

**Geelong  
Citizens' Jury  
Final Report**

January 2017

# Principles

| PRINCIPLE  | DESCRIPTION  |
|--|--|
| Councillors will demonstrate understanding of and competency in their role.                                | Clear role descriptions for councillors.<br>Induction training and ongoing training of Councillors in all areas.<br>Performance reviews.   |
| Council will be representative of the community and responsive to the diversity of needs in the community. | Encourage a diverse range of community members to nominate for Council.<br>Minimise barriers to participation in Council and associated civic committees.  |
| Council will communicate effectively and promote community engagement.                                     | Council communication plan including communication with media and online communication strategies.<br>Engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders.<br>Inclusive policies and practices when engaging with the community.   |
| Council will be transparent and accountable.   | The Code of Conduct needs to be followed.<br>Council is to follow clear policy, procedures and protocols.<br>The decision making process needs to be visible.<br>Council is to regularly review performance and plans.<br>There needs to be a regulatory body to oversee the operation of Council and ensure accountability. |
| Councillors will operate with integrity and honesty and within the legal framework.                        | Honest declaration of prior experience and interests at time of standing for Council.<br>Consequences for failure to follow Code of Conduct.<br>Declaration of conflicts of interest when particular issues are being considered.<br>Council will operate within the legal framework and the powers of Council.              |
| Council will develop and follow a long term strategic plan.  | Strategic plan to include vision, goals, implementation and evaluation plus linked to other Council plans.   |
| Council will operate effectively and efficiently   | Council decisions linked to achievements of goals and desired outcomes. Transparent allocation of resources and sound financial management. Efficient use of council resources.  |

# Practical Recommendations

## Introduction

The Geelong Citizen's Jury was tasked with the remit of 'Our Council was dismissed, how do we want to be democratically represented by a future Council?'

The Geelong Citizen's Jury was a representation of the demographic cross section of the City of Greater Geelong. Over an intensive period of face to face and online forum work the Jury has developed recommendations for the Minister and Cabinet to consider for the Geelong Council election in 2017 and beyond. These have been separated up into practical and aspirational recommendations.

Practical recommendations addressed those ideas concerning the election of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor and the Ward structure. These recommendations are limited by the existing State legislation.

The Aspirational recommendations, which are still in Draft, cover those ideas which are outside the existing legislation.

The Jury bonded as a team and addressed challenging matters to arrive at the recommendations included in this report. The Jury recognised our individual biases and strove to find common ground to respond to the remit and give the framework for Geelong to move forward.

We, the Jury, thank the Minister for the opportunity to give a voice to the citizens of Geelong and its surrounds. We are thankful of the undertaking given to table the unedited report in Parliament and have it presented to Cabinet.

The people of the City of Greater Geelong have spoken for the benefit of us all. We expect that our elected State representatives and our future Councillors shall listen to what has been said. We want those acting on our behalf to keep focussed on the democratic process and like us, put aside individual and partisan agendas, to give Victoria's second largest city the framework to succeed.

# The Mayor

The jury recommends that the mayor is elected by the council from among the councillors. They should serve a 2 year term.

## **Practical Conditions**

**Decision Making Process:** The decision on electing a mayor took us considerable time, and opinions swung frequently. The final decision was based on a rating scale of Love It, Like It, Live With It, Lament It, Loathe It. 79% voted 'Live With It' or above for the directly elected Mayor option, in comparison to 84% voting 'Live With It' or above for the Council-elected Mayor option. Prior to this we had close to a 50:50 vote with the 'yes / no' options. There was a significant group who were undecided unless further aspirational changes occurred for the directly-elected mayor option. Clarifying these options may have changed the results.

Therefore, by majority, the jury recommends that the mayor is elected by the council.

The key advantages of voting for a council-elected mayor were as follows:

- Better relationships with councillors with greater internal support
- More likely to be a cohesive unit with less conflict between mayor and councillors
- Greater understanding of council operations
- Less susceptible to populism

The key advantages of a directly-elected mayor were as follows:

- Greater engagement from community in the voting process
- Symbolic figurehead for the city
- A greater mandate from the whole community to drive the agenda for Geelong

Both options were voted for based on a number of conditions as follows:

- Roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for all parties need to be clarified
- Public education on roles and duties of mayor / councillors etc.
- Enforceable code of conduct and a defined process for its application
- Transparency is required in the election process if the council-elected mayor option is pursued.

It was decided by the Jury that the Mayor serves a two-year term, and is eligible for re-election as opposed to a four year term. This was agreed on the 'live with it scale' with percentages of 82% for two year term and 69% for a 4 year term. One year terms for the mayor were ruled out by the jury.

### **Aspirational Conditions**

As stated, there was a significant group who were undecided unless further aspirational changes occurred for the directly-elected mayor option. Clarifying these options may have changed the results.

## Wards and Councillors

### **The Result:**

The citizens jury agreed as a 'super majority' on a four ward structure, comprising of 11 councillors in total. We suggest these wards be divided into rough geographical areas, dependent on the electoral population of the areas. The proposed wards would encompass the Bellarine coastal region, the Northern region, suburban Geelong and central Geelong. The preferred distribution of councillors would be three in each ward except for central Geelong, which would have two. This distribution would be dependent on the number of electoral voters in each ward as per current electoral legislation. It is worthwhile noting that this proposal received more than 90% of jury support.

### **Rationale:**

This structure would provide multiple local voices in each ward to represent the diversity of local needs and interests in each area. We decided on the odd number of councillors to avoid deadlocks when voting on issues. In addition, we agreed the greater region needed to be broken up into wards, but fewer wards with multiple members to encourage collaboration, increase broader representation and greater accessibility for voters to councillors.

### **Principles:**

Council will be representative of the community and responsive to the diverse needs of the community.

Council will communicate effectively and promote community engagement.

# Aspirational Recommendations

The Geelong Citizens' Jury was tasked with the remit of 'Our Council was dismissed, how do we want to be democratically represented by a future Council?'

The Aspirational recommendations cover those ideas outside the existing legislation that the jury believes will improve local democracy. If these recommendations are adopted, the City of Greater Geelong will potentially have the best Council in Australia in terms of representation and trust.

The jury engaged with a range of speakers and considered submissions, reports and other documents. Robust discussion during the jury process and via the online portal ensured a broad array of ideas were considered, debated and refined.

The jury comprised approximately 100 citizens, randomly selected from 15,000 invites of Greater Geelong addresses representative of the census data for gender, age and geography.

## **Aspirational recommendation contents**

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## **Broadcasting Council Meetings through multiple media platforms, ie. web, radio, podcast, etc**

### **Rationale**

To provide a consistent flow of unedited data and information to the wider community in an open and transparent public forum. It also provides a platform for the community to refer back to, fostering a sense of involvement. This does not prevent physical attendance of meetings and minutes are available on the web.

Portability of information and will include feedback forums.

Holds councillors accountable to the code of conduct

This does not include closed/confidential meetings or items of a sensitive nature; voting will not be broadcast, only the results.

### **Principles this links to**

Transparency and Accountability.

## Facilitating Citizen Engagement

### **Rationale**

Provide regular opportunities for community engagement through the use of citizens' juries and committees under Section 86 (where appropriate) to advise council, and review decisions and performance in areas of major spending and planning. They will also review the formation and adherence to the annual council budget.

Citizens directly participating in council processes.

Greater engagement assists well-informed decision making by council and improves community confidence that Council is providing services in the best interests of all sections of the community.

Using citizens' juries and committees will improve council transparency and accountability. It will also increase community knowledge about the role of council and their decisions. The role of specific juries should be clearly defined.

The community consultation process will also include opportunities for submissions to council juries and committees.

This engagement allows the community to liaise with councillors in delegated decision making on specific issues and may increase the pool of candidates for future council roles.

### **Principles this links to**

Accountability, transparency and good governance.

A just and inclusive democracy, that are less likely to have a conflict of interests.

Inclusiveness of minority groups in decision making in government.

Accountability of council to the community.

Transparency of local government processes and decisions.



## Citizens of Geelong Online Portal

Provide an online mechanism for citizen input and feedback to to improve councillor awareness of community values, issues and ideas.

### **Rationale**

For the purposes engendering community engagement and the sharing and discussion of new ideas, we would like to emulate the White House “We The People” program.

The “We The People” program is an online portal that allows members of the community to lodge ideas they wish to put to the administration. Any idea that receives at least a specific number of votes requires a formal response from the administration.

In a Geelong Council context, such a portal would allow members of the community to engage with council on ideas that would not normally come to the attention of the council.

Depending on the response to the idea, different actions might be triggered within council.

For example, one thousand positive votes for the idea might require the council to formulate a formal response to the idea. Five thousand positive responses might require the council to take the idea to an appropriate community reference group.

A significantly large enough community response to an idea could trigger an idea to be fully considered before council.

Essentially, this would be a mechanism that promotes community consultation between council and community, and maintains the concept of the “citizens jury”, because everyone has the opportunity to be involved.

### **Principles this links to**

Citizen Jury, Engagement, Transparency, Consultation, Participation

## Compulsory knowledge acquisition and training for candidates and elected councillors

### **Rationale**

Free acquisition of knowledge and information for candidates around the role of becoming a councillor, including councillor role orientation, council policies and processes to gain basic understanding of the responsibilities of the position.

Once a councillor is elected this should include mandated on-going/annual training or refresher as relevant for example;

civic responsibilities,  
team/collaboration skills,  
financial management,  
strategic planning,  
governance,  
community stakeholder engagement,  
people management, etc.

All training to be accessible via flexible means (including part-time), such as online or hard copy form, etc.

### **Principles this links to**

Council will demonstrate understanding of and competency in their role.  
Council will be transparent and accountable.

## Education of community to promote democratic processes

### **Rationale:**

Accessible education should be provided to citizens to ensure the public is informed in matters of local government and to ensure democratic representation.

### **Council:**

Information on roles, duties, powers, responsibilities and expectation of council and councillors would help ensure a fair, equitable and democratic council is appointed.

### **Access to Councillors:**

The public should be made aware of how to contact and engage with their representative.

### **Oversight of Council:**

Citizens should be provided information on all oversight bodies relevant to council and councillors. This information should include contact details and scope and jurisdiction of the varying bodies. This would allow citizens to better report misconduct and abuses of power within the local government system.

### **Diversity of Council:**

By providing education to members of the community, more opportunities will be available for members of the public to run for local council thus increasing the diversity of council candidates and councillors.

### **Nomination and Election of Candidates and Councillors:**

The community should be informed about the nomination and electoral processes of councillors. This would allow the community to better democratically vote for their representative.

### **Current Issues:**

Community members should be provided with information regarding current issues, before and during debate and deliberations. Citizens are entitled to be aware of council decision making processes.

### **Principles this links to:**

Council will be representative of the community and responsive to the diversity of needs in the community.

Council will be transparent and accountable.

Council will communicate effectively and promote community engagement.

## Maximum size of Victorian municipalities

### **Rationale**

To minimise disparity of representation among different municipalities and to ensure councils don't get too big.

To distinguish local level government from higher-level government, i.e. state etc.

Fewer larger multi councillor wards, provide compromise between diversity of local representation and focus on municipality wide issues, ensuring strategic view of issues

This may occur by:

Proposed upper limit on number of councillors and resident/voter to councillor ratio

- Maximum number of councillors per municipality be increased from 12 to 15 (including mayor)
- Maximum resident/ratepayer to councillor ratio be limited
- If maximum resident/ratepayer to councillor is exceeded, municipality to be subdivided
- If number of COGG councillors is increased to 15, then recommended ward structure is 5 wards of 3 councillors.

### **Principles this links to**

Council will be representative of the community and responsive to the diversity of needs in the community.

Council will operate effectively and efficiently

Council will be transparent and accountable

## Candidate and councillor public information

**Rationale** To further develop Division 4 Form 2 Regulation 43 Candidate Questionnaire to include more information about each potential councillor so voters can make more informed decisions. It should also help to improve accountability of council members. These questions listed below are in addition to the existing questions already established within the existing candidate questionnaire Form 2 regulation 43.

These responses need to be supplied to the voters with the electoral voting forms (if at all possible) or else this information needs to be provided via a link to an online portal where it can be accessed with the voting papers.

These questions (plus those already in the candidate questionnaire) should be compulsory for candidates to complete.

1. Why would you like to be elected as a councillor / mayor?
2. What do you hope to achieve for your electorate?
3. What is your vision for Geelong?
4. Please provide details of any community service or charitable roles previously undertaken (if any)
5. Please provide details of any attributes or experiences (employed or otherwise) which may help prepare you to become a councillor
6. Are you affiliated with any 3rd party group? i.e Union, business or community group
7. What are you passionate about?
8. What are your areas of expertise?

Prior to elections, all candidates must disclose all relevant details that may impact their ability to provide transparent governance. Voters should be entitled to access all *relevant* details of candidates in order to inform the voting process. This will apply to elected councillors on an ongoing basis.

Relevant information may include significant assets, specific allegiances, business enterprises and connections. As per the client section process listed above.

**Principles this links to** Transparency, accountability

## Election process

Conditions relating to the directly elected Mayor and Deputy Mayor model

### **Rationale**

If, in the event of, a directly elected mayor, the following conditions must be met:

1. The mayor would need to have been a councillor prior to running for the mayoral role, with a minimum of one term
2. Pre-training of any potential mayor would need to occur as specified (a training/skills based course in local government at a minimum)
3. The election would occur at the same time as the councillors (so the community aren't voting for two separate elections)
4. A candidate must first nominate as a councillor and then may also nominate for a mayor or deputy mayor.
5. If the councillor picked as a popular choice through the whole of Geelong is not elected as a local councillor, they will **not** be mayor. The next most popular choice who is an elected councillor would become mayor.
6. The mayoral candidate would need to cap any spending for advertising to a nominated figure.

### **Principles this links to**

Democracy, Community engagement, Accountability, Effective and efficient council

**To prohibit developer financial and in-kind contributions to candidates and council staff, consistent with other states' legislation.**

**Rationale:** If a developer/interest group funds a councillor's election campaign, or provides funds to council staff, that councillor or staff member may feel an obligation to support the developer's building application. Also, councillors and staff should have a mandatory obligation to declare funding from any source.

**Principles this links to**

Transparency

Integrity

Honesty

Fairness

## Development of a Junior Council and appointment of a Junior Mayor

### **Rationale**

Junior Councillors will be nominated from Years 10, 11, 12 students from local private and public schools.

The Junior Council will enable young people who might have otherwise not known or been interested in Council to experience civic and democratic processes.

They will be representative of Council wards.

Raising youth-specific issues with input into Council.

Junior Mayor to provide summary to Council periodically for decision-making.

Mandate for Junior Council should be clear.

### **Principles this links to**

Community representation

Community engagement and education



## Greater administrative and advisory collaboration and support to Mayor, Deputy and Councillors

### **Rationale**

As per the commission of inquiry report, see below:

To build / develop a collaborative environment between the Mayor, the deputy, all councillors, the City of Greater Geelong, and the Vic. Govt. to ensure good governance. If there is good strong administrative support underpinning the roles of the mayor and councillors it will enable greater efficiency and better outcomes for the City of Greater Geelong.

This could include undertaking an internal review of the existing expertise and skills available and utilising the people we have within the COGG offices, identifying the gaps in administrative and advisory requirements and building a support network.

Advisors could include but would not be limited to expert internal/ external staff/ consultants stakeholders and community feedback.

### **Principles this links to**

The 3 key principles:

- councillors will demonstrate understanding of and competency in their role *with a view to better*
- ... development and following a long term strategic plan
- and
- ....will operate effectively and efficiently