

The Hon Dr Ken Coghill BVSc, PhD

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Wednesday 8th May 2019

Victorian Electoral Commission,  
530 Collins Street,  
Melbourne, Victoria  
Dear VEC,

## Re: Local Government Representation Review, Boroondara 2019

I write to support the VEC's preferred option, Option A, as articulated in the Preliminary Report.

As it argues, Option A

provides voters with more choice of candidates in elections, a greater possibility of increasing the diversity of councillors and interests represented, does not divide significant communities of interests, contains the major commercial centres within wards and provides clear boundaries.

In particular, the diversity of views and interests represented on Council to be expected to result from Option A would lead to superior decision-making by Council. This effect is now well documented and supported by research.

Conversely, single member wards are demonstrated to concentrate the range of views and interests represented and to lead to defensive, closed shop approaches which in turn have shown a strong tendency to reject public participation. Such approaches have the effect of stifling the range of options taken into account in decision-making and restricting the potential contribution of the rich information held within the City's population.

I share the concern reported in the Preliminary Report that "the counting method for single-councillor wards could potentially leave a significant minority of voters feeling unrepresented". Not only "could" it, in my observation it is abundantly clear that that is the effect in Boroondara.

The looming climate change crisis is clearly of increasing concern to communities across Victoria. There is growing frustration at the slowness of action to mitigate climate change,

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including at local government level. Many of the measures to mitigate or adapt to climate change can be taken at local government level.

Accordingly, it is apt that communities actively engage with their councils, which requires Council to firstly, be receptive to empowering people and their organisations and secondly, to actively enable, facilitate and respond to the contributions of the people in addressing the difficult but necessary transition to a low carbon society.

Option A offers the best opportunity of a council that represents the range of views and interests across the community and which is orientated to working quickly and effectively with the people of Boroondara on major issues of concern.

Yours sincerely



Ken Coghill

Adjunct Professor, Swinburne University  
Open Government Forum (civil society Member)  
Accountability Round Table Ltd (Director & Treasurer)  
Australian Open Government Partnership Network (Chair)

