

Local council electoral structure review

Preliminary Report

Merri-bek City Council

October 2023

Acknowledgement of Country

The electoral representation advisory panel acknowledges the Wurundjeri people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters for which it is holding this review and pays respects to ancestors and Elders past, present and emerging. The panel acknowledges their custodianship for many thousands of years and their continuing living culture.

Report approval

Version	Date approved	Approved by
1	10 October 2023	The Honourable Frank Vincent AO KC
1	10 October 2023	Ms Liz Williams PSM
1	10 October 2023	Mr Sven Bluemmel

Version approval

Version	Date approved	Approved by	Brief description
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Executive summary

An electoral structure review panel appointed by the Minister for Local Government is reviewing the electoral structure of Merri-bek City Council.

The purpose of the review is to advise the Minister on the appropriate number of councillors and electoral structure, including ward names, for the council.

Under Victoria's *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act), Merri-bek City Council must now have a single-councillor ward electoral structure.

The panel is looking at:

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

This report outlines the preliminary models the panel is presenting for public consultation, for the proposed new electoral structure of Merri-bek City Council to meet the requirements of the Act.

More information about the background to the review is available on [page 6](#).

Developing electoral structure models

The panel considered a range of factors when deciding on the models in this report, including:

- research and analysis
- voter growth or decline over time.

More information on the way the panel decided on the models is available on [page 7](#).

Electoral structure models

After considering research and the requirements of the Act, the panel is presenting the following electoral structure models for public consultation:

- Model 1: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 11 councillors – 11 wards with one councillor per ward.
- Model 2: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 11 councillors – 11 wards with one councillor per ward, with different ward boundaries to Model 1.
- Model 3: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 11 councillors – 11 wards with one councillor per ward, with different ward boundaries to models 1 and 2.

Details on these models, including maps, are available in [Appendix 1](#).

Next steps

The panel is now seeking feedback on the preliminary electoral structure models. You can make a response submission to the preliminary models until 5 pm Wednesday 8 November 2023. If any response submitters wish to speak at a public hearing, the panel will hold an online

public hearing on Tuesday 14 November. Following this, the panel will present its final recommendation to the Minister on Wednesday 13 December 2023.

More information about the review process is available on the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) website at vec.vic.gov.au

Background

About the 2023–24 electoral structure reviews

In October 2022, the Minister for Local Government formed 2 electoral representation advisory panels to review and provide advice on the electoral structures of 39 local councils, under section 16 of the Act. If the Minister accepts the electoral structure recommended by the panel, any changes are expected to take effect at the October 2024 local council elections.

The Act introduced several changes to local government representation, including the types of electoral structures local councils may have. All metropolitan, interface and regional city councils (including Merri-bek City Council) must now have single-councillor ward electoral structures.

For Merri-bek City Council, the panel is examining:

- the number of councillors and wards
- where the ward boundaries should be
- the name of each ward.

The Act requires electoral structures to provide fair and equitable representation and facilitate good governance. Each ward must have an approximately equal number of voters per councillor (within +/-10% of the average). While conducting the review, the panel also notes the role of a councillor as specified under section 28 of the Act.

The electoral representation advisory panel

The panel conducting the electoral structure review of Merri-bek City Council has 3 members:

- The Honourable Frank Vincent AO KC (Chairperson)
- Ms Liz Williams PSM
- Electoral Commissioner Mr Sven Bluemmel.

The purpose of the review is to advise the Minister on the appropriate number of councillors and electoral structure, including ward names, for the council. The panel is independent of councils and the VEC.

Under the Act, the VEC is not responsible for reviewing council electoral structures but must provide administrative and technical support to the panel. The Electoral Commissioner (or their nominated representative) must be a member of each panel.

Public engagement

Public information program

On behalf of the panel, the VEC conducts a public information and awareness program to inform the public about the Merri-bek City Council electoral structure review. This includes:

- printed public notices in state-wide newspapers

- public information sessions to outline the review process and respond to questions from the community
- a media release to announce the start of the review
- information on social media channels
- website content on vec.vic.gov.au, including:
 - current information on the review process
 - fact sheets for each council under review and a submission guide.

Merri-bek City Council was also offered but did not take up 2 optional methods to promote the reviews:

- social media advertisements targeted at the council area
- notifying voters in the council area subscribed to the VEC's VoterAlert service about the start of the review and release of the preliminary report.

Public consultation

The panel now invites input to the electoral structure review of Merri-bek City Council via:

- response submissions to this preliminary report
- an online public hearing for anyone who makes a response submission to speak to the panel and expand on their submission.

Public submissions are an important part of the review process and are considered alongside other factors addressed during the review. These are outlined below.

Developing recommendations

The electoral structure models the panel is presenting in this preliminary report comply with the Act and were developed through careful consideration of:

- research and analysis conducted by the VEC support team, including geospatial and demographic data
- rates or patterns of population and voter change over time, and relevant forecasts of growth or decline based on forecast information provided by .id (informed decisions, a company specialising in demographics and forecasting).

Deciding on the number of councillors

The Act allows local councils to have between 5 and 12 councillors, but neither the Act nor the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020 specify how to determine the appropriate number of councillors. Therefore, the models put forward by the panel in this report are guided by the Act's intention for fairness and equity in voter representation.

In examining the appropriate number of councillors for Merri-bek City Council, the panel considered the following criteria:

- the population and number of voters in the council area, compared to other councils with a similar population size and number of voters in the same category (for example, other comparable metropolitan, interface or regional city councils)
- patterns of population change and voter growth or decline in the council area over time
- the current and past numbers of councillors
- the representation needs of the communities of interest in the council area.

The panel's final recommendation will also consider any matters raised in public response submissions not already listed above.

Local councils with a larger number of voters will often have more councillors. Large populations generally have greater diversity, both in the type and number of communities of interest and issues relating to representation. However, the ideal number of councillors can also be influenced by the circumstances of each council, such as the:

- nature and complexity of services the council provides
- geographic size and topography of the area
- forecast population and voter growth or decline
- social diversity.

Deciding the electoral structure

Under the Act, regional city, metropolitan and interface councils must now have single-councillor ward electoral structures.

When developing single-councillor ward models for Merri-bek City Council, the panel considered these criteria:

- whether the structure would comply with section 15(2) of the Act (see below), and for how long it would likely comply
- the appropriate number of councillors, as outlined above
- whether meaningful and effective ward boundaries could be established and whether these would be easily identifiable to local communities
- the representation of communities of interest
- the voter distribution and physical features of the area, and the impact these may have on the shape and size of wards
- past elections for the council, including:
 - numbers of candidates nominating
 - incidences of uncontested elections
 - rates of informal voting.

The panel's final recommendation will also consider any matters raised in public response submissions not already listed above.

Under section 15(2) of the Act, subdivided structures must aim for an approximately equal number of voters per councillor in each ward. This means the number of voters represented by each councillor in a ward should be within +/-10% of the average number of voters per councillor for all wards.

During this review, the panel aims to recommend a structure that will comply with section 15(2) at the time of the 2024 local council elections and, if possible, also comply based on voter numbers at the time the review is conducted. The panel uses forecasts of population and voter change to assess compliance at the 2024 elections with as much accuracy as possible. In some cases, population change and other factors impacting voter numbers mean it is not possible to create compliant subdivided structures based both on voter numbers that were current at the time of the review and forecast voter numbers. In these instances, the panel prioritises compliance at the 2024 local government elections to ensure each vote will have approximately equal value at the 2024 election.

One of the factors that may impact compliance with section 15(2) is the number of current and forecast voters with ratepayer-based voting entitlements, also known as council-enrolled electors. Voters' rolls include both state-enrolled electors (the majority of the roll) and a smaller number of council-enrolled electors. The Act introduced changes to ratepayer-based entitlement categories, which come into full effect at the 2024 local council elections. The panel will take this change to the makeup of voters' rolls, and therefore compliance with section 15(2) of the Act, into consideration during this review.

Deciding on ward names

The panel takes the following approach to naming wards:

1. The panel retains existing ward names if these are still relevant to the area covered by the ward.
2. When a new name is required, the panel bases this on features such as:
 - places (registered under the *Geographic Place Names Act 1998*) in the ward
 - compass directions
 - native flora or fauna.

Use of Aboriginal language

The panel recognises that there should be meaningful consultation with local Aboriginal communities and groups before a ward is named using Aboriginal language. Meaningful consultation is a significant process that the panel is not able to undertake within the timeframes of the current review program.

The panel also recognises that many of the place names in current use across Victoria are based on Aboriginal language. As such, the panel may put forward new ward names using Aboriginal language if:

- it is the name of a place within a ward

- it is currently in common use

and

- the name is registered under the *Geographic Place Names Act 1998*.

Unregistered names using Aboriginal language have not been put forward by the panel as new ward names. While the panel supports the adoption of names based on Aboriginal language, this requires appropriate consultation.

Accordingly, for the panel to consider an Aboriginal language ward name that is suggested in a public submission to the review, the name submitted needs to comply with the above guidelines.

About Merri-bek City Council

Profile

At its southern point, Merri-bek City Council is 4 km from the Melbourne CBD. It spans an area of about 51 km², extending north to the Metropolitan Ring Road, west to Moonee Ponds Creek (which forms most of its boundary with Moonee Valley City Council) and east to Merri Creek (which forms most of its boundary with Darebin City Council).

The Traditional Custodians of the land in Merri-bek City Council are the Wurundjeri people. The name Merri-bek (meaning 'rocky country' and acknowledging the connections to Merri Creek) was one of 3 names put forward by the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation to replace the council's former name of 'Moreland'. The new name was formally recognised by the Victorian Government in September 2022 following community consultation and council endorsement.

Landscape

The council area is highly urbanised. Most land is designated residential, but there are also important industrial sites and commercial centres. Open space and parklands account for 15% (839 hectares) of the council land area and are located throughout, particularly along Merri and Moonee Ponds creeks (Merri-bek 2023).

The council area includes the suburbs of Brunswick, Brunswick East, Brunswick West, Coburg, Coburg North, Pascoe Vale, Pascoe Vale South, Oak Park, Fawkner, Glenroy, Hadfield and Gowanbrae. It also extends into parts of Fitzroy North, Parkville, and Tullamarine.

Housing growth and development has mostly moved north along the main transport corridors. The well-established suburbs in the south, such as Brunswick and Coburg, are more densely populated and have undergone greater rates of growth. In the northern parts of the council area, dwellings are larger and more separate.

The council area's northern boundary is the Western Ring Road, while Sydney Road and Lygon Street are the major north–south roads. Boundary Road, Bell Street, Moreland Road and Albion Street run east–west. Major train lines, such as the Upfield and Craigieburn lines, follow the north–south transport corridors and various tram routes provide additional transport services.

Commercial activity is concentrated along Lygon and Nicholson streets and Sydney Road in Brunswick and further north in Glenroy.

Population and community

In 2021 the council area was home to 171,357 people (ABS 2022), with Brunswick, Coburg, and Glenroy the most populous suburbs (Merri-bek 2023). Forecast to grow at a rate of 1.4% per annum, the population will likely surpass 250,000 by 2036. A significant portion of this growth is expected in Brunswick, Brunswick East, and Coburg (Merri-bek 2022).

The proportion of the population identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander is 0.6%, similar to the Greater Melbourne average of 0.7% (ABS 2022).

At the 2021 Census, the median age was 35. This was lower than the metropolitan average, while incomes were slightly higher (ABS 2022). About one third of residents were born overseas (ABS 2022) and 31% of households used a language other than English at home (ABS 2022). The council area has a prominent and well-established Italian community, and large Arabic and Greek-speaking populations (ABS 2022). Religious diversity is evident with the presence of Catholic, Islamic, and Eastern Orthodox communities (ABS 2022).

The social profile changes somewhat across the council area and particularly in the northernmost suburbs. The suburbs of Fawkner and Hadfield, for example, have a greater proportion of overseas-born residents and higher levels of social disadvantage compared with the suburbs further south (.id 2023a, 2023b).

Current number of councillors and electoral structure

Merri-bek City Council is currently divided into 3 wards with a total of 11 councillors:

- one ward with 3 councillors (South)
- 2 wards with 4 councillors each (North-East and North-West wards).



Figure 1: Diagram of current electoral structure of Merri-bek City Council.

There are approximately 130,481 voters in Merri-bek City Council, with an approximate ratio of 11,861 voters per councillor.

Visit the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au for more information on Merri-bek City Council.

Last electoral structure review

The VEC conducted an electoral representation review of Merri-bek City Council in 2011. This review was carried out under the *Local Government Act 1989* (Vic), which was replaced by the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic).

After conducting the review, the VEC recommended that Merri-bek City Council continue to consist of 11 councillors elected from 3 wards (2 wards with 4 councillors each and one ward with 3 councillors).

Visit the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au to access a copy of the 2012 representation review final report.

Preliminary findings and models

Number of councillors

After taking into consideration the requirements of the Act and the agreed criteria, the panel found 11 councillors to be an appropriate number for Merri-bek City Council.

The panel considered the characteristics of Merri-bek City Council in relation to similar metropolitan councils, including its population, the number and distribution of voters, and the size and geography of the council.

Similar metropolitan councils to Merri-bek City Council						
Local council	Area (km ²)	Number of voters at 2020 election	Population (2021 Census)	Current total estimate of voters	Number of councillors	Number of voters per councillor
Melbourne City Council	38	137,164	149,615	146,930	9	16,325
Brimbank City Council*	123	133,409	194,618	136,190	11	12,380
Merri-bek City Council*	51	131,631	171,357	130,481	11	11,861
Boroondara City Council	60	126,619	167,900	125,020	11	11,365
Monash City Council*	82	120,823	190,397	120,771	11	10,979
Kingston City Council	91	118,779	158,129	119,474	11	10,861
Knox City Council	114	117,363	159,103	116,282	9	12,920
Darebin City Council	54	114,106	148,570	114,358	9	12,706
Whitehorse City Council	64	112,640	169,346	113,214	11	10,292

*These local councils are undergoing an electoral structure review during 2023–24.

Maintaining 11 councillors

Merri-bek City Council currently has 130,481 voters represented by 11 councillors and covers an area of 51 km². Other metropolitan councils with a similar number of voters usually also have 11 councillors. As only modest population change is forecast for the council, the panel considers it appropriate for the total number of councillors to remain unchanged. The panel did not feel there were any special circumstances or strong arguments for decreasing the number of councillors.

Electoral structure

To identify the most appropriate electoral structure, various factors were considered. This included the requirements of the Act, the communities of interest in Merri-bek City Council, the appropriateness of ward boundaries and which models offered the best potential for fair and equitable representation and consequently facilitate good governance.

In developing the preliminary models presented in this report, the panel considered a range of models. The strongest 3 models have been put forward for further public comment.

The panel proposes 3 models for the consideration of the Merri-bek City Council community:

- a subdivided electoral structure of 11 single-councillor wards (Model 1)
- a subdivided electoral structure of 11 single-councillor wards, with different ward boundaries to Model 1 (Model 2)
- a subdivided electoral structure of 11 single-councillor wards, with different ward boundaries to models 1 and 2 (Model 3).

Diagrams of the preliminary models are included in [Appendix 1](#).

A single-councillor ward structure with 11 councillors (Model 1)

Model 1 proposes an 11-ward structure for Merri-bek City Council, with each ward represented by one councillor, as mandated by the Act.

Model 1 uses major roads or creeks to define ward boundaries, including Moreland, Bell, and Boundary streets.

South of Moreland Road, the council is divided into 4 wards. Brunswick East Ward is divided from Brunswick North and South wards by Lygon/Holmes Street. On the other side of Brunswick North and South wards, Brunswick West Ward begins at Pearson/Shamrock Street. The Brunswick North and Brunswick South wards are separated from each other by some of Victoria and Blyth streets. Sydney Road runs through the centre of both wards.

Coburg and Coburg North wards are split by Bell Street. Coburg north is further separated from Pascoe Vale and Pascoe Vale South by Sussex Street, and Coburg is separated from Pascoe Vale South by Lynsey, Liverpool, and Hawthorn streets.

Completing the eastern corridor, Fawkner Ward encapsulates the suburb of Fawkner, areas of Coburg North near Sydney Road, and parts of Hadfield and Glenroy near Fawkner Cemetery.

While Model 1's compact wards benefit suburb-based communities, it has its challenges. For example, the model splits larger suburbs like Coburg and Glenroy. Hadfield and Glenroy residents in Fawkner Ward might not identify with the western parts of the ward, across the cemetery. Also, the boundary between Coburg and Pascoe Vale South wards, which uses streets like Hawthorn and Linsey instead of major roads, might seem arbitrary.

A single-councillor ward structure with 11 councillors (alternative version) (Model 2)

Under this model, Merri-bek City Council would adopt an 11-ward structure. Each ward would be represented by one councillor, in line with the requirements of the Act.

Model 2, while mirroring Model 1's approach of aligning wards with suburb areas, focuses on specific communities and demographic considerations. It retains the boundaries of the 4 wards south of Moreland Road from Model 1, but with different names. Additionally, this model introduces ward names based on features in the wards, as opposed to locality-based naming.

Model 2 focuses on the communities along Merri Creek. This connection is established by 2 north-south oriented wards: Warrk-Warrk Ward, which accommodates electors west of Merri Creek in the council area's southern end, and Pentridge Ward. Pentridge Ward has Sydney Road, Champ Street, and Merri Creek as its west boundary and captures areas of Coburg and Coburg North adjacent to the creek's recreational zones.

Harmony Park Ward is next to Pentridge Ward and covers most of the remaining parts of Coburg and Coburg North. Its boundaries are Gordon and Sussex streets to the west and Bakers Road to the north. Bababi Djinanang Ward includes Coburg North beyond Bakers Road and the entire Fawkner locality. Incorporating the cemetery into this ward achieves a clearer division between the east and west wards.

Model 2 also addresses the demographic shifts between the north and south of Boundary Road and Rhodes Parade. It extends the boundary west along Charlotte Street, creating space for 2 wards north of this: Djirri Djirri and Box Forest wards, which are separated by Cardinal Road, Glenroy Road, and Widford Street. This also groups Oak Park and most of Pascoe Vale into the Westbreen Ward south of Boundary Road.

While Westbreen Ward's borders with Box Forest Ward to the north and Dunstan Ward to the south are well-defined, the boundaries between Djirri Djirri and Westbreen wards are the least distinct among the 3 proposed models.

The move from using Sydney Road as a uniting feature within wards in Model 1, to using Sydney Road as a boundary could present an issue for the Coburg communities south of Bell Street, for whom Sydney Road may be an important feature of their ward.

A single-councillor ward structure with 11 councillors (alternative version) (Model 3)

Under this model, Merri-bek City Council would adopt an 11-ward structure. Each ward would be represented by one councillor, in line with the requirements of the Act.

Model 3, like Model 2, focuses on keeping communities along Merri Creek together. It differentiates between 'inner' Coburg communities and those near Merri Creek. While it divides the east and west wards the same way as Model 2, Model 3 enhances certain boundaries and simplifies the electoral structure.

The boundaries of 6 wards in Model 3 are consistent with Model 2, but some have different names.

Model 3 prominently uses the Craigieburn train line as a boundary with Moonee Ponds Creek Ward to its west. It also uses Sydney Road as a clear dividing line between the wards in the Brunswick suburb. This contrasts with Model 1, where the boundary was formed by joining Victoria and Blyth streets. This shift towards using Sydney Road as a boundary streamlines the council's electoral structure. However, the move away from using Sydney Road as the central, uniting feature in the wards of Model 1, to using Sydney Road as a boundary divides communities in Coburg and Coburg North.

While using the train line enhances certain boundaries, Model 3 does not use Boundary Road as a ward boundary. While this strengthens boundaries in the council area's north-west, it has a potential downside in merging the Hadfield and Pascoe Vale communities together in Westbreen Ward. Communities in these suburbs may not share a common identity.

Summary

In summary, introducing single-councillor wards represents a large electoral structure change for Merri-bek City Council. Achieving models that divide communities into appropriate wards while also accounting for population growth and ensuring they comply with the +/-10% requirement can be challenging.

Model 1 attempts to use localities and major transport features as boundaries. It creates mostly uniform ward sizes and uses Sydney Road as a uniting feature within wards. However, the model groups unrelated communities in Fawkner Ward and divides Coburg and Pascoe Vale South wards unclearly.

Model 2 minimises the division of communities along Merri Creek. It creates distinct wards in Coburg based on their proximity to the creek and includes localities such as Fawkner and Oak Park more effectively in specific wards. Despite Model 2's strengths, the division of Djirri Djirri and Westbreen wards is less clear.

Model 3 is similar to Model 2 in its approach to Merri Creek communities but introduces the train line as a strong boundary, carving out a distinct Moonee Ponds Creek Ward. It also simplifies the overall structure by consistently using Sydney Road as a boundary in the Brunswick area. However, by not using Boundary Road as a divider, Model 3 might group together communities with fewer common interests.

Models for public feedback

The panel considers all models outlined below to be the single-councillor ward electoral structures with the best potential to offer fair and equitable representation for voters in Merri-bek City Council and consequently facilitate good governance. Please see [Appendix 1](#) for detailed maps of these models.

Model 1

Merri-bek City Council has 11 councillors and is divided into 11 wards with one councillor per ward.

Ward names: Brunswick East Ward, Brunswick North Ward, Brunswick South Ward, Brunswick West Ward, Coburg Ward, Coburg North Ward, Fawkner Ward, Glenroy East Ward, Glenroy West Ward, Pascoe Vale Ward, Pascoe Vale South Ward.

Model 2

Merri-bek City Council has 11 councillors and is divided into 11 wards with one councillor per ward.

Ward names: Bababi Djinanang Ward, Box Forest Ward, Bulleke-bek Ward, Djirri Djirri Ward, Dunstan Ward, Harmony Park Ward, Jewell Ward, Pentridge Ward, Thomson Ward, Warrk-Warrk Ward, Westbreen Ward.

Model 3

Merri-bek City Council has 11 councillors and is divided into 11 wards with one councillor per ward.

Ward names: Bababi Djinanang Ward, Box Forest Ward, Bulleke-bek Ward, Dunstan Ward, Harmony Park Ward, Merri Creek Ward, Moonee Ponds Creek Ward, Randazzo Ward, Thomson Ward, Warrk-Warrk Ward, Westbreen Ward.

Ward names

The panel has suggested ward names to identify the wards in each model and invites comments from the community on these names as part of submissions responding to the preliminary report. The basis of the ward name recommendations for each model are described below.

Model 1

Brunswick East Ward, Brunswick North Ward, Brunswick South Ward, Brunswick West Ward, Coburg Ward, Coburg North Ward, Fawkner Ward, Glenroy East Ward, Glenroy West Ward, Pascoe Vale Ward and Pascoe Vale South Ward have names that are new and are based on natural features, built features, roads, rivers, lakes or localities found within each ward.

Model 2

Bababi Djinanang Ward, Box Forest Ward, Bulleke-bek Ward, Djirri Djirri Ward, Dunstan Ward, Harmony Park Ward, Jewell Ward, Pentridge Ward, Thomson Ward, Warrk-Warrk Ward and

Westbreen Ward have names that are new and are based on natural features, built features, roads, rivers, lakes or localities found within each ward.

Model 3

Bababi Djinanang Ward, Box Forest Ward, Bulleke-bek Ward, Dunstan Ward, Harmony Park Ward, Merri Creek Ward, Moonee Ponds Creek Ward, Randazzo Ward, Thomson Ward, Warrk-Warrk Ward and Westbreen Ward have names that are new and are based on natural features, built features, roads, rivers, lakes or localities found within each ward.




The panel will review ward name suggestions received during the response submission stage when forming the final advice to the Minister for Local Government on the electoral structure of the council. Suggested ward names should comply with the panel's approach to naming wards (see [Deciding on ward names](#) and [Use of Aboriginal language](#)). All ward name suggestions received during the response submission stage will be provided to the Minister for consideration at the conclusion of the electoral structure review.

Next steps

Response submissions

Any person or group, including the local council under review, can make a response submission to the electoral representation advisory panel. In your submission you should address the models proposed by the panel in this preliminary report.

You can make a submission:

	<p>Online</p> <p>Visit vec.vic.gov.au to make a submission online.</p> <p>You will need to make an account to use the online Public Submission Tool and can save a draft submission to finish later.</p>
	<p>By email</p> <p>merri-bek.erapsubmissions@vec.vic.gov.au</p>
	<p>By post</p> <p>Electoral Representation Advisory Panel c/o Victorian Electoral Commission Level 11, 530 Collins St Melbourne VIC 3000</p>

The panel must receive all response submissions before 5 pm on Wednesday 8 November 2023. If you post your submission, make sure it has enough time to reach the panel before the deadline. Late submissions will not be accepted.

Required information

For your submission to be considered, you must include your:

- full name
- contact phone number or email address
- postal or residential address.

To protect the integrity and transparency of the review process, the panel will not consider submissions without this information. If you are submitting as a group or organisation, you must include the name of a nominated contact person who is authorised to submit on behalf of your group.

On behalf of the panel, the VEC will handle information provided by submitters in accordance with the privacy policy available at vec.vic.gov.au/privacy

Public access to submissions

To ensure transparency in the electoral structure review process, your submission will be published on the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au. The VEC will remove your signature and contact details, including residential and postal addresses, from all public copies but must publish your full name (or group name) and locality (suburb or town).

Please note that any submission content that is potentially defamatory, offensive, obscene or that includes the personal information of people or organisations who are not a party to the submission may also be redacted before publication.

Public hearing

If you make a response submission, you can also ask to speak at an online public hearing to support your submission and expand on your views.

The online public hearing is scheduled for:

Time: 10 am

Date: Tuesday 14 November 2023

The panel encourages participation in the public hearing. If you wish to speak at the public hearing, you **must** indicate this in your response submission. The public hearing will not be held if there are no requests to speak.

Anyone can attend a public hearing, but you will only be able to speak if you asked to in your response submission. If you ask to speak, the VEC will contact you to arrange a time for you to speak at the hearing. You will have 10 minutes to address the public hearing panel, which will include at least 2 of the review panel members. The members of the public hearing panel may ask you questions.

Visit the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au for more information on public hearings.

Final report

Following the public hearing, the review panel will consider all evidence gathered and prepare a final report for the Minister for Local Government containing a recommendation for the number of councillors and the electoral structure for the local council.

The final report is scheduled to be provided to the Minister on Wednesday 13 December 2023. The Minister will consider the final reports, including any determination to make the reports publicly available. Any change to the electoral structure of Merri-bek City Council following on from this review is expected to apply at the October 2024 local council elections. Under the Act, the final council electoral structure will be set by an Order in Council published in the Victoria Government Gazette.

References

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—(2023a) [City of Merri-bek, People born overseas](#), .id, accessed 1 September 2023.

— (2023b) [City of Merri-bek, Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage](#), .id, accessed 1 September 2023.

Appendix 1: Model maps

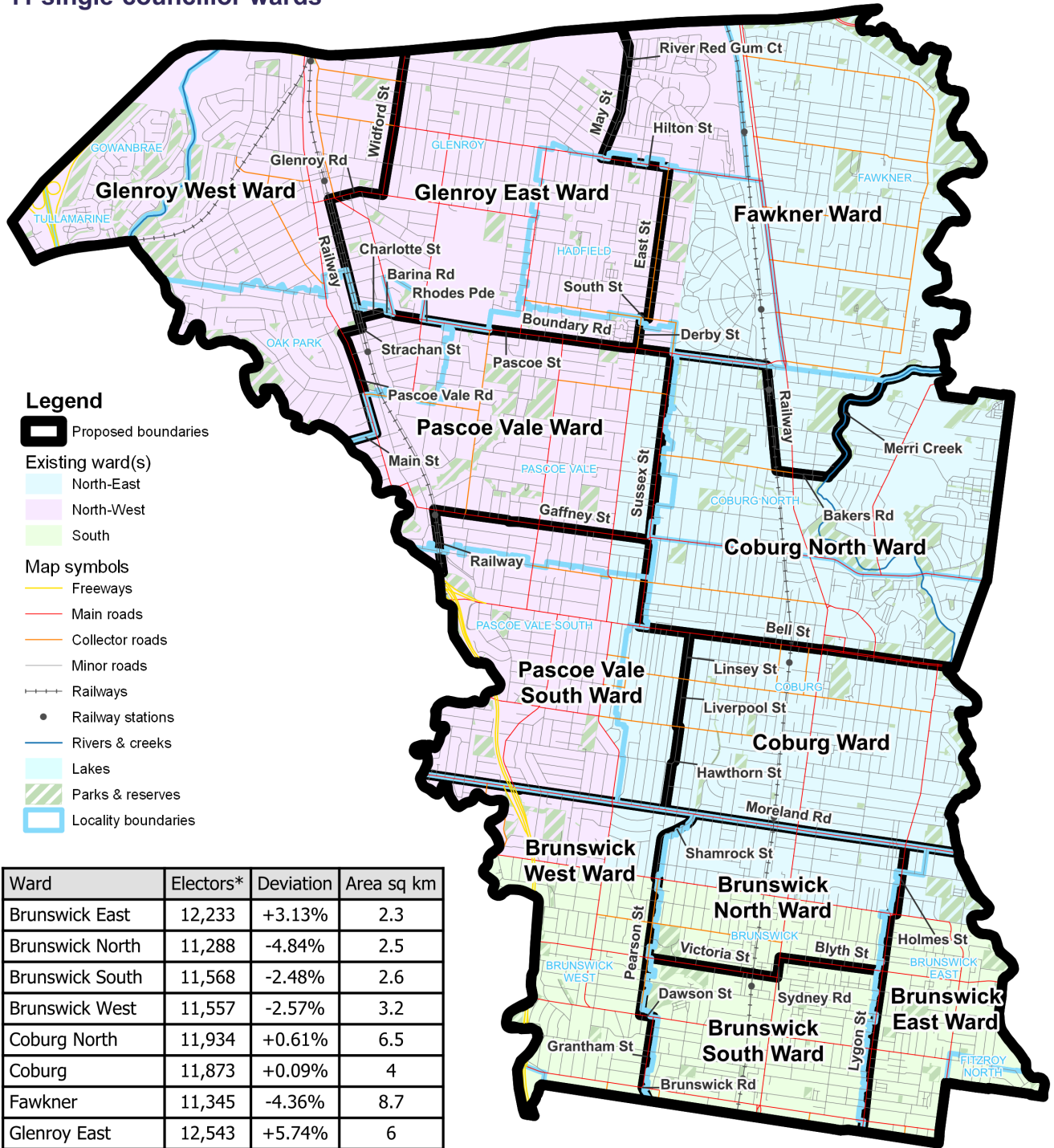
The following maps are included in this report:

Map	Page
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Merri-Bek City Council

Model 1

11 single-councillor wards



Ward	Electors*	Deviation	Area sq km
Brunswick East	12,233	+3.13%	2.3
Brunswick North	11,288	-4.84%	2.5
Brunswick South	11,568	-2.48%	2.6
Brunswick West	11,557	-2.57%	3.2
Coburg North	11,934	+0.61%	6.5
Coburg	11,873	+0.09%	4
Fawkner	11,345	-4.36%	8.7
Glenroy East	12,543	+5.74%	6
Glenroy West	12,239	+3.18%	6.5
Pascoe Vale South	12,284	+3.56%	4.4
Pascoe Vale	11,617	-2.06%	4.4
Total	130,481		51
Average	11,862		4.6

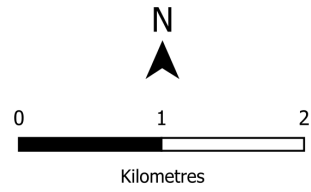
*Elector numbers as at 25 July 2023

Data use:



Layers for alignment:
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Data for Model 1

Ward	Electors*	Deviation	Area# (square km)
Brunswick East	12,233	+3.13%	2.3
Brunswick North	11,288	-4.84%	2.5
Brunswick South	11,568	-2.48%	2.6
Brunswick West	11,557	-2.57%	3.2
Coburg North	11,934	+0.61%	6.5
Coburg	11,873	+0.09%	4
Fawkner	11,345	-4.36%	8.7
Glenroy East	12,543	+5.74%	6
Glenroy West	12,239	+3.18%	6.5
Pascoe Vale South	12,284	+3.56%	4.4
Pascoe Vale	11,617	-2.06%	4.4
Total	130,481	n/a	51
Average	11,862	n/a	4.6

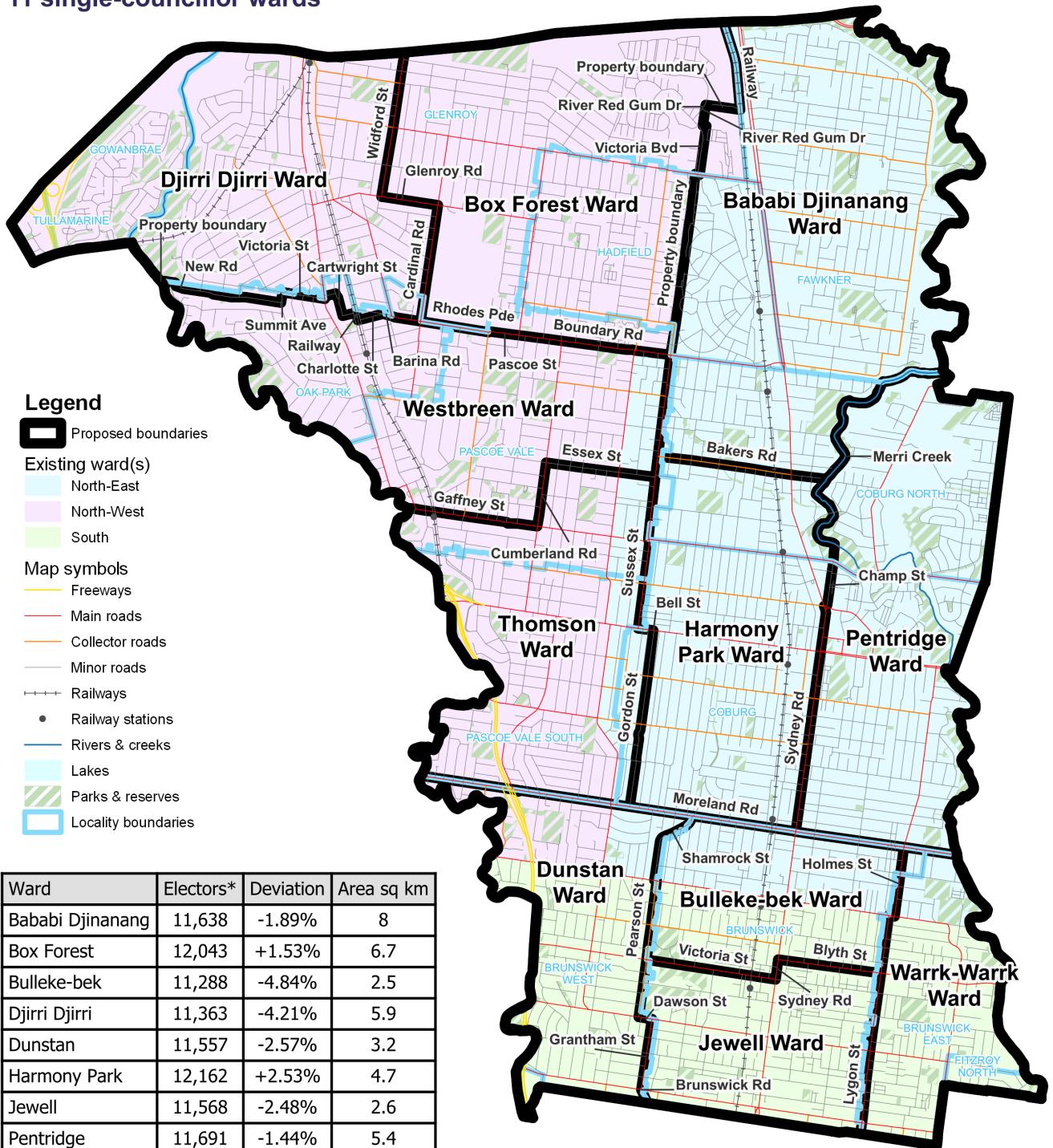
*Elector numbers at 25 July 2023

#Ward area (square km) and total council area is measured at level of accuracy required for electoral boundaries. This may vary slightly from other data sources (for example, the ABS).

Merri-Bek City Council

Model 2

11 single-councillor wards



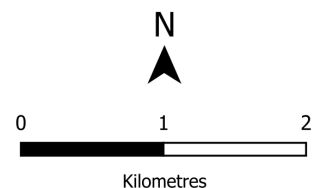
*Elector numbers as at 25 July 2023

Data use:



Layers for alignment:
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Data for Model 2

Ward	Electors*	Deviation	Area# (square km)
Bababi Djinanang	11,638	-1.89%	8
Box Forest	12,043	+1.53%	6.7
Bulleke-bek	11,288	-4.84%	2.5
Djirri Djirri	11,363	-4.21%	5.9
Dunstan	11,557	-2.57%	3.2
Harmony Park	12,162	+2.53%	4.7
Jewell	11,568	-2.48%	2.6
Pentridge	11,691	-1.44%	5.4
Thomson	12,178	+2.66%	4.6
Warrk-Warrk	12,233	+3.13%	2.3
Westbreen	12,760	+7.57%	5
Total	130,481	n/a	51
Average	11,862	n/a	4.6

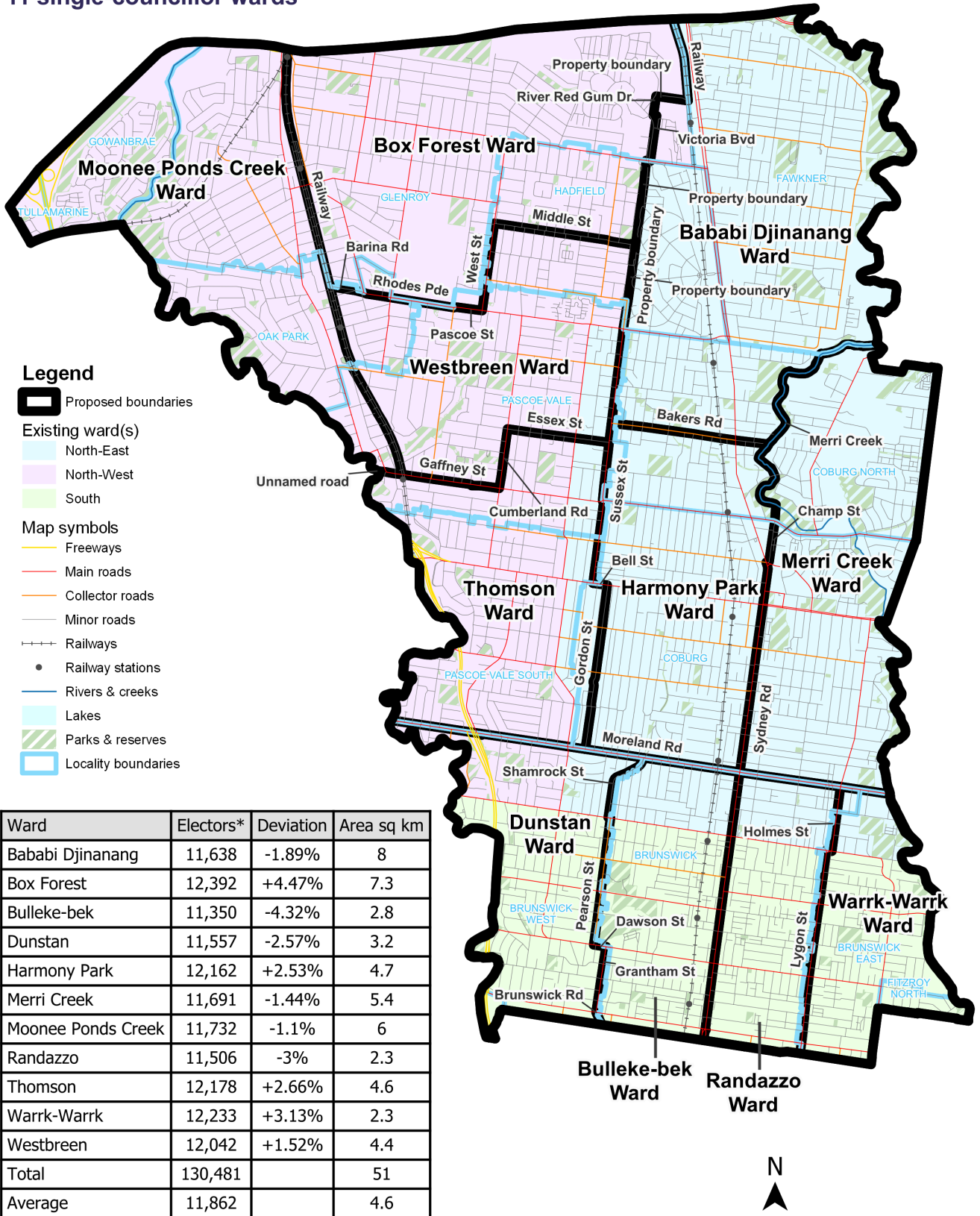
*Elector numbers at 25 July 2023

#Ward area (square km) and total council area is measured at level of accuracy required for electoral boundaries. This may vary slightly from other data sources (for example, the ABS).

Merri-Bek City Council

Model 3

11 single-councillor wards



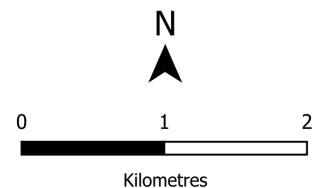
*Elector numbers as at 22 July 2023

Data use:



Layers for alignment:
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Data for Model 3

Ward	Electors*	Deviation	Area# (square km)
Bababi Djinanang	11,638	-1.89%	8
Box Forest	12,392	+4.47%	7.3
Bulleke-bek	11,350	-4.32%	2.8
Dunstan	11,557	-2.57%	3.2
Harmony Park	12,162	+2.53%	4.7
Merri Creek	11,691	-1.44%	5.4
Moonee Ponds Creek	11,732	-1.1%	6
Randazzo	11,506	-3%	2.3
Thomson	12,178	+2.66%	4.6
Warrk-Warrk	12,233	+3.13%	2.3
Westbreen	12,042	+1.52%	4.4
Total	130,481	n/a	51
Average	11,862	n/a	4.6

*Elector numbers as at 25 July 2023

#Ward area (square km) and total council area is measured at level of accuracy required for electoral boundaries. This may vary slightly from other data sources (for example, the ABS).

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