



6 March 2024

Ward boundary review panel
Victorian Electoral Commission

via email to: Wellington.WardReview@vec.vic.gov.au

To the ward boundary review panel

SUBMISSION: WELLINGTON SHIRE COUNCIL WARD BOUNDARY REVIEW

Wellington Shire Council has reviewed the Preliminary Report prepared by the Victorian Electoral Commission that recommends a preliminary model, that proposes changes to the boundaries of Wellington Shire's Central, Coastal and Northern wards.

Wellington Shire Council recognises the challenging task of reflecting communities of interest in redividing our wards. As the Preliminary Report notes, a drawback of the preliminary model is that the northern part of the proposed Coastal ward will include areas that are some distance from the southern coastal communities. The Commission needs to be aware that rural farming communities like Nambrok and Denison (currently in the Northern Ward) use adjacent towns (under 10kms) like Heyfield and Maffra for shopping, health services, schools and so on. To effectively force these communities into the Coastal ward, where their ward Councillor is now likely to be over 80kms away in Yarram, is the complete antithesis of a 'community of interest'.

Likewise, Longford is 5kms from Sale and effectively a part of greater Sale. The Sale Golf Club is even in Longford! To move Longford from the Central ward to the Coastal ward, for no other reason than to 'shore up the numbers', removes them completely from their clear and obvious community of interest.

These are just two examples where the proposals are completely counter-intuitive to a large rural council like Wellington Shire that cannot be logically carved into 3 similar sized wards that reflect reasonable communities of interest.

However, we recognise this Government's desire that Victorian Councils should have wards, and their resultant policy directives in this regard (noting that single member wards would be an even worse outcome for this shire). We also acknowledge the

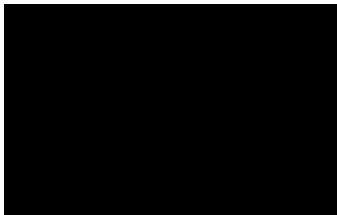
commentary in the Preliminary Report that *'No other model could be developed that used strong features for boundaries as effectively, or represented communities of interest as adequately, to the same degree as the proposed preliminary model'*. As such, Council has not submitted an alternative proposed model.

In addition, all Councillors have an obligation to provide civic leadership for the whole of Wellington Shire, not just their own ward. One of our Council's strengths has been the ability of Councillors to represent the whole community and focus on the benefits for the municipality overall.

Ultimately, Wellington Shire Council recognises the balancing act required of the Commission and the mathematical exercise required to ensure that voter deviations be within the legislated +/-10% range.

We thank the Victorian Electoral Commission for the opportunity to comment and await the Final Report.

Yours sincerely



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Chief Executive Officer

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