

**Electoral structure review - Moorabool Shire Council - Response Submission
Loretta Toohey - Springbank - 19 April 2023, 04:19 pm**

Dear Review Panel,

As a member of the Moorabool shire, I would like to express my support for the proposed model number two in preference to the proposed model number one.

As a local farmer and an active member of the rural community within the shire, the un-subdivided model concerns me as I am confident this model will lead to the loss of the local representatives in the local ward areas. Local representatives are a vital component of council as they work to ensure the major towns and areas in our council area do not solely benefit or control the rates nor do they solely dictate how the regional areas should be developed or serviced into the future. The proposed three ward system is a more effective and fair system that will ensure the services provided by council are fairer with an equal cross section of voters represented.

My late husband, Patrick Toohey was a Councillor and Mayor of Moorabool shire for many years. He faced struggles in securing funding, investments, and community outcomes from the council for projects in smaller regional communities due to Councillor disparity. He was, as I am a strong believer that the representation of a council needs to be from a diverse cross section of the entire shire area. I am concerned having an un-subdivided council area means you may end up with all the Councillors residing in the large town centers only, who even with the best intentions will never be able to fully represent the smaller more regional areas within the shire in the same way those who live in those regional areas can.

The un-subdivided council option would also expose the council to party politics. Being on the urban fringe of Melbourne, there is an obvious risk of people being elected to council with a party driven view, rather than being a localised candidate. Instead, a localised candidate's sole purpose is to represent the local people of both the shire and their specific ward and where necessary be willing to hold members of parliament to account, no matter what party those candidates belonged to when the shire is not getting its fair share.

Another concern of the un-subdivided option is also the risk of candidates being elected based upon preferences or vote spillage by a candidate rather than being truly elected by the people they are supposed to represent. If the three separate wards were to exist, it would ensure at least that to some degree a cross section of the local community would always become Councillors and ensure a diverse range of views and perspectives were being brought forward to the council chambers.

Bringing the Councillor numbers up to nine and having three representatives from the three separate wards will also bring with it a more equal representation of voices across the entire shire. This will as a result bring a very well-balanced perspective to the council chambers when deliberating decisions as a collective.

Although the multiple ward system may need to be reviewed again in the future, this should be standard practice for a growing municipality to ensure the council chambers dynamic evolves with the local council. Given this and given the Moorabool shire is a collective of multiple communities, a cross section of the shire needs to be maintained to keep the decision making equitable across all the shire's people to ensure the best interests of the entire shire, not just pockets of it are always up to help.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide my view which I feel is a view shared by many within my local area.

Kind Regards,
Loretta Tohey