

The Victorian Electoral Commission



VEC states that we hope for collaboration between Boroondara Council and residents.

Input from members of the public is a valuable part of ongoing processes as well as reviews!

Democracy implies that all citizens (of Boroondara in this case) should be able to contribute and affect the governance of our home territory at Council level. Many of us wish to collaborate with the Boroondara Council and find it difficult. The avenues that I see are:

1. Writing submissions, joining petitions or responding to Council requests for information or opinion.
2. Attending Council meetings, sometimes raising issues and questions.
3. Talking with a local Councillor.

- 1. Submissions to Council:**

I have found Council staff very helpful and have met, talked with and corresponded with several to discuss issues on questions of Heritage overlays, Heritage destruction, Recycling, Dog management.

- 2. Attending Council meetings:**

This I have found to be dispiriting.

- a. To raise a new matter, a written submission must be made and a reply from a staff member received before it can be addressed by the Council. It may become an agenda item some weeks or months later.

- b. To contribute to an Agenda item, a local can submit a question early in the evening before the meeting. It may be selected and the questioner may be asked to contribute further. On the other hand I was once told that my question had been rewritten and the new question was answered!

- c. The Councillors do not discuss matters between themselves at public meetings and there is no possibility of participating from the floor, unless asked. I assume that there has been discussion of issues by Councillors beforehand.

- 3. Discussion with a local Councillor**

I have had brief talks with three of the Glenferrie Ward Councillors; the one I found best to talk with departed after one cycle, unfortunately. I believe this could be a good approach but it is important that a dialogue can ensue.

There are several reasons why I support a Ward system & multiple Councillors per Ward:

1. A Ward system: It is a big and varied Council area. Boroondara population is expanding substantially and I believe it may be wise to expand the Wards, perhaps to 12. It is useful that councillors develop a substantial knowledge of the Ward in order for both resident and councillor to have an intelligent discussion, especially covering matters not known by one of the parties. Ideally, councillors learn a lot about the whole area but specialised knowledge including history would be a substantial task and it is appropriate to concentrate on a single ward.
2. While I support the position that party politics would be inappropriate in Council engagements with residents, it is well known that Boroondara has a conservative Council at present and this frustrates many like myself who believe that a wider range of sympathies would open discussion in a democratic manner and we would reach some more satisfying solutions.
In passing, I understand that a nearby Council has two candidates per ward and in most there is a woman and a man. This is an obvious polarity but other differences and resolutions can arise and enlighten us all.