

Electoral Representation Review - East Gippsland Shire Council - Preliminary Submission
Helen Martin - Metung - 1 March 2019

I believe that the current number of Councillors is appropriate.\s\s

I support an unsubdivided municipality.

The question of the number of Councillors revolves around the role that a Council is expected to play. Is it a 'board' overseeing the actions of a professional management team (as was intended after local government amalgamations) or is it a kind of 'participatory democracy' where Councillors intervene actively in decisions on behalf of their constituents? I have worked as an employee in local government for 12 years - including 7 at East Gippsland Shire - and I believe that equitable and consistent decision making is much stronger when the Councillors act as a board than when they take detailed decision making into their own hands.

The 'board' approach is facilitated by an unsubdivided municipality, when all Councillors are expected to take into account the needs and interests of all parts of the Shire. Constructing wards in a Shire the size of East Gippsland and with its population distribution is problematical, as the rural ones would need to be very large geographically and the urban ones might be quite artificial (e.g. a division of Bairnsdale into 2 or 3 wards). The earlier experience of Banksia (Bairnsdale-Lakes Entrance) and Waratah (rest of Shire) illustrates this, because Paynesville had to be added to the rural Waratah ward to make the numbers stack up.