

From: Great Western Future Committee [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 5 April 2023 11:19 AM
To: Northern Grampians ERAP Submissions 2023
Subject: VEC Ward Submission - Northern Grampians Shire - Great Western Future Committee

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The Great Western Future Committee (GWFC) thanks the Victorian Electoral Commission and the Electoral Representation Advisory Panel for the opportunity to make this submission.

The GWFC is a community incorporated association that oversees the progression of the Great Western Future Plan and provides a platform for various community and interest groups to have an opportunity to participate and be involved in strategic projects for Great Western.

The committee met on the 20th March 2023 and reviewed the first round submissions in conjunction with the Electoral Representation Advisory Panel preliminary report.

After lengthy discussions the committee came to a unanimous decision and a motion was moved that the committee support the discounted option of 7 councillors and 7 wards.

The GWFC then carried out community engagement posting this decision on our Facebook page to **unanimous support**. Had the community voiced a different opinion the committee would have supported the majority view.

The GWFC then sent correspondence to our current councillor Trevor Greedy who responded “*I do think this is the best way to go and I will support the community's submission*”.

In reading all the previous submissions there is an **overwhelming majority acknowledging the shires diversity** and the need to represent various regions with a ward system being the best way to achieve this within the Northern Grampians Shire.

The Committee also believed that this option would serve the Great Western community the best as it would mean that our ward boundary would remain as it is today and we would have **the best representation for Great Western and its community**.

The Northern Grampians Shire Council submission indicated that they were happy with the **current** structure and it has served the residents well. We believe that the 7 ward option is the closest option to the current model and will serve the residents in the shire far better than any other proposed models.

The Electoral Representation Advisory Panel discounted the 7 ward option stating splitting the major towns would cause disharmony and that Stawell would need to be split into 4 wards when in fact the discounted map only shows 3 wards for Stawell, this is only one more ward than Model 2 recommends. The report does not give any evidence of what disharmony would be created with the rezoning of wards for Stawell. The Northern Grampians Shire in their submissions also discounted the 7 ward model citing the disharmony would ensue but without any evidence on what this disharmony would look like.

There is evidence however with existing disharmony between the shire townships, none more so than between Stawell and StArnaud. The creation of an unsubdivided ward will in our opinion require substantial change management activity, rate payer funds, time and effort from an already resource strapped and time poor council and administration to try and unite the region into one ward.

Regarding Model 2 the future committee believes there is little difference between the unsubdivided option and this model in that half of Stawell is situated in the South West Ward and the same representation issues would apply.

Regarding uncontested elections the committee believed that this is quite acceptable and people will run if they feel that the current incumbent is not performing. The only reason the South West ward failed was due to the incumbent, who was deemed as performing well, resigning late not giving any time for anyone else to stand.

It is recognised that all stakeholders need to do more to encourage new councillors to stand including VEC, Councils and community groups themselves.

In summary we believe the 7 ward 7 councillor option is the best option for the following reasons:

- 1.
- 2.
3. Retains 7 councillors
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
7. Is the closest model to the current model which the majority are
8. happy with
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
12. Diverse areas have fair representation
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.
16. Stawell retain 3 councillors
- 17.
- 18.
- 19.
20. StArnaud retain 2 councillors
- 21.
- 22.
- 23.
24. South West Ward remains the same.
- 25.
- 26.
- 27.
28. Minimal change management required
- 29.
- 30.
- 31.
32. Funds and resources not diverted from business as usual operations
33. to unite the region
- 34.
- 35.
- 36.
37. Our incumbent councillor supports this model
- 38.
39. We have a single point of contact councillor representative to build a relationship with which would be difficult under other options

We thank you also for giving the opportunity to speak to this submission **which we would like to accept.**

We thank you again for this opportunity for submission.

Sincerely

Great Western Future Committee.

--

Bruce Ahchow

President

Great Western Future Committee



Great Western 3374