

Electoral structure review - Gannawarra Shire Council - Response Submission
Ross Stanton - Cohuna - 27 March 2023, 07:54 pm

Let me start by saying I support an unsubdivided Council with 7 Councilors.

Initial submissions to the VEC Panel, has highlighted the divide between Cohuna and Kerang, mostly on the Cohuna side of the ledger. I believe this divide stems from the original amalgamation of the Old Cohuna and Kerang Borough's and is ingrained in some of our community. In reality, I don't believe this divide is evident in Council decisions and spending, you only have to look at some of the great projects completed in Cohuna in the last few years, with Millions of dollars invested into the township, on Projects like the Cohuna Beach, Cohuna All-Abilities Playground and the Cohuna Waterfront, along with other projects undertaken in and around Cohuna.

Gannawarra is a large and diverse Council and recent Statistics show we are a growing population, we are seeing significant growth in places like Cohuna and Koondrook, these areas are seeing high demand for housing and available land, while Kerang is seeing a demand for Industrial land and has increased development in manufacturing and now mining. With the commencement of the Mineral reserve mine on the northern boundary of the Shire, I suspect an influx of workers will see an increased demand for housing in our northern towns of Kerang, Quambatook, the Kerang Lakes area and even Murrabit.

As a community we cannot afford our Councilors to have an imaginary fence (Ward Boundary) impacting on their thought and decision process, from what I see now we have some councilors who are driven by making decisions based on what they think their "Ward" will view as good for them or bad for the others, rather than thinking about the wider implication for the Shire as a whole. An unsubdivided Council, would allow for the best candidates to be elected, take away the "them against us thinking" (over time) and allow for a more balanced representation for all of Gannawarra.

The issue I have with the proposed two wards and 6 councilors, is that we will still retain that, them against us mentality, driven by the Social media beast, that haunts us all. We will also have an increased situation, by where the Mayor, may need to cast a deciding vote to avoid a council deadlock, this increases pressure on the Mayor and other councilors, while increasing the divide between Wards.