



COMMITTEE FOR GEELONG

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTORAL REVIEW

DISCUSSION PAPER

SUBMISSION

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Committee for Geelong (CfG) is an independent group of member organisations, working together to leverage the economic potential of the Geelong region. The CfG works to achieve the best long-term outcomes for the region, enabling Geelong to become a world-class city. With a clear focus on economic development and innovation, infrastructure and capacity, and civic leadership and advocacy, the CfG make connections and creates opportunities to help deliver positive social outcomes and develop a vital, inclusive, progressive, smart and sustainable Geelong region for the future. CfG members include business, education, health, local government, non-government and community organisations.

The CfG welcomes the comprehensive local government electoral review discussion paper.

Geelong is facing a number of challenges as its economic and social profile change and it is imperative that the Council of the City of Greater Geelong is properly structured and equipped to be able to play a robust leadership role in meeting those challenges.

There is a strong desire within the community of Geelong to have a Council that will not only effectively deliver the local day-to-day services that a modern society requires, but will also articulate a shared vision for the future and deliver on local and regional priorities that strengthen the overall economy. Where major projects are identified for the Geelong region, it is imperative to have effective local government leadership with the ability to form strategic alliances and mobilise coalitions of support so that these projects are brought to fruition.

In 2011 the State Government took a positive step towards improving local government in Geelong by implementing its policy to allow for the direct election of a Mayor. The stated aim was to have a directly elected Mayor at the head of the City of Greater Geelong, to provide strong drive and leadership, to increase the prospects of major initiatives being promoted, processed and delivered across a broad economic, social and environmental agenda.

In its submission at the time the CfG argued that it would be a high-risk strategy to simply graft a directly elected Mayor on to the existing representational structure of 12 single councillor wards. To optimise the prospects of success the CfG argued that a fresh start was highly desirable so that candidates for the position of Mayor, and in turn the successful incumbent, would have a level of confidence that the structure they were to preside over had been designed with a view to it achieving a good balance between corporate efficiency and democratic representativeness and that it had been designed to suit the new governance model.

The concept of grafting a Mayor onto the existing representational structure has now been tested between November 2012 and September 2013. Although this is insufficient time for it to be fully tested, it seems that some shortcomings have

already been identified and are being debated within the Geelong community. We note that no such debate exists in relation to the Mayoral system in Melbourne.

One observation on the Geelong system seems to be pertinent. A directly elected Mayor can claim to have a mandate, but without some legislative authority and powers, the Mayor is severely constrained. In the case of Geelong, under the existing structure, there are 12 other councillors who also can claim that they have a mandate. The directly elected Mayor needs to be **more** than first among equals.

Given the comprehensiveness of this electoral review, it is expected that 'modernising' changes will be proposed for all councils in Victoria. The CfG believes there is a strong case for building on, and enhancing the **special** arrangements that have been put in place for Geelong, especially in respect of the direct election of Mayor. Further, Geelong may also serve as a potential model for other Victorian municipalities.

This submission addresses issues outlined in Chapter 6 of the Local Government Electoral Review discussion paper. It advocates measures which the CfG believes will enhance electoral representation in Geelong, and strengthen local government in Geelong.

2. THE CASE FOR CHANGE

The CfG wants to see a directly elected Mayor with more power and authority, who, when supported by a group of councillors with a 'big picture' focus can contribute strongly to the economic and social well-being of Geelong, its citizens and its business enterprises.

Two sources are quoted to demonstrate that the case for change of this nature is not radical and indeed is being considered and implemented in other jurisdictions.

In a 2012 Discussion Paper entitled 'Australian Mayors: What Can and Should They Do', Professor Graham Sansom from the Australian Centre for Local Government Excellence, argues that in some Australian states the role of Mayor has not been updated so that it interacts with other wide ranging reforms that have occurred in local government.

The discussion paper states:

"The functions of mayors should be updated and recodified to match other changes that have occurred in Australian local government. Except in Queensland, the structures and norms of political governance have largely failed to keep pace with the expanded functions of local government, and especially the growing expectation that councils will act more strategically to reflect and represent the needs and aspirations of their communities, and ensure sound management of community assets. These goals cannot be achieved unless the political arm of local government has the capacity to discharge its responsibilities effectively alongside those of management."

Sansom looks at the overseas experience on this subject and explores an Australian model which he describes as the 'semi-executive' Mayor – one with more responsibilities and greater authority than is generally the case at present, but who remains subject to a 'separation of powers' between the political realm of policy and strategy on the one hand, and the management realm of administration and program implementation on the other.

The discussion paper states:

"What emerges strongly from the literature and international discourse is a perceived need for what has been described as local 'facilitative leadership' or 'place-based leadership' grounded in local government and, in particular, the office of Mayor. It is argued that more effective civic leaders are required in order to, among other things:

- *Engage the community and other local stakeholders in formulating a strategic vision and supporting plans*
- *Secure political support within the body politic for the adoption and concerted, consistent implementation of strategic plans and associated budgets*

- *Maintain ongoing partnerships with others involved in implementation, especially sound inter-government relations in which the local voice is heard and respected.”*

The Sansom discussion paper supports a number of the arguments put forward by the CfG in its 2011 submission leading up to the implementation of the State Government’s directly elected mayor policy.

No doubt the Sansom discussion paper will serve to inform the Electoral Review Panel, and extracts will be quoted in this submission to reinforce some of the CfG’s arguments for change.

The Panel responsible for reviewing metropolitan local government in Perth, in their final report in July 2012, considered the role of elected members (Perth Metropolitan Local Government Review Panel Final Report – Page 153) and stated:

“The model for elected members needs to be updated to encourage an increased capacity for strategic decision-making. The Panel believes elected members need to exhibit a higher standard of executive governance, similar to that of a board. This can be reinforced by training, which is encouraged by appropriate remuneration. The demonstration of board-like behaviour will be particularly important in a restructured environment where metropolitan local governments will typically serve large populations and have budgets of \$200 million or more. Elected members will need to move from a representative role to more of a leadership role. In the larger local governments, where there is more diversity in areas and needs, elected members will have to consider the big picture and be less focussed on matters of a very localised nature.

The Panel believes that elected members must represent their whole district, not just a small ward. Indeed, within the newly created local governments, a renewed focus on the broader district will be vital. Elected members will need to work towards the advancement of the community as a whole, rather than represent small pockets or narrow interests. This is why the Panel suggests that ward systems not be utilised initially in the newly created districts.”

It is the CfG’s firm belief that the implementation of legislation strengthening the Mayor’s role as the centrepiece of arrangements is essential for modernised local government in Geelong. The CfG believes the directly elected Mayor concept should be retained and creatively built upon to improve the capacity and performance of local government in Geelong. As argued later in this submission it is also essential for the representational structure for the election of councillors to be changed to facilitate the election of councillors with the characteristics of those described above in the Perth report.

3. PROPOSED CHANGES FOR GEELONG

The CfG strongly supports retention of direct election of the Mayor. To optimise the prospects of success for this model the CfG proposes that:

- A Deputy Mayor be directly elected so that the Mayor and Deputy Mayor are elected as a team;
- The expectations and requirements of candidates for the office of Mayor and the role of the Mayor in office be updated and articulated by statute or some other means;
- The authority and powers of the Mayor be ‘modernised’ so that the Mayor can effectively perform the role;
- The representational structure be altered to provide for a total council of nine councillors with:
 - The directly elected Mayor and Deputy Mayor being included in the nine;
 - Four ordinary councillors being elected from four geographically delineated wards;
 - Three ordinary councillors being elected from the municipality as a whole.

3.1 Retain the directly elected Mayor

The key point in favour of a directly Mayor is that he/she is directly and clearly accountable to the electors of the whole municipality. The literature provides ample evidence that a directly elected Mayor can use his/her democratic legitimacy to speak and negotiate on behalf of the whole community.

It is also argued that directly elected Mayors significantly enhance the visibility of the Mayor’s office by:

- the enduring nature of the position over a term of several years;
- the greater capacity for continuity and delivery over the several year term;
- the attention that the local community and media focus on the individual in that position.

The Sansom discussion paper notes that directly elected mayors are appointed in New Zealand, Queensland and Tasmania ‘and all the mayors interviewed in those jurisdictions affirmed the value and importance of having a personal mandate.’ The paper goes on to state:

“Even though mayors may not enjoy specific additional powers, and may sometimes find themselves in a minority within the elected council, a personal mandate was seen to enable them to appeal directly to constituents, to represent a diverse range of community interests, to work effectively with central governments, business and other key partners, and to exercise more influence within the council organisation, both in negotiations with other councillors and with senior management.”

Geelong has had a short experience with a directly elected Mayor between November 2012 and September 2013. This is probably insufficient time for it to be fully tested, but drawing on the lessons learned from that short period, the CfG believes the concept should be retained and developed.

It is expected that the positive aspects outlined above will be seen in time as being beneficial to local government in Geelong in raising its profile across its broad economic, social and environmental agenda. In addition the associated higher profile and engagement of the whole community through the Mayoral election should play a part in enhancing democratic participation and active citizenship.

3.2 Mayor and Deputy Mayor directly elected as a team

In its 2011 submission the CfG proposed the election of a Mayor and Deputy Mayor as a team. The Government did not adopt this concept.

Section 11C (1) of the City of Greater Geelong Amendment Act 2012 provides that the Council must elect a councillor to be a Deputy Mayor.

The CfG still holds the view that the Mayor and Deputy Mayor should be elected as a team. The CfG particularly endorses the value of mutual support with such a team. It should be easier to interest a 'good candidate' to stand as Mayor if he/she knew they were taking on the task with a known partner and ally.

In selecting an appropriate candidate for Deputy Mayor, consideration is likely to be given to broadening the electoral base of the Mayoral candidate. It is noted that, in the Melbourne City Council elections, teams sometimes blend candidates of different political bases, thus reducing the direct party political influence in the election process. The CfG believes that teams are also often balanced in gender terms and this would provide greater gender equity in the case for Geelong.

A precedent is set in Victoria with the dual model used for the City of Melbourne. The CfG supports this model for Geelong and notes the provisions set out in Section 15 of the City of Melbourne Act 2001. The CfG believes that these provisions should guide the arrangements for Geelong.

“15. Joint nominations for Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor

(1) A candidate for the office of Lord Mayor or Deputy Lord Mayor at a general election must nominate for the office jointly with another person.

(2) The notice of candidature must specify which of the 2 candidates nominating is seeking election as Lord Mayor and which of the candidates is seeking election as Deputy Lord Mayor.

(3) A person may only nominate once for election either to the office of Lord Mayor, or to the office of Deputy Lord Mayor, at an election.”

The CfG also supports Section 11 (1) of the City of Greater Geelong Amendment Act 2012 stating that a person who is a candidate for election as the Mayor is not eligible to be a candidate for election as a councillor if the elections are conducted at the same time. If a Deputy Mayor is to be directly elected this provision should be extended to cover the Deputy Mayor as well.

When considering the advantages and disadvantages of the Mayor/Deputy Mayor being prevented from standing as a councillor the CfG believed that it came down to the relative weight put on two issues, namely would the risk that failed Mayor/Deputy Mayor candidates on the Council being disruptive be a greater or lesser concern than Mayor/Deputy Mayor candidates being prevented from also standing as ordinary councillors being a waste of talent?

On balance, the CfG gave greater weight to the concern that failed Mayor/Deputy Mayor candidates could be disruptive as ordinary councillors. CfG also holds the view that serious candidates wanting to provide leadership in the Mayor/Deputy positions would be unlikely to want to hedge their bets by standing for both positions.

On this question the CfG also notes the provision in Section 16 of the City of Melbourne Act, 2001 preventing the Mayor and Deputy Mayor from standing for election as a councillor.

3.3 Expectations of the Mayor

The success of local government in Geelong will largely depend on the attributes and qualities of the individuals who are directly elected as Mayor and Deputy Mayor and their understanding of the roles that are to be performed.

Whether it is through legislation or some other means, the expectations and attributes of the Mayor and the requirements of the role should be laid out, perhaps in a job description similar to the manner in which a job description is provided for a chief executive position.

3.3.1 Expectations of Mayoral candidates

The CfG believes that accountability to the voters would be enhanced if candidates in Mayoral teams spelt out a vision, policy platform, programs and plans for their four-year term - much the same as happens in State Government.

This would leave the way open for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, in duo, to run as the leaders of a team of candidates contesting ordinary councillor positions across the municipality. The Mayor, Deputy Mayor and all those candidates in the team would prosecute the manifesto and if elected could have a majority and a clear mandate.

Voters could then judge the performance of the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and the Council against its policies, programs and plans over the four-year term.

3.3.2 Expectations of the Mayor in office: Role and Responsibilities

Mayor as leader of the Council

This internal leadership role involves:

- setting up an effective governance structure within the scope of the legislation.
- presiding over the decision-making structures of the Council.
- 'managing' the councillors to form them into a team (working on the relationships and cohesion between the councillors).
- providing motivation and leadership to the administration so they gain a strong sense of what is important (not managing the staff which is the CEO's role).

Mayor as leader in the community

This external leadership role provides scope for the Mayor to use the position:

- to bring people together around a specific vision for the future.
- to act as a catalyst for finding best solutions to issues.
- to aid co-ordination and cohesion.
- to effectively position the Council in its strategic relationships with the Commonwealth Government, State Government, key agencies and institutions, community organisations and stakeholders.

Mayor as figurehead (or spokesperson)

The Mayor is spokesperson for the Council, making public statements, which project a positive image of the Council (and his/her own image) whether it is in the media or speaking on public platforms at home or abroad.

3.3.3 Personal attributes of the Mayor

Provided the Mayor has relevant leadership skills and attributes, experience in local government is not a necessary prerequisite. However, the Mayor will possess most, if not all, of the following personal attributes:

- Absolute integrity, both personal and professional
- A record of high achievement, including as a leader
- Demonstrated qualities of leadership, drive and commitment
- Good public speaking ability
- Socially at ease, articulate, diplomatic and politically astute
- A good listener
- Adept and confident in handling the media
- The ability to master complex briefs and to argue a case coherently
- The ability to act as a spokesperson at home and abroad
- An understanding of the needs and aspirations of various sections of the community

3.4 Modernise the Authority and Powers of the Mayor

The City of Greater Geelong Amendment Act 2012 prescribed special functions for the Mayor viz:

“11E Special functions of Mayor

(1) The Mayor of the Council may, at his or her discretion;

- (a) appoint a Councillor of the Council, to a non-remunerated position, to be the Council's representative, on a body in respect of which the Council is entitled to representation;**
- (b) appoint a Councillor of the Council to be the chairperson of a special committee of which at least one member of the committee is a Councillor.**

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1)(b), if a Councillor appointed by the Mayor to be chairperson of a special committee was not already a member of that committee, he or she becomes a member of that committee on that appointment.”

This Act provides the Geelong Mayor with direct powers whereas the City of Melbourne Act 2001, under Section 25A gives the Council the authority to delegate powers to the Lord Mayor viz:

“The Council may by instrument of delegation delegate to the Lord Mayor a power, duty or function of the Council specified in the instrument relating to-

- (a) the appointment of Councillors to chair committees;**
- (b) the appointment of Councillors to represent the Council on external organisations, committees and working parties;**
- (c) travelling arrangements relating to Councillors;**
- (d) expenses incurred by Councillors in the course of their duties.**

A limiting factor in the Geelong legislation is that the Mayor of Geelong under 11E (1) (a) can only appoint a councillor to a non-remunerated position as the Council's representative on a body in respect of which the Council is entitled to representation. For example, the Mayor of Geelong does not have the power to appoint a representative to a remunerated position on the Geelong Regional Library. This power is with the Council.

On the face of it, the Lord Mayor of Melbourne seems to have more power in relation to appointments to external organisations. However, the current practice at the City of Melbourne is that Council has delegated power to the Lord Mayor under Section 25A (a) (c) and (d), but not (b). The Council itself makes these appointments described in (b).

The Local Government Act 1989, under Section 3F gives councils a general power viz:

“(1) Subject to any limitations or restrictions imposed by or under this Act or any other Act, a Council has the power to do all things necessary or convenient

to be done in connection with the achievement of its objectives and the performance of its functions.

(2) The generality of this section is not limited by the conferring of specific powers by or under this or any other Act.”

Councils could rely on this section for authority to undertake such activities as setting up a portfolio system.

As stated earlier Sansom, drawing on observations from overseas, advocates an Australian model which he describes as the ‘semi-executive’ Mayor – one with more responsibilities and greater authority than is generally the case at present, but one who remains subject to a ‘separation of powers’ between the political realm of policy and strategy on the one hand, and the management realm of administration and program implementation on the other.

The CfG has not formed a firm view on the extent of increased powers and authority that should be granted to the Mayor of the City of Greater Geelong, but it clearly needs to be more than it is at present. In addition, the Mayor’s office should have appropriately qualified and experienced personnel to provide a high level of advisory and administrative support. This would be similar to the support available to the Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor of Melbourne where the Chief of Staff, along with support staff, works closely with the offices of the Chief Executive Officer, Councillor Support, Directors and Managers to ensure an effective relationship exists to support the functionality of the Council.

Auckland, New Zealand is cited as an example, where the Mayor is the head of the Auckland Council’s governing body and provides overall leadership to other elected members and the organisation.

Pursuant to section 9 of the Auckland Council Act, the Mayor has enhanced responsibilities:

- to articulate and promote a vision for Auckland
- to provide leadership for the purpose of achieving objectives that will contribute to that vision.

The role of the Mayor also includes:

- leading the development of council plans (including the long-term plan and the annual plan), policies, and budgets for consideration by the governing body
- ensuring there is effective engagement between the Auckland Council and the people of Auckland, including those too young to vote.

To undertake these roles, the Mayor has a number of powers, including to:

- establish processes and mechanisms for the Auckland Council to engage with the people of Auckland, whether generally or particularly (for example, the people of a cultural, ethnic, Geographic, or other community of interest)
- appoint a Deputy Mayor
- establish committees of the governing body (the Mayor is a member of each committee of the governing body)
- establish and maintain an appropriately staffed office of the Mayor
- appoint the chairperson of each committee of the governing body and, for that purpose, the Mayor:
 - may make the appointment before other members of the committee are determined
 - may appoint himself or herself.

The Auckland model would be a useful guide in prescribing the role and powers for the Mayor of the City of Greater Geelong.

The CfG agrees with Sansom's view that the Mayor's powers and responsibilities should be articulated either by statute or some other means so that the 'rules of the game' are clear. It also agrees that in cases where the Mayor has considerable power and authority the Mayor must represent accurately the policies and decisions of the council in performing his or her function.

4. CHANGE THE REPRESENTATIONAL STRUCTURE

4.1 Number of councillors

The City of Greater Geelong Amendment Act 2012 prescribes a reconstitution of the Council from 2016 viz.

- “8(1) from the general election, to be held in 2016, the Council consists of –
- (a) a Mayor elected to represent the City of Greater Geelong as a representative of the municipal district as a whole; and
 - (b) not fewer than 4, and not more than 11, Councillors elected –
 - (i) to represent the municipal district as a whole; or
 - (ii) to represent wards into which the municipal district is divided.”

The Committee for Geelong believes that the Council should have nine councillors in total, comprised of;

- The Mayor and Deputy Mayor, both directly elected
- Four councillors elected from four geographically delineated wards
- Three councillors elected from the municipal district as a whole.

4.2 Ward structure

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) last reviewed ward structures in Geelong in 2008, reporting on 12 May 2008. It recommended 12 single councillor wards and this structure was introduced and still exists.

The City of Greater Geelong Amendment Act 2012 calls for the next review of ward boundaries to be conducted before the general election of the Council in 2016.

Neither the provisions of the City of Greater Geelong Amendment Act 2012 outlined in 4.1 above, nor the criteria adopted by the VEC when determining electoral structures (outlined on Page 84 of the Electoral Review discussion paper) allow for the consideration of what the CfG proposes in Section 4.3 of this document - a 'mixed model' structure where a number of councillors are elected from across the whole municipality and a number elected from wards.

In considering the question of ward structure, it is first useful to examine the 2008 VEC report. In its 2008 review, the VEC considered an un-subdivided municipality but ruled it out because it:

- recognised that there are a number of distinct communities of interest within the municipality, including established and new residential areas, vast rural areas to the north, commercial and retail precincts, as well as significant coastal locations;
- noted the large and rapidly growing number of voters in the City;
- believed it would be extremely difficult for candidates to canvass all of the electors if the municipality were un-subdivided;
- believed it may lead to an unreasonably large number of candidates on ballot papers.

The VEC therefore looked at a number of models that divided the municipality into wards. In its Preliminary Report, the VEC presented three options: The preferred option was;

- that the Greater Geelong City Council consist of twelve councillors, to be elected from six two-councillor wards ($6 \times 2 = 12$)

The first preliminary alternative option was:

- that the Greater Geelong City Council consist of twelve councillors to be elected from twelve single-councillor wards with different boundaries to those in the current structure ($12 \times 1 = 12$).

The second preliminary alternative option was:

- that the Greater Geelong City Council consist of twelve councillors, to be elected from four three-councillor wards ($4 \times 3 = 12$).

In testing the preliminary options with the community, the VEC found no support for their preferred option i.e. the $6 \times 2 = 12$ option. This narrowed it down to the 12×1 or 4×3 options.

In summary the VEC found that the 4×3 option best captured communities of interest because it recognised the differences in land use, interests and demographics. However, it found that, due to the size and number of voters in the City and the high number of voters per ward (around 40,000) it was not an appropriate structure for the City of Greater Geelong.

In summary the VEC considered that no single-councillor ward structure could be drawn that effectively captured the communities of interest within the City of Greater Geelong and that in any single-councillor model, some boundaries must be drawn arbitrarily, thereby dividing communities of interest such as Clifton Springs and Drysdale and inappropriately combining others such as the rural voters and those in the outskirts of urban Geelong. It also acknowledged that there would always be difficulty in determining the ideal boundaries under any of the models, largely due to the geographic composition, perceived communities of interest and the need to meet the legislative requirements.

Despite its reservations the VEC came to the conclusion (and recommended) that a structure with twelve single-councillor wards was most likely to provide the best balance between the criteria it considered for the electoral representation review and was satisfied that its 12×1 structure would provide the best opportunity for fair and equitable electoral representation to voters of the City of Greater Geelong.

Both the VEC's review and the legislation provide sufficient scope and flexibility to allow a 'mixed model' option to be considered. The CfG therefore recommends a 'mixed model' as an alternative to the present structure.

4.3 Adopt the best model for Geelong: Victoria's major non-capital City

While single councillor wards were popular following the restructuring of municipal boundaries in the mid 1990's, there has been a substantial decrease in the number of municipalities divided into single councillor wards since 2003 – from 43 municipalities in 2003, to 11 in 2012, a reduction of 32 (refer Electoral Review Discussion Paper, Table 19, page 81).

In light of the VEC's deliberations and the difficulty it had in reaching its conclusions in 2008 the CfG holds the view that the 12-councillor structure has not delivered the community of interest benefits sought by the VEC in 2008 because:

(1) While a break-up into 12 wards spreads the representation well geographically it does give rise to a form of parochialism that inhibits the opportunity for a broad, whole-of-municipality approach to the identification of issues, the development of regional projects and broad-based decision making.

(2) Significant 'community of interest' sectors are not catered for in the 12 x 1 structure.

In the City of Greater Geelong in 2008 there were 144,740 voters who had an adult franchise entitlement and 15,841 voters with a property based entitlement (mainly non-resident owners). Only four voters applied to be enrolled as company nominees. There is a clear weighting with residential voters.

'Mirror representation' as cited in the Local Government Electoral Review discussion paper, states that more effective representation occurs when specific groups in a society are represented according to their ratio in the community. Representatives should as nearly as possible represent the shades of opinion, the interests, and diversity of the community at large.

This is why an un-subdivided municipality has some appeal to the CfG, because it gives appropriate recognition to community sectors such as tourism, retail, agriculture and community groups representing the aged, disabled and the culturally and linguistically diverse. Under the present 12-ward structure the voices of these major interest sectors are indistinct and constrained.

An un-subdivided municipality may, in the opinion of the VEC, have some drawbacks but it is a way, perhaps the only way, in which sectors of interest within the community at large can assemble voting support in sufficient numbers to give candidates representing those sectors a reasonable chance of succeeding in an election to become a councillor.

An un-subdivided municipality together with the proportional representation system of voting increases the prospects of candidates representing sector constituencies being successful. In part this is because successful candidates only have to receive a quota of votes, not a majority as in preferential voting, and their chances of obtaining the quota are enhanced if they can gain voting support across the whole municipality. This level of support is quite difficult to achieve in a geographically prescribed ward.

While the CfG is attracted to an un-subdivided municipality it recognises that there is a case for geographical representation due to the large size of the municipality.

Although the VEC, in its 2008 review, had some reservations about subdividing the municipality into four wards it did state that this break-up best captured communities of interest because it recognised the differences in land use, interests and demographics.

The CfG has therefore come to the view that a 'mixed model' would be superior to the present structure, namely four councillors elected from four geographically delineated wards (4 x 1) plus three councillors elected from across the municipal district as a whole (1 x 3).

The 'mixed model' has been applied in the City of Adelaide since 2007 and is again being recommended following a recent Electoral Representation Review (refer City of Adelaide Draft Representation Review Report – New Proposal – August 2013).

The structure being recommended is:

- The Lord Mayor being elected by the electors for the whole area,
- Six councillors being elected as representatives of the area as a whole; and
- Four councillors being elected as representatives of four defined wards.

In explaining the reasons for making the recommendation the Draft Report on the proposed Adelaide structure states;

“The election of councillors from the council area as a whole is the only councillor composition that ensures the fundamental democratic principle of one vote one value.....”

“The inclusion of the election of some councillors as representatives of wards incorporates the desirability of reflecting communities of interest of an economic, social, regional and other kind and improves the perceived feasibility of communication between electors affected by the proposal and their elected representatives.”

The CfG considers that, with the new heightened awareness in Geelong of the Mayoral system, the VEC's deliberations could easily lead to a different conclusion than the one drawn in 2008. The CfG believes that the legislation and/or the criteria used by the VEC in determining electoral representation should allow for a 'mixed model' to be considered and, if appropriate, recommended.

5. CONCLUSION

The CfG recognises that designing electoral representation is not an exact science and relies on considered experimentation, careful review and fresh implementation. Recent history shows that even voting systems used in Commonwealth elections, designed to be fair and equitable, can be exploited.

This submission has sought to express expectations, identify trends that have worked in other jurisdictions and offer some creative suggestions on how electoral representation and local government can be improved in Geelong.

In summary, for the City of Greater Geelong, the CfG would like to see:

- the directly elected Mayor concept retained,
- the concept expanded to include a directly elected Deputy Mayor,
- the Mayor given enhanced powers, authority and resources,
- the council to comprise a total of nine councillors,
- councillor representation to be achieved through a 'mixed model' of four councillors elected from wards and three elected from across the whole municipality.

The CfG looks forward optimistically to the outcomes of the review process.