

Submission to VEC Electoral Review of Boroondara City Council

To whom it may concern,

Below is my submission to the VEC Electoral Review of Boroondara City Council representation.

As resident of Ashburton, located within the Solway Ward, there are two areas that I wish highlight for consideration in this review process, namely: number of councillors and structure of wards (single/multi-councillor). Each submission is presented below.

1. Number of Councillors

Proposal:

Increase the number of councillors from the current ten to eleven.

Rationale:

- **Eleven councillors would reduce the likelihood of deadlocks on council decisions and the Mayor effectively having two votes (casting vote).** According to the 2008 Review in 2000-2008, the Mayor's casting vote had been used approximately fifteen times, thereby doubling the voting power of the Mayor's ward.
- **Boroondara's population is forecasted to grow steadily at an annual rate of under 1%, and is projected to increase by 40,315 people by 2041 (23% growth).** The population of the council area is within the range to justify an additional councillor.
- **Facilitate creation of multi-councillor wards with total voter numbers of 30,000-40,000,** with three/four councillors per ward thus adhering to the principle of legislative equity requirement.

2. Multi-Councillor Wards

Proposal:

Restructure the council wards from single-councillor wards to multi-councillor wards.

Rationale:

- **Only seven councils (including Boroondara) in Victoria have purely single-councillor wards - of these, two councils are covering much larger geographic areas than Boroondara** and the vast majority of councils with similar geographic and populations to Boroondara have moved to multi-councillor wards, thereby increasing the diversity of views from the community on council. According to the 2008 Review in 2000-2008, 46% of Boroondara council meetings have had uneven numbers i.e. in

almost half of meetings at least one councillor was absent - which means at almost half of the council meetings, at least one ward was unrepresented.

- **Multi-councillor wards promote a wider range of community engagement** (provides opportunity for recent arrivals to Boroondara to get involved). Multi-councillor wards with proportional representation will provide a more diverse council, electing people with different experience and expertise. Multi-councillor wards would ensure that not only one view is heard from a community (ward) and provides residents with choice of councillors to approach as well as allowing councillors to advocate on behalf of particular groups that approach them and provide a safeguard against ineffective councillors.
- **Having more than one councillor for a ward allows the councillors to share the workload and ensures representation.** Multi-councillor wards would ensure that a ward is represented at a Council meeting, even if a single councillor from a multi-councillor ward is absent or recuses themselves from a decision.
- **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). They would also provide economies of scale that can assist with administrative and other functions.
- **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.

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. This undermines the public consultation process which was to seek the diverse views from within the community.

Yours Sincerely,

Gemma-Jane Cooper

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