

****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, located within the Solway Ward, there are three areas that I wish highlight for consideration in this review process, namely: number of councillors; structure of wards (single/multi councillor); and ward names. Each area is presented in detail 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.

1. **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. In late 2018 the councillor from Solway Ward rightly recused themselves from voting on a controversial decision which divided the community in that ward due to a conflict of interest, but this meant the voters in affected ward lacked representation when the decision was made.

- ****Single-Councillor wards are less able to absorb population changes than multi-councillor wards. **Multi-councillor wards would allow for future-proofing of the wards with the highest proposed population growth to minimise the need for future boundary changes.**
- **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.**

1. **Ward Names**

****Proposal: ****

Acknowledge the aboriginal connection to the area encompassing the Boroondara City Council by renaming wards with appropriate aboriginal based names in consultation with representatives of the relevant aboriginal peoples.

****Rationale: ****

This would be small gesture in the spirit of reconciliation between Australia's first people and those arriving over the past two-hundred years.

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.

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

