



Local Council Electoral Structure Review

Surf Coast Shire

Submission by Committee for Lorne

February 2023

This submission is on behalf of the Committee for Lorne regarding the electoral structure of the Surf Coast Shire

We believe it is important to recognise a number of key factors which serve to make for effective and responsive local government:

- representation of communities of interest
- acknowledgement of the diverse communities of the Surf Coast - rural, coastal, urban and peri-urban
- experience has shown that having councillors representing wards provides a better outcome than several councillors and an unsubdivided Shire.

The Committee for Lorne is an incorporated association that:

- represents the wider community of the Lorne Ward, including all residents and property owners,
- acts as the focal point for the extended community on matters, including social, planning and environmental issues, impacting the broader community,
- acts as an advocate with Local, State and Federal government agencies and departments,
- be a reference point for external groups and agencies who wish to consult with or undertake works and projects which might impact the Lorne Ward community.

The Committee for Lorne would like to see an electoral structure of nine wards, each with one Councillor.

In the last electoral review in 2011/12, the community of Lorne made submissions seeking the reinstatement of multiple wards after the experience of feeling totally disenfranchised when the Surf Coast Shire was a single ward. At that time, a submission from the Lorne community contained the following;

“The reality is that whilst all Councillors in an un-subdivided ward should represent the interests of all ratepayers, the community of Lorne feels completely disenfranchised because of the divergence of issues, needs and pressures across the Shire and the apparent pressure to prioritise the issues related to growth in the northern part of the Shire. This makes it almost impossible under the current structure, for Councillors to apportion their time fairly across all communities in the Shire. In a perfect world, the boundaries of the Shire would be redrawn so that Torquay, with its issues associated with rapid growth and urban sprawl, would be more closely aligned with Geelong and the coastal villages from Anglesea to Apollo Bay would be the real “Surf Coast Shire”.”

The initial recommendation of that review was to retain an unsubdivided structure. The Lorne community made further representation requesting reconsideration of the recommendation. The result was the reintroduction of the multiple ward structure.

Since 2012, the Lorne ward has been represented by a local councillor and the community recognises the very positive impact that has had. Having a local ward councillor who is present in the community, who understands the pressures and needs of the community and who can represent the community effectively in the Council chamber is truly effective local government.

As stated, the Committee for Lorne proposes that the Surf Coast Shire be divided into nine wards, each ward being represented by one Councillor. This retains the total number of Councillors at nine, as it is now. Attached to this submission is a map showing the proposed boundaries of the nine wards. There may be some finessing of the boundaries, but as we present them, the boundaries recognise the diverse communities of interest within the Shire. In the case of the Torquay region, we have simply named the wards Torquay-1, 2, 3, 4. Naming of the nine wards should possibly reflect either indigenous heritage or the history of the locality. In the case of older parts of Torquay, the ward naming could reflect the history of the growth of the surfing industry.

We have considered the number of voters in each of the nine wards and believe they all comply with the variation of +/-10%.

In the case of the Lorne ward, we propose that the northern boundary should be Painkalac Creek at Aireys Inlet. This allocates a small amount of Aireys Inlet to the Lorne ward. Painkalac Creek is the boundary between the lands of the Gadabanud whose territory is from this boundary south to Cumberland River and the Wadawurrung whose territory extends north through Torquay.

The wards we have designed reflect the variation in the communities of interest and also the nature of the environment in each ward; coastal, rural, hinterland, peri-urban and urban. History has shown us that nine councillors in an unsubdivided Shire cannot and are not across the variety of issues and priorities affecting such a diverse social and geographical environment as Surf Coast Shire. Having an elected Councillor in each ward is the most practical way of ensuring proper representation.

We ask that you consider the special needs of the various Communities of Interest and ensure proper focus on those needs by creating nine wards with a Councillor in each who will work closely with the Community to implement solutions.

We thank you for the opportunity to make this submission and would be prepared to speak publicly to this submission.

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