Monday, 22 July 2019

Victorian Electoral Commission
Level 11, 530 Collins Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

Submission to Banyule City Council Electoral Representation Review

Watsonia Neighbourhood House is located in the Grimshaw ward of Banyule City Council and make this submission to the Electoral Representation Review on ward structure, electoral structure and number of councillors. As a community development organisation we understand the needs and priorities of the people in our local community and work to address disadvantage.

Electoral structure and number of councillors

The existing single member ward structure has enabled our organisation to develop a positive and productive relationship with our ward councillor. This understanding has resulted in a deep understanding and strong advocacy on local issues with individual accountability. The result for our organisation is proactive support for the grass roots work we do in our community.

We are one of six neighbourhood houses across the Banyule City Council area each located in different wards encompassing diverse communities and addressing a range of issues. Our experience is that individual Ward councillors have a broad understanding of the complexity of issues across the local government area and are able to apply a sensible strategic approach to balancing community priorities.

Our concern for a multi member ward is that member responsiveness to local issues may be compromised if there are conflicting points of view and competitive behaviour between councillors. Our concern for an unsubdivided electoral structure is a loss of representation and accountability for localised issues.

We support the existing single member subdivided ward structure.

Ward structure

Banyule is a growing area and we would welcome more opportunities for community representation in local council. In particular we would like to see a greater representation of women and of minority community groups. Greater diversity in representation will bring a broader range of lived experiences and perspectives which will contribute to robust decision making, creative thinking and problem solving and leadership styles.

Banyule City Council currently has 7 wards. We would like to see a realignment of ward boundaries to increase from 7 to 9 wards. In the process of realigning ward boundaries it is important that locations of communities of interest are taken into consideration to ensure that they are not compromised or divided.

We are disappointed that more community discussion has not been available during this review to help more people to understand the complexities of the proposed changes. This would result in a stronger democratic outcome.

Regards

Katherine Barling
President
On behalf of Committee of Governance

Lucie Holden
Manager