

Electoral Representation Review - Boroondara City Council - Preliminary Submission
Rob Staszewski - Hawthorn - 11 March 2019

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Submission to the representation review for Boroondara City Council.
Date: Monday, 11 March 2019 7:46:46 PM

From: Rob Staszewski.

To Whom It May Concern,

For quite a while now I have been developing concerns re. our practice of representative democracy and am thus grateful to be given this chance to make a submission to the representation review for Boroondara City Council. I support an increase to eleven councilors for the City and a shift to multi councilor wards.

An increase to an odd number of councilors minimizes the risk of protracted dead locks in council and thus simply appears common sensical to me. I've been reliably informed that urban councils of similar size to Boroondara have chosen eleven as the number of their councilors so feel content to join them. Rather more seriously, the Idea of Dead Locks over contentious issues, (eg. electing a Mayor), being left to Mayors to break or to the toss of the proverbial coin appears uncomfortably Fraught for me.

More Fundamental is my concern with Single Member Franchises be they at any level of Governance. Regardless of what form of voting system is followed, single member wards allow the possibility, however unlikely, for a clean sweep of wards by members of a single party or unified set of interests with less than 51% of the total votes and the rest of the constituency disenfranchised.

In all wards serious attention must be paid to major local infrastructural needs from roads, waste management, child care and ease of access to public centers to storm water, parks and sports facilities. For a single councilor the above must consume a great deal of one's resources. Yet for many members of any community other concerns, perhaps such as the Arts, Community Gardens, opportunities for Youth Engagement and Cultural Recognition etc., mean more for them than general community concerns, yet meeting their needs where possible will often result in benefits to the broader community as a whole. Fewer, larger multi councilor wards must enable opportunities for more efficient prioritization of councilor resources whilst hopefully creating scope for partial specialization amongst them.

Boroondara is not such an immense area that contact between councilors and constituents is all that difficult even between the current northern and southern wards. Three or four new multi councilor wards would be no where near that large. According to the 2016 Census nearly a quarter of Boroondarians belong to our largest five year age group, the 20-24 year olds, while 15% of us can claim Chinese Ancestry. Neither group are to be seen in our current crop of councilors.

So summing up; three wards, two with four councilors and one with three or, four wards one with two councilors and three with three would still be small enough to share that sense of distinct local community, perhaps even more strongly than our minuscule current wards. eg., Kew and Hawthorn as a whole are quite distinct from our eastern wards. Within these larger wards councilors, directly representing the 1st, 2nd, 3rd or 4th largest sectors of their ward, would have the opportunity to learn to work together to satisfy their direct constituents as well as ensure the efficient functioning of the greater council.

Thank's for considering my submission
Rob Staszewski.
