

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your proposals for changing the electoral system in Boroondara.

I do want to initially say that there has been no case made as to why there needs to be any changes. Where is the evidence that the current system is not effective?

Of the 3 options listed the only one that I would support is :

Option C: Boroondara consist of 11 councillors elected from 11 single-councillor wards.

Reasons

The VEC justification for multi-councillor wards includes the fact that other councils have that system. My response is “So what?” Where is the proof that those councils are better than Boroondara? I believe that there are a number of other Councils with single councillor wards (Knox, Nillumbik, Murrindindi, Yarra Ranges, Loddon, Pyrenees) and they, like Boroondara, seem to be very effective.

As I wrote in my previous submission, the level of socio-economic disadvantage experienced in various areas within the City of Boroondara is nowhere near as severe or as widespread as it is in other metropolitan councils. Boroondara’s size is compact with a large voter population and, compared to other councils, has a relatively low rate of population growth.

Also, a strength of single-councillor wards is the representation of local communities, with councillors directly accountable to constituents. If there are two or more councillors it is difficult for people to identify which one is responsible for their needs/concerns. The capacity for direct and localised representation would be diluted.

In a multi-councillor ward what happens if one councillor is working very hard but the other decides to ‘ride on his/her coat-tails’ and basically does nothing? How do constituents monitor performance and vote accordingly at the next election?

Voting Methodology

I am very opposed to proportional representation. Successful candidates would need to achieve a quota to be successful and , usually, that is only achieved after the distribution of “surplus votes”, which come from the votes of candidates who have been eliminated from the count. This means that candidates with minimal support can be elected.

Candidates representing groups or issues that have very little minority support, and who actually received very few votes, could be elected. Proportional representation would lead to a high level of politicisation within Boroondara Council, with the interests of constituents given less weight than those of Political priorities and intrigues.

I strongly believe that if the VEC wants to politicise Boroondara local council then proportional representation is the way to do it.

I welcome the opportunity to speak to my submission at the public hearing on Tuesday 14th May 2019.