

Local council electoral structure review

Preliminary Report

Wangaratta Rural City Council

July 2023

Acknowledgement of Country

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

Document history and version control

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Executive summary

An independent electoral structure review panel appointed by the Minister for Local Government is reviewing the electoral structure of Wangaratta Rural City Council.

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

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

The panel is looking at:

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

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

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

Developing electoral structure models

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

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

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

Electoral structure models

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

- Model 1: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 7 councillors – 7 wards with one councillor per ward.
- Model 2: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 7 councillors – 7 wards with one councillor per ward, with different ward boundaries to Model 1.
- Model 3: a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 7 councillors – 7 wards with one councillor per ward, with different ward boundaries to Models 1 and 2.

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

Next steps

The panel is now seeking feedback on the preliminary electoral structure models. You can make a response submission to the preliminary models until 5 pm Wednesday 2 August 2023. If any response submitters wish to speak at a public hearing, the panel will hold an online public

hearing on Tuesday 8 August 2023. Following this, the panel will present its final recommendation to the Minister on Wednesday 6 September 2023.

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

Background

About the 2023–24 electoral structure reviews

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

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

For Wangaratta Rural City Council, the electoral representation advisory panel is examining:

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

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

The electoral representation advisory panel

The panel conducting the electoral structure review of Wangaratta Rural City Council has 3 members:

- The Honourable Frank Vincent AO KC (Chairperson)
- Ms Liz Williams PSM
- Acting Deputy Electoral Commissioner Ms Máiréad Doyle.

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

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

Public engagement

Public information program

On behalf of the panel, the VEC has conducted a public information and awareness program to inform the public about the Wangaratta Rural City Council electoral structure review. This has included:

- printed public notices in state-wide newspapers
- public information sessions to outline the review process and respond to questions from the community
- media releases to announce the start of the review
- information on social media channels
- updated website content on vec.vic.gov.au, including:
 - current information on the review process
 - submission guide and fact sheets for each council under review with background information.

The VEC will continue to promote the review on behalf of the panel during the response submission stage via media releases, the VEC’s social media channels and the VEC website.

Public consultation

The panel now invites input to the electoral structure review of Wangaratta Rural City Council via:

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

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

Developing recommendations

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

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

Deciding on the number of councillors

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

In examining the appropriate number of councillors for Wangaratta Rural City Council, the panel considered the following criteria:

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

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

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

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

Deciding the electoral structure

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

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

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

The panel's final recommendation will also consider any matters raised in public response submissions not already listed above. Under section 15(2) of the Act, subdivided structures must aim for an approximately equal number of voters per councillor in each ward. This means

the number of voters represented by each councillor in a ward should be within +/-10% of the average number of voters per councillor for all wards.

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

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

Deciding on ward names

The panel has taken the following approach to naming wards.

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

Use of Aboriginal language

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

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

- it is the name of a place within a ward
- it is currently in common use

and

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

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

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

About Wangaratta Rural City Council

Profile

The Rural City of Wangaratta is located approximately 250 km north-east of Melbourne in the Ovens Murray region of Victoria. Covering an area of 3,646 km², the municipality is bordered by Moira Shire Council to the north-west, Benalla Rural City Council to the west, Mansfield and Wellington Shire Councils to the south, Alpine Shire Council to the east and Indigo Shire Council to the north-east.

The traditional custodians of the lands within Wangaratta Rural City Council are the Yorta Yorta, Taungurung and Bpangerang people (FPSR 2023).

Landscape

About 17% of land in the municipality is reserved for nature conservation (ABARES 2023), including parts of the Alpine National Park in the south, the Warby-Ovens National Park in the north-west, and the Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park in the north-east. The King River and the Ovens River are also important geographical features of the area, flowing down from the Alpine National Park from the south and the east of the municipality respectively. These river systems support fertile valleys and floodplains, which are important ecological corridors sustaining agriculture and communities alike (DTP 2023).

Around 55% of land in the council area is used for agriculture, primarily for grazing and livestock production. Irrigated cropping, horticulture and pastures accounts for only a small proportion of this agricultural land use (ABARES 2023).

The population of the Rural City was 29,808 in 2021 (ABS 2022a), an increase from 26,815 recorded in 2011 (ABS 2012). Wangaratta is the municipality's largest urban centre, home to 19,172 people or about two-thirds of the population (ABS 2022a). Other large townships include Glenrowan, Oxley, Milawa, Moyhu and Eldorado. Just over a quarter of the population live in smaller towns and rural areas across the municipality (ABS 2022a).

The Hume freeway runs through the north of the municipality connecting the region to Melbourne and Sydney. V/Line passenger and freight services operate on the railway line passing through Wangaratta in the north. The Wangaratta Aerodrome is used for emergency, charter and flight training services (DTP 2023, RDV 2023a).

Community

The population grew at an annual rate of approximately 1% from 2011-2021 (RDV 2023b) and is forecast to continue to grow at an annual rate of 0.8% from 2022 to 2028, with this growth concentrated in the town of Wangaratta.

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people make up 1.9% of the population compared to 2% for regional Victoria (ABS 2022a, ABS 2022b). Nearly 85% of the population was born in Australia, and 89% of people speak only English at home, at rates higher than those recorded for regional Victoria as a whole (81% and 86.4% respectively) (ABS 2022a, ABS 2022b).

The median age of the population is 45 years, slightly higher than the median for regional Victoria of 43 years (ABS 2022a, ABS 2022b).

The median weekly household income was \$1,326 in 2021, slightly lower than the average of \$1,386 for regional Victoria (ABS 2022a, ABS 2022b). Home ownership is high in the municipality. Of occupied homes, 41% were owned outright, higher than the average for regional Victoria of around 39%, while 32% of people own homes with a mortgage and 22.2% were rented, both lower than the regional Victoria average (ABS 2022a, ABS 2022b).

Agriculture is significant to the economy of the municipality. The major agricultural activities are sheep and cattle grazing, beef, lamb and dairy production, viticulture, cereal cropping and stone fruit production (DTP 2023). Forestry is also important to the economy, with plantation forest and production native forest covering about 21.5% of land, mostly in the south of the municipality (ABARES 2023). Together, agriculture and forestry employ 7.2% of employed people, accounting for 8.9% of economic output (REMPPLAN 2023).

However, with the Wangaratta Hospital and expanding public and private medical facilities, health care and social assistance is the largest industry by employment. The industry employs 22.4% of workers and represents 10.9% of economic output (REMPPLAN 2023). Manufacturing and construction are also important industries, together representing almost 17% of jobs in the municipality. Major manufacturing activities include metal fabrication, textiles, timber processing and some food processing (DTP 2023).

Current number of councillors and electoral structure

Wangaratta Rural City Council is currently divided into 4 wards with a total of 7 councillors:

- one ward with 4 councillors (City Ward)
- 3 wards with one councillor each (North Ward, South Ward, Warby Ward).

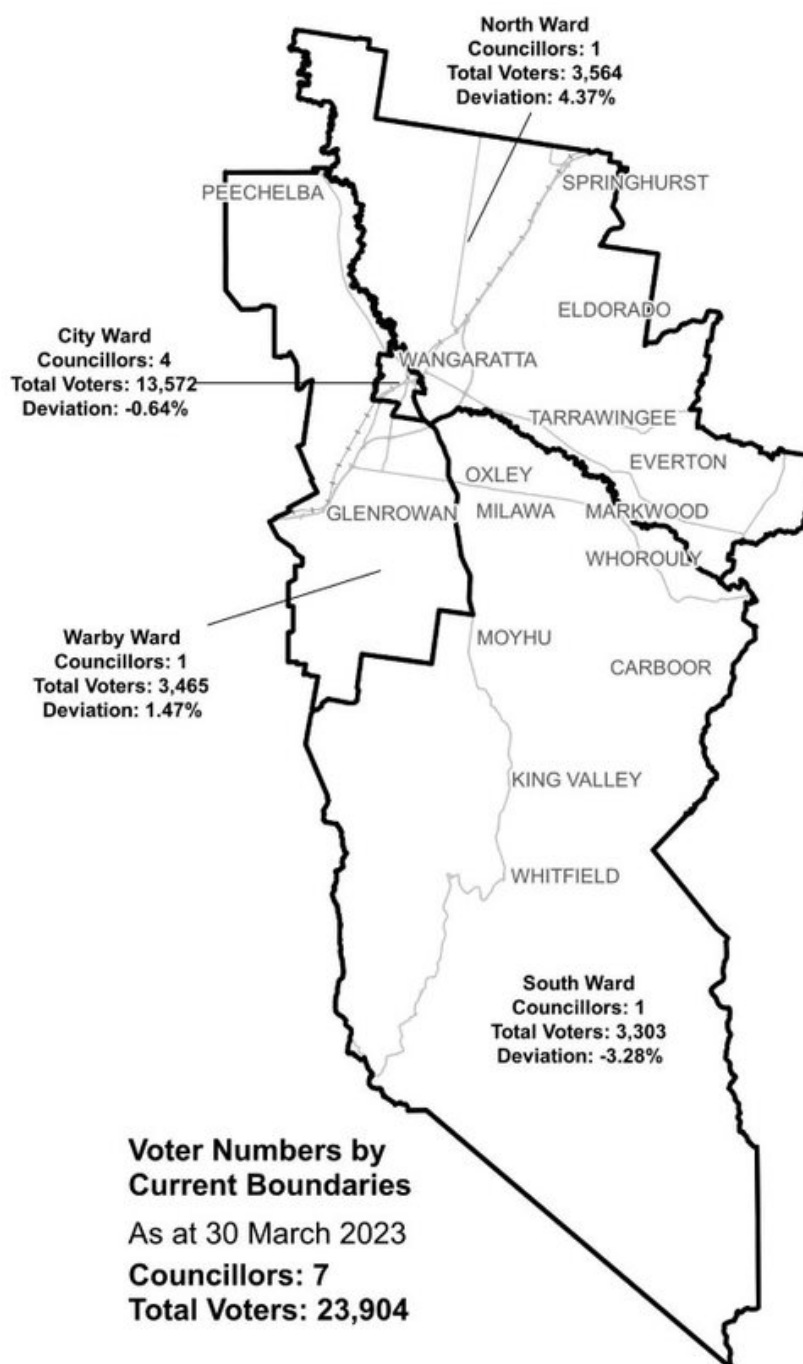


Figure 1: Diagram of current electoral structure of Wangaratta Rural City Council

There are an estimated 23,904 voters in Wangaratta Rural City Council, with an estimated ratio of 3,414 voters per councillor.

Visit the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au for more information on Wangaratta Rural City Council.

Last electoral structure review

The VEC conducted an electoral representation review of Wangaratta Rural City Council in 2015. This review was carried out under the *Local Government Act 1989*, which was replaced by the *Local Government Act 2020*.

After conducting the review, the VEC recommended that Wangaratta Rural City Council change to consist of 7 councillors elected from 4 wards (1 ward with 4 councillors and 3 wards with 1 councillor each).

Visit the VEC website at vec.vic.gov.au to access a copy of the 2015 representation review final report.

Before the 2015 review, the VEC held a representation review of Wangaratta Rural City Council in 2004. After conducting the review, the VEC recommended that Wangaratta Rural City Council change to consist of 7 councillors elected from an unsubdivided municipality.

Preliminary findings and models

Number of councillors

After taking into consideration the requirements of the Act and the agreed criteria, the panel found 7 councillors to be an appropriate number for Wangaratta Rural City Council.

The panel considered the characteristics of Wangaratta Rural City Council in relation to similar regional city councils, including its population, the number and distribution of voters, and the size and geography of the council.

Similar regional city councils to Wangaratta Rural City Council						
Local council	Area (km ²)	Number of voters at 2020 election	Population (2021 Census)	Current total estimate of voters	Number of councillors	Number of voters per councillor
Greater Bendigo City*	3,000	91,892	121,470	93,852	9	10,428
Ballarat City*	739	84,694	113,763	87,340	9	9,704
Latrobe City*	1,426	58,170	77,318	59,099	9	6,566
Greater Shepparton City*	2,422	46,242	68,409	46,959	9	5,217
Mildura Rural City*	22,082	40,720	56,972	42,932	9	4,770
Wodonga City*	433	32,430	43,253	33,461	7	4,780
Warrnambool City*	121	27,279	35,406	27,731	7	3,961
Wangaratta Rural City*	3,645	23,267	29,808	23,904	7	3,414
Horsham Rural City*	4,267	16,206	20,429	15,753	7	2,250

*This local council is undergoing an electoral structure review during 2023–24.

Maintaining 7 councillors

Wangaratta Rural City Council currently has 23,904 voters represented by 7 councillors and covers an area of 3,645 km². Other regional city councils with a similar number of voters usually also have 7 councillors. As forecasts indicate only modest population change is expected for the council, the panel considers it appropriate for the total number of councillors to remain unchanged. Moreover, while changing the number of councillors can support a favourable electoral structure, modelling of Wangaratta Rural City found neither a decrease or increase in councillor numbers would support such a structure.

Electoral structure

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

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

The panel proposes 3 models for the consideration of the Wangaratta Rural City Council community:

- a subdivided electoral structure of 7 single-councillor wards (Model 1)
- a subdivided electoral structure of 7 single-councillor wards, with different ward boundaries to Model 1 (Model 2)
- a subdivided electoral structure of 7 single-councillor wards, with different ward boundaries to Models 1 and 2 (Model 3).

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

A single-councillor ward structure with 7 councillors (Model 1)

Under this model, Wangaratta Rural City Council would adopt a 7-ward structure. Each ward would be represented by one councillor, in line with the requirements of the Act.

Model 1 consists of four urban wards comprising the Wangaratta urban centre and three rural wards. The boundaries of the 3 proposed rural wards closely resemble those of the current structure, primarily following waterways and major rural roads.

The Ovens River forms a strong and recognisable boundary between the proposed Reedy Creek and King River wards to the east. This is consistent with the boundaries of the current structure between North Ward and South Ward. The Ovens River also forms the boundary between the Reedy Creek and Warby-Ovens wards to the north. This also mirrors the boundaries of the current structure between North and Warby Ward.

The boundary between the proposed Warby-Ovens and King River wards follows Wangaratta-Whitfield Road, then moves west from the present boundaries to follow Factory Creek and north to follow minor roads and property boundaries. These minor adjustments to the boundary between the Warby and South wards in the current structure address projected future changes in voter numbers and distributions.

Four wards comprise most of the urban area of Wangaratta. The external boundaries of these four urban wards closely follow the boundaries of City Ward of the current electoral structure. The Ovens River, Three Mile Creek and main roads form strong recognisable boundaries. To the north-east, the proposed Appin Ward extends westward from One Mile Creek to Reith Road, taking in areas outside the boundary of the current City Ward to incorporate areas of future residential development.

Waterways were used to form strong, recognisable boundaries between the urban wards, namely One Mile Creek and Three Mile Creek. The ward boundaries dividing the urban area also follow main roads such as Ryley Street and Greta Road. In some areas the boundaries follow minor roads to divide residential areas, for example, the boundary between the proposed Appin and Wareena wards. This is to ensure an equivalent number of voters in each ward.

In the north of Wangaratta, the boundaries of Merriwa Park Ward mainly follow the Ovens River to the east and the Three Mile and One Mile Creeks to the west. The boundaries to the south of the ward follow main roads, including Ryley Street and Millard Street.

The panel considered the strengths of Model 1 to be:

- Creation of compact wards with strong, recognisable boundaries
- Inclusion of areas of future residential development currently into Appin Ward by extending its western boundary beyond the current City Ward boundary
- Uniting communities on either side of the railway line which passes through Wangaratta
- Minimal change approach by mostly retaining the external boundaries of the City Ward of the current electoral structure.

Potential drawbacks of the model include:

- External boundaries of the 4 urban wards capture most but not all areas of the population of Wangaratta, such as residents living to the east of Murdoch Road, meaning some residents with strong connections to the town may be included in more rural-focused wards
- Urban communities and neighbourhoods may be split into different wards, such as the boundary between the proposed Appin and Wareena wards which follows minor roads
- Merriwa Park Ward is a long ward which may capture disparate communities in the north and south of the urban area.

A single-councillor ward structure with 7 councillors (alternative version) (Model 2)

Under this model, Wangaratta Rural City Council would adopt a 7-ward structure. Each ward would be represented by one councillor, in line with the requirements of the Act.

Model 2 also consists of 4 urban wards comprising Wangaratta and 3 rural wards. The 4 urban wards have the same names and boundaries as in Model 1 and therefore contain the same urban area of Wangaratta.

The approach to modelling the rural wards is different, however. Rather than following waterways and major rural roads, the boundaries of the rural wards in Model 2 follow major roads.

The Hume Freeway forms the boundary between the Warby-Ovens and Eldorado wards in the east, as well as between the Warby-Ovens and Eldorado wards in the north. The boundary between the King River and Eldorado wards in the east follows the Hume Freeway and Snow

Road. Although not a major road, using Oxley Flats Road to form part of this border ensures that the larger townships of Oxley and Milawa are not divided into separate wards.

The benefits of Model 2 were considered to be:

- Use of clear, definable features, with major roads forming strong and recognisable ward boundaries
- Uniting the formerly divided farming and rural communities on either side of the Ovens River who may have similar interests or needs

The potential drawbacks of Model 2 include:

- The geography and large size of King River Ward may result in increased workloads and travel time for councillors to connect with and represent local communities
- The localities of Whorouly, Whorouly South and Whorouly East to the east of the municipality have been divided along Snow Road between the King and Eldorado wards.

The benefits and drawbacks of Model 2 in relation to the urban wards comprising Wangaratta are the same as for Model 1.

A single-councillor ward structure with 7 councillors (alternative version) (Model 3)

Under this model, Wangaratta Rural City Council would adopt a 7-ward structure. Each ward would be represented by one councillor, in line with the requirements of the Act.

Model 3 comprises 2 large rural wards, 3 compact urban wards in Wangaratta, and 2 large peri-urban wards extending east and west from Wangaratta's urban centre.

Similar to Model 2, the boundaries of the rural King River and Ovens River wards follow major roads such as the Hume freeway and Snow Road, the Ovens River and Reedy Creek, as well as the railway, rural roads and locality boundaries.

Mount Warby Ward and Bullawah Ward are the 2 peri-urban wards which blend urban residential and commercial areas of Wangaratta with rural areas outside the boundaries of the current City Ward.

Mount Warby Ward captures the rural township of Glenrowan and rural localities to the south and west of Wangaratta including Waldara, Wangandary and Wangaratta South. This ward also captures the urban area in the south-west of Wangaratta between Three Mile Creek and Greta Road, alongside the future urban growth areas to the north-west of Wangaratta east of Reith Road.

Bullawah Ward unites the residential and commercial areas of central Wangaratta currently in City Ward with urban areas west of Murdoch Road to the south, along Wilsons Road and Oxley Flats Road to the south-east, and across the Ovens River along Parfitt Road to the East. This ward also comprises other semi-rural parts of the localities of Wangaratta, East Wangaratta and North Wangaratta.

The 2 peri-urban wards unite urban areas and future development areas of Wangaratta outside of the current City Ward boundary. Under the current structure, urban and residential areas of Wangaratta east of Murdoch Road, east of the King River and North of the Ovens River were previously separated from the urban area captured in the City Ward. Model 3 addresses this division of communities by bringing all of the urban areas into the one ward.

Similarly, Model 3 ensures rural communities are captured by the two large rural wards in the north and south of the municipality. In submissions to previous representation reviews, the community raised the strong rural identity and specific needs of those making a living from the land, arguing the need for a clear separation of the rural community from the urban community into different wards. It was suggested that such separation could facilitate dedicated and accountable geographic representation.

By better capturing the separate urban and rural communities of interest in separate wards, Model 3 may facilitate better representation.

There are also some potential drawbacks of this model.

- The 2 rural wards are very large in area compared to the 5 urban and peri-urban wards. This may result in increased workloads and travel time for councillors to connect with and represent local communities.
- The peri-urban wards still combine urban communities with rural communities, particularly to the west of Wangaratta in the Mount Warby Ward. Having separate representation of urban and rural communities has not been resolved comprehensively.
- The urban areas of Wangaratta captured within the City Ward under the current structure have been separated into the 2 peri-urban wards. This represents a significant change which may conflict with how residents of these areas identify with the local area.

Summary

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

Model 1 represents minimal change from the current structure: the 3 rural wards have been maintained and the City Ward is divided into 4 single-councillor wards with minimal changes to boundaries to account for future population growth and changes in population distribution.

Model 2 uses major roads rather than rivers as boundaries between the 3 rural wards to unite rural communities on either side of the Ovens and King Rivers who share similar needs and interests.

Model 3 proposes 2 peri-urban wards and the urban wards to unite all urban areas and future development areas of Wangaratta, while capturing the rural areas and communities of the municipality in 2 large and separate rural wards.

Each model has strengths and potential drawbacks. The panel now welcomes feedback and suggestions for improvement from the public through response submissions.

Models for public feedback

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

Model 1

Wangaratta Rural City Council has 7 councillors and is divided into 7 wards with one councillor per ward.

Ward names: Appin Ward, King River Ward, Merriwa Park Ward, Reedy Creek Ward, Warby-Ovens Ward, Wareena Ward, Yarrunga Ward.

Model 2

Wangaratta Rural City Council has 7 councillors and is divided into 7 wards with one councillor per ward.

Ward names: Appin Ward, Eldorado Ward, King River Ward, Merriwa Park Ward, Warby-Ovens Ward, Wareena Ward, Yarrunga Ward.

Model 3

Wangaratta Rural City Council has 7 councillors and is divided into 7 wards with one councillor per ward.

Ward names: Appin Ward, Bullawah Ward, King River Ward, Mount Warby Ward, Ovens River Ward, Wareena Ward, Yarrunga Ward.

Ward names

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

Model 1

The King River, Merriwa Park, Reedy Creek, Warby-Ovens and Wareena ward names are new and are based on the registered names of parks and natural features found within each ward.

The Appin and Yarrunga ward names are the former names of 2 wards under the electoral structure of Wangaratta Rural City Council prior to the 2004 electoral representation review.

Model 2

The Eldorado, King River, Merriwa Park, Warby-Ovens and Wareena ward names are new and are based on the registered names of parks, natural features or localities found within each ward.

The Appin and Yarrunga ward names are the former names of 2 wards under the electoral structure of Wangaratta Rural City Council prior to the 2004 electoral representation review.

Model 3

The Bullawah, King River, Mount Warby, Ovens River and Wareena ward names are new and are based on the registered names of parks, natural features or roads found within each ward.

The Appin and Yarrunga ward names are the former names of 2 wards under the electoral structure of Wangaratta Rural City Council prior to the 2004 electoral representation review.




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

Next steps

Response submissions

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

You can make a submission:

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

The panel must receive all response submissions before 5 pm on Wednesday 2 August 2023. If you post your submission, make sure it has enough time to reach the panel before the deadline. Late submissions will not be accepted.

Required information

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

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

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

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

Public access to submissions

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

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

Public hearing

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

The online public hearing is scheduled for:

Time: 10 am

Date: Tuesday 8 August 2023

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

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

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

Final report

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

The final report is scheduled to be provided to the Minister on Wednesday 6 September 2023. The Minister will consider the final reports, including any determination to make the reports publicly available. Any change to the electoral structure of Wangaratta Rural City Council following on from this review is expected to apply at the October 2024 local council elections. Under the Act, the final council electoral structure will be set by an Order in Council published in the Victorian Government Gazette.

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Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2020 (Vic)

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— (2023b) [Regional Snapshot](#), Data set (Wangaratta LGA), accessed 4 April 2023.

REMPPLAN (2022) [Economy, Jobs and Business Insights \(Wangaratta\)](#), REMPLAN website, accessed 11 May 2023.

Appendix 1: Model maps

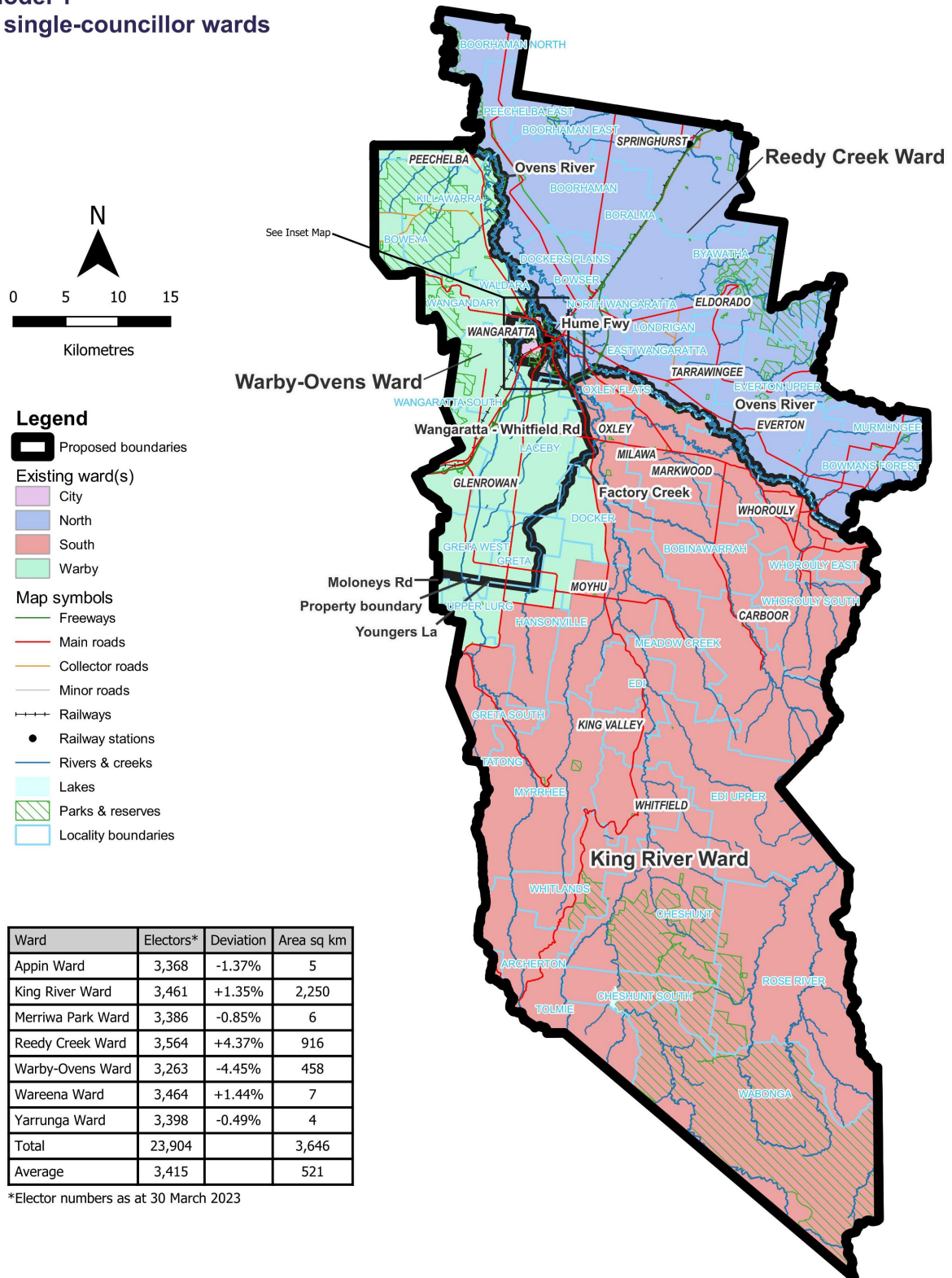
The following maps are included in this report:

Map	Page
Model 1 – a single-councillor ward structure with 7 councillors – 7 wards with one councillor per ward.	27
Model 2 – a single-councillor ward structure with 7 councillors – 7 wards with one councillor per ward (with boundaries different to Model 1).	29
Model 3 – a single-councillor ward structure with 7 councillors – 7 wards with one councillor per ward (with boundaries different to Models 1 and 2).	31

Wangaratta Rural City Council

Model 1

7 single-councillor wards



Ward	Electors*	Deviation	Area sq km
Appin Ward	3,368	-1.37%	5
King River Ward	3,461	+1.35%	2,250
Merriwa Park Ward	3,386	-0.85%	6
Reedy Creek Ward	3,564	+4.37%	916
Warby-Ovens Ward	3,263	-4.45%	458
Wareena Ward	3,464	+1.44%	7
Yarrunga Ward	3,398	-0.49%	4
Total	23,904		3,646
Average	3,415		521

*Elector numbers as at 30 March 2023

Map prepared by:



Data use:

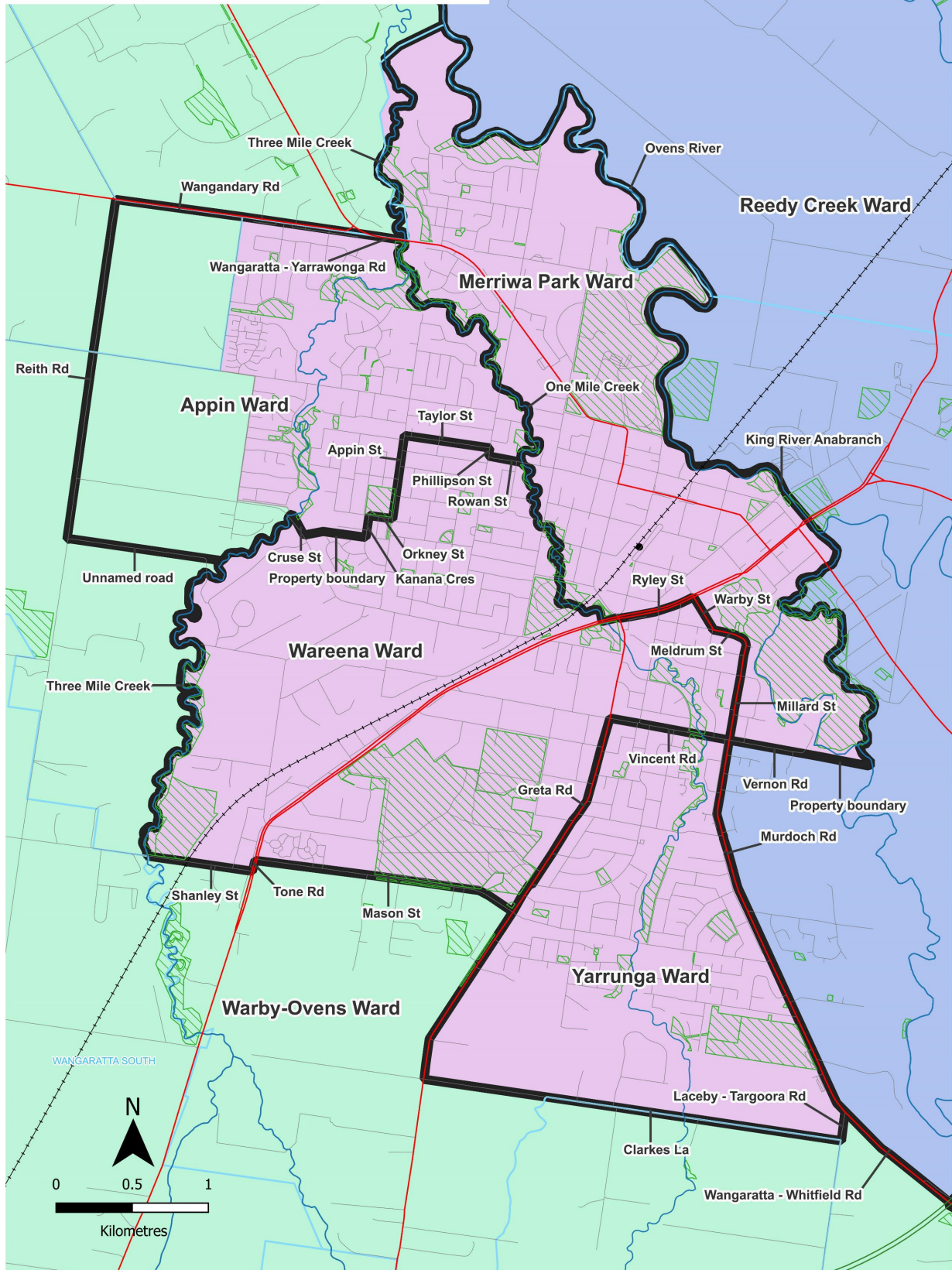


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Wangaratta Rural City Council

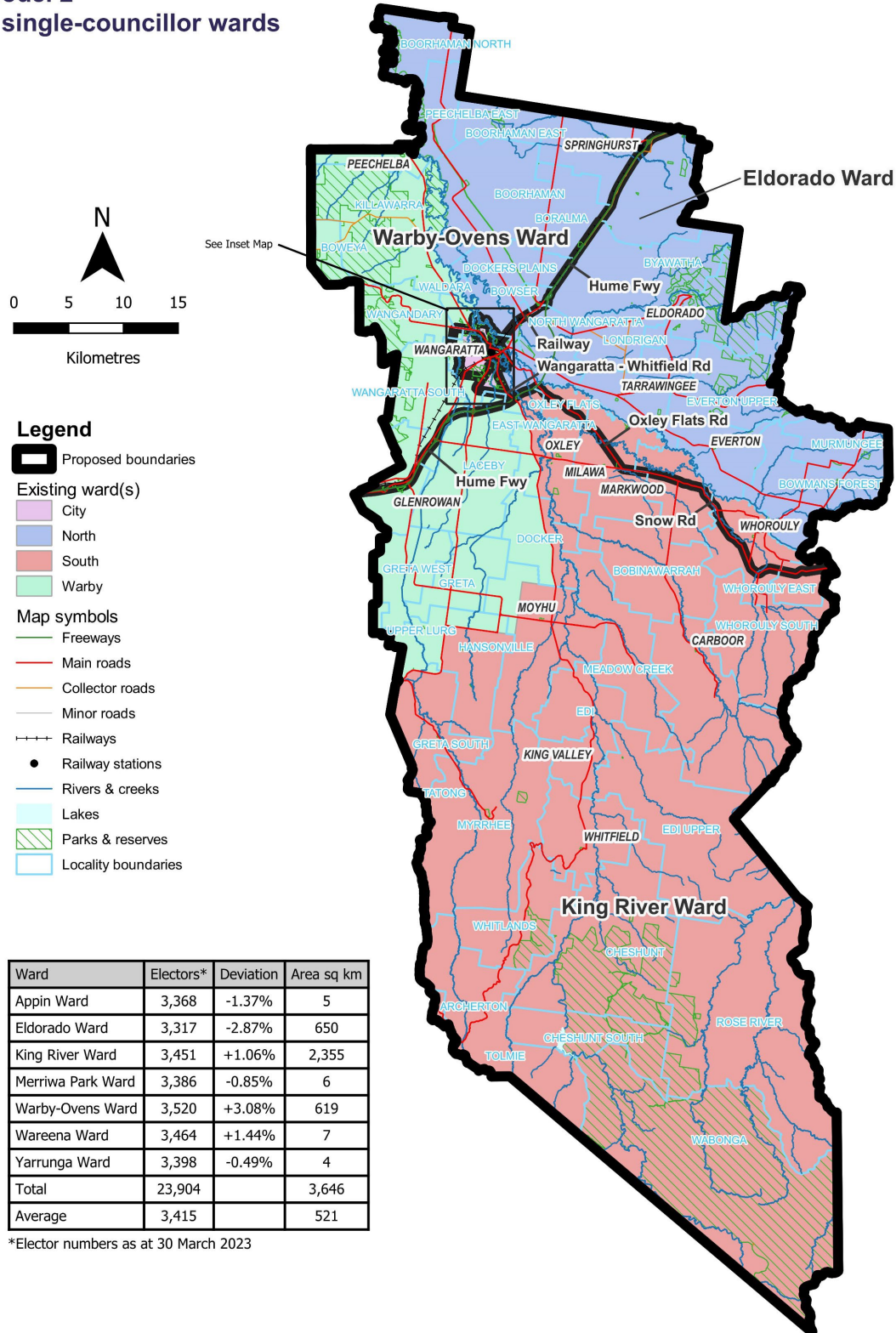
Inset - Model 1



Wangaratta Rural City Council

Model 2

7 single-councillor wards



Map prepared by:



Data use:

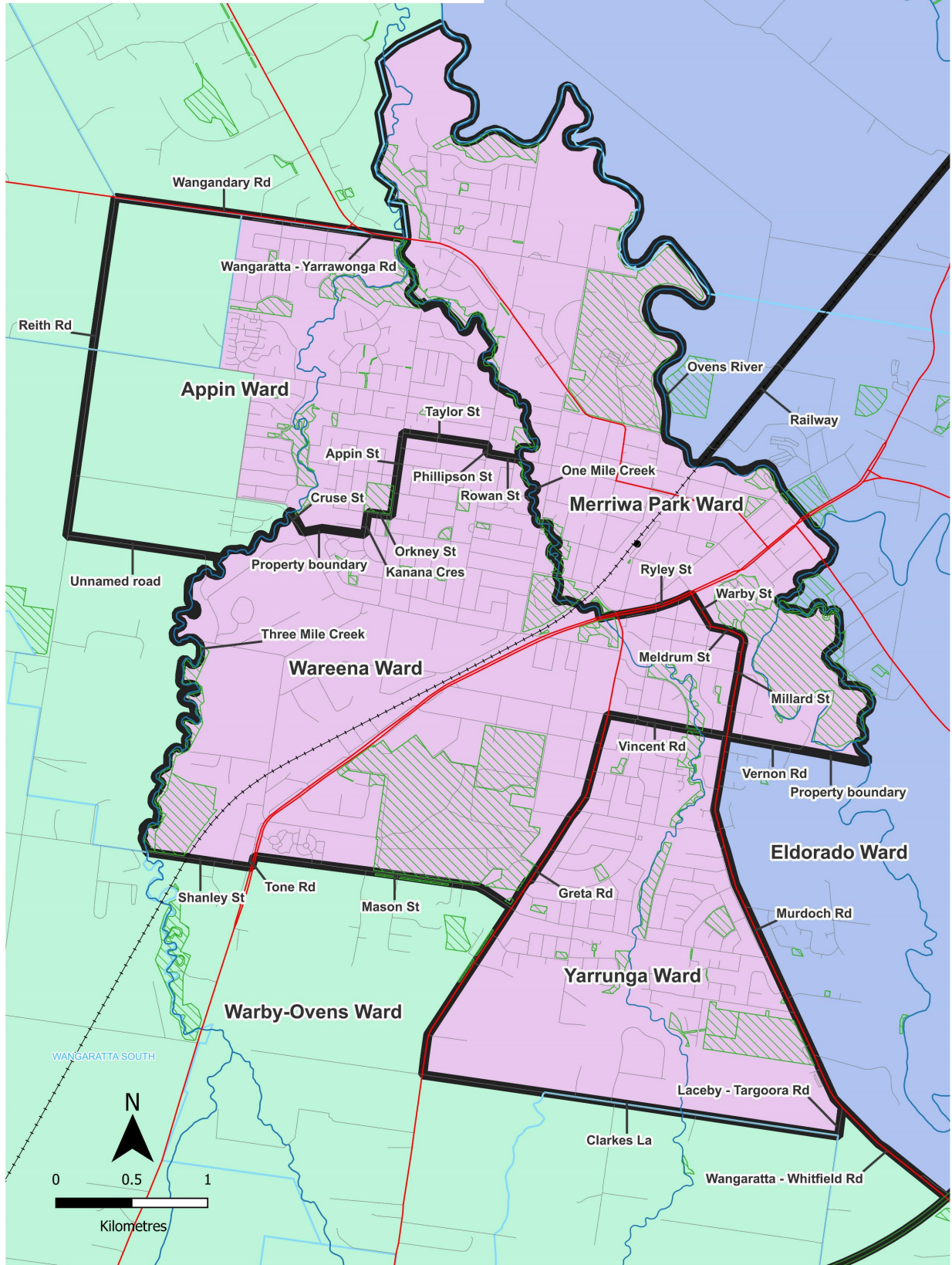


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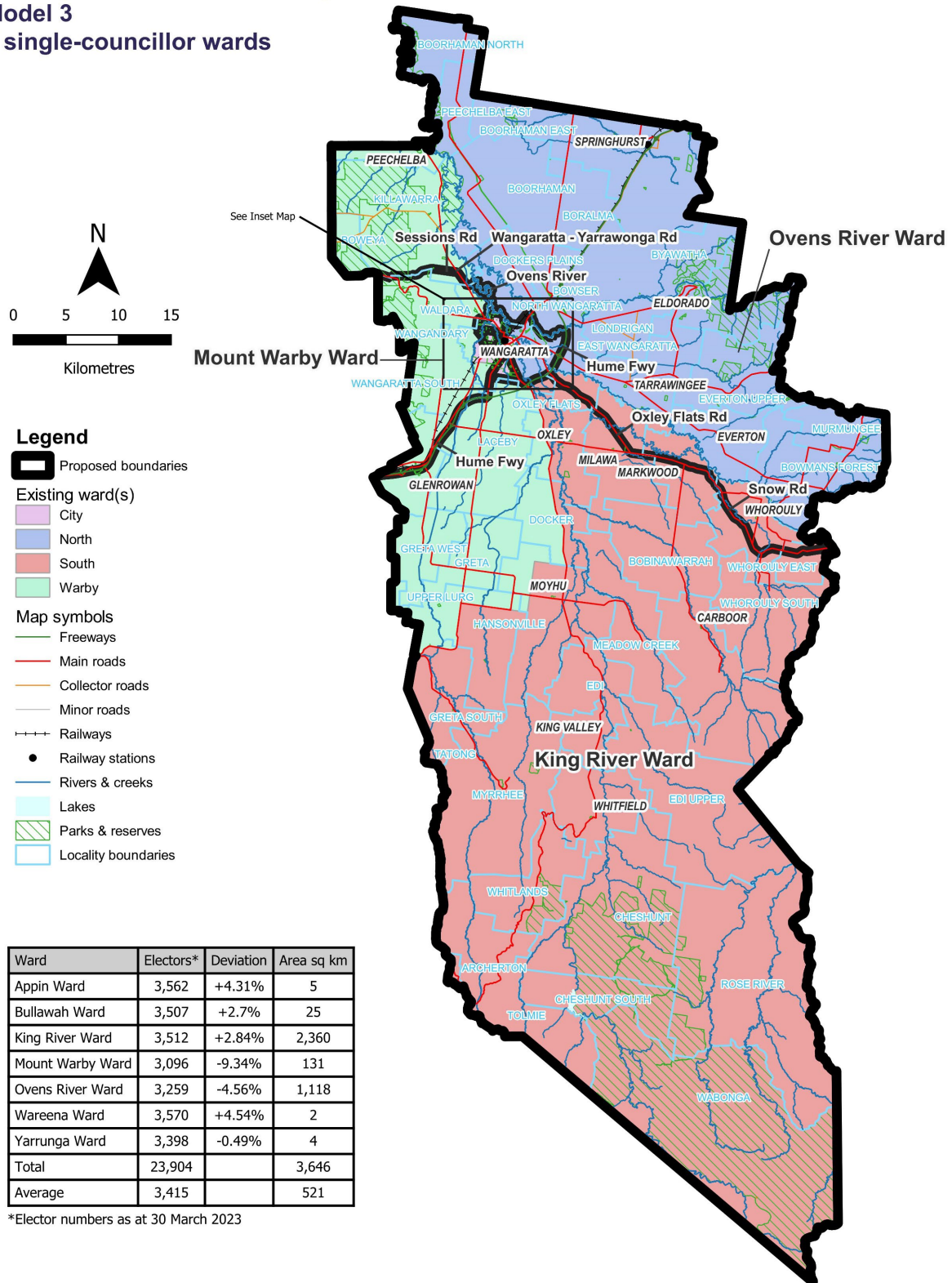
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Wangaratta Rural City Council

Model 3

7 single-councillor wards



Ward	Electors*	Deviation	Area sq km
Appin Ward	3,562	+4.31%	5
Bullawah Ward	3,507	+2.7%	25
King River Ward	3,512	+2.84%	2,360
Mount Warby Ward	3,096	-9.34%	131
Ovens River Ward	3,259	-4.56%	1,118
Wareena Ward	3,570	+4.54%	2
Yarrunga Ward	3,398	-0.49%	4
Total	23,904		3,646
Average	3,415		521

*Elector numbers as at 30 March 2023

Map prepared by:



Data use:

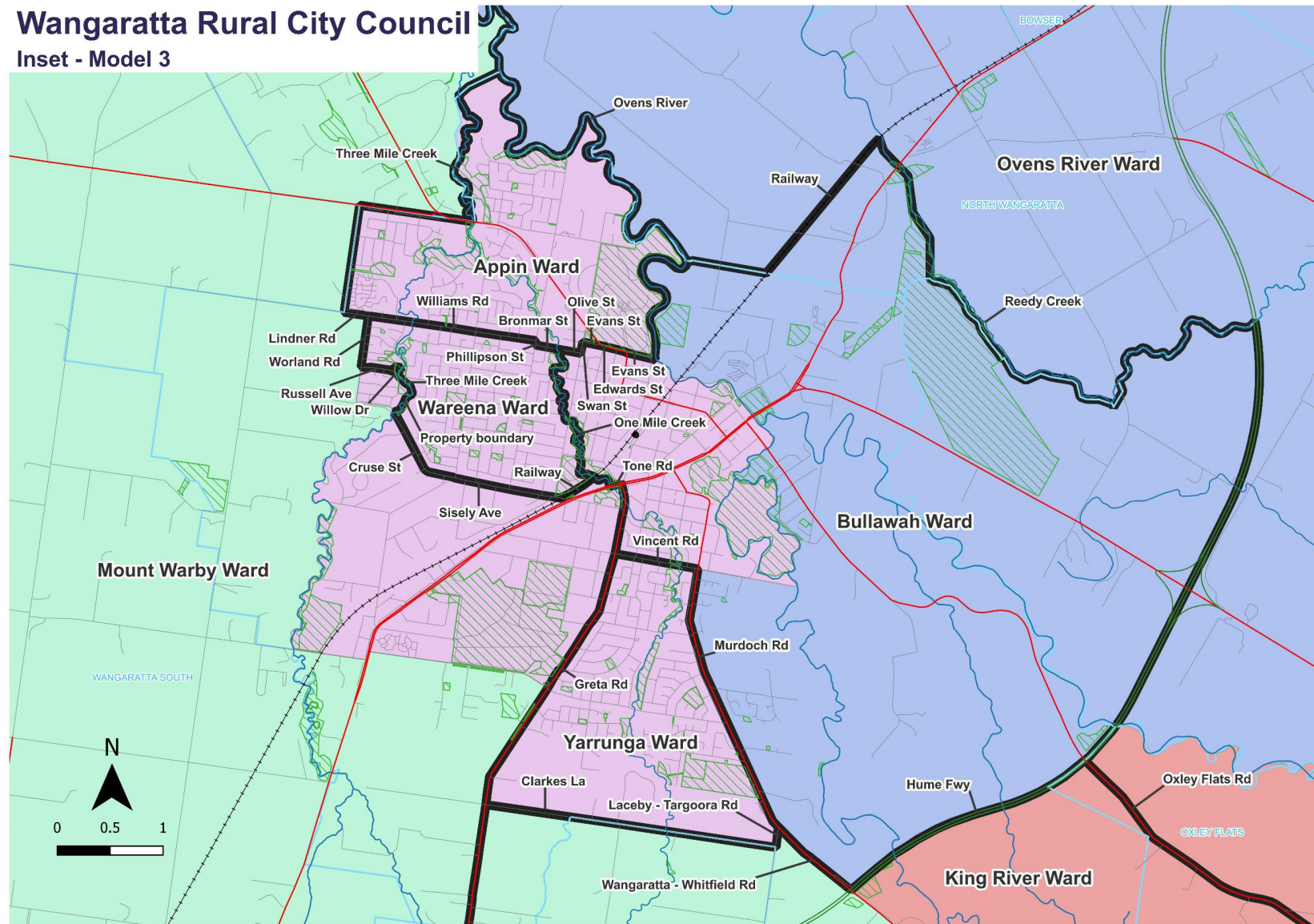


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Inset - Model 3



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