

Electoral structure review - Port Phillip City Council - Response Submission
Ben Morgan - South Melbourne - 09 August 2023, 03:47 pm

Submission on the VEC review of ward boundaries of Port Phillip City Council.

Firstly, I wish to commend the return to single-member wards. In my view, these wards are more manageable in scale for councillors, and correlate more closely with local communities. The large three-member wards currently in use are entirely artificial and do not correspond to any communities of interest. Single-member wards also clarify councillors' responsibilities.

I wish to recommend that, in so far as is possible, ward boundaries should coincide with the borders of the local suburbs. Where this is not possible, such as in such large suburbs as Port Melbourne or St Kilda, boundaries should follow those of identifiable communities.

I also wish to recommend that the name of a wards match that of the suburb within that ward. Arbitrary and meaningless names such as Gateway, Kirrip Park, etc. should be avoided wherever possible: not only do they cause confusion, but they also contribute to voter disengagement with local government.

I wish to recommend that Proposed Model 2 be adopted because:

1. The borders of the wards more closely align with the borders of the suburbs. This is especially true of South Melbourne Ward;
2. Where the suburbs are too large to fit in a single ward, the boundaries (for the most part) coincide with those of recognisable communities (Balaclava, etc.). Port Melbourne is perhaps problematic, but Model 2 is better than the alternatives (refer 4. below);
3. The wards are sensibly and clearly named, bearing (for the most part) the names of the suburbs within them (though I do have some suggestions - refer below);
4. The other models on offer have major deficiencies in these regards. Model 1 (an adaptation of the current model) splits South Melbourne (a community of interest) between two wards. There is no rational reason to subdivide South Melbourne at Park St other than to satisfy the demands of statistics. Model 3 has some strange anomalies on ward boundaries, such as putting part of Port Melbourne into Gasworks Ward, some of South Melbourne into Lakeside Ward, etc. These models both have puzzling names for wards that are likely to cause voter confusion and disconnection (I do not think anyone identifies with the entirely theoretical construct of Gateway East, for example).

In Model 2, the ward names could be improved by renaming:

- (1) Kirrip Park Ward as Fishermen's Bend Ward or North Port Ward. The name Montague would be more historically apt for this area but seems to have fallen into disuse; most news reports covering development in the area refer to it as Fisherman's Bend.
- (2) Renaming Catani Ward as Parks Ward. The bulk of this ward is composed of the two Parks (Albert Park and Middle Park), while the name Catani is associated solely with St Kilda, the minority component - very much a case of the tail wagging the dog.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.