

****Submission to VEC Electoral Review of Boroondara City Council ****

To whom it may concern,

I welcome the opportunity to make a submission to the VEC Electoral Review of Boroondara City Council representation. As resident of Ashburton within the Solway Ward, I am advocating support for change to multi-Councillor wards and in particular option A proposed by the VEC.

I support the multi-Councillor ward structure presented in option A for the following reasons:

- ****Multi-councillor wards would reflect community interests by capturing the commercial hubs and activity centres together with the areas they service. **Multi-councillor wards can cover a larger area thus promoting a more coherent implementation of council wide approaches to provision of social, cultural, community and sports facilities rather than single-councillor wards which may promote a fragmented or parochial approach when executing council policies. The proposed boundaries capture the communities of interest within Boroondara. Residents are familiar with their suburbs, major shopping centres and landmarks and the main roads which act as dividers.**
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- **Multi-councillor wards promote diversity** and promote the representation of a variety of views within the community, particularly on issues that have a significant number of minority groups or views involved. This is an important advantage over the single-Councillor ward in which the largest minority is likely to dominate. Even if it makes up a minority of the residents (e.g three communities of interests that make up 35, 30 and 25 percent of the community respectively) it is possible for the largest group to dominate and influence councillors in single Councillor wards and prevent other views from been considered.
- **Multi-councillor wards would facilitate the representation of features that impact on larger areas than are covered by single-councillor wards** (such as the Yarra River, Gardiners Creek and Camberwell Junction). Larger multi-councillor wards are more effective at supporting council to develop plans that have impact across the entire council whether these relate to environment, sports facilities, transport, planning, heritage, social and cultural etc. They would also provide economies of scale that can assist with administrative and other functions.

In conclusion I support a change to multi-councillor wards in order to address the deficiencies in the current single member wards, which act to amplify the voices of specific sectors, whether they be narrow majorities or the largest minority, at the expense of diverse other opinions.

I would also like to take this opportunity to highlight my concerns about the publicity campaign undertaken by the City of Boroondara in relation to the electoral review process. In particular I note that on their website and via their official facebook page the Council has chosen to actively promote the current ten ward single councillor system. I believe that this active promotion of this structure by the City of Boroondara considerably undermines the public consultation process which was to seek the diverse views from within the community. For council to devote resources to mobilising residents to make submissions that benefit the existing councillors by maximising their own chances of getting re-elected has disturbing implications for democracy. I am very disappointed that council resources (paid by rate payers) have been used not to inform or promote submission from the citizens of Boroondara, but to push an agenda for a particular model.

I would be happy to speak about the above submission at the scheduled public hearing on Tuesday 14th May.

Yours Sincerely,

John Friend-Pereira

