

Electoral Representation Review - Boroondara City Council - Preliminary Submission
Michael Doyle - Ashburton - 11 March 2019

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Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Electoral Representation Review with respect to Boroondara.

I write in support of ten single-councillor wards for Boroondara City Council.

In summary, has the Council performed so badly that its current structure must be changed? I think not. Indeed, the risk of changing is that we will have a much poorer structure imposed in its place. A major risk is that there will be a loss of local representation with the vital linkage of constituent-councillor being broken.

The system is working perfectly well. I have not seen any criticism with the current Boroondara Council. Where and what are the demanding reasons for change?

I note that the VEC Local Council Submission Guide states that "single-councillor wards are less able to absorb population change than other electoral structures, particularly where growth within a local council area is uneven and ward enrolments are changing at different rates". However, there is no supporting evidence to prove that 'single-councillor wards are less able ... than other electoral structures'.

Apparently, some () other councils have multi-councillor wards. So what? Is that is a good reason for Boroondara Council having them too? May I ask "why ?" Would it cause such strife and confusion if Boroondara did not follow suit? Must all councils, regardless of uniqueness, be forced to conform to a uniform straitjacket approach? Again, I ask "why ?" 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.

(Some, but not all, councils have multi-councillor wards. There are a number of Councils with single-councillor wards : Knox, Nillumbik, Murrindindi, Yarra Ranges, Loddon, Pyrenees)

A major 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.

Boroondara Council has a reputation for in-depth and effective public consultation processes. This has resulted in single-ward councillors who are very knowledgeable on both broad and local issues. 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?

I note that multi-councillor wards would require a proportional representation system of voting. I strongly feel that this would be to the detriment of the quality of councillors 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 would like to speak at a public hearing in support of my submission.