

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to comment on the electoral structure of the Boroondara Council and on the number of councillors.

**Electoral structure**

I believe the council should be restructured so that either we do away with wards altogether, or we opt for larger multi-councillor wards. I understand that councillors (like other politicians) should represent their local constituencies, and understand local problems. However, I think that these days, when people move around a lot in their cars, the ward as a boundary is too narrow. We need councillors who can see the bigger picture, and address issues at a local level fairly across the shire, not just thinking about what happens in their own back yard.

The idea of the councillor representing a geographical community of interest such as a ward seems somewhat outdated. I have lived in the ward of Bellevue for over 20 years. However, I do much of my daily business, not in Bellevue, but in Cotham, Junction and Glenferrie, where the shops, library, restaurants and many offices are. I do not think of myself as a citizen of Bellevue. But I do think of myself as living in Boroondara - I pay my rates to the Boroondara Council. I would hope that the allocation of resources across the shire operates fairly so that all wards, all ratepayers, are equally well-served. Boroondara Councillors should represent Boroondara as a whole, while, of course, being aware of what is happening in their street.

Living in Bellevue, at the last election I only had one candidate to choose from - we citizens of Bellevue did not even have a vote, which seemed unfair to me. There was no choice for me in that election, of candidates representing different views.

Having multi-councillor wards would result in a more lively and energetic election and council. It would open the field and give smaller groups and individuals with no financial backing more of a chance of being elected onto council. We currently have a system where candidates in different wards can be backed by a single group (e.g. a political party or business group) and this group ends up dominating the council. Having multi-councillor wards (or no wards) would mean that smaller groups spread across the shire would have more chance of being represented by a councillor or two. This is a more democratic system in terms of representation.

**Number of councillors**

Having an even number of councillors is problematic. When there is a tie in terms of voting, the mayor is asked to cast his/her vote to break the stalemate. This seems fundamentally unfair, as it gives the mayor two votes. Shouldn't all councils have an odd number of councillors to avoid this situation?

Furthermore, most other councils of our size have 11 councillors. Moreland and Monash council are smaller than Boroondara, but have 11 councillors. Finally, it's not clear to me why the VEC backed away from its initial recommendation in 2008 to have 11 councillors - this seems like an obvious overdue change.

Best wishes

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