

Electoral Representation Review - Boroondara City Council - Preliminary Submission  
Greg Kasarik - Burwood - 12 March 2019

Dear Victorian Electoral Commissioner,

I am writing with respect to the review of the Boroondara Local Council Representation and Subdivision Review.

While I am not currently a resident of the Shire, I was until I lost everything in a fire during 2018 and was forced to relocate into the City of Whitehorse. However, I am intending to relocate back into the same property once rebuilding has been completed. As such, I feel that I should submit my thoughts regarding this review.

At the outset, I would like to say that I am fully in support of retaining the single Councillor ward structure, although would prefer to see the number raised to 12, should this be possible.

My reasons for this are because I believe that the current structure is of greater benefit to the local residents, as it allows each Councillor to be better acquainted with their constituents and the relevant issues within each ward. Given that the matters that Councillors deal with are "local", in a way that other levels of Government are not, it seems that the best way to manage the efficiency of this style of Government is to ensure that the representatives are similarly local. A system of single Councillor wards ensures this, by ensuring that each Councillor is representing half the number of people that a double Councillor ward representative would be representing and that they therefore will be better equipped to become intimately acquainted with the local residents and their issues, in a way that they would not be able to achieve if their efforts were spread out over the area now contained within two council wards.

Secondly, I would like to see the number of Councillors raised to twelve. The reason for this is population growth and the fact that for most Councillors, being a Councillor is a part time job as remuneration is not enough to provide for a full time commitment. Since the last review, the population of the Shire has risen by 20,000 people and if this trend continues, by the time the next review occurs, the Council will be managing the interests of a further 20,000 citizens, or a total population of nearly 200,000. It is my view that given this inexorable population increase and the part time nature of the Councillor's role, the number of persons that each Councillor will be representing by the time of the next review will be 20% higher than the number assumed at the last review. Given this, a 10% increase in the number of Councillors would appear to make sense, as this will allow Councillors to narrow their geographical representation, even as the number of constituents increases. Also, the addition of another two Councillors will allow for more talented and capable people to become representatives and potentially lighten the load for the council, as a whole, when addressing council wide concerns.

Finally, I would like to say that I am concerned by the overt politicisation of many local councils in recent years. One of the best teachers that I had the privilege of studying under was the former Mayor of Kew, Jack Gervasoni and one of the things that made him such an excellent teacher was the fact that he was so committed to serving on his local council and proud of the fact that the position of being Mayor meant that he could work on issues that directly impacted both himself and his local community. This is the vision I still hold of the ideal Councillor: A person dedicated, not to their own career advancement, or issues of little relevance to the local community, but instead to the betterment of their local community through a commitment to appropriate planning, service provision and good governance.

While I am personally supportive of issues, such as the reconsideration of whether Australia Day is celebrated on Jan 26, I do not believe that Local Government is a suitable forum for this type of conversation and believe that Councillors need to be focused on the bread and butter of the service provision and "the order and good government of their municipal districts", as specified as per Section 3A of the Local Government Act (1989).

Over the years, I have become increasingly concerned by the seeming trend for "up and coming" politicians to wet their feet as local Councillors, before heading off to where they really want to be: State, or Federal politics.

For this reason, I support a single Councillor system, because I believe that it is more likely to result in the election of representatives, who's main interest is local governance, rather than

Electoral Representation Review - Boroondara City Council - Preliminary Submission  
Greg Kasarik - Burwood - 12 March 2019

grandstanding on issues that are the Constitutional Responsibility of the States, or Federal Government. While no system is perfect, I believe that one in which there are two Councillor elected for each ward is far more likely to result in the election of one person who is committed to the betterment of the local community and a "runner up", who is more interested in grand standing and wasting the council's valuable time and resources on matters unrelated to what should be their primary concern: Local Governance. Certainly having a single Councillor in each ward does not guarantee that this won't still become a problem, but I believe that it is much more likely to reduce it.

I appreciate your time and the opportunity of being allowed to make this submission,

Kind Regards,

Greg Kasarik

