

Electoral Representation Review - East Gippsland Shire Council - Preliminary Submission  
Friends of Mallacoota - Mallacoota - 11 March 2019

This submission is made on behalf of Friends of Mallacoota, which has a current membership of 140. Our group has ongoing dealings with the East Gippsland Shire and its Councillors. Our overall experience over a number of years is that as a small community of about 1100 residents we do not feel represented as a small and remote community.

The central administrative of the Shire is located in Bairnsdale, with limited outreach services in our town. Councillors are drawn from Bairnsdale, Orbost and other larger population areas and we do not have proportionate representation from small and remote communities which make up a significant percentage of the Shire population. Bairnsdale-based Council services are difficult to access when it is a six hour return journey, and when information sessions such as the ones run by VEC about this review are held in the evening it involves an overnight stay.

Our needs are different from those of the urban areas, for example waste management and access to Council services. Authorised Officers are located 240 km away and are often unable to attend incidents such as straying and dangerous animals, illegal clearing and dumping of rubbish.

Our first recommendation is that the Shire returns to a ward system with nine councillors.

Our second recommendation is that the wards and number of Councillors truly represents the interests of the whole Shire not just the urban and more populated areas. The number of wards is not the major issue - democratic representation is. There could be fewer wards with multiple Councillors for example.

Small and remote communities could have two to three Councillors with small communities grouped according to location. After all, small communities make up a significant percentage of the Shire population. The greater Bairnsdale area could have three to five Councillors. Other Councillors/Wards would be representative of population.

Population should not be the sole arbiter of ward and Councillor distribution. In a rural area such as ours other factors need to be given weight.

Thank for the opportunity to take part in this review.

Martyn Hiley

Coordinator, Friends of Mallacoota