

Local council ward boundary review

Preliminary Report

Cardinia Shire Council

February 2024



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February 2024

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Level 11, 530 Collins Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000
T 131 832
info@vec.vic.gov.au
vec.vic.gov.au

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Acknowledgement of Country

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) acknowledges the Bunurong and Wurundjeri peoples 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 VEC acknowledges their custodianship for many thousands of years and their continuing living culture.

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Executive summary

Under section 17 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic) (the Act), the Minister for Local Government has asked the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) to conduct ward boundary reviews for 10 local council areas prior to the next general local council elections in October 2024.

For these 10 councils, the number of voters per councillor is forecast to be out of balance by October 2024, with the number of voters per councillor in one or more wards forecast to vary from the average number of voters per councillor for all of the wards by more than 10 per cent.

Cardinia Shire Council is one of the 10 local council areas under review. The purpose of this review is to correct this forecast imbalance for the October 2024 local council election.

In its review, the VEC is looking at:

- the number of currently enrolled voters in each ward
- the forecast number of enrolled voters at the next election
- adjustments to the locations of existing ward boundaries.

At the end of the review, the VEC will recommend ward boundary changes to the minister, with the aim of all wards in Cardinia Shire Council being within the legislated +/-10% tolerance at the time of the 2024 local council election.

This preliminary report presents proposed ward boundary adjustments for Cardinia Shire Council.

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

Ward boundary models

After considering research and the requirements of the Act, the VEC is presenting a single model for public consultation, outlining the proposed ward boundary changes to Cardinia Shire Council.

Details on this model, including a map, are available in [Appendix 1](#).

Next steps

The VEC is now seeking feedback on its preliminary ward boundary model. You can make a response submission to the preliminary model until 5 pm on Wednesday 20 March 2024. If any submitters ask to speak at a public hearing, the VEC will hold this online on Tuesday 26 March 2024. Following the hearing, the VEC will present its final recommendation to the minister on Wednesday 24 April 2024.

More information about the review process is available on the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au

Background

About the 2024 ward boundary reviews

Under section 15(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic), for a council that is divided into wards:

- a) each ward should have an approximately equal number of voters per councillor; and
- b) the number of voters per councillor in a ward should not vary from the average number of voters per councillor for all of the wards by more than 10 per cent.

On 22 February 2023, the VEC provided advice to the Minister for Local Government on councils that were projected to have at least one ward with the number of voters per councillor outside this +/-10% range at the time of the October 2024 local council elections.

This advice was based on:

- current enrolment and enrolment trends
- future population projections
- legislated changes to council entitlements for council-enrolled voters.

On 20 April 2023, in response to this advice and under section 17 of the Act, the minister asked the VEC to conduct ward boundary reviews for 10 local council areas before the October 2024 local council elections. These reviews aim to balance the number of voters per councillor for the wards of these 10 councils in time for the 2024 elections.

Cardinia Shire Council is one of the 10 local council areas under review.

In its review, the VEC is looking at:

- the number of currently enrolled voters in each ward
- the forecast number of enrolled voters at the next election
- adjustments to the locations of existing ward boundaries.

A ward boundary review does not change a council's electoral structure, number of councillors, or ward names. A ward boundary review also cannot change the external boundaries of a local council, divide local councils, or amalgamate local councils.

At the end of the review, the VEC will recommend ward boundary adjustments to the minister, with the aim of all wards in Cardinia Shire Council being within the legislated +/-10% tolerance at the time of the 2024 local council election.

The ward boundary review panel

Leading the VEC's review is a ward boundary review panel, which has 2 VEC members including the program sponsor.

Administrative and technical support for the panel is provided by the VEC's team of electoral structure and boundary review experts as well as specialists from across the VEC.

Public engagement

Public information program

The VEC is conducting a public information and awareness program about the Cardinia Shire Council ward boundary 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.

Cardinia Shire Council was also offered 2 optional methods to promote the reviews:

- printed public notices in local newspapers
- targeted social media advertisements for the council area.

Cardinia Shire Council took up the option for local newspaper notices but not the option for targeted social media.

Public consultation

The VEC now invites input to the ward boundary review of Cardinia Shire Council via:

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

Public submissions are an important part of the review process and the VEC will consider them alongside other factors during the review. These factors are outlined below.

Considerations in developing models

The model in this preliminary report complies with the Act and was developed through careful consideration of:

- research and analysis conducted by the VEC, including geospatial, electoral 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).

When developing the preliminary model for Cardinia Shire Council, the VEC considered:

- whether the adjusted wards would comply with section 15(2) of the Act (see below), and how long they are likely to comply

- 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
- the scale of ward boundary changes, aiming for minimal change (where possible).

In addition to the above, the VEC's final recommendation will also consider matters raised in public response submissions.

Under section 15(2) of the Act, subdivided structures must aim for an approximately equal number of voters per councillor across all wards. 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 of that council.

During this review, the VEC aims to recommend ward boundary adjustments that help ensure a council's wards 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 VEC 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 adjust the ward boundaries of a council so that both 'current' (at the time of the review) and 'forecast' (at October 2024) voter numbers are within the legislated +/-10% tolerance. Where this happens, the VEC prioritises compliance at the October 2024 elections to ensure each vote will have approximately equal value at the 2024 elections. In some cases, the VEC's recommended model may set the current ward deviations outside the +/-10% tolerance. This is because the ward deviations are forecast to change over a short period of time and move within the +/-10% tolerance by the time of the 2024 local council elections.

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 VEC 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.

About Cardinia Shire Council

Profile

Cardinia Shire Council is located 55 km south-east of the Melbourne CBD and covers an area of around 1,281 km². It is bordered by Casey City Council to the west, Yarra Ranges Shire Council to the north, Baw Baw Shire Council to the east, and Bass Coast and South Gippsland shire councils to the south. The Western Port Bay coastline forms part of the south-western boundary.

The Traditional Custodians of the land in Cardinia Shire Council are the Bunurong and Wurundjeri peoples (ACHRIS 2024).

Landscape

The shire has a mix of urban, rural and forest environments. The South-East Growth Corridor runs through the centre of the council where the most urbanised areas are located, including Pakenham and Officer.

The south of the shire features meadows, farms, small communities and coastal areas. The north includes small and medium sized towns, farmland, and the Cardinia Reservoir. Bunyip State Park is in the north-east.

At the 2021 Census the shire had a population of 118,194, mostly living in Pakenham (54,118) and Officer (18,503). Bunyip is the largest town in the east, while Emerald, Cockatoo, and Gembrook form a band of communities across the north-west. Koo Wee Rup and Lang Lang are the major towns in the south along Western Port Bay and the South Gippsland Highway (ABS 2021a, ABS 2021c, ABS 2021d).

Major transport routes run along the growth corridor, including the Princes Highway and Freeway, and Pakenham and Warragul trainlines. The South Gippsland and Bass highways run along the Western Port Bay coastline.

Community

Between 2016 and 2021, the council grew from 94,128 to 118,194 residents (ABS 2021a), at an annual growth rate of around 5.1%. The population is forecast to reach 154,726 by 2028, with growth concentrated around Officer and Pakenham (.id 2022).

There is a strong demand for housing in Pakenham and Officer among relatively young families (.id 2022) resulting in a low median age and high home-ownership rate. The median age at the last Census was 34, compared with 37 for Greater Melbourne overall. Nearly 74% of private households are owned outright or with a mortgage, compared with 66.8% for all of Greater Melbourne. About half of all homes are owned with a mortgage, and this is higher in some areas, such as Officer at 57%. This compares to 37.1% for Greater Melbourne overall (ABS 2021a, 2021b).

Nearly a quarter of residents (23.5%) were born overseas – lower than the Greater Melbourne median of 40.1%. About 20% of households used a language other than English at home, compared with 37.7% for Greater Melbourne overall (ABS 2021a, 2021b).

Areas of high growth tend to have more diverse communities, with 32.7% of people in Pakenham born outside of Australia and 24.1% of households using a language other than English at home (ABS 2021a). Median household income in Cardinia is \$1,874 per week, compared to Greater Melbourne overall at \$1,901 (ABS 2021a, 2021b). Construction (13.8%), health care and social assistance (13.4%), retail trade (9.9%), manufacturing (9.4%), and education and training industries (8.2%) are the largest employers (.id 2022).

Current electoral structure

Cardinia Shire Council has a total of 9 councillors and is divided into 9 single-councillor wards (Beacon Hills, Bunyip, Central, Henty, Officer, Pakenham Hills, Ranges, Toomuc, and Westernport wards).

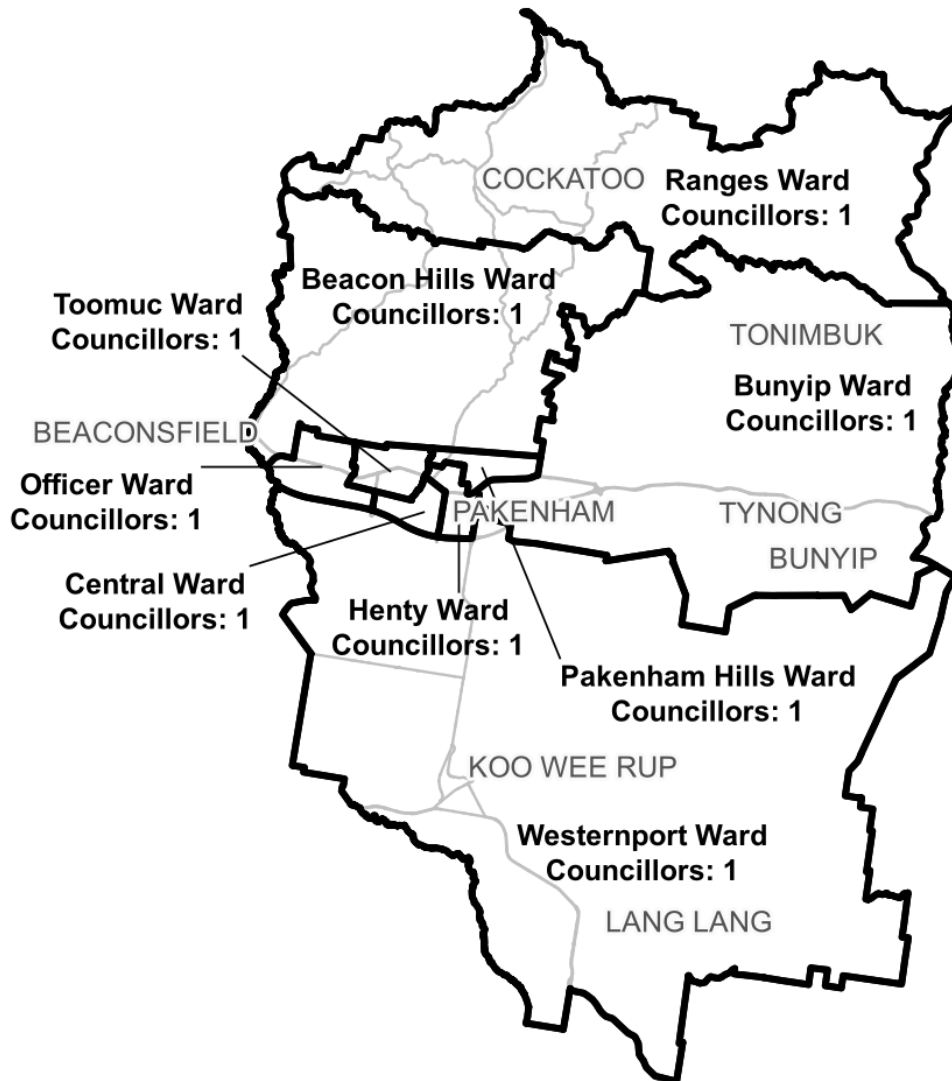


Figure 1: Diagram of current electoral structure of Cardinia Shire Council.

There are an estimated 91,941 voters in Cardinia Shire Council, with an estimated ratio of 10,216 voters per councillor.

By October 2024, the voter-to-councillor ratio of Officer Ward is forecast to be outside of +10%, and the voter-to-councillor ratio of Beacon Hills Ward is forecast to be outside of -10%.

Visit the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au for more information on Cardinia Shire Council.

Last electoral structure review

The VEC conducted an electoral representation review of Cardinia Shire Council in 2020. That 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 Cardinia Shire Council continue to consist of 9 councillors elected from 3 wards (one ward with 4 councillors, one ward with 3 councillors, and one ward with 2 councillors).

Please note, the current structure differs from the one recommended in the 2020 final report.

Visit the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au to access a copy of the 2020 representation review final report.

Preliminary findings and models

Ward boundary models for public feedback

The VEC considered a range of ward boundary adjustments for Cardinia Shire Council and chose the strongest model for public consultation.

The following model is presented for community consideration:

- Preliminary model, which proposes changes to the boundaries of Central, Bunyip, Henty, Officer, Pakenham Hills, and Westernport wards.

A map of the preliminary model is included in [Appendix 1](#).

Preliminary model

Under the current structure, Officer Ward has significantly more voters than the other wards, with a ward deviation that is currently well above the accepted +10% range. In contrast, the ward deviations of both Beacon Hills Ward and Bunyip Ward are currently outside -10%. Although the Bunyip Ward deviation is forecast to correct itself by the October 2024 local council elections, Officer and Beacon Hills wards are likely to remain outside the accepted +/- 10% range. For all wards to be within +/-10% for the October 2024 elections, the number of voters in Officer Ward must be reduced, and for Beacon Hills Ward the number of voters must be increased.

It should also be noted that, because Officer and Pakenham are growing at a much faster rate than other areas of the council, it is not possible to develop boundary adjustments for Cardinia's single-councillor ward structure that will result in all wards remaining within the legislated +/-10% tolerance beyond the October 2024 local council elections. It is likely that the council will need another ward boundary review before the following local council elections in 2028.

To correct the current wards for the 2024 elections, it is necessary to change the boundaries of multiple wards to distribute the surplus voters from Officer Ward. Overall, the preliminary model proposes 5 changes to existing ward boundaries, which would result in 5,966 voters (or about 6.5% of the voter population) being shifted to a different ward, based on current voter numbers.

The preliminary model makes 2 changes to reduce the area of Officer Ward:

- The western boundary continues in a line southward along Brunt Road to the railway line, transferring the area between the railway line, Brunt Road and the Princes Highway to Beacon Hills Ward.
- The boundary with Central Ward moves west to follow Sandy and Shaw roads, transferring this area to Central Ward.

To balance the additional voters transferred from Officer Ward to Central Ward, it is necessary to make 2 adjustments to the boundaries of Central, Henty and Pakenham Hills wards:

- The boundary between Henty and Central wards is shifted south from the Princes Highway to the railway line.

- The north-eastern boundary between Henty and Pakenham Hills wards moves from Irving and Atkins roads, instead following Ahern Road and the Princes Highway.

These changes move housing from the north-east of Central Ward into Henty Ward and a small pocket of housing from the north-east boundary of Henty Ward into Pakenham Hills Ward. In addition to balancing voter numbers between Central, Henty and their neighbouring wards, these changes use easily identifiable boundaries along the railway line and Princes Highway.

The last adjustment is made to the boundary between Bunyip and Westernport wards, where the boundary along Pakenham and Deep Creek is shifted south to follow the Princes Freeway. This change transfers a small area from Westernport to Bunyip Ward and brings the voter numbers of both wards more into balance with the other wards. It also uses a much more easily identifiable boundary in the form of the Princes Freeway.


The boundary adjustments proposed in the preliminary model aim to preserve an appropriate voter balance between the wards, use easily identifiable boundaries and, where possible, minimise the number of voters impacted by the changes. The panel now seeks feedback on these proposed changes.

Next steps

Response submissions

Any person or group, including the local council under review, can make a response submission to the VEC. Your submission should address the model or models proposed in this preliminary report.

You can make a submission:

	<p>Online Visit vec.vic.gov.au and make an account to use the online Public Submission Tool. You may save a draft submission to finish later.</p>
	<p>By email Cardinia.WardReview@vec.vic.gov.au</p>
	<p>By post Ward boundary review panel Victorian Electoral Commission Level 11, 530 Collins St Melbourne VIC 3000</p>

The panel must receive all response submissions before 5 pm on Wednesday 20 March 2024. If you post your submission, it must reach the VEC before the deadline. Late submissions will not be accepted.

Required information

To be considered, your submission 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 VEC will not consider submissions without this information. If you are submitting as a group or organisation, you must include a nominated contact person authorised to submit on behalf of your group.

The VEC will handle information provided by submitters in accordance with its privacy policy at vec.vic.gov.au/privacy

Public access to submissions

To ensure transparency in the ward boundary 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: 2pm

Date: Tuesday 26 March 2024

The VEC 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 expressly asked to speak 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. 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 VEC will consider all evidence and prepare a final report for the Minister for Local Government containing recommended ward boundary adjustments for the local council.

The final report is scheduled to be provided to the minister on Wednesday 24 April 2024. The minister will consider the final reports, including any determination to make the reports publicly available. Any change to the ward boundaries of Cardinia Shire Council following 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

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) (2022a) [2021 Census All persons QuickStats - Cardinia](#), ABS, accessed 7 February 2024.

—(2022b) [2021 Census All persons QuickStats - Greater Melbourne](#), ABS, accessed 7 February 2024.

—(2022c) [2021 Census All persons QuickStats - Officer](#), ABS, accessed 7 February 2024.

—(2022d) [2021 Census All persons QuickStats - Pakenham](#), ABS, accessed 7 February 2024.

ACHRIS (Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Register and Information System), [ACHRIS](#), Aboriginal Victoria, accessed 7 February 2024.

Geographic Place Names Act 1998 (Vic).

.id (Informed Decisions) (2022) [Cardinia Shire Community Profile](#), .id, accessed 7 February 2024.

Local Government Act 1989 (Vic).

Local Government Act 2020 (Vic).

Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020 (Vic).

Appendix 1: Model map

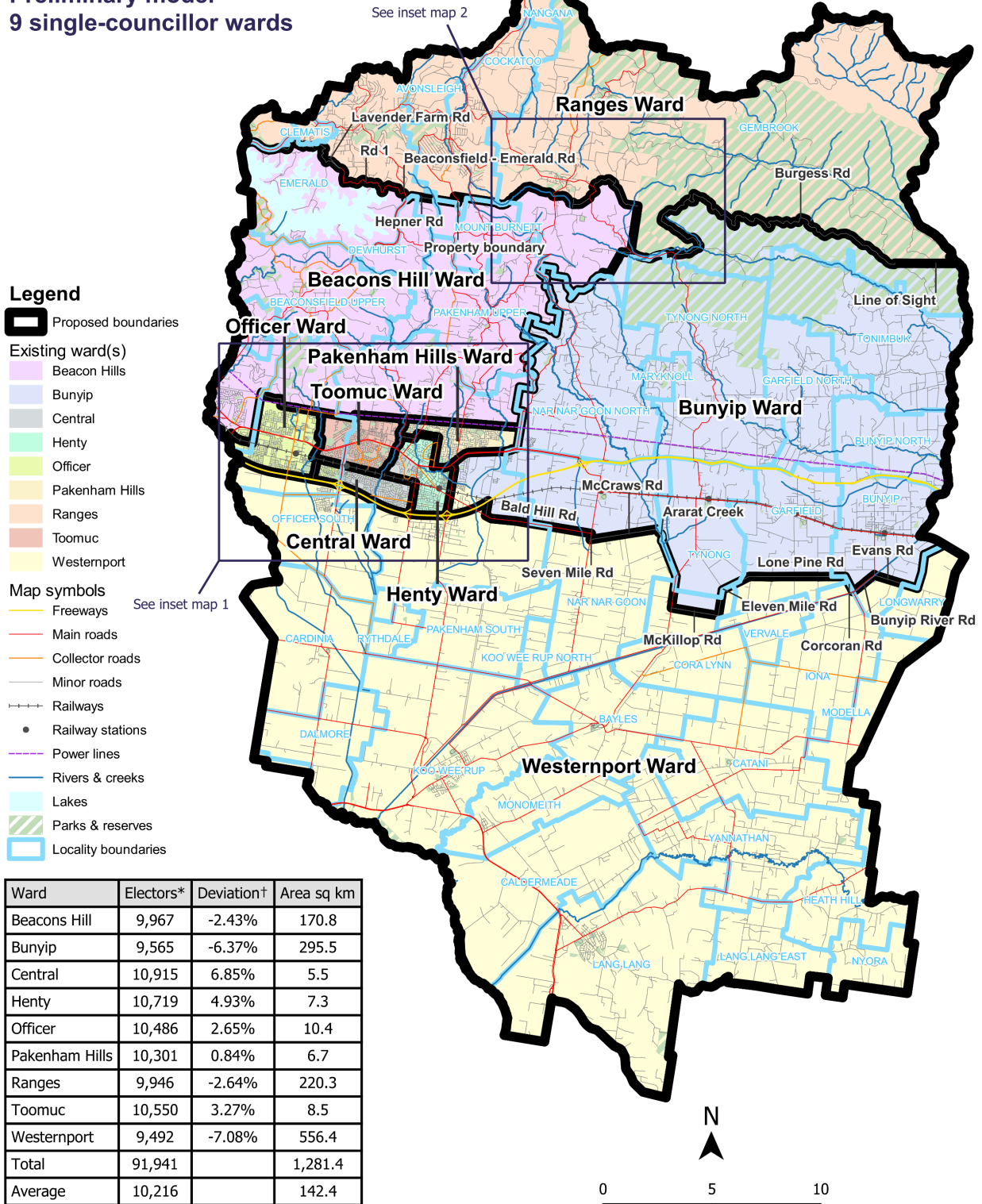
The following map is included in this report:

Map	Page
Preliminary model – with proposed changes to the boundaries of Central, Bunyip, Henty, Officer, Pakenham Hills, and Westernport wards.	19

Cardinia Shire Council

Preliminary model

9 single-councillor wards



*Elector numbers as at 3 November 2023
 †The deviations of all wards are projected to be within +/-10% by the time of the 2024 local government elections.

Map prepared by:

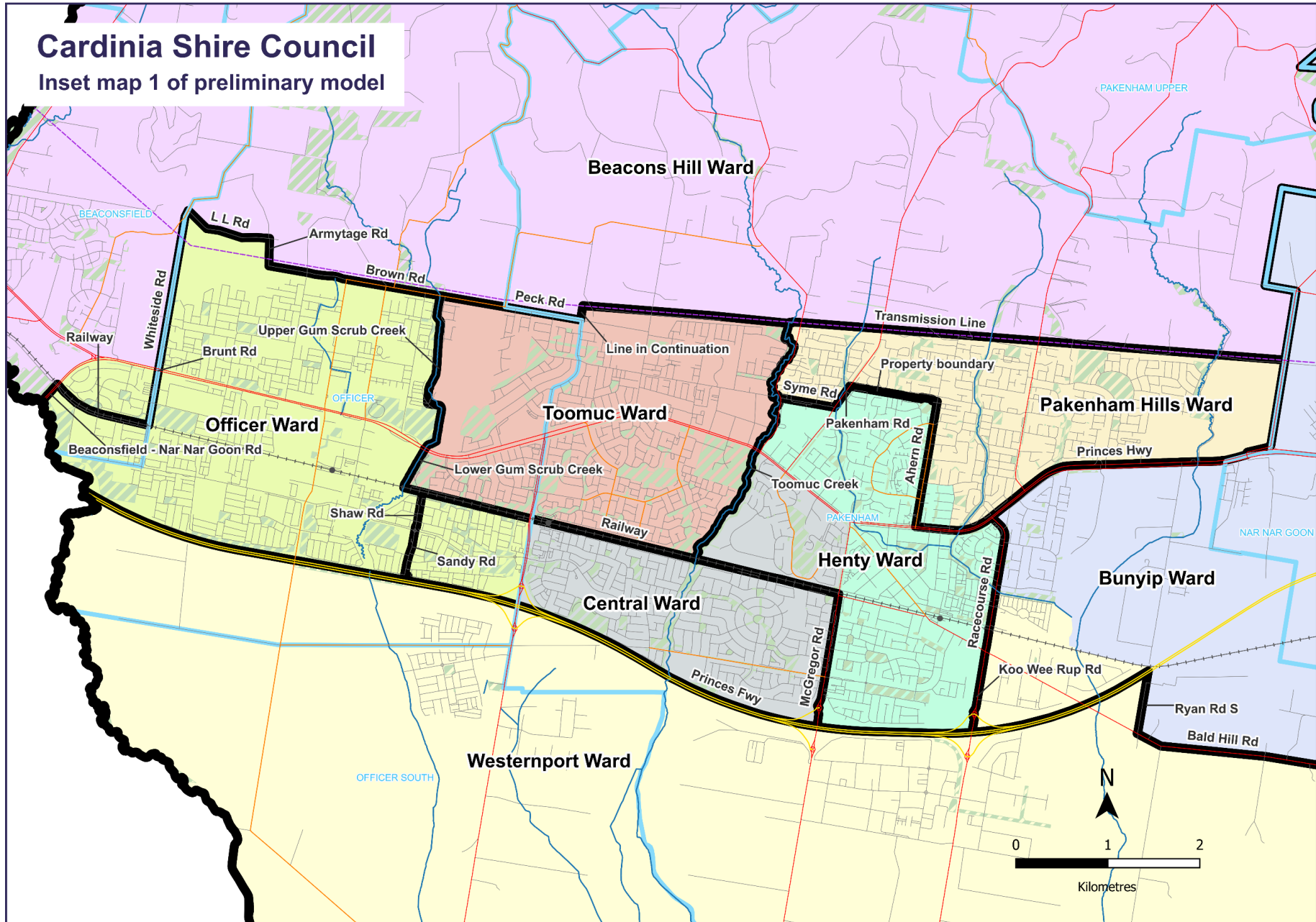


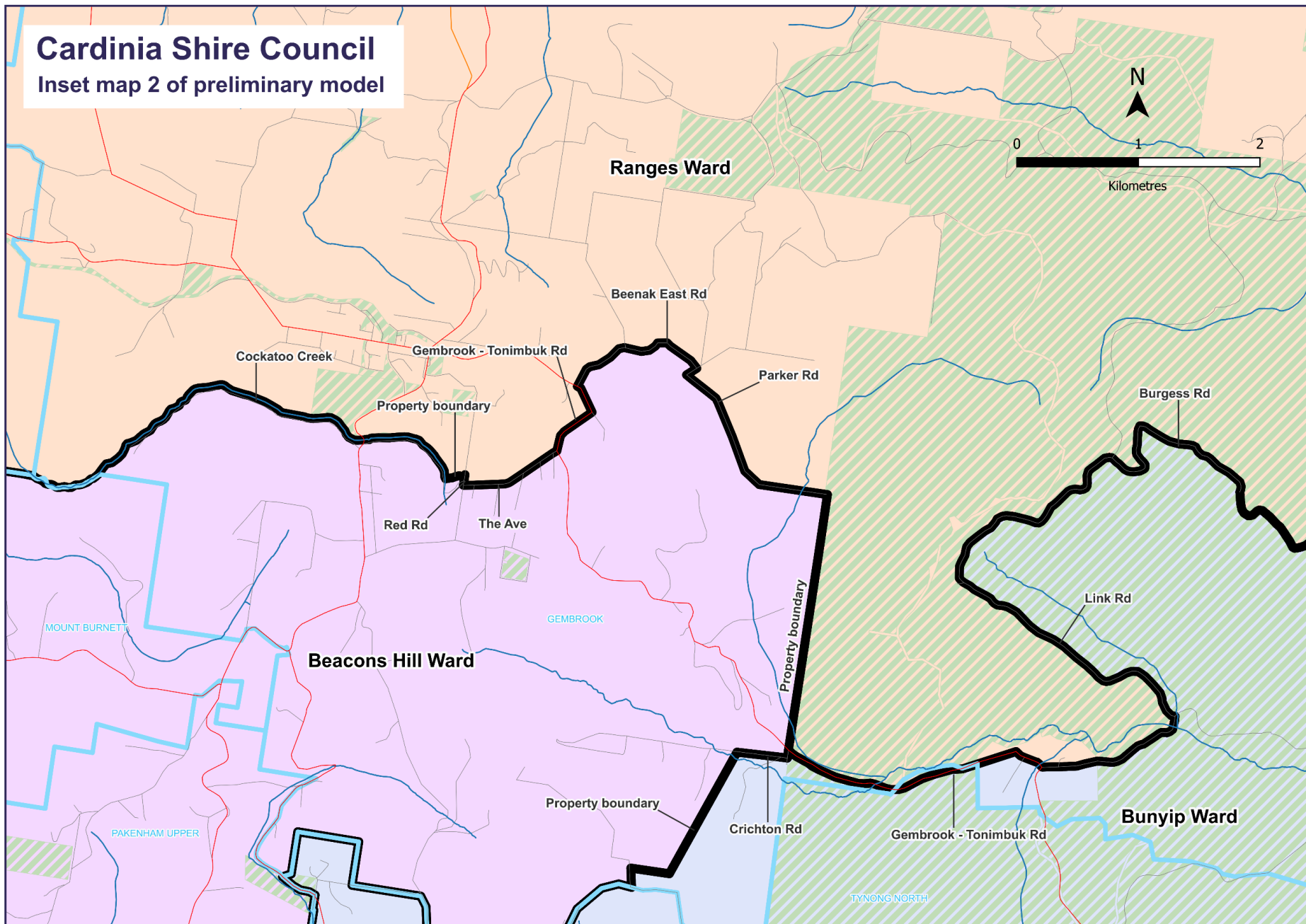
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Data for Model 1

Ward	Electors*	Deviation†	Area# (square km)
Beacons Hill	9,967	-2.43%	170.8
Bunyip	9,565	-6.37%	295.5
Central	10,915	6.85%	5.5
Henty	10,719	4.93%	7.3
Officer	10,486	2.65%	10.4
Pakenham Hills	10,301	0.84%	6.7
Ranges	9,946	-2.64%	220.3
Toomuc	10,550	3.27%	8.5
Westernport	9,492	-7.08%	556.4
Total	91,941	n/a	1,281.4
Average	10,216	n/a	142.4

*Elector numbers at 3 November 2023

† The deviations of all wards are forecast to be within +/-10% by the time of the 2024 local council elections. The current deviation of some wards may be set outside +/-10% at the time of the review to offset forecast change between the review and the 2024 election.

#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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