

Geelong Advertiser

EDITORIAL

Jury must find civic cohesion

IT was people power that gave Geelong its two most recent mayors and it will be people power again playing a part in shaping how the city council looks after the State Government-appointed administrators move on and the vote is returned to ratepayers in 2017.

A Citizens' Jury is to be employed to provide recommendations on whether Geelong should elect its own mayor and deputy mayor and other issues like how many councillors and wards this city needs.

This select group of 100 Geelong residents will provide the public input into decisions that will affect all ratepayers for years to come.

Local Government Natalie Hutchins Minister quite rightly points out that the last Geelong council — sacked because it was riddled with internal conflict and plagued by a bullying culture — did not deliver good governance. The expectation is that a

Citizens' Jury will help ensure that does not happen again.

The objective is commendable, as is the fact that the 100 jury members will be chosen by an independent non-partisan research organisation.

But still we urge caution.

It is understandable that these jury members will want to see their city shake off its years of municipal torpor. It is therefore possible that we will end up with 100 committed, passionate individuals who have 100 committed, passionate, *different* opinions on how to get this city moving forward again.

This Citizens' Jury provides Geelong with a rare chance to have a tangible say in how this city is run, helping shape the form that our council will eventually take.

Ratepayers providing the cohesion our council lacked for so long would be a fine first step.