

Representation Review - Banyule City Council - Preliminary Submission
Gareth Moorhead - Ivanhoe - 14 Jul 2019

I write to support strongly an increase in the number of councillors for the City of Banyule, and the structure of the City of Banyule be changed to Multi-member Wards.

I submit that Banyule should have at least 9 and preferably more councillors. Banyule is a large, diverse metropolitan council. At present estimated population of 99,000 with only 7 councillors, we have an average of greater than 14,000 voters per councillor. This is significantly greater than is typical for "middle ring" councils. A significant increase is therefore highly justified. Furthermore, Banyule is growing very rapidly. We have an important major public transport route, the Hurstbridge line, the capacity of which is being significantly increased; and we have significant levels of construction of apartment blocks, including quite large buildings, along the transport corridors. An increase in number of councillors to 9 would bring us to around 11,000 voters per councillor, around the middle of the range. However, the planned significant population growth indicates a larger number of councillors to maintain the number of voters per councillor is warranted, so that 10 or 11 are easily justified.

I submit that Banyule should be structured into Multi-member Wards for the following reasons: At present Banyule has seven single-ward councillors. The diversity of councillors is, and has historically been, very low. Banyule has a great diversity across a very steep social gradient, from the public-housing in West Heidelberg to the generally wealthy establishment areas of Eaglemont; from the inner urban vibe of Ivanhoe to the commuter suburbs of Greensborough and Rosanna. These communities of interest are not well-represented by the lack of diversity on council. The predominance of certain areas in achieving infrastructure outcomes is arguably one indicator of the lack of representivity. The challenges of urban densification and of the major construction project of the North East Link, which will be occurring during much of the 12 year review period, require a Council that better reflects and is able to manage the different interests of residents. With existing clear divides such as major roads and the train lines and creeks and rivers, Banyule is well suited to subdivision into natural regions. A mixture of two and three councillor wards, with mostly three councillor wards, and the consequent requirement for proportional preferential voting, will encourage a greater diversity of candidates, with more women and more generally under-represented communities likely to nominate and be elected. As has also been noted, multi-member wards structures generally improve the governance of councils, with less parochial horse-trading driven by re-election prospects, and better accessibility by voters to councillors with whom they have greater affinity.