

Electoral Representation Review - East Gippsland Shire Council - Preliminary Submission  
Lakes Entrance Action and Development Association - Lakes Entrance - 13 March 2019

Lakes Entrance Action and Development Association (LEADA) represents Lakes Entrance residents and businesses. Since the amalgamations of Shires in East Gippsland and the creation of an unsubdivided LGA the voice of Lakes Entrance has diminished. The town is suffering as a result. LEADA is supportive of a ward system which is in agreement with all but one of the preliminary submissions to date. These submissions have highlighted the size of the East Gippsland Shire and how it is different from urban Councils. LEADA acknowledges the difficulties in drawing up ward boundaries to ensure voters are fairly and equitably represented. However LEADA believes this can be done.

LEADA is supportive of many of the views expressed in Dr Colebatch's thoughtful submission. It has been our experience that the bureaucratisation of council activity has resulted in the weakening of the voice of local communities. Lakes Entrance does not have a Councillor that has part of their role being accountable back to the community of Lakes Entrance nor does the town have a Council Officer that has a responsibility to bring together the issues of Lakes Entrance and respond in a planned, coordinated and timely manner.

In order to get coverage of the large East Gippsland Shire LEADA favours a number of single councillor wards with Lakes Entrance being one of those wards. The town acts as and is a community of 5000 people. It is a major economic unit. Lakes Entrance attracts more overnight tourists and holiday makers than any other town in East Gippsland and it is the home of the largest fishing fleet in Victoria. The population peaks at around 30,000 in peak holiday times. Residents identify with being from Lakes Entrance not East Gippsland. However residents and businesses do see it is important to be part of a larger regional area and also support the importance of sparsely populated areas having a voice. An alternative to single councillor wards would be an arrangement that approximates to the 2007 reviews preferred option which respected both the population distribution and the road network: The preferred option was: that the East Gippsland Shire Council consist of nine councillors, to be elected from one four-councillor ward (Mitchell Ward), one three-councillor ward (Lakes Ward) and one two-councillor ward (Snowy Ward). There are common environmental issues, economic interests and communities of interest in a Lakes Ward. LEADA urges VEC not to opt for the easy to implement but unsuccessful solution of an unsubdivided East Gippsland Shire.

Bruce Hurley

President

Lakes Entrance Action and Development Association.

