



2015-16

**Council  
Representation  
Reviews**

# **Final Report**

## **2015 Wellington Shire Council Electoral Representation Review**

*Wednesday 11 November 2015*

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# 1 Recommendation

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) recommends Wellington Shire Council consist of nine councillors elected from three three-councillor wards.

This recommendation is submitted to the Minister for Local Government as required by the *Local Government Act 1989*.

Please see Appendix 2 for a detailed map of this recommended structure.

## 2 Executive summary

The *Local Government Act 1989* (the Act) requires the VEC to conduct an electoral representation review of each municipality in Victoria before every third council general election.

The purpose of an electoral representation review is to recommend an electoral structure that provides fair and equitable representation for the persons who are entitled to vote at a general election of the council. The matters considered by a review are:

- the number of councillors
- the electoral structure of the council (whether the council should be unsubdivided or divided into wards and, if subdivided, the details of the wards).

The VEC conducts all reviews on the basis of three main principles:

1. ensuring the number of voters represented by each councillor is within 10 per cent of the average number of voters per councillor for that municipality
2. taking a consistent, State-wide approach to the total number of councillors and
3. ensuring communities of interest are as fairly represented as possible.

### Current electoral structure

The last electoral representation review for Wellington Shire Council took place in 2004. The review recommended that the Shire retain an unsubdivided structure with nine councillors.

### Preliminary submissions

Preliminary submissions opened at the commencement of the current review on Wednesday 22 July 2015. The VEC received 21 submissions by the deadline for submissions at 5.00 pm on Wednesday 19 August.

### Preliminary report

A preliminary report was released on Wednesday 16 September with the following options for consideration:

- Option A (preferred option)  
**Wellington Shire Council consist of nine councillors elected from an unsubdivided structure.**
- Option B (alternative option)  
**Wellington Shire Council consist of nine councillors elected from three three-councillor wards.**

## Response submissions

The VEC received 48 submissions responding to the preliminary report by the deadline for submissions at 5.00 pm on Wednesday 14 October.

## Public hearing

The VEC conducted a public hearing for those wishing to speak about their response submission at 6.00 pm on Wednesday 21 October. Eleven people spoke at the hearing.

## Recommendation

**The VEC recommends Wellington Shire Council consist of nine councillors elected from three three-councillor wards.**

This electoral structure was designated as Option B in the preliminary report. Please see Appendix 2 for a detailed map of this recommended structure.

## 3 Background

### 3.1 Legislative basis

The Act requires the VEC to conduct an electoral representation review of each municipality in Victoria before every third general council election, or earlier if gazetted by the Minister for Local Government.

The Act specifies that the purpose of a representation review is to recommend the number of councillors and the electoral structure that provides ‘fair and equitable representation for the persons who are entitled to vote at a general election of the Council.’<sup>1</sup>

The Act requires the VEC to consider:

- the number of councillors in a municipality and
- whether a municipality should be unsubdivided or subdivided.

If a municipality should be subdivided, the VEC must ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is within 10 per cent of the average number of voters per councillor for that municipality.<sup>2</sup> On this basis, the review must consider the:

- number of wards
- ward boundaries (and ward names)
- number of councillors that should be elected for each ward.

### 3.2 The VEC’s approach

#### Deciding on the number of councillors

The Act allows for a municipality to have between five and 12 councillors, but does not specify how to decide the appropriate number.<sup>3</sup> In considering the number of councillors for a municipality, the VEC is guided by the Victorian Parliament’s intention for fairness and equity in the local representation of voters under the Act.

The VEC considers that there are three major factors that should be taken into account:

- diversity of the population
- councillors’ workloads and
- profiles of similar municipalities.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 219D of the *Local Government Act 1989*.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Section 5B(1) of the *Local Government Act 1989*.

Generally, those municipalities that have a larger number of voters will have a higher number of councillors. Often large populations are more likely to be diverse, both in the nature and number of their communities of interest and the issues of representation.

However, the VEC considers the particular situation of each municipality in regards to: the nature and complexity of services provided by the Council; geographic size and topography; population growth or decline; and the social diversity of the municipality, including social disadvantage and cultural and age mix.

### **Deciding the electoral structure**

The Act allows for a municipality ward structure to be:

- unsubdivided—with all councillors elected ‘at large’ by all voters or
- subdivided into a number of wards.

If the municipality is subdivided into wards, there are a further three options available:

1. single-councillor wards
2. multi-councillor wards or
3. a combination of single-councillor and multi-councillor wards.

A subdivided municipality must have internal ward boundaries that provide for a fair and equitable division of the municipality, and ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor remains within 10 per cent of the average number of voters per councillor for the municipality.

In deciding which electoral structure is most appropriate, the VEC considers the following matters:

- communities of interest, encompassing people who share a range of common concerns, such as geographic, economic or cultural associations
- the longevity of the structure, with the aim of keeping voter numbers per councillor within the 10 per cent tolerance as long as possible
- geographic factors, such as size and topography
- the number of voters in potential wards, as wards with many voters can have a large number of candidates, which can lead to an increase in the number of informal (invalid) votes and
- clear ward boundaries.



### 3.3 The VEC's principles

Three main principles underlie all the VEC's work on representation reviews:

- 1. Ensuring the number of voters represented by each councillor is within 10 per cent of the average number of voters per councillor for that municipality.**

Over time, population changes can lead to some wards in subdivided municipalities having larger or smaller numbers of voters. As part of the review, the VEC corrects any imbalances and also takes into account likely population changes to ensure ward boundaries provide equitable representation for as long as possible.

- 2. Taking a consistent, State-wide approach to the total number of councillors.**

The VEC is guided by its comparisons of municipalities of a similar size and category to the council under review. The VEC also considers any special circumstances that may warrant the municipality having more or fewer councillors than similar municipalities.

- 3. Ensuring communities of interest are as fairly represented as possible.**

Each municipality contains a number of communities of interest. Where practicable, the electoral structure should be designed to ensure they are fairly represented, and that geographic communities of interest are not split by ward boundaries. This allows elected councillors to be more effective representatives of the people and interests in their particular municipality or ward.

### 3.4 The electoral representation review process

#### Developing recommendations

The VEC bases its recommendations for particular electoral structures on the following information:

- internal research specifically relating to the municipality under review, including Australian Bureau of Statistics and .id (Informed Decisions) Pty Ltd<sup>4</sup> data; voter statistics from the Victorian electoral roll; and other State and local government data sets
- small area forecasts provided by .id (Informed Decisions) Pty Ltd
- the VEC's experience conducting previous electoral representation reviews of local councils and similar reviews for State elections
- the VEC's expertise in mapping, demography and local government

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<sup>4</sup> .id is a company specialising in population and demographic analysis that builds suburb-level demographic information products in most jurisdictions in Australia and New Zealand.

- careful consideration of all input from the public in written and verbal submissions received during the review and
- advice from consultants with extensive experience in local government.

### **Public involvement**

Public input is accepted by the VEC:

- in preliminary submissions at the start of the review
- in response submissions to the preliminary report and
- in a public hearing that provides an opportunity for people who have made a response submission to expand on this submission.

Public submissions are an important part of the process, but are not the only consideration during a review. The VEC ensures its recommendations are in compliance with the Act and are formed through careful consideration of public submissions, independent research, and analysis of all relevant factors, such as the need to give representation to communities of interest.

## 4 Wellington Shire Council representation review

### 4.1 Profile of Wellington Shire Council

Wellington Shire is located in the Gippsland area of south-eastern Victoria. The Shire borders the South Gippsland, La Trobe, Baw Baw and Alpine local government areas and stretches from Victoria's high country to southern beaches and the Bass Strait. With a population of 42,220 people spread over approximately 10,817 square kilometres, Wellington is the third largest municipality in Victoria by area.<sup>5</sup>

As Table 1 shows, Wellington's population is concentrated around the city of Sale and the surrounding towns of Maffra, Yarram, Heyfield, Rosedale and Stratford, with settlements along the coast including Port Albert, Golden Beach, Loch Sport and Seaspray.<sup>6</sup> Agriculture, forestry, oil and gas are among the major economic drivers, with healthcare, accommodation and retail trade also contributing to the local economy. Other employers in the municipality include the retail trade sector, health care, social services and construction.<sup>7</sup>

There are approximately 42,533 voters in Wellington Shire, with 4,726 voters per councillor.<sup>8</sup> The Shire has a median age of 41, almost matching the median age for rural and regional Victoria generally of 41.6. Around 27 per cent of the population is aged between 50–69 years, also in line with the general demographics of rural and regional Victoria. The Shire has a reasonably low percentage of residents who speak a language other than English at home, and approximately 11 per cent of residents who were born overseas.

**Table 1: Current population estimates in major towns**

Sale	13,186
Maffra	5,112
Stratford	2,615
Yarram	2,168
Heyfield	1,937
Rosedale	1,600
Seaspray	316

In the five years between 2006 and 2011, just over 37 per cent of the population of the Wellington Shire changed address, demonstrating a similar level of population mobility in comparison to the general trend in rural and regional Victoria.

<sup>5</sup> Wellington Shire Council, *Council Plan 2013–17*.

<sup>6</sup> Wellington Shire Council *Annual Report, 2007–08*.

<sup>7</sup> Wellington Shire Council, *Council Plan 2013–17*, p.5.

<sup>8</sup> Data derived by Victorian Electoral Commission from State and Council voter rolls (as at January 2015). Estimated voter numbers are larger than the estimated resident populations as voters can be non-residents.

The Gunaikurnai people are recognised as the traditional inhabitants of much of the Wellington Shire.<sup>9</sup> Just over 1 per cent of the Shire's population identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

The Shire is home to some of the state's most significant tourist destinations and contains sections of the Alpine National Park, as well as the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park and Grand Strzelecki Track, the historic Port of Sale, and the Gippsland Regional Maritime and Armed Forces Museums.

## 4.2 Current electoral structure

The last electoral representation review for Wellington Shire Council took place in 2004. Prior to the review, the Shire was represented by nine councillors elected from an unsubdivided municipality. Following the 2004 review, the VEC recommended retaining this electoral structure.

## 4.3 Public information program

Public involvement is an important part of the representation review process. The Wellington Shire Council representation review commenced on Wednesday 22 July and the VEC conducted a public information program to inform the community, including:

- public notices of the review and the release of the preliminary report in local and state-wide papers
- media releases announcing the commencement of the review, the release of the preliminary report and the publication of this final report
- a public information session to outline the review process and respond to questions from the community
- coverage through the municipality's media, e.g. Council website or newsletter
- a helpline and dedicated email address to answer public enquiries
- ongoing information updates and publication of submissions on the VEC website and
- a *Guide for Submissions* to explain the review process and provide background information on the scope of the review.

See Appendix 3 for full details of the public information program.

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<sup>9</sup> Department of Premier and Cabinet, Victorian Government, *Registered Aboriginal Parties in Victoria*, 2014.

## 5 Preliminary report

### 5.1 Preliminary submissions

The VEC received 21 preliminary submissions by the deadline for submissions at 5.00 pm on Wednesday 19 August. Submissions were received from a broad mix of stakeholders including community organisations, a current councillor and individuals.

A number of submissions noted the number of voters with undevelopable properties in the Ninety Mile Beach area. Of those submissions, most suggested that the voter numbers in this area not be included in the calculation of voter numbers for the whole municipality. The VEC's response to this issue is discussed in section 5.2 of this report.

The submissions were made available on the VEC website.

#### Number of councillors

Most submissions identified nine as the appropriate number of councillors for Wellington Shire Council. A high number of submissions (over one third) did not state a preference for the number of councillors. Two submissions suggested increasing the number of councillors, with one of these submissions also suggesting that the number could be either increased or decreased.

#### Electoral structure

The majority of submissions expressed a desire to introduce a subdivided electoral structure, and a wide range of proposals for ward representation were put forward.

The most common subdivided model was a seven-ward municipality with a three-councillor ward for Sale and six single-councillor wards representing the other major population centres and their surrounds. Submitters in support of this option suggested that the outlying areas past Sale (including Yarram, Maffra, Heyfield, Stratford, Rosedale and Longford) were not being sufficiently represented, and that these areas would benefit from direct, local representation.

The next most common preference (put forward by over one third of submitters) was for a subdivided municipality, with no specific recommendation on the number of councillors or a specific configuration of wards.

Four submissions expressed a preference for the status quo of nine councillors elected from an unsubdivided municipality, although two of these preferred either the status quo or a subdivided model of three wards with three councillors each. Wellington Shire Council's submission favoured retaining the status quo of nine councillors elected from an unsubdivided municipality. The Council argued that the current model allows for optimal representation and accessibility, and promotes a strategic and municipality-wide approach by councillors.

Two submitters proposed a three three-councillor ward model for the Wellington Shire.

A list of people who made a preliminary submission can be found in Appendix 1.

## 5.2 Preliminary report

A preliminary report was released on Wednesday 16 September. The VEC considered public submissions and research findings when formulating the options presented in the preliminary report.

### Number of councillors

When considering the appropriate number of councillors for a municipality, the VEC assesses population data and other factors which may warrant an increase or decrease in the number of councillors, such as projected population growth or special circumstances relating to distinct communities of interest. The analysis of demographic data for Wellington Shire Council indicated that the number of voters in the Shire had grown by 4,619 since the time of the last review, generally consistent with the growth in other Gippsland municipalities (e.g. Bass Coast and East Gippsland Shire Councils).

As noted in the VEC's 2004 review of Wellington Shire Council, the Shire's voters' roll includes a disproportionately high number of non-resident property owners associated with undevelopable properties in the Ninety Mile Beach area. The anomalous non-resident voters in this area resulted from the sale of vacant land between Paradise Beach and The Honeysuckles in the 1950s and 60s,<sup>10</sup> which was subsequently subject to planning and development controls. While the VEC acknowledged the anomaly during the 2004 review, it determined that these non-resident owners of undevelopable properties must be included in the calculation of the total voting population of Wellington Shire. Given this group's diminishing numbers, and the fact that they have minimal demands on Council, the VEC determined that the area should not be over-represented with additional councillors.

In the current review, the VEC's preliminary analysis concluded that the statistical profile of Wellington Shire was otherwise highly consistent with rural and regional Victoria in general, and no increase in the number of councillors was needed on the grounds of population growth. The VEC therefore recommended no change be made to the current number of nine councillors.

### Electoral structure

In its preliminary report, the VEC found that an unsubdivided structure could be effective in addressing the constraints which arise with ward boundaries in a municipality with diverse geography and a population dispersed between an urban centre and outlying towns. The VEC

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<sup>10</sup> Wellington Shire Council, *Ninety Mile Beach Plan*, [wellington.vic.gov.au/Developing-Wellington/Planning-Projects/Ninety-Mile-Beach-Plan](http://wellington.vic.gov.au/Developing-Wellington/Planning-Projects/Ninety-Mile-Beach-Plan).

noted that an unsubdivided municipality was a suitable model as it would not prohibit voters being able to raise issues or vote on matters affecting them based on their location within the municipality, and could also overcome the challenge of the non-resident owners of undevelopable properties along the coast. The VEC put forward an unsubdivided model, reflecting the existing structure of the municipality, as its preferred option.

However, the VEC recognised that subdivided models were more popular in preliminary submissions than the unsubdivided structure, and considered a number of subdivided options in preparing the preliminary report. The most common suggestion put forward by submitters who preferred subdivision was a model with seven wards, including a three-councillor ward for Sale surrounded by six single-councillor wards. The VEC considered this option, but ultimately determined it would be unsuitable on the grounds that it could result in over-representation of the coastal area and potential for failed elections, with insufficient local population to draw candidates from. In addition, the diverse geography of the municipality made it difficult to encapsulate communities of interest within ward boundaries.

To reflect the call for subdivision expressed in submissions, with separate representation of Sale and the outlying towns, the VEC put forward a subdivided structure of three three-councillor wards for further consultation as Option B. The model was considered to achieve good representation of the geographic areas of the high country and Maffra, Sale, the southern regional communities, and the coast. It also grouped the interconnected towns of Sale and Longford, and retained a strong sense of unification of the southern part of the Shire.

### Options

After careful consideration, the VEC put forward the following options:

- Option A (preferred option)  
**Wellington Shire Council consist of nine councillors elected from an unsubdivided structure.**
- Option B (alternative option)  
**Wellington Shire Council consist of nine councillors elected from three three-councillor wards.**

## 6 Public response

### 6.1 Response submissions

The VEC accepted submissions responding to the preliminary report from Wednesday 16 September until 5.00 pm on Wednesday 14 October. The VEC received 48 response submissions. Of the 48 submissions received, 44 were from individuals and four were from organisations: Port Albert Progress Association; Proportional Representation Society of Australia; Seaspray Ratepayers Association and Wellington Shire Council. A list of people who made a response submission can be found in Appendix 1. Table 2 indicates the level of support for each option.

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**Table 2: Preferences expressed in response submissions**

Option A	Option B
2*	46

\* One of the submissions in favour of Option A also stated that Option B would be acceptable.

### Number of councillors

Based on its preliminary findings, the VEC put forward two options with nine councillors. While the preliminary submissions had demonstrated a slightly broader mix of views on what the appropriate number of councillors for the municipality should be, the response submissions were uniform in their support of nine councillors.

### Electoral structure

As outlined in Table 2, a clear majority of submissions supported the VEC's Option B: a subdivided structure of nine councillors elected from three wards of three councillors each. Of the 46 submissions received in favour of Option B, 23 submissions put forward similar reasons. Ten submissions supported Option B but did not provide reasons. The key themes of the response submissions are outlined below.

### *Lack of representation for towns outside of Sale*

Many of the preliminary submissions had raised concerns that the towns outside of Sale were not being sufficiently represented (including Yarram, Heyfield, Maffra, Stratford, Rosedale and Longford). Most of the submissions in support of Option B reiterated this sentiment, suggesting that the unsubdivided structure was not promoting equitable representation across the Shire.



### ***Direct accountability of local representatives***

Many submissions stated that the subdivision into three multi-councillor wards would be preferable as it would increase direct accountability of councillors, and would be more effective as local councillors would know local issues. A small number of submissions suggested that the proposed Option B would be more democratic.

### ***Size of the Shire***

Many submissions argued that the subdivided model would suit the size of the Shire, as it was difficult for councillors to represent the whole municipality in an unsubdivided structure. These submissions argued that the unsubdivided model would improve representation for the residents and ratepayers of outlying areas. The submissions referring to the size of the Shire stated that Option B was preferable to Option A in that it would provide a voice in council for the north, south and central areas of the Shire.

### ***Communities of interest***

The majority argued that Option B would provide for better representation of communities of interest, despite the constraints the VEC had identified related to ward boundaries. Several submissions commented that the proposed boundaries captured the distinct parts of the Shire well, from the high country in the north, around the town of Sale in the centre of the municipality and along the coast. No submitters were concerned about the potential mix of coastal and rural communities in Coastal Ward, which included the towns of Yarram and Port Albert in the south.

In contrast to preliminary submissions, only one response submission referred to the issue of the owners of undevelopable properties at Ninety Mile Beach. This submission indicated that Option B would not lead to over-representation of the largely non-resident population of this area.

## **6.2 Public hearing**

The VEC conducted a public hearing for those wishing to speak about their response submission at 6.00 pm on Wednesday 21 October in the Wellington Shire Council Chamber, Port of Sale Business Centre, 64–66 Foster Street, Sale. Eleven speakers attended the public hearing. A list of people who spoke at the hearing can be found in Appendix 1.

One speaker spoke in favour of Option A, and ten speakers in support of Option B.

### **Support for Option A: Retaining the current structure of nine councillors in an unsubdivided municipality**

A representative of the Wellington Shire Council argued in favour of retaining the current structure of nine councillors in an unsubdivided municipality. Council maintained that the whole Shire is represented under the current structure, including the outlying towns around Sale. Council provided detailed information about current and proposed projects across the Shire,

stating that Council takes a municipality-wide, strategic approach and funds infrastructure and community projects for the Shire as a whole.

### **Support for Option B: Three wards with three councillors per ward**

#### ***Recognising communities of interest***

Speakers in support of Option B focussed on the benefits of the three-ward model in recognising local communities of interest. These speakers emphasised the challenges presented by the large geographic size of the Shire, suggesting it was too large for councillors to be expected to travel or for constituents to visit council offices and meetings held in Sale. The smaller wards, it was argued, also reflected the social and cultural heritage of the areas encapsulated by Option B's boundaries.

While there were representatives from across the Shire at the public hearing, a number of speakers from Yarram and Port Albert emphasised the challenges of travelling from the far south of the Shire to Sale. A number of speakers also noted that there were no direct public transport routes between Yarram and Sale, limiting connectivity of the Shire. Speakers conceded that the wards would still be large under Option B, but generally preferred the subdivided model compared to the unsubdivided structure.

Several speakers in favour of Option B suggested that agricultural communities and industry representatives would be better served under the model. One speaker noted that there had been limited representation on Council from the farming community, and that the more local, multi-councillor ward model could facilitate this representation.

#### ***Maintaining a municipality-wide approach***

One of the potential limitations of the subdivided model is that councillors may focus on local ward issues at the expense of considering issues and acting in the interests of the municipality as a whole. Speakers at the public hearing did not express concern at this potential limitation. By contrast, speakers in favour of the ward model argued that it would still facilitate a municipality-wide approach, as local councillors would act as a group in the interests of the whole municipality, as well as bringing their specific local ward perspectives.

#### ***Smaller wards will encourage candidates to nominate***

The VEC noted that there could be a risk of a smaller number of candidates for the fewer vacancies available in Option B compared with the unsubdivided structure. In response to this concern, speakers suggested that the subdivision of the municipality would re-invigorate interest in the local community and that the number of candidates nominating for election would be adequate to ensure contested elections.

Several speakers suggested that the subdivided model would encourage more candidates to nominate for local government elections. Two speakers argued that the subdivided structure would encourage more female candidates in particular, suggesting that the smaller geographic distance would reduce the costs and travel time required for campaigning.

## 7 Findings and recommendation

### 7.1 The VEC's findings

The VEC has taken into account the key themes expressed in submissions to the representation review, as well as internal research and analysis to develop its final recommendation. The recommendation complies with the legislative equality requirement, acknowledges communities of interest and was supported in several submissions.

#### **Number of councillors**

Determining the number of councillors for Wellington Shire Council was not a substantially disputed element of this review. The VEC's final recommendation is consistent with the findings of its preliminary report. The VEC recommends retaining the existing number of nine councillors on the basis that no increase or decrease is warranted considering population trends or special circumstances relating to distinct communities of interest.

The analysis of demographic data indicated that the annual population growth rate is 0.6 per cent and the number of voters in the Shire is consistent with other Gippsland municipalities (e.g. Bass Coast and East Gippsland Shire Councils).

#### **Electoral structure**

In contrast to the question of the number of councillors, determining the electoral structure for Wellington Shire Council was a more complex matter to resolve. The most common option put forward in preliminary submissions was a model with seven wards, including a three-councillor ward for Sale surrounded by six single-councillor wards for the remainder of the Shire. As outlined in the preliminary report, this was not a workable option as it could not accommodate the legislative voter-to-councillor ratio requirements.

The VEC put forward two electoral structures in its preliminary report which were both considered to facilitate fair and equitable representation. Option A, an unsubdivided structure, reflected the status quo, while Option B, a subdivided structure with nine councillors in three three-councillor wards, responded to the strong sentiment expressed in submissions for a local ward model reflecting geographic and social communities of interest of Wellington Shire.

#### ***Option A: Nine councillors elected from an unsubdivided municipality***

The VEC put forward the current unsubdivided structure as its preferred option. An unsubdivided structure means that residents and ratepayers vote for the whole council, rather than on a ward-by-ward basis. An unsubdivided structure also potentially promotes a municipality-wide approach to issues, allowing all constituents to approach all councillors on issues of concern to them, regardless of the location of either the councillor or constituent. An unsubdivided structure for

Wellington Shire Council also overcame the challenge of allowing for the non-resident owners of undevelopable properties along the Ninety Mile Beach without over-representing the coastal area.

Ideally, an unsubdivided structure also increases the choice of candidates for voters. However, in the case of Wellington, the VEC noted the strong desire expressed in written submissions and at the public hearing that, based on the large geographic size and diversity of the Shire, the subdivided structure would be preferable for encouraging candidates and local representation. The VEC has observed that while the number of Sale-based councillors is proportionate to the population, current Council membership has a gap in geographic representation from the far south, west and north of the Shire. It should be noted that in recent elections in the Wellington Shire there were 14 and 12 candidates standing for nine vacancies. While an unsubdivided model can be beneficial in potentially encouraging candidates, in Wellington there is still a relatively low number standing for the nine council positions.

***Option B: Nine councillors elected from three wards of three councillors each***

The subdivided structure put forward in Option B meets the desire expressed in many submissions to introduce ward representation. The three wards provide separate representation for the high country and Maffra, Sale, the southern communities, and the coast. Under this structure, the coastal area would not be under-represented (as many submitters argue is currently the case) or over-represented, and ensures all wards (including the Ninety Mile Beach area) comply with the accepted tolerance based on enrolment.

This model groups the interconnected towns of Sale and Longford, and retains a strong sense of unification of the southern part of the Shire. It also uses the Thomson River and Merriman Creek as a clear and logical boundary, which is easy for voters to identify.

Option B provides three councillors for each ward to ensure that adequate representation can be achieved for the different communities that exist within each of the wards. After hearing public submissions on this matter, the VEC is satisfied that there is strong acceptance of the ward boundaries as reasonably encapsulating communities of interest.

**Summary**

The VEC has carefully considered the most appropriate electoral structure for Wellington Shire Council. The current number of councillors was generally accepted by submitters throughout consultation on the review, and the VEC is recommending the number of councillors for the Shire remains at nine. In terms of electoral structure, there was a clear appetite to move to a subdivided electoral structure expressed through submissions to the review.

Through both stages of written submissions and at the public hearing, many submitters expressed a perception that Sale was being disproportionately favoured over other distinct communities in the Council's decision making. The purpose of this review is not to test the accuracy of this perception, but to consider an electoral structure for Wellington Shire Council that will best deliver fair and equitable representation for voters into the future. The VEC provided two viable options for the community's feedback in its preliminary report—Option A proposed retaining Wellington Shire's unsubdivided electoral structure and Option B introduced three three-councillor wards for the Shire.

The VEC recognises the challenge of providing effective representation across Wellington Shire's geographically large and diverse landscape. Based on the evidence and persuasive descriptions of Wellington Shire's unique communities of interest, it is clear that a move to a subdivided electoral structure will allow the best opportunity for these communities to be represented on Wellington Shire Council. Therefore, the VEC recommends Option B.

## **7.2 The VEC's recommendation**

**The VEC recommends Wellington Shire Council consist of nine councillors elected from three three-councillor wards.**

## Appendix 1: Public involvement

### Preliminary submissions

Preliminary submissions were received from:

Lyle Allan

Christopher Cato

John Coghill

Michael Glebov

Christopher Goold

David and Lucy Gregory

Jane Hildebrant

Michael Hobson

Diane Hogan

Fairlie Kermode

Brian Lee

Gayle Maher

Darren McCubbin

Gary Proud

Saul Stainer

Garry Stephens

John Street

Port Albert Progress Association

Proportional Representation Society (Victoria-Tasmania) Inc

Seaspray Ratepayers & Progress Association Inc

Wellington Shire Council

## Response submissions

Response submissions were received from:

Valerie Austin	Jane Hildebrant	Port Albert Progress Association
Peter Beagley	Michael Hobson	Proportional Representation Society of Australia (Victoria-Tasmania) Inc
Ian Blackmore	Diane Hogan	Gary Proud
Peter Bond	John Hogan	Margaret Proud
Robyn Clarke	Angus & Lynette Hughes	Fiona Reynolds
Robert Clench	Joy Jarvis	Birgit Sarsfield
John Coghill	Fairlie Kermodé	Christopher Sarsfield
Joyce Cumming	June Kerridge	Seaspray Ratepayers & Progress Association
Warren Curry	Ulla Killury	Brian Stackhouse
Jennifer Dickinson	Dale Kosta	Saul Stainer
Allan Evans	Peter Madden	John Steel
Gary Evison	Ben Maher	Garry Stephens
Lewis Farley	Gayle Maher	Ben Street
Michael Glebov	Phoebe Maher	John Street
David Goodall	Deirdre Marshall	Wellington Shire Council
Heather Hall	Christine McIntosh	Terry & Barbara Willmott



## Public hearing

The following individuals spoke at the public hearing:

John Coghill

Gary Evison

Jane Hildebrandt

Michael Hobson

Fairlie Kermode

Port Albert Progress Association

Maggie Evison, Seaspray Ratepayers & Progress Association

Saul Stainer

Gary Stephens

John Street

Arthur Skipitaris, General Manager Corporate Services, Wellington Shire Council

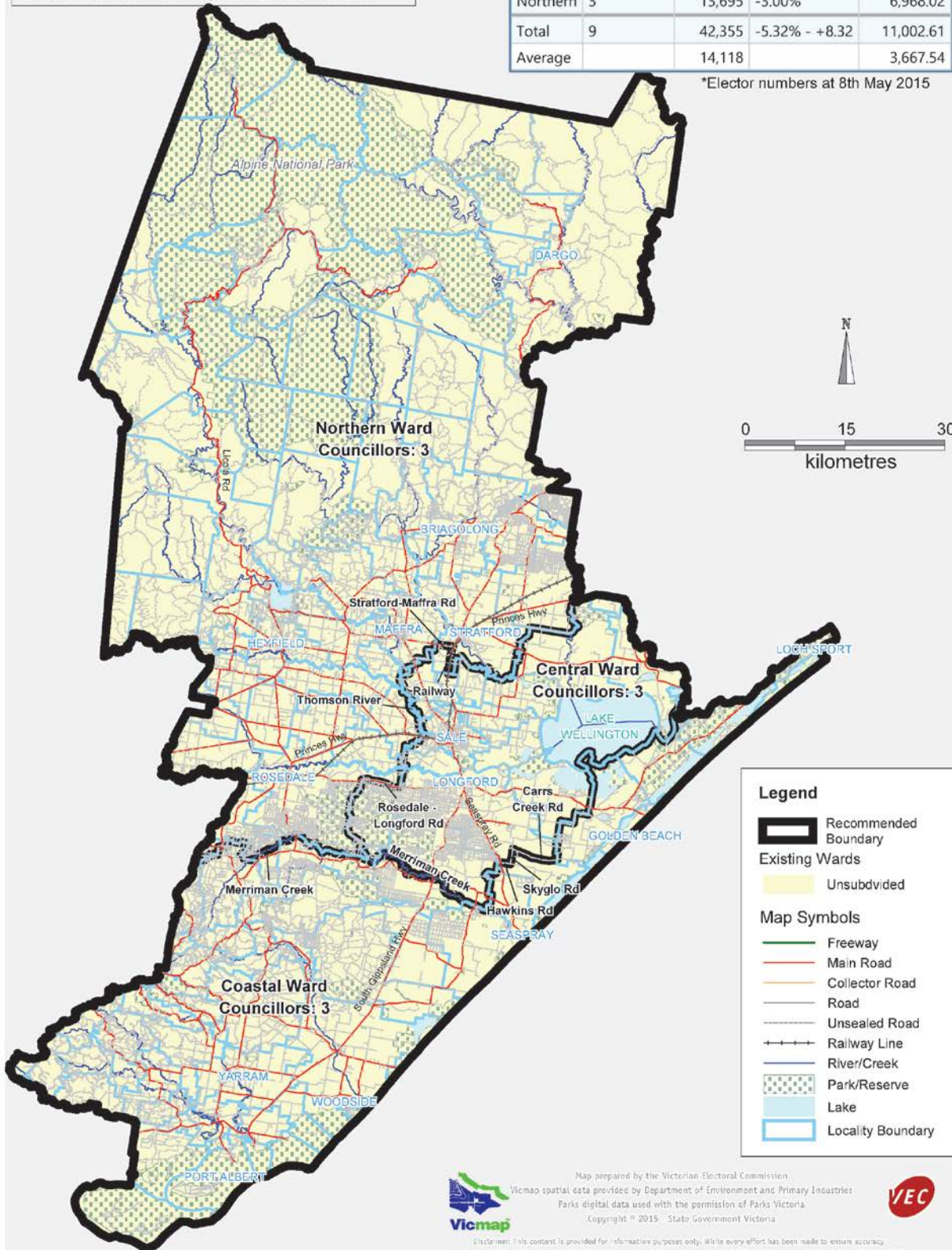
## Appendix 2: Map

### Wellington Shire Council

Map of Recommended Option  
Nine Councillors, Three Wards

Ward	Councillors	Electors*	Deviation	Area sq km
Central	3	13,367	-5.32%	1,210.11
Coastal	3	15,293	+8.32%	2,824.48
Northern	3	13,695	-3.00%	6,968.02
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>42,355</b>	<b>-5.32% - +8.32</b>	<b>11,002.61</b>
<b>Average</b>		<b>14,118</b>		<b>3,667.54</b>

\*Elector numbers at 8th May 2015



Map prepared by the Victorian Electoral Commission  
Vicmap spatial data provided by Department of Environment and Primary Industries  
Parks digital data used with the permission of Parks Victoria  
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## Appendix 3: Public information program

### Advertising

In accordance with the Act, public notices of the review and the release of the preliminary report were placed in the following newspapers:

Newspaper	Notice of review	Notice of preliminary report
<i>Herald Sun</i>	Wednesday 15 July	Wednesday 9 September
<i>Yarram Standard News</i>	Wednesday 22 July	Wednesday 16 September
<i>Latrobe Valley Express</i>	Thursday 23 July	Thursday 17 September
<i>Sale Gippsland Times</i>	Friday 24 July	Friday 18 September

### Media releases

A media release was prepared and distributed to local media at the commencement of the review on Wednesday 22 July. A further release was distributed at the publication of the preliminary report on Wednesday 16 September. A final release was circulated on the publication date of this final report.

### Public information session

A public information session for people interested in the review process was held on Tuesday 28 July in the Wellington Shire Council Chamber, Port of Sale Business Centre, 64–66 Foster Street, Sale.

### Helpline and email address

A telephone helpline and dedicated email address were established to assist members of the public with enquiries about the review process.

### VEC website

The VEC website delivered up-to-date information to provide transparency and facilitate public participation during the review process. An online submission tool was made available and all public submissions were posted on the website.

### Guide for Submissions

A *Guide for Submissions* was developed and distributed to those interested in making submissions. Copies of the *Guide* were available on the VEC website, in hardcopy on request and also provided to Council.

### Council website and newsletter

Information about the review was provided to Council for publication in council media, e.g. website and newsletter.

Victorian Electoral Commission  
Level 11, 530 Collins Street  
Melbourne VIC 3000

131 832

[wellington.review@vec.vic.gov.au](mailto:wellington.review@vec.vic.gov.au)