

Electoral structure review - Surf Coast Shire Council - Preliminary Submission
Michael Collins - Anglesea - 18 February 2023, 01:21 pm

With regard to the current review of the Surfcoast Shire boundaries and Wards I would like to make a submission in favour of multi councillor wards with an equal number of councillors per ward. The reason for more than one councillor per ward is that these positions are often held by people who are still either in the workforce or busy in other areas of their life. It is impractical for these people then to be a single representative for their ward. By having two or more representatives the workload can be shared and there can be a more intense review of local issues. A single councillor model may discourage those who could not commit to the time required to fulfill the role. This would be unfair to those who have much to offer their community.

Secondly, unlike many urban centres the population of the Surfcoast is quite spread out with often different issues affecting different communities. This spread has led to a mix of different people being elected from these towns but still representing the same ward. In the case of Anglesea it has been common to have a councillor from Aireys Inlet and also one from Anglesea representing the ward. This has seen a fair and equitable distribution of votes across the towns with each community having a local member to address their issues.

With regard to the ward structure it is imperative that large regional centres do not dominate the electoral process. Torquay with almost half the Shire population already has 4 councillors but could potentially have more if a single ward system were adopted. This could see smaller communities alienated from local government as they would not have a local voice. Many of our communities have had their boundaries realigned so that in both State and Federal spheres our representatives are based sometimes hundreds of kilometers away. In many instances our local Shire representative has been our last line of defence against poor decisions made either in Melbourne or Canberra.

In short, I would advocate for increased local representation by people living close to or within that locality. I believe the multi ward, multi councillor model is the only way that this can be achieved effectively.

I have not included a model of the ward system but I would like to potentially address this at the next stage of the review and would request to be included in the hearing process.