

**Electoral structure review - Surf Coast Shire Council - Preliminary Submission
Gary Allen - Lorne - 22 February 2023, 11:47 am**

I submit that the interests of the residents of the Lorne Ward - Surf Coast Shire are best met by the division of the Shire into nine wards with one councillor elected to represent each ward. I have attached my reasons.

Thank you
Gary Allen

Submission Ward Structure Review – Gary Allen

The purpose of the review is to ensure compliance with the Local Government Act 2020 and with the stated aims of the Commission to provide proper governance and leadership through advocacy, decision making and action.

The current Lorne Ward is guaranteed representation with the allocation of one councillor. She/he currently represents over 3,000 voters in a ward that has a shared history and a community of interest. The residents contribute, on average, 15% of the Council's rate revenue and therefore must be effectively represented. The councillor is most likely to be a resident in the ward and therefore aware of the unique challenges and opportunities provided in the area. It has a unique topography and character situated in the Otway National Forest.

Development in the ward is restricted due to its location. The growth corridor in the Shire is from Torquay to Winchelsea (the largest per capita in the state), with its unique demands. The Lorne Ward residents love the coastal and hinterland (Deans Marsh) character and heritage of their townships which they share from both Indigenous and European settlement times.

Equal voter population +/- 10 percent can be achieved by expanding the current Lorne Ward boundary to Painkalac Creek. The other eight wards, each achieving a community of interest and voter numbers can be gained by:

- Aireys Inlet (Painkalac Creek) to the western section of Anglesea(1) Coastal
- The eastern section of Anglesea to Bellbrae (1) Coastal
- Jan Juc and the area between it and Spring Creek (1) Peri-urban, Coastal and some hinterland
- Torquay towards Armstrong Creek, divided into 4 wards (4) Peri-urban
- Winchelsea and the areas including Moriac moving towards Torquay (1) Hinterland

The Lorne Ward councillor represents a significant number of residents who do not live permanently in the Ward. Sixty-nine percent of the properties in the township of Lorne are owned by part-time residents. The majority of these residents are unaware of the possibility of registering as a ward voter. Yet, the councillor must respond to their requests and often meet onsite to understand the complexity of the matters raised. This is far less likely to occur if the councillor must make a two hour round trip to meet the ratepayer.

In the recent development of the Stribling Reserve Pavilion (\$6 million project), the Shire allocated \$20,000 for landscaping. This displayed a lack of awareness of the topography, climate and drainage relevant to the site. Through representation in the Chamber an additional \$150,000 was eventually allocated. The initial allocation was perhaps adequate for a building in Torquay (flat land). This problem is compounded by the fact that one officer working at the Shire lives in Lorne. My example points to the fact that to be properly represented the residents need a councillor across the many complexities in our community.

Lorne, like most communities, is suffering from the high cost of housing and accommodation. This was a problem in Lorne well before the pandemic, because of the restrictions to growth imposed by bushfire overlays and being situated within a national forest. Over time, workers unable to afford to buy or rent in Lorne, have been forced to move to surrounding communities such as Deans Marsh to live. This provides a strong link between the two communities as many work, play sport and come to the coast for recreation. This connection began before the construction of the Great Ocean Road,

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when Deans Marsh was the rail connection from Melbourne with visitors travelling by horse drawn coach from Deans Marsh, Benwerrin, across the Otways to Lorne.

The land, across the Otways, to Painkalac Creek in the east, Lorne and the Cumberland River to the west, was the traditional lands of the Gadubanud language group. This suggests to me two possible names for the ward – Gadubanud Ward or the Otways Ward.

We contribute 15% of the rate revenue we deserve guaranteed representation.