

Representation Review - Banyule City Council - Preliminary Submission

Sustainable Macleod Inc - Macleod - 23 Jul 2019

Sustainable Macleod is one of 7 Transition Towns in Banyule. Transition Towns are affiliated with a worldwide network of over 2000 towns with the aims of tackling climate change and creating sustainable visions for their communities. Sustainable Macleod works closely with Banyule City Council and 3 of the 7 councillors, and to a lesser extent with the other 4 councillors.

Sustainable Macleod's preference is for 3 wards of 3 councillors. However, as there is a bill before the State Government to abolish multi councillor wards, pragmatically we wish to address the options of 3 councillors in 3 wards, and an increase to 9 of single council wards.

As a community group we are strongly involved with the councillors closest to our suburb, (representing Ibbott, Olympia and Griffin). We know that our councillors, particularly those in the 3 largest wards by population, are extremely overworked. Two of them are on deviations of + 9.74 and +5.96 and the third on +3.86.

We elect our councillors on their vision and supposedly on a part time basis. However, our experience is that they are so caught up in dealing with ward 'minutiae' - such as complaints about a range of things from the state of the footpath to losing \$2 in a parking meter - that they have little time to execute their vision. These 3 councillors effectively work at least, if not more than, full time to serve their wards. It is our view that we need smaller wards by population and therefore an increase in the number of councillors. It is also our view that the larger the wards, the more likely that candidates are excluded by virtue of not being able to commit to a full time work load for council. This reduces the pool to people who are retired or who have sufficient means not to have to work full time.

It is also clear from the deviations that there will need to be a redrawing of boundaries in Griffin and Olympia and that simply moving some population from Griffin to Olympia given the rapid rise in population in these wards, will not resolve the issue as outlined above. We are in Ibbott Ward and likewise would not want to see any increase in population and the workload of our councillor. Currently the average population per councillor is 14,165 and we would like to see this drop to around 11,000.

Our preference is for 3 ward of 3 councillors. This would be achieved by substantially combining Olympia and Griffin; Grimshaw, and Ibbott and part of Hawdon; Beale, Bakewell and part of Hawdon with some minor adjustments to equalize the numbers in each.

Our reason for preferring 3 wards is that Sustainable Macleod, the other Transition Towns and the many environmental groups in Banyule comprise a large groundswell of people interested in a sustainable agenda for their wards but we are significantly under-represented currently. Although the major political parties do not endorse candidates, most councillors are members of a political party or strongly aligned with one, and non proportional voting favours these candidates at the expense of candidates who represent non-aligned interests. We believe that proportional representation would aid the election of candidates representing significant sustainable or other interests such as minority ethnic groups and would also allow more women to be elected. Women have never held more than one seat out of 7 on Banyule City Council and yet women comprise more than half the voting population and 37% of councillors in Victoria. For both women and ethnic minorities the workload of a councillor must be manageable on a true part time basis for them to nominate.

Should there be no option other than single councillor wards, then we suggest the wards be redrawn according to the map we have submitted. We would strongly argue that no shopping centre be split down the middle of its street eg Burgundy Street, Heidelberg or Lower Plenty Road, Lower Plenty, Upper Heidelberg Road, Ivanhoe or any others as this would make it very difficult for Traders' Association. Sustainable Macleod has a representative on the Macleod Village Traders committee and while Macleod is not likely to be affected, we are aware of concerns of other

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Traders' Groups.

In redrawing the ward boundaries we have kept intact groups of interest including socioeconomic groups and traders associations.