

Submission to VEC Electoral Review of Boroondara City Council

To VEC Review Team

I hereby make a submission to the VEC Electoral Review of Boroondara City Council structure

I live in Ashburton in Solway Ward. Boroondara has single Councillor Wards, a structure which in my view is unsatisfactory for multiple reasons.

Core reasons are set out below -

1. Single member wards tend to lead to a homogeneous council membership which is not reflective of the diversity of attitudes, perspectives and cultures present across the community. It can lead to entrenchment of a single dominant view.
2. The absence of a Councillor for any reason including leave or illness leaves a Ward unrepresented on Council.
3. Where a Councillor is conflicted on a particular issue and recuses themselves from participation in discussion and voting the Ward becomes unrepresented on an issue which may be critical for the Ward constituents.

(This occurred recently in relation to a major council Sportsground development proposal at Dorothy Laver reserve which would have excised significant sporting facilities from access for the local sporting community and still threatens.- I point out that the Councillor has behaved totally honourably but the situation prevented him from representing his constituents.

4. Council members tend to become entrenched with no pathways for the gradual development of new Councillors such as is provided by multi-member Wards.

In recognition of these factors most Councils of a size and complexity consistent with that of Boroondara have moved to multi-member Wards. Few such Councils retain single member Wards.

Proposal:

1. That Boroondara be restructured in multi-member Wards with at least three Councillors to be elected at each election in each Ward.
2. The size of Wards be set to maintain the principle of voter equity in accordance with legislative requirements.

3. Voting be on the basis of proportional representation.

Concluding Comment:

Boroondara Council to the best of my knowledge has conducted no survey or plebiscite of residents to canvas their views on Ward structures and Council membership.

Yet Council has campaigned through Facebook and otherwise for maintenance of the status-quo. Such an approach is unrepresentative and can fairly be viewed as self-serving.

Alan Cooper

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