



2015-16

**Council
Representation
Reviews**

Final Report

2015 Towong Shire Council Electoral Representation Review

Wednesday 10 June 2015

This page has been left intentionally blank

Contents

1 Executive summary.....	4
2 Background.....	6
2.1 Legislative basis.....	6
2.2 The VEC’s approach.....	6
2.3 The VEC’s principles.....	8
2.4 The electoral representation review process.....	8
3 Towong Shire Council representation review.....	10
3.1 Profile of Towong Shire Council.....	10
3.2 Current electoral structure.....	11
3.3 Public information program.....	11
4 Preliminary report.....	13
4.1 Preliminary submissions.....	13
4.2 Preliminary report.....	14
5 Public response.....	15
5.1 Response submissions.....	15
5.2 Public hearing.....	16
6 Findings and recommendation.....	17
6.1 The VEC’s findings.....	17
6.2 The VEC’s recommendation.....	21
Appendix 1: Public involvement.....	22
Appendix 2: Map.....	23

1 Executive summary

The *Local Government Act 1989* (the Act) requires the Victorian Electoral Commission (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 Towong Shire Council took place in 2004. The review recommended that Towong Shire Council consist of five councillors elected from an unsubdivided structure.

Preliminary submissions

Preliminary submissions opened at the commencement of the current review on Wednesday 18 February. The VEC received five submissions by the deadline for submissions at 5.00 pm on Wednesday 18 March.

Preliminary report

A preliminary report was released on Wednesday 15 April with the following options for consideration:

- Option A (preferred option)
Towong Shire Council consist of five councillors elected from an unsubdivided structure.

- Option B (alternative option)

Towong Shire Council consist of five councillors elected from two two-councillor wards and one single-councillor ward.

Response submissions

The VEC received four submissions responding to the preliminary report by the deadline for submissions at 5.00 pm on Wednesday 13 May.

Public hearing

The VEC scheduled a public hearing for those wishing to speak about their response submission at 10.00 am on Tuesday 19 May. There were no requests to speak so the hearing was not held.

Recommendation

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) recommends Towong Shire Council continue to consist of five councillors elected from an unsubdivided municipality.

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

2 Background

2.1 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.’¹

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.² 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.

2.2 The VEC’s approach

Deciding on the number of councillors

The Act allows for a municipality to have between 5 and 12 councillors, but does not specify how to decide the appropriate number.³ 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.

¹ Section 219D of the *Local Government Act 1989*.

² *ibid.*

³ 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 considering 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.

2.3 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.

2.4 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 data⁴; 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

⁴ .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.

3 Towong Shire Council representation review

3.1 Profile of Towong Shire Council

Towong Shire is located in far north-east Victoria, near the major regional centre of Albury-Wodonga on the Hume Freeway corridor. With an area of approximately 6,670 square kilometres, up to 65 per cent of the Shire is natural environment and conservation area and 25 per cent agriculture and timber plantations. It is bordered by the Murray River (and the New South Wales border) in the north and east; the City of Wodonga and Indigo Shire in the west; and East Gippsland and Alpine Shires in the south.

Towong Shire has a population of 5,940 (with 5,520 estimated voters) and a low population density—less than one person per square kilometre.⁵ The main towns are Corryong in the north-east (with 25 per cent of the Shire's population) and Tallangatta in the north-west (with 16 per cent of the population). Other townships include Bellbridge, Bethanga, Walwa and Eskdale. About 50 per cent of the population reside outside the townships. Towong Shire has an average of 1,104 voters per councillor, about one third of the average number for rural and regional Victoria as a whole.⁶

The median age in Towong is relatively high at 47 (compared with the rural and regional Victorian median of 42), with 15 per cent of the population aged 70 years or over. The population is expected to continue ageing over the next 20 years, with significant out-migration of people aged 15–29.⁷ On average, Towong Shire's population is projected to remain static or slightly decline over the next 12 years, a common trend in much of inland rural Victoria.⁸

Approximately 11 per cent of Towong Shire's population was born overseas, but only around 1 per cent of the population speak a language other than English at home (compared with 5 per cent in rural and regional Victoria generally). The original inhabitants of the area include the Waywurru and Dhudhuroa language groups.⁹ People identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander comprise 1.4 per cent of the population. There is a very low mobility rate, with only 9 per cent of people reporting a change of address between 2006 and 2011, compared with the rural and regional average of 38 per cent.

Agriculture (mainly beef cattle farming), forestry and fishing provide 24 per cent of the employment in the Shire—these industries only employ 8 per cent in rural and regional Victoria

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) *Estimated Resident Population*, 2012.

⁶ Data derived by Victorian Electoral Commission from State and Council voter rolls (as at January 2015).

⁷ Rural Councils Victoria, *Rural Migration: Trends and Drivers*, 2013, p.15.

⁸ Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure, *Victoria in Future 2014 – Population and Household Projections to 2051*, 2014.

⁹ Reid, J. and Blake, Barry J., 'The Dhudhuroa language of northeastern Victoria: a description based on historical sources', *Aboriginal History*, Vol. 26, 2002, pp 177-209.

as a whole. As in regional and rural Victoria generally, manufacturing and construction are important industries in Towong Shire, employing 16 per cent of the workforce combined, along with health care and social services comprising 12 per cent of the workforce.¹⁰

Towong Shire is located at the headwaters of the Murray River. Other important natural features include the Burrowa-Pine Mountain National Park in the north-east; the foothills of Mount Bogong and part of the Alpine National Park in the south; and the foothills of the Snowy Mountains in the south-east.

3.2 Current electoral structure

The Towong Shire Council has an unsubdivided structure with five councillors. This structure was recommended by the VEC following the 2004 electoral representation review.

The recommendation was based on the following considerations:

- Towong Shire's low number of voters and declining population
- many of the Council's responsibilities are Shire-wide
- representation for communities of interest can be achieved through means other than subdivision into wards (including local consultation)
- the public's concerns around achieving a geographic spread of candidates would likely be addressed by the introduction of proportional representation in the following election and
- despite the relatively large geographic size of Towong Shire, the number of voters per councillor remains substantially lower than in most other municipalities in Victoria.

Half the public response submissions to the 2004 review supported retention of the unsubdivided structure.

3.3 Public information program

Public involvement is an important part of the representation review process. The Towong Shire Council representation review commenced on Wednesday 18 February and the VEC conducted a public information program to inform the community.

¹⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics *Regional Profile*, 2012.

Advertising

In accordance with the Act, public notices of the review and the release of the preliminary report were placed in the newspapers listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Public notices

Newspaper	Notice of review	Notice of preliminary report
<i>Herald Sun</i>	Wednesday 4 February	Wednesday 1 April
<i>Corryong Courier</i>	Thursday 19 February	Thursday 16 April
<i>Tallangatta Herald</i>	Thursday 12 February	Thursday 16 April
<i>Albury Border Mail</i>	Saturday 21 February	Saturday 18 April

Media release

A media release was prepared and distributed to local media at the commencement of the review on Wednesday 18 February. A further release was distributed at the publication of the preliminary report on Wednesday 15 April.

Public information sessions

Public information sessions for people interested in the review process were held on Tuesday 24 February at 3.00 pm at the Corryong RSL Hall, Donaldson Street, Corryong and 7.00 pm at the Tallangatta Memorial Hall, Banool Road, Tallangatta.

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.

4 Preliminary report

4.1 Preliminary submissions

The VEC received five preliminary submissions by the deadline for submissions at 5.00 pm on Wednesday 18 March. Submissions were made by two local residents; community group Upper Murray Business Inc; the Proportional Representation Society of Australia (PRSA); and Towong Shire Council. A list of people who made a preliminary submission can be found in Appendix 1.

Number of councillors

The majority of submissions supported increasing the number of councillors. Of the submissions preferring an increase in councillor numbers, one proposed an increase to six and three suggested an increase to seven councillors. Two submissions supported either an increase in the number of councillors or retention of the existing number of councillors.

Towong Shire Council's submission stated that, while the current number of five councillors was adequate, councillor numbers could be increased to six. Council argued that the cost of increasing councillor numbers would be minimal and an additional councillor would assist meeting attendance, enabling more councillors to be involved in key decision-making.

Issues raised by other submitters included the need to cover councillors' absences from meetings and events, which were sometimes caused by the large distances required to travel across the Shire.

Electoral structure

Subdivision into wards

There was no clear consensus on the electoral structure expressed in preliminary submissions. While three submissions preferred dividing the council into wards, there were differences of opinion as to whether the subdivision should be into two or three wards.

Two-ward model

Towong Shire has two large town centres: Corryong in the east and Tallangatta in the west, divided by the natural boundary of mountain ranges in between. Two submissions in favour of subdivision argued that the natural boundaries could be used to create a two-ward model, resulting in more local representation of distinct communities.

The submissions of Brian Fraser and Beverley Stewart favoured two multi-councillor wards with a boundary separating the eastern and western sides of the Shire. One submission stated that the areas of Mitta Valley and Bethanga Peninsula have not had representation for some time.

Three-ward model

Upper Murray Business Inc suggested the natural boundaries could create three wards known as 'Upper Murray', 'Bellbridge and Surrounds' and 'Tallangatta/Mitta'. The group submitted that an Upper Murray ward (with two councillors) in the east would represent the older, lower socio-economic demographic; a Bellbridge and Surrounds ward (with one councillor) in the north-west would represent the younger population working in Albury-Wodonga; and a Tallangatta/Mitta ward (with two councillors) in the south-west would represent the mix of higher and lower socio-economic residents of the area.

Retaining existing unsubdivided structure

Towong Shire Council argued that the existing unsubdivided structure was working well and ensuring adequate representation. Council's submission affirmed that councillors take a whole-of-council approach in an unsubdivided structure, working together in a holistic way on overarching strategies for the Shire. The PRSA also supported retaining the unsubdivided structure, on the grounds that this would provide the benefits of proportional representation; reduce the risk of tied votes at council meetings given the odd number of councillors; and give voters a greater choice of candidates. The PRSA also argued that the unsubdivided structure reduced the likelihood of uncontested elections, and that communities of interest need not be rigidly geographic.

4.2 Preliminary report

A preliminary report was released on Wednesday 15 April. The VEC considered public submissions and research findings when formulating the options presented in the preliminary report. After careful consideration, the VEC put forward the following options:

- Option A (preferred option)
Towong Shire Council consist of five councillors elected from an unsubdivided structure.
- Option B (alternative option)
Towong Shire Council consist of five councillors elected from two two-councillor wards and one single-councillor ward.

5 Public response

5.1 Response submissions

The VEC accepted submissions responding to the preliminary report from Wednesday 15 April until 5.00 pm on Wednesday 13 May. The VEC received four response submissions. 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.

Table 2: Preferences expressed in response submissions

Option A	Option B	Non-VEC Option
2	1	1*

* One submission presented an option outside those presented by the VEC, with five councillors elected from two two-councillor wards and one single-councillor ward, with different boundaries to those of the preliminary report's Option B.

Half of the response submissions supported the VEC's Option A, one submission supported the subdivided model (Option B), and one proposed a subdivided model of five councillors with boundaries different to those presented in Option B of the VEC's preliminary report.

Number of councillors

There was uniform support throughout response submissions for five councillors as the appropriate number for Towong Shire Council.

The PRSA supported Option A (five councillors) on the grounds that an odd number of councillors prevents stalemates and promotes a decisive council.

Towong Shire Council's submission stated that five councillors is an adequate number, although did raise some concerns that if one or two councillors are absent from meetings, it can limit debate on issues. Council noted the difficulties for councillors in covering such a large municipality, but supported the VEC's Option A of five councillors.

The Corryong Neighbourhood Centre supported five councillors, but preferred that they be spread over single and multi-councillor wards. The submission of Annette and Robert Redfern and Kevin and Pauline Davis also supported five councillors according to the VEC's Option B.

Electoral structure

Subdivision into wards

The sentiment expressed in submissions revealed the sense of difference between the eastern and western parts of the municipality. The Corryong Neighbourhood Centre stated that there was

a lack of representation for the majority of the population and that the area with the smallest population has the most representation.

The Centre's submission addressed this concern by presenting an option with three separate wards, using different boundaries to the VEC's subdivided model of Option B. The Centre argued that two councillors would represent the eastern end of the Shire with the largest population base; one councillor would represent the centre area with a smaller population; and two councillors in the western end of the shire would represent the higher socio-economic demographic and similar population numbers to the eastern end.

The submission of four local residents of Corryong supported Option B, which clearly distinguishes the communities of interest in the eastern end of the shire (with the Upper Murray Ward) and the western end of the shire (with the Tallangatta/Mitta Ward).

Retaining existing unsubdivided structure

Two submissions (Towong Shire Council and the PRSA) favoured retaining the current unsubdivided structure. Towong Shire Council reaffirmed its position from its preliminary submission, stating that the existing unsubdivided structure was working well and ensuring adequate representation. The Council's submission asserted that councillors take a whole-of-council approach in an unsubdivided structure, working together on overarching strategies for the Shire.

The PRSA also supported retaining the unsubdivided structure on the grounds that it promotes a decisive council; avoids uncontested elections; and results in an absolute majority of voters electing an absolute majority of councillors.

5.2 Public hearing

The VEC scheduled a public hearing for those wishing to speak about their response submission at 10.00 am on Tuesday 19 May at the Tallangatta Memorial Hall, Banool Road, Tallangatta.

There were no requests to speak so the hearing was not held.

6 Findings and recommendation

6.1 The VEC's findings

The overall findings of the VEC are based on internal research, preliminary submissions and response submissions to the options put forward for comment. Ensuring the number of voters represented by each councillor is within 10 per cent of the average number of voters per councillor is also taken into account. Based on these considerations, the VEC recommends that Towong Shire Council continue to consist of five councillors from an unsubdivided municipality.

Number of councillors

The VEC considers that municipalities of a similar size and type should have a similar number of councillors. According to current estimates, Towong Shire is currently one of the smaller rural municipalities in Victoria.¹¹ In relation to population and geographic size, the Shire is the fourth smallest rural municipality in Victoria. Table 3 demonstrates the electoral structures of similarly sized rural councils, indicating that Towong is comparable to other rural councils with five councillors.

As Towong Shire's population is not predicted to grow, and there is no significant development or other population pressures that would justify an increase in councillors' responsibilities, the VEC considers that an increase in the number of councillors is not supported by the demographic data.

Historically, the VEC has preferred an odd number of councillors to reduce the possibility of tied votes at Council meetings and the need to use a mayoral casting vote, potentially increasing pressure on the Council's decision-making processes. While Towong Shire Council's preliminary submission outlined some arguments for increasing the councillor numbers to six (to cover the geographic distances of the municipality and attend community events), Council's response submission concluded that five councillors is adequate. There was also considerable support in the preliminary and response submissions for retaining the current number of councillors. For these reasons, the VEC recommends retaining the number of councillors at five.

¹¹ 2011 Census population data, *Guide for Submissions: 2015 Towong Shire Council Electoral Representation Review*, p.22.

Table 3: Electoral structures of comparative Victorian councils

Municipality	Area (km ²)	Population (2011 Census)	Number of voters at last review	Current estimate of voters [#]	Number of councillors	Number of voters per councillor	Electoral structure
Alpine*	4,788	12,044	11,198	11,569	7	1,653	Unsubdivided
Central Goldfields	1,533	12,602	11,017	11,114	7	1,588	3 x single-councillor wards 1 x four-councillor ward
Northern Grampians	5,728	11,799	10,540	10,925	7	1,561	2 x single-councillor wards 1 x two-councillor ward 1 x three-councillor ward
Mansfield	3,844	8,185	9,429	10,363	5	2,073	3 x single-councillor wards 1 x two-councillor ward
Strathbogie	3,303	9,706	9,268	9,628	7	1,375	3 x single-councillor wards 2 x two-councillor wards
Loddon	6,696	7,443	7,669	7,567	5	1,513	5 x single-councillor wards
Pyrenees	3,435	6,770	7,120	7,264	5	1,453	5 x single-councillor wards
Yarriambiack*	7,326	7,018	6,998	6,116	7	874	2 x two-councillor wards 1 x three-councillor ward
Buloke	8,000	6,221	6,149	5,887	7	841	2 x two-councillor wards 1 x three-councillor ward
Towong*	6,675	5,889	5,482	5,520	5	1,104	Unsubdivided
Hindmarsh*	7,524	5,695	5,306	5,003	6	834	3 x two-councillor wards
Queenscliffe	9	3,058	4,245	4,237	5	847	Unsubdivided
West Wimmera*	9,108	4,089	4,279	3,917	5	783	Unsubdivided

* The municipality is currently undergoing an electoral representation review by the VEC during 2015–16.

Voter estimate calculated after the January 2015 merge of the State electoral roll and Council-only electors as at the 2012 council elections.

Retaining existing unsubdivided structure

The VEC acknowledges the arguments in support of subdividing the municipality into wards. Introducing ward boundaries would represent the distinct northern, eastern and western parts of the Shire. While subdivision would guarantee representatives who are directly accountable to voters in these particular localities, there are significant disadvantages which potentially limit fair and equitable representation across the municipality.

The proposed boundaries of Option B of the VEC’s preliminary report (outlined in Diagram 1) were based on the Upper Murray Business Inc model. The option creates separate wards for communities in the north-east and north-west of the Shire, and also meets the voter-to-councillor ratio required under legislation. The boundaries proposed by the Corryong Neighbourhood Centre also represent the local communities of interest and use clear geographic boundaries, but result in wards that would not comply with the voter-to-councillor ratio required by the Act and therefore do not comply with the VEC’s requirements for this review. Under this model, the central ward is also divided by mountains.

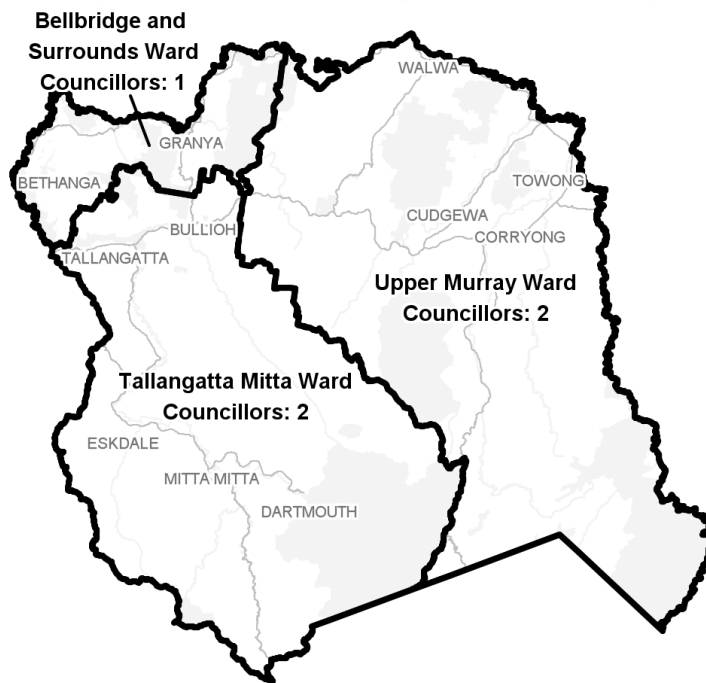


Diagram 1: The VEC’s proposed Option B for Towong Shire Council

Another limitation of implementing a ward structure in a rural municipality with a declining population is the risk of limiting the pool of candidates who stand at council elections, creating a risk of ward elections being uncontested. An unsubdivided structure allows all candidates to run for the whole municipality and makes them accountable to all voters, who have the greatest

possible choice of candidates at elections. As the PRSA's submissions stated, the unsubdivided model means that all candidates are elected by an absolute majority across the municipality.

Councillors were first elected in the unsubdivided structure in Towong in 1997. VEC records indicate that there were a strong number of candidates standing in recent elections, providing reasonable choice for voters. The candidates at the most recent council election in 2012 were drawn from across the Shire, including Granya, Tallangatta Valley, Mount Alfred, Tintaldra, Towong Upper, Dartmouth and Corryong. The successful candidates at that election were from Towong Upper, Tallangatta Valley, Dartmouth, Mount Alfred and Granya.

As outlined in Diagram 2, three councillors elected at Towong Shire Council's 2012 general election are from the west of the Shire and two are from the east, broadly in proportion to voter numbers. This suggests that no area of the Shire is currently under-represented. One submission raised concerns that one of the current councillors works outside of the municipality and only returns at weekends, leading to a sense of lack of representation. The VEC acknowledges this sentiment and the challenges of local representation in a large geographic ward where councillors may have other work commitments. However, these other work commitments are not a consequence of the electoral structure and, therefore, cannot be solved by an alternative electoral structure.

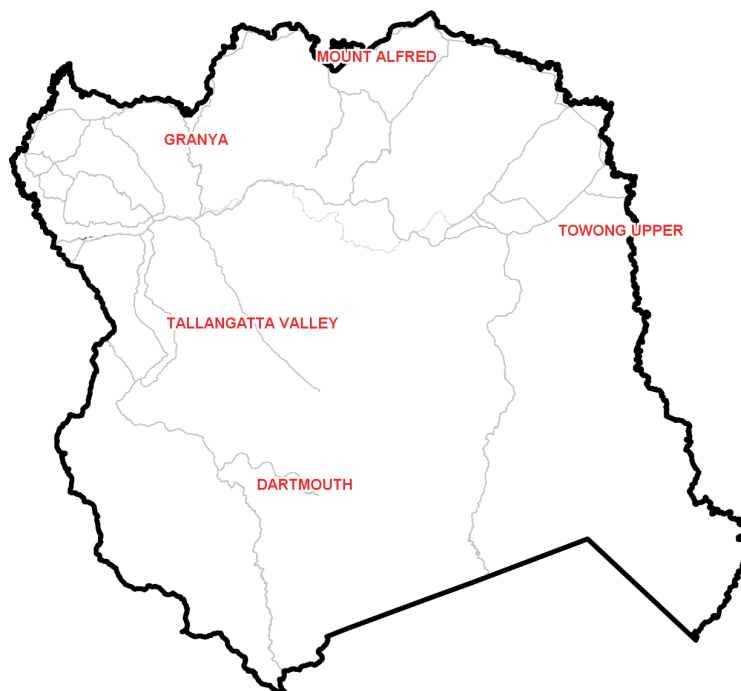


Diagram 2: Location of councillors elected in 2012

While acknowledging support among some submitters for a subdivided structure, there were no compelling issues raised in submissions that suggested Towong Shire Council's unsubdivided structure was not providing effective representation for voters across the Shire.

For the reasons outlined above, the VEC recommends that Towong Shire Council retains the existing unsubdivided structure.

6.2 The VEC's recommendation

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) recommends Towong Shire Council continue to consist of five councillors elected from an unsubdivided municipality.

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

Appendix 1: Public involvement

Preliminary submissions

Preliminary submissions were received from:

Brian Fraser

Proportional Representation Society of Australia (Victoria-Tasmania) Inc

Beverley Stewart

Towong Shire Council

Upper Murray Business Inc

Response submissions

Response submissions were received from:

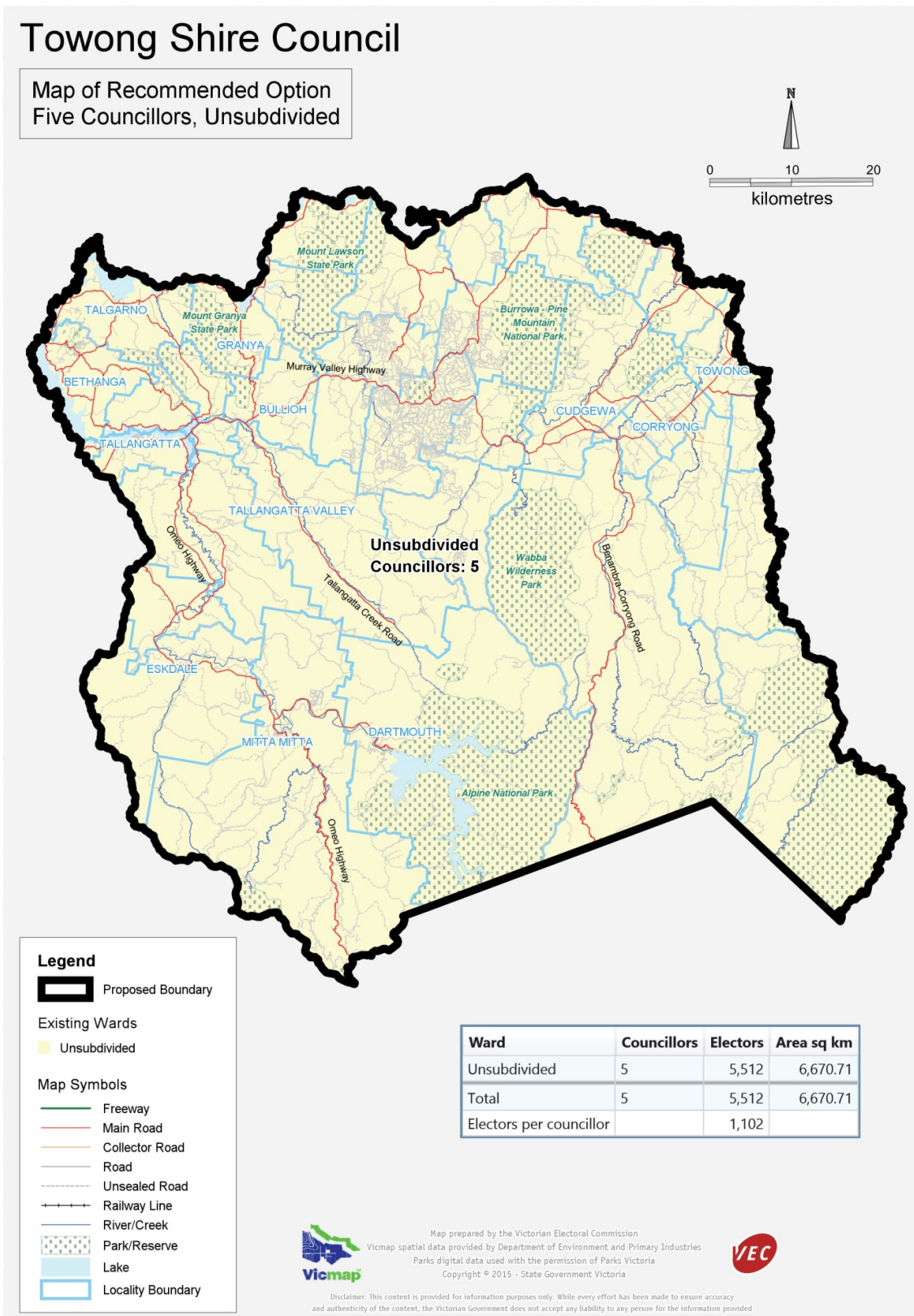
Corryong Neighbourhood Centre

Proportional Representation Society of Australia (Victoria-Tasmania) Inc

Annette and Robert Redfern and Kevin and Pauline Davis

Towong Shire Council

Appendix 2: Map



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

131 832

towong.review@vec.vic.gov.au