

**Electoral structure review - Hepburn Shire Council - Response Submission  
Lesley Hewitt - Daylesford - 19 April 2023, 04:27 pm**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the three models proposed for Hepburn Shire. I am a current serving Councillor at Hepburn Shire Council having been elected in 2020.

Model 1 is for 7 councillors in an unsubdivided ward. I do not support this model. Hepburn Shire covers a larger geographical area and there is little community of interest across the four main towns in the Shire. There is an East/West divide in the Shire that impacts on residents' travel movements, use of services, and commonality of interests which means that residents would be poorly represented in an unsubdivided model. I note that the recent report on the functioning of Moira Council stated that an unsubdivided ward had not worked at Moira Council where it has led to under-representation for the less populous areas of the Shire (and according to the recent report on the Moira Shire Council this under-representation increased with time)

Model 1 is likely to increase informal votes due to the potential size of ballot paper, is likely to favour those candidates who have the financial and other resources to campaign across the large geographical area and it would be difficult for councillors from across the Shire to fully understand and appreciate community nuances in relation to issues including historical factors.

Model 2 is the 4 ward, two Councillor proposal. I do not support the even number of Councillors. This would give both increased powers to, and pressure on the mayor leading to greater use of the mayor's casting vote as the likelihood of tied votes increases. This is likely to increase with this model. My preference would have been for a 3 Councillor, 3 ward structure as submitted previously but I note that this has not been put forward by the panel.

As a result, I support Model 3 - 7 wards, 7 councillors. It provides similar boundaries to the status quo with the difference that Creswick and Daylesford/Hepburn Springs are divided. An advantage of this proposed model is that Eganstown is included with Daylesford. Eganstown residents primarily obtain their health, education and retail services from Daylesford and this is appropriate. I note that the Daylesford Hepburn Springs ward boundary does not align with the towns. In the Model 3 proposed boundary is Raglan St. That is not the Daylesford/Hepburn Springs town boundary and seems odd that the towns are divided that way. This needs work to better align with the actual lived experiences of residents.

In initial feedback some who have supported an unsubdivided structure have alleged that ward boundaries lead to parochialism. The Local Government Act (2020) specifically states that councillors must make decisions for the benefit of the whole Shire, which in my experience this is what has usually occurred at Hepburn Shire. This would continue with Model 3 with the additional benefit of local understanding of issues to underpin Council decision-making.

Should Model 2 or 3 be decided upon ward names should reflect geographical locations so that residents can better identify which ward they reside in.