

Panel of 100 Geelong residents to advise on city's future rulers

Citizens' jury will shape our council

SHANE FOWLES

A **SELECT** group of Geelong residents will play an influential role in deciding what Geelong's new council will look like.

One hundred people will be picked to form part of a citizens' jury, which will recommend the best design of the City of Greater Geelong.

The jury has a broad range of potential reforms to consider, including whether:

THE directly-elected mayoral model is retained.

A DEPUTY mayor is needed and how they are elected.

THE current 12-councillor structure should be replaced.

WARD structure in the municipality should become

multi-member or whether the ward boundaries should be abolished.

The process follows the dismissal of the Geelong council in April, after a commission of inquiry set up by the State Government found it was riddled with conflict and plagued by a bullying culture.

Local Government Minister Natalie Hutchins said the residents' views would help design a governance structure before the return of an elected council, set for October next year.

"The last council failed to deliver good governance — and

a citizens' jury will help ensure that does not happen again," she said.

The initiative has been used successfully in South Australia and the City of Melbourne, where the jury helped inform the council's latest 10-year financial plan.

Ms Hutchins said the independently run 100-person jury would provide "a wider representation of community

voice", tapping into people from all corners of the city.

"The Andrews Labor Government wants to know what the people of Geelong think is best for their future council and to help design it," she said.

The independent group newDemocracy Foundation would select the jury and oversee the process, expected to be held over several weekends in November and December.

Other interested residents, community and lobby groups would be able to air their views with the jury, which would take them into account when they deliberated.

The jury would produce a public report with recommendations for the Government to consider.

"The last council failed to deliver good governance — and a citizens' jury will help ensure that does not happen again."

LOCAL GOVERNMENT MINISTER NATALIE HUTCHINS

