

21 February 2023

**Surf Coast Shire Victorian Electoral Commission Review**

As a resident of Lorne, I wish to make a submission to the VEC Review. I acknowledge the limitations of the Review. However, in order to context my views, I feel I must make the point that my submission is made against a background of unprecedented dissatisfaction of the local community with its treatment by the Surf Coast Shire. An example of this is the almost complete inaction of the Shire in regard to issue of cockatoos spilling garbage from bins for at least a decade. Finally there seems to be late recognition of the problem and a scramble for a solution. Criticism of the Council is not criticism of the current or previous Councillors who have diligently served their ward. However it serves to highlight that the internal boundaries of the Shire whilst attempting to represent areas of interest and commonality, have fallen short. I propose that this be looked at.

In order not to exacerbate the situation it is critical that the Commission retain the Ward sub-division representation. Adopting an un-subdivided approach would in my view create greater issues for the smaller communities within the Shire when considered against the Torquay area. Torquay is now approaching the size worthy of inclusion as a suburb of Greater Geelong. Its interests are not congruent with the smaller townships that make up the rest of the Shire.

Much has changed in the thirty years since the Surf Coast Shire was established 1994. Torquay then was also largely a coastal town with its surfing industry and holiday/vacation services. Lorne, then was a relatively quiet seaside town emerging from its reliance on fishing and timber. Although development is proceeding in Winchelsea and some other country towns, Winchelsea Ward is also significantly a farming environment. When compared with Torquay, this again highlights the disparity of interests and the need to retain a Ward structure.

Torquay, including Jan Juc is rapidly moving towards a population of 25,000. It has now become a southern dormitory suburb of Greater Geelong. With a sizeable daily commuter population, its community interests are now urban/suburban and increasingly commercial. It no longer fits well with the original ethos of its surf-culture origins. These factors have made it increasingly difficult to manage its coexistence with the divergent interests of the rest of the Shire. These considerations should rate highly when determining a fair and equitable ward voting structure.

Lorne, at the far southern end of the Shire, has community interests that are squarely focused on the natural beauty of the Otway Forest and the tourism industry, contrasting Torquay's relatively new urban outlook. But in addition to community of interest considerations, the Lorne Ward has some practical differences in its funding streams. For example, the funding streams for the Lorne hospital and school are classified by the state government as 'rural' - a funding mechanism not echoed elsewhere in the Shire. These and other examples already stand Lorne apart.

I support other Community Members that have proposed a 9 ward Council with amended boundaries. Each ward could comprise around 4000 voters with a single elected Councillor. The proposal more effectively provides within each ward for commonality of interest and activity that characterise them. A possible 9 ward structure and map are shown at Figure 1 and Map 1, based on the following:

**Electoral structure review - Surf Coast Shire Council - Preliminary Submission  
Douglas Robertson - Lorne - 21 February 2023, 09:50 pm**

- communities of interest
- equal or near-equal population size
- a one councillor per ward

In the geographical centre of the Shire, Bellbrae and its Paraparap and Freshwater Creek hinterlands are clearly best classified as small rural and agricultural. At the same time, Aireys and Anglesea are both clearly coastal in their outlook. Further, Anglesea has a natural division at its heart – the Anglesea River – which, if used as a population boundary, would allow a neat and equitable separation into two wards of equal population size: [1] South Anglesea + Aireys, and [2] North Anglesea + Bellbrae.

As these factors demonstrate, the Shire contains several clearly different communities of interest: one of the key VECB considerations in this review of its internal structure.

In my view, the model outlined in the following table and map, with nine equal wards and one elected councillor per ward, seems to most fairly represent this disparate Shire by population, communities of interest and natural boundaries.

Doug Robertson

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

**Figure 1**

Ward	Sub-division	Population	Interest	Council
<b>Aireys/Sth Anglesea</b>	Aireys	1444	<b>Coastal</b>	<b>1</b>
	South Anglesea	2419		
	Gherang	351		
	Wensleydale	79		
		<b>4293</b>		
<b>Bellbrae</b>	North Anglesea	2000	<b>Small Rural</b>	<b>1</b>
	Bellbrae	1049		
	Bells Beach	140		
	Freshwater Creek	365		
	Mt Duneed	350		
	Paraparap	156		
		<b>4060</b>		
<b>Jan Juc</b>	Breamlea	8	<b>Peri-urban</b>	<b>1</b>
	Connewarre	184		
	Jan Juc	3618		
		<b>3811</b>		
<b>Lorne</b>	Bambra	121	<b>Otway Tourism</b>	<b>1</b>
	Benwerrin	16		
	Big Hill	40		
	East Birregurra	27		
	Boonah	20		
	Deans Marsh	316		
	Eastern View	66		
	Fairhaven	687		
	Lorne	2300		
	Moggs Creek	237		
	Penny Royal	89		
		<b>3919</b>		
<b>Torquay 1</b>		<b>3809</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Torquay 2</b>		<b>3809</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Torquay 3</b>		<b>3809</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Torquay 4</b>		<b>3809</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Winchelsea</b>	Barrabool	195	<b>Peri-urban/rural</b>	<b>1</b>

**Electoral structure review - Surf Coast Shire Council - Preliminary Submission  
Douglas Robertson - Lorne - 21 February 2023, 09:50 pm**

	Buckley	198		
	Gnarwarre	232		
	Inverleigh	65		
	Modewarre	239		
	Moriac	647		
	Mt Moriac	211		
	Ombersley	11		
	Winchelsea	1952		
	Winchelsea South	137		
	Wurdiboluc	124		
		<b>3919</b>		
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>35330</b>		<b>9</b>

**Map 1: Suggested Ward Divisions**

