

Electoral Representation Review - Glenelg Shire Council - Response Submission
Wendye Maddox - Portland - 2 April 2019

Glenelg Shire Electoral Review 2019

I make this submission on the understanding that currently there is a Council representative from the Casterton area, but I base my submission on the fact it would be extremely difficult under present make up of Glenelg Shire Council (GSC) to enable continued rural representation.

I also understand that any elected representative is required to deliberate and counsel for entire GSC.

I would also like to submit the number of councillors (7) is appropriate for current needs.

I would also like to thank the VEC representatives (staff) for their helpful advice and assistance during this process

- (a) I would be happy to speak re my submission if necessary.
- (b) I did attend VEC public session re review process.

Submission-----

Regarding feed back to current review, and reading VEC preferred options , I base my argument on

Option C (3 Wards 1 -2 – 4 reps) this would be my preferred but would also prefer

Option B (2 wards 2 and 5 reps) over option A.

I understand the argument of the maths behind option A, and of course, purely on the maths, equality of value of votes, there is no argument.

My submission is an argument that in some instances there may be more important issues for deciding an electoral style. The Victorian Upper House is possibly one great example.

I also notice of the 79 rural municipalities only 22 are unsubdivided and 57 are subdivided, so on those approx parameters GSC would not be unusual.

I also note the VEC apparently does not consider its role, is to decide which concept of representation is the most appropriate for a municipality, so my guess is your recommendation (Option a) is based purely on the "Maths" argument. Ie equality of vote value.

Currently all councillors (except currently one) are Portland citizens.

Of course all councillors must have a primary objective of endeavouring "to achieve", the best outcomes for all ratepayers. To do this councillors need to represent the WHOLE community when making deliberations.

Surely council's composition should and would need to also reflect the makeup of all its constituents.

When local councillors, (Present exempted) lose focus on the interests of their local constituent, the electorate becomes alienated and disillusioned, leading to a sense of empathy in isolated

communities. This can lead and does lead to a general lack of interest in standing for council, as seems almost impossible (Unless one is a film star or such??) for any rural ratepayer in GSC to be elected without a Ward system.

Under the current unsubdivided structure, local communities often cease to be represented and can be treated as part of the homogenous whole, or as is perceived in GSC, part of a city. This is not a comfortable or accepted argument when you live up to 100+ kms from that city. Rural communities have their own unique identity and special idiosyncrasies', commonly not understood by city dwellers.

Going back to the "Maths" argument, another possible argument could be currently, there are 17500 (approx) voters in GSC. Any future council could, most likely be seven councillors all living in Portland city. A possible alternative argument with an undivided council, that would mean 7500 constituents unrepresented. In theory I know that is not so, but in practice and as perceived by rural ratepayers, that is so, hence once again the feeling of alienation.

The other consideration when speaking of alienation, most staff naturally would come from city dwellers, especially admin staff, perhaps more so than outdoor staff, but that is a very important factor re the feeling of alienation. I understand the administration is of course necessary to stay in the city, but staff can also sometimes become very parochial, perhaps not intentionally, but naturally, because that is where they by numbers predominately live and socialise with each other and with possibly councillors. In actual fact you could have a council and staff made up of city dwellers, whom of course love their city and wish to progress it, admirable goal and not to be belittled, but once again places greater Portland city, population 10000 alienating 7500 rural rate payers. On the other hand the 7500 rural ratepayers would very barely have the opportunity of meeting a councillor except on a very formal basis at a meeting or one off special so called listening post, none of which is as convenient as actually knowing your councillor is a rural citizen with knowledge of small community life. Not nearly as comfortable as a casual meet in the street say even a cup of coffee or a meet outside school pick up, quite often informal greets can be extremely beneficial to a councillor.

May I also point out an unique anomaly re rating in GSC. The Portland Aluminium Smelter is a huge factor, being one extremely high paying rate payer. Of course twenty five years ago, the then Portland City needed to cope with huge infrastructure investment to cope with the unusual quick increase in population. This requirement has now been basically met, but now with settlement of work force (around 600) spread around the GSC including people travelling up to an hour each way, rural ratepayers feel the only benefit, generally speaking is actual direct employment at said smelter, no real benefit of rate receivable except of course to help with administration of GSC.

May I also mention an issue re the rural communities situated along the South Australian border, and the so called "border anomalies" experienced by these ratepayers. I know full well most of these border issues, council is not directly involved, but at all times they need council advocacy to bring these issues and the potential problems caused to the powers that be. It seems unless you live daily with these issues you never really understand the inconvenience caused, hence the need for local input by representation. I note the panel recommends ministerial direction, and we ask to have council direction on such issues. I will note some examples.

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Nil public transport

Little discussion re infrastructure eg STED Sewerage scheme for Nelson

Very poor traffic arteries (Portland Casterton Rd , Portland Nelson Road, Heywood Portland road)
etc

Poor communication facilities (NBN Phones in Nelson having South Australian exchange (08) and all
businesses in South Australian telephone directory.

Electricity supplied from South Australia to Nelson hence if SE of SA has a fire ban day and cuts
power as is common Nelson is without power also. Very dangerous fire risk –no electricity =no
water (or sewerage) as bore pumps out of action.

Emergency ambulance to Nelson for example is directed from Melbourne (000), One hour from
either Portland or Heywood but would be twenty minutes from Mount Gambier.

In Nelson very little GSC infrastructure, for example in summer access to rubbish disposal limited to
2 days per week. Poor for food outlets and holiday houses. Does have normal weekly pick up, but
not adequate for business's in summer when population can increase up to 2000 commonly.

No Police coverage in holiday season, population of 2000 needs some kind of police presence, even
if only over Christmas/ Easter.

These are some of the border issues, does not include eg

Mistakes made with council promotions, videos, etc as no representation on council to inform of
such errors.

Surely these are the types of issues , only appreciated , by locals, for locals, you cannot expect such
issues to be appreciated by non locals. Council of course are not responsible for many of the above,
but advocacy by council is surely appropriate.

I submit there can be no one simple electoral structure for all Victoria. There is a vast diversity of
interests between rural city and rural voters. Of course cities have a lot more governance issues to
deal with, but the above considerations need an awareness of support both received and given by
their rural communities.

I believe Wards should be a priority for GSC, tyranny of distance is surely an important issue, rural
people need to have a connection to the council and visa versa.

Thankyou for the opportunity

Wendye Maddox

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