



Local Council Electoral Structure Review
Preliminary Report Surf Coast Shire
Response Submission by Committee for Lorne
April 2023

This submission is on behalf of the Committee for Lorne in response to the Preliminary Report of the Electoral Representation Advisory Panel regarding the electoral structure of the Surf Coast Shire

We reiterate the opening statement of our submission in February, that 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,
- is 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.

At the last Electoral Review in 2012, the Preliminary Report recommended maintaining the status quo – an unsubdivided electoral structure. At that time the Lorne Community responded to the report and reiterated its original submission; introduction of a ward structure providing fair and proper representation of communities of interest. The final report at that time recommended introduction of a ward structure.

Once again, we ask for reconsideration of the model we proposed in our submission.

Whilst the Preliminary Report outlines three models for consideration, the Committee for Lorne would like to see an electoral structure of nine wards, each with one Councillor.

We make the following comments regarding the Electoral structure models proposed in the Preliminary Report.

Model 1 – an unsubdivided electoral structure with 9 councillors

- We had this structure once before and Lorne and indeed, other small communities of interest, were not well represented.
- Lorne has had more effective and responsive representation over past 10 years with an elected ward councillor.
- There is repeated reference in the Preliminary Report to community support for a subdivided electoral structure.
- Effective representation of communities of interest should take precedence over any perceived benefits of having a “shire-wide” perspective”.
- Only 9 of 62 submitters preferred unsubdivided.

Model 2 – a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 8 councillors, 2 wards and 4 councillors per ward

- The report states that this model is best able to accommodate future growth and change, but it is not provide for proper representation of diverse communities of interest.
- Equal number of councillors means mayor has casting vote. This is not a desirable situation.

Model 3 – a subdivided electoral structure with a total of 9 councillors, 3 wards and 3 councillors per ward

- The three proposed wards do not represent individual communities of interest. Winchelsea is a mixture of rural, and peri-urban. Otway Range ward is a combination of hinterland and coastal.
- The deviations for Otway Range and Winchelsea ward well outside the $\pm 10\%$.

Summary

- Large majority of submitters are in favour of subdivided wards (53 out of 62).
- An equal number of councillors puts the casting vote in the hands of the Mayor. Uneven number of councillors avoids this.
- Three wards is a better model than an unsubdivided Shire, but the wards proposed have diverse communities of interest.
- Ward realignments [if there ARE to be wards] should be based on current verifiable populations and not on some notional potential population extrapolation into an unknown future.
- We, Committee for Lorne, would still urge consideration of a 9-ward structure with one councillor per ward. This model recognises the individual communities of interest and has high probability of an elected councillor coming from within the ward community.
- We believe that the proposed boundaries between Winchelsea, Lorne and Aireys Inlet wards could be adjusted to align voter numbers within the required deviation of $\pm 10\%$.

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

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