

Representation Review - Banyule City Council - Response Submission Matthew Goodman - Rosanna - 17 Sep 2019

First of all I want to congratulate those involved in the creation of the preliminary report for the excellent work they have done. I believe that the report represents an extremely fair representation of the facts as well as the submissions received. I am gratified that the option of remaining with 7 wards has been excluded from the options available so that we can all accept that there will be some change and move forward with clear eyes to find the best solution.

It should come as little surprise that I favour Option A as it very close to my own submission.

I will concede that considerable work has been undertaken to create broadly acceptable boundaries in Options B and C. I do not think Option C is good for Banyule but I do want to take the time to recognise the efforts of the VEC staff who managed to create a reasonable solution if the council is to continue with single member wards.

Option B represents a reasonable division of the Council area and populations however, in my opinion, the map clings too hard to the idea of communities of interest. My interpretation of the requirement is that boundaries should not split communities. Option B seems to be trying to make the southern ward homogenous, ie wealthy. I believe that this is neither necessary nor desirable. Instead we should be fostering cross - pollination between communities to encourage a stronger community as a whole. A councillor who is free to ignore the poorest in our community is not a situation I would like to see. This argument is of course multiplied when we consider Option C. For this reason I will not be considering option B in my discussion, however it is clearly a better option than Option C.

I will not go into too much detail of all the arguments for multi member wards vs single member wards in this document as I have already outlined them in my previous submission.

For completeness however here is a summary.

1. Banyule's elections have been poorly contested. Multi member wards would encourage competition and give more choices to voters. With the addition of 2 extra wards, Option C would exacerbate the current lack of choice.
2. Banyule council has a lack of diversity, the experience of other councils is that moving to Multi member wards would help to rectify this.
3. By creating fewer borders, Option A reduces the risk of dividing communities.
4. With larger wards, proportional population balance is more easily maintained. This ensures that no persons vote is of greater power than any other.

It is clear that a lot of work has gone into option C to make the wards as even as possible, at worst they have a 5.75% deviation of population from average which is well within the design criteria of the VEC. Nonetheless it is clear that Option A gives a much better result with less than 1.5 % deviation. This better result is also more robust to change over time as the larger population is better able to absorb population fluctuations. I anticipate that this structure could serve the council through the next review.

I would like to address some of the arguments made for single member wards.

5. ****Multi member wards encourage political parties and candidates. ****It is not clear why this is a bad thing. Political parties have the resources to give training and support, which can mean more capable councillors. In any case, having contested the previous election, I am all too aware of the considerable support given to 'independent' candidates from the major political parties. I believe this argument is in fact a distaste for political parties which are not part of the status quo.
6. **Multi member wards lead to dummy candidates.** A quick look at Nillumbik shire elections shows that single member wards are no protection from such tactics. I note that reforms to local election laws are expected to bring in some measures to combat the

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practise of dummy candidates. This is to be welcomed. Single member wards are not the answer to this problem however.

7. **Multi member wards encourage 'lazy' councillors.** This is a slanderous accusation leveled at the hard working councillors who are the majority of councillors in this state. The method of election is no protection from lazy individuals.
8. ****Multi member wards do not conform to the Local Government Bill. **** This bill has not been passed by parliament and could well see significant changes. The VEC cannot act on what they anticipate the law will be but on what the law is currently.
9. ****Multi member wards could lead to conflict between councillors. ****Councillors are not elected to make friends and have a nice time. They are elected to represent their constituents. In a democracy, we should expect to see councillors making difficult decisions and having disagreements. This is a sign of a healthy democracy.
10. ****Council has been doing a good job and should be allowed to continue as it is. ****This is an argument I encourage councillors to take to the electorate at the next election. This decision cannot be made as a reward or indeed, a punishment for the performance of Council. The task ahead of us is to find the best system for electing a good representative body irrespective of who is currently elected.

On a final note, I would like to suggest that ward names be of aboriginal origin. Whenever we gather we always acknowledge that we are on the land of the Wurundjeri willum people. I think that using their language to name our wards would be a step toward showing that we meant those words.

I thoroughly endorse the findings of the preliminary report and I hope that Option A will be accepted as the final choice.

Matt Goodman

