

Representation Review – Banyule City Council – Preliminary Submission  
Good Governance Banyule – Greensborough – 26 June 2019

Victorian Electoral Commission

RE; Review of Banyule's Electoral Representation Review 2019

My name is Brian Grace I am the Vic President of a group of concerned residence. We have formed an action community group called Good Governance Banyule. We meet on a regular basis and discuss all things Banyule. Our main inference is on the way the Banyule City Council manages our community and how it involves the community in decision making process.

We as a group attend all council meetings and actively participate in discussion about many issues that affect the Banyule community.

We support the review of Banyule's Electoral Representation Review , we believe very strongly that a change has to happen. We support a 3 ward 3 councillor type of representation.

The main reason we advocate this change is in our opinion the Council and its councillors have become exclusive rather than inclusive, by this we mean council has become a closed shop to communication with the community it is there to represent.

We further will explain our meaning of exclusiveness; the council replaced a public forum, which was open to the community to ask questions and to give their opinions on local matters that affect them. This forum was prior to the council meeting. It was replaced by public question time and questions have to be submitted in writing two days prior to any council meeting. The public question time was then placed at the end of the all council meetings. In some cases the public was concerned when questions were altered by council and the answers given by council didn't even answer the question put to it.

They further placed restrictions on the community of only ever asking the question once and that during the council meetings the community can only discuss two agenda items each meeting.

Good Governance Banyule feels and has strongly opposed any changes to the way in which the Banyule Council has changed the way it communicates with the community.

We feel a 3 ward 3 councillor option would be good for the community making the process to be a councillor easier for people within the general community to run for council thus making the process far more inclusive than it is at the moment, this inclusive process change will be a far better process than we have at the moment.

There have been numerous accounts that council have simply ignored community concerns because of the way the council has only one councillor per ward. A recent example that council did little or nothing about a recent large development . It failed to notify the developer within time, which was 60 days. It never advised any affected community members of the development until it was going to VCAT. Still then the councillor that represents the ward did nothing about updating the community about what was happening with the development.

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Good Governance believe this would not happen in a 3 ward 3 councillor type of representation as the other two councillors would ensure the community was informed and represented fully.

Visits to community groups and sporting clubs within wards could be shared around by the councillors. We understand that there have been community groups and some sporting clubs meetings have never been attended by councillors. This under a 3 ward 3 councillor system could be shared around ensuring that all community groups and sporting clubs are visited.

Regular ward council meetings could be conducted as some wards do have ward meetings others have had none.

The northern end of the Banyule council namely Watsonia and Greensborough are not strangers to multi councillor representation as this was an area represented previous by the Diamond Valley Council where they had multi councillor wards. The system was well liked but changed when it merged with Heidelberg council to form the current Banyule City Council.

We feel that the current boundaries that represent our community don't need to be changed to any drastic level rather combine the wards that we currently have. We feel the Grimshaw and Bakewell wards could combine and have 3 councillors elected to represent the community. Much the same for Olympia and Ibbotson wards and have 3 councillors in the ward. The other 3 wards could easily be combined into one ward with no increase in councillor representation.

The council has made a decision to let the status quo stand and support the current one councillor one ward concept stand. We do not agree with this opinion. This is based on all the above reasons.

Our community needs a change, a change for the better. Good Governance Banyule believes that 3 councillors for 3 wards offers that change.

The vast majority of council decisions are made with all councillors are in agreement there is nothing wrong with this and many would point out that council are in unison and they support one another when decisions need to be made. We believe that is not the way to a good local government. We feel that all matters should be strongly debated and all issues should be discussed. Not the sheep mentality of follow the leader.

Good Governance Banyule believes that the election of a Mayor could also be elected by the community rather than by councillors as is the current system. We feel that when local council elections happen a vote for mayor could also be held on the ballot paper. This would mean the mayor was elected for a 3 year term not the current merry go round that is happening at the moment for one year. This item may not be the scope of the current review but we believe it will help the community to have stable local government knowing they elected the mayor. This change and that of multi councillor wards would send a powerful message to the community of Banyule that this is not change for change sake but a positive change for the better and the community is at the heart of the change.

Lastly we feel that women are not fairly represented within council, it has become a 'BOYS CLUB' in the last 20 years or so there has only been a single woman councillor at any one time. We feel that women should be on council in far greater numbers than what they have been in the past. We

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believe increasing the councillors to nine and 3 per ward would make it far easier for women to sit on council. That is possibly the best result that can come out of a restructured Banyule City Council .

Good Governance Banyule believes an increase in councillors to the Banyule Council is a positive and constructive move to make local government in Banyule more accountable for decisions made on its behalf. An increase of two councillors from the current 7 sends a clear message that the community is important and it needs to have better accountability than it currently has.

In summary, the city of Banyule needs a change and a change for the better. What is offered by the VEC is a positive fresh approach to local government that we have not seen for many years. We believe the community will whole heartedly support a change to multi councillor wards. This is despite their council apposing such a move.

We thank the VEC for the way they have conducted such a review and believes that they will make the right decision of change for our community.

I would like to also attend a hearing to submit my views in person. Please advise me when this is.

With kind regards,

Brian Grace

Vice President

Good Governance Banyule.

