

Local Council Representation Review

Thank you for this opportunity to express my views.

Option A is my preferred option.

I am a Boroondara resident who is deeply concerned about the state of our democracy in Australia. Having travelled and read widely, I am intensely aware how precious our democracy is. Unfortunately, in Australia many citizens are disillusioned with politics at all three levels. I am not suggesting that merely by adopting Option A, we will suddenly become a vibrant and healthy democracy. However, I believe that it will be one crucial step in the process within Boroondara.

I note the VEC's Principle no. 3. At the moment, the council is very monochrome. This does not reflect the increasingly diverse nature of local communities. As the VEC rightly discusses, not only are communities based on geography; but today's society is increasingly mobile and diverse.

With regard to the suggestion that single-councillor wards would 'reduce the likelihood of political interference in local issues and the politicisation of local council elections'; all I can say is, that our current single-councillor wards have been a spectacular failure from that point of view. I have seen Felicity Sinfeld, my current councillor in the ward of Cotham, and Phillip Healey, another councillor, wearing Josh Frydenberg garb, and handing out his flyers. Felicity also gave out how to vote cards for Tim Smith at the last state election. In the 2016 local council elections for Cotham, one of the other candidates was Elliot Watson, the husband of Cynthia Watson, another councillor, who is on the Victorian Liberal Party's administrative committee. Phillip Healey was Tim Smith's campaign manager in the last state election. I realise that they are entitled to do so. I am merely stating facts. In the 2016 election in the ward of Cotham, it was patently obvious which candidate had the most money behind them, with the stream of correspondence in our letter boxes. It is crucial that money does not over ride other interests. This is less likely to happen with Option A, as it won't be a winner takes all situation. I would also like to suggest that the almost unanimous and very vocal opinion of the current council might in and of itself, suggests a uniformity of outlook, which might have been reflective of the community in the past; but times have changed, and will continue to, at an exponential rate. We need a council that is capable of adapting and functioning at a high level.

I am very active in a number of local organisations, including the University of the Third Age, the Boroondara Reconciliation Committee and various environmental groups. The second and third mentioned groups reflecting the growing awareness of these issues within Australia broadly, but particularly within one of the most socially progressive areas within Australia, e.g. in the marriage equality plebescite, Kooyong, (which almost mirrors Boroondara), had one of the highest votes in favour. I fully endorse David Crawford's submission on behalf of the BRN. I would just like to add that, not only did the council peremptorily take away the Acknowledgement of Country, it is mandatory for the Council prayer to be recited. With regard to the environmental issues in many different guises, there has been much disquiet regarding the slowness and inadequacy of council's actions of such pressing concerns.

With regard to the practicalities of being a councillor. Due to the part time nature of being a councillor, it is unrealistic to expect a single person to be able to cater; both in respect to time engagement and understanding of all the complexities within the evolving Boroondara community, to a single person.

With regard to the number of councillors: I strongly believe that there should be 11 councillors. For two reasons; that Boroondara has one of the highest voter-to-councillor ratios, and to help prevent tied votes.