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Subject: Mount Alexander Shire submission

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Model 1: A single-ward model would not serve the numerous communities spread across our Shire well. Residents from the smaller towns and communities across the shire should have ready access to representation on council. A “one-ward” model raises the risk of larger population centres dominating the Council and smaller communities being left without a local representative. While there are some common issues across the shire there are also different needs and aspirations between the many Mount Alexander communities.

A single-ward model opens the possibility of unrepresentative single-issue interest groups, or even political parties, having unhealthy manipulative influences in the democratic process.

Model 2: Two representatives from each ward would mean an even number of councillors, and is that an ideal situation when issues divide numbers evenly? Local democracy would be better served by having smaller wards with one representative each.

Model 3: Is the pick of the bunch presented but why are there 8 wards? Some boundary tweaking to achieve an odd number of equitable wards would seem much more sensible.

And some random observations and thoughts: Chewton is a geographically spread out community as a legacy of the gold rush. It needs to be treated as an entirety by being all within the same ward with whichever model is finally chosen. In the 1850s when municipal governance was being considered there was much debate about the need to be one community - and not be linked to Castlemaine! The Borough of Chewton resulted – then when it faded with population decline, the former debate was rekindled with passion. Chewton community then became part of the Shire of Metcalfe – until amalgamation into the Shire of Mount Alexander was mandated. Chewton has a proud history of independence (dating from the Monster Meeting of December 15 1851?) and this should be respected by ensuring Chewton sits entirely within one ward of any new restructure of the Mount Alexander Shire.

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