

LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTORAL STRUCTURAL REVIEW SUBMISSION. 12/04/2023

Catherine Marr

[REDACTED]

Curdievale. 3268

[REDACTED]

No of Councillors:

I prefer an uneven number of councillors. Then providing all councillors are present and none need to declare a pecuniary interest, it is less likely for a 'deadlock' on issues thus needing the mayor to have the deciding vote. Not an ideal situation.

I agree an extra councillor could lessen the "load" somewhat and maybe make it less likely for "vested influences to sway council decision." But not sure the population needs this many wards.

Electoral Structure:

I favour model 3, a subdivided electoral structure with 7 wards. One councillor per ward.

If a local person or persons stand for election I feel I can vote with so much more confidence because I have known them and I'm just not relying on what the candidate is spruiking.

Local councillors need less time traveling to meeting with the community, which means more time to spend on other council responsibilities. And hopefully less burn out as so much time can be spent travelling. This I know from first hand experience. The Corangamite Shire is long in geographical terms and the topography, the high rainfall and number of rural vehicles (eg Tractors towing machinery) can effect substantially time taken to get to a destination. Reading the distance on a flat map is not always an accurate indication of time to make that journey.

Corangamite shire covers a diverse range of agricultural activities, from the areas with dry cropping to the more intense dairy farming. Each have their own particular needs and locals understand these differences. Each of the towns in Corangamite are unique providing a wide range of services and facilities. Although we still need to travel to Ballarat or Warrnambool for some services.

Given the Shire offices are located in Camperdown which is the largest and most central town (I favour this model) I think its very important that those of us who live outside Camperdown have a local person to identify with and has the knowledge we often need. It can be a least an hour's drive to pick up the free RAT test from the council office.

I have noticed that social diversity is increasing in the town closest to me. I notice this when following the local school on facebook, when attending the local pool and when shopping in the town. And I'm sure our local councillor has recognized this too. I note it is not showing up in the statistics yet, but it will ii think. But still an important consideration when devising the 5/10 year council plan.

Having and knowing your local councillor means much easier for the councillor and the resident to meet together to discuss a particular issue, whether that be a local issue or whole of shire issue. Eg. Roads, tourists, community services and planning.

The past elections may have had less candidates standing, but this could be due to the fact we know our councillors very well as we see and mix with them in our daily lives and so if we know they are representing us well then "why stand against them". It could also be that people have become less motivated to stand for council as it is a very time consuming position, which can effect the time you have to give to your own business/occupation. It would be more time consuming standing for a position for the whole shire as so many voters would need to be convinced of candidate's skill set. You also need to be able to withstand much criticism from the public. And then the question that most candidates would ask "Can I really make a difference" at this local level.

I don't believe there is any evidence to suggest that an unsubdivided council would encourage "stronger candidates" or more accountable candidates. "Well Qualified" candidates can always nominate whether a council is subdivided or not.

The ward system which has evolved over the years has served the Corangamite community well.

Councillors have committed to a 5/10 year council plan with annual reviews and set a budget to fund the plan from rates with contributions from the State and Commonwealth. Corangamite Shire has delivered a strong financial result for many years and consistently scored above average in the Customer Rating Surveys. Council have needed to absorb so many extra services which the state decrees, but have generally not funded services which are not council responsibility. This can be very difficult to sell to the public especially Council is constantly reviewing the planning scheme shire wide, over a period of time. Council are making decisions to present Corangamite as a great place to live, work and visit.

Council Meetings are open to the public and council meetings are live streamed and held on a two year rotation basis in each ward. Communication to the community is provided electronically and by way of newsletters and the annual calendar, as well as being able to chat to our local councillor.

All this shows me that councillors can make the difficult decisions for the shire as a whole, as well as representing their local ward. Of course not everyone will be provided with the free services they want.

I prefer the names of the 7 subdivisions to remain as we know them, except of course for the Central ward where I would favour then being called "Central Ward," "East Central Ward" and "West Central Ward." Much easier than trying to remember names that don't say much to me about the area.