

To Whom It May Concern,

Re: VEC Representation and Subdivision Review – Boroondara City Council

I support Option A, the VEC's preferred structure.

My rationale for supporting Option A is as follows:

- I believe this option will lead to fairer and better representation of ratepayers within the Municipality. Multi-councillor wards will decrease the chance that wards are left unrepresented as a result of conflict-of-interest, illness or some other absence. When unrepresented, wards have no voice, no-one to provide balanced counter-arguments to Council and no vote. There is currently a big issue with this.
- All councillors vote on issues, some contentious, yet each councillor is only accountable to their own ward. They have power without accountability. Whilst Option A will not entirely remedy this issue, extending the geographical region of responsibility for each councillor will require them to be more outward-focused and will enable more ratepayers to hold them to account at election time if they are not providing adequate representation.
- Under the current system no councillor is local to their entire ward and councillors are not even required to live in the ward they represent so there will be little difference with a change to a larger ward structure. The key to representation is accountability.
- The four wards of Option A better capture communities of interest. I prefer this structure to the five wards of Option B which also reduces the number of councillors in each to 2.
- I question why Council has used \$30,000 of ratepayers' money as a vehicle for propaganda. Instead of treating such reviews as a threat to their current monopoly, Council's focus should be on the importance of the review to the community whom they serve. The money should have been spent on announcing the review to all ratepayers rather than on a scare campaign promoting Council's desired outcome. The majority of the community was unaware of the review and many others have been scared into believing there is now risk of loss of local representation. This is not the first time that Council has sought to deliberately obscure an issue of significant importance to ratepayers.
- I would expect councillors to be keen to listen to residents' concerns and take those on board when considering various issues that come up before Council. The current problem is that councillors don't seem to be keen to listen to anyone other than Council itself. They seem to have forgotten that they were elected by ratepayers to represent ratepayers. Greater accountability to a larger geographical area and potentially more competition during elections (as well as more choice for the community) may help turn this around.

Yours sincerely,

Nicholas Talbot