provides a natural boundary for an area that is difficult to confine to suburb boundaries given the expected growth and the large populations of Essendon and Moonee Ponds.
17. The southern boundary may appear awkward, but in fact follows the path of the Moonee Ponds Activity Centre (except for precinct 5) and the eastern side of Mt Alexander Rd:

Map 1 to Schedule 1 to Clause 37.08



18. In terms of councillor representation, this ward includes three major precincts of development and growth and allows for representation that can appropriately integrate strategic planning for all three areas (MVRC, MPAC, Windy Hill), and respond to the community needs emerging from these developments.

Buckley Ward

19. The proposed Buckley Ward (dark green - Aberfeldie Park Ward in Model 2) has a voter population of 10,466, a deviation of +1%. The inclusion of the area around Lincoln Park in this ward creates a more regular shaped ward than the proposed ward in Model 2. It also makes use of Roberts Rd to the west—the boundary between the state electorates of Niddrie and Essendon. The boundary south of Buckley St appears a little awkward due to the mapping tool, but can run along Vida St as in Model 2.
20. This ward is expected to experience further growth along Mt Alexander Rd and Keilor Rd and the voter population allows for this growth.
21. While this ward includes parts of Moonee Ponds, Essendon and Aberfeldie, it is a better configuration than the similarly proposed ward in Model 2. Buckley Ward in Model 1 keeps Aberfeldie intact, but splits Essendon. This proposal splits Aberfeldie, but keeps intact a larger portion of Essendon, including significant portions of the North Essendon shopping precinct to which this community is connected.

Woodlands Ward

22. The proposed Woodlands Ward (yellow ward - Napier Ward in model 2) is a better sized configuration than that proposed in Model 2. At 9,823, -5% deviation, it strikes a better result than the proposed Napier Ward with its +9% deviation. This has been achieved by moving the area south of Mt Alexander Rd to the ward below, and including a small portion to the east, north of Woodlands Rd.
23. This ward comprises Strathmore and North Essendon, combined with part of Essendon. It is bounded clearly by the train line, freeway and Mt Alexander Rd—three boundaries that serve to split communities, if not suburbs.
24. This ward is expected to undergo significant population growth as a result of North Essendon and Niddrie being identified as areas for increased housing under the State Government's new *Housing Statement*. The population of the ward as proposed here can accommodate this growth.

Airport Ward

25. The Airport Ward of Model 2 appropriately connects Airport West, Strathmore Heights and Essendon Fields—three quite distinct and smaller suburbs, but with a common interest in the Airport and Essendon Fields. The population of 9,831, -5% deviation, provides room for growth in Airport West, and is an improvement on Model 2 by including a small portion of Niddrie that is connected via Matthews Ave.
26. Access to Essendon Fields, and the interface between the Airport and residential precincts, are common interests across this ward and the integration of these areas in the one ward allows for effective and coherent representation by a councillor. This model also returns to the effective ward structure that was in place prior to 2008.

27. The freeway is one of the distinct boundaries in Moonee Valley and is appropriately used as the southern boundary of this ward.

Rosehill Ward

28. The Keilor East ward, Rosehill Ward (light purple) is the same as the Rosehill Ward proposed in Model 1. This ward makes use of Steele Creek, the freeway and Buckley St to the south. This is an uncontroversial arrangement.

Avondale Ward

29. Similarly, Canning Ward from Model 1 can be incorporated in the proposed model here as Avondale Ward (grey) and is uncontroversial.

Steele Creek Ward

30. The final ward, Steele Creek Ward (light blue) is Buckley Ward from Model 2 without all of Essendon West, lowering the voter population to just below the average. This is an appropriate adjustment given the expected population growth in Niddrie along Keilor Rd as part of the *Housing Statement*.
31. The remainder of this ward takes in all of Niddrie and parts of Essendon and Aberfeldie, with the southwestern boundary running along the Maribyrnong Trail.

Ward Names

32. The following names are proposed for the nine wards:
- a. **Djerring Ward** – taking the name from the new Djerring Flemington Hub and meaning ‘together’ in local Wurundjeri Woi-wurung language, and approved through appropriate processes for the naming of the Hub.
 - b. **Myrnong Ward** – taking the name from the current Myrnong Ward, and the yam daisy commonly grown and eaten by traditional custodians of the land throughout south-eastern Australia.
 - c. **Moonee Ward** – taking the name from Moonee Ponds Creek and Moonee Ponds.
 - d. **Woodlands Ward** – taking the name of Woodlands Rd and Woodland Park, which was set aside as parkland in 1883.
 - e. **Buckley Ward** – takes its name from the current Buckley Ward and Lt William Buckley, also known as Captain Buckley, who was a prominent land owner, not an escaped convict. Buckley St runs through the centre of the ward.
 - f. **Airport Ward** – takes its name from Essendon Airport.

- g. **Rosehill Ward** – takes its name from the current Rose Hill Ward.
- h. **Avondale Ward** – taken from the suburb name of Avondale Heights, most probably named after one of the Avondale Houses in Ireland or Scotland.
- i. **Steele Creek Ward** – takes its name from the historically significant waterway, Steele Creek.

Summary

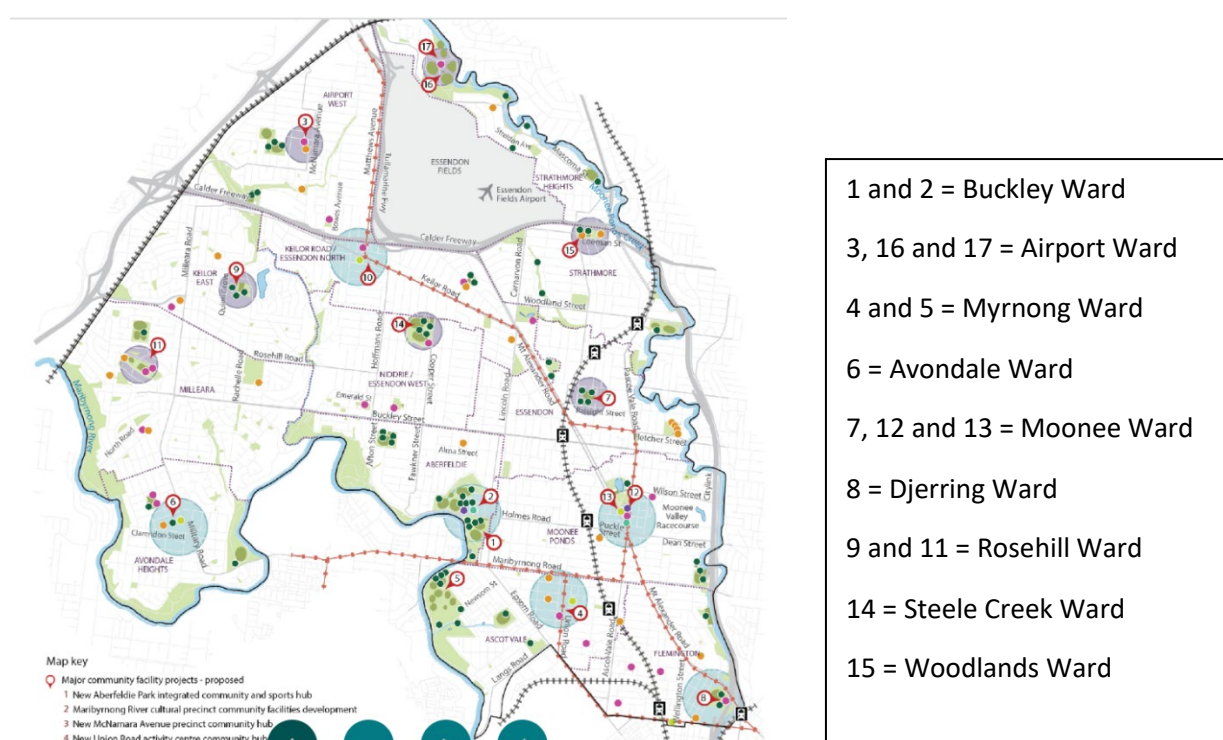
- 33. For reasons outlined above, it is challenging to divide Moonee Valley into nine evenly populated wards that keep neighbourhood precincts intact, as well as draw on effective and meaningful boundaries.
- 34. This challenge is illustrated by the MV2040 strategic planning framework that divides the municipality in 13 neighbourhoods. This framework informs the Council's long-term planning and is embedded in the Moonee Valley Planning Scheme. The 13 precincts are depicted below:



- 35. The proposed wards in this submission keep intact eight of the MV2040 neighbourhoods: Flemington, Ascot Vale, Avondale Heights, Keilor East, Airport West and Strathmore Heights, Strathmore, and Niddrie/Essendon West. Five neighbourhoods have necessarily been split due to population and boundary requirements.
- 36. The proposed map combines elements of Models 1 and 2 to create nine evenly populated wards that take into account designated areas of future growth. The suggested boundaries

draw on main roads, the freeway, waterways and the Craigieburn train line. Only the north-eastern boundaries of Avondale Ward, a small section of Steel Creek Ward and the northern boundary of Myrnong Ward are drawn along residential streets. The boundaries make use of state district boundaries where possible.

37. While the commercial precincts of Essendon North and Keilor Rd have been split across wards, all other commercial precincts have been kept intact.
38. 14 of the 15 community facilities precincts, as defined in the Moonee Valley Planning Scheme and MV2040, and around which communities of interest gravitate, are contained in single wards as depicted below:



39. The proposed nine wards comply with all requirements and present a model that allows for fair, equal and good governance.
40. I would like to speak at the public hearing on 14 November.