

Electoral structure review - Stonnington City Council - Response Submission Nicki Batagol - Armadale - 08 August 2023, 09:53 pm

In making this submission, I personally believe that the Stonnington community is better served by the current multi-member ward with proportional voting, rather than the single member ward options presented. I believe that this system ensures that elected representatives do represent the communities that they are elected to serve through better diversity in Councillors. There is a significant amount of literature in this regard, which I will not repeat.

That said, I recognise that the Local Government Act 2020 and the terms of reference provided limits options to single member wards.

Number of Councillors: I agree with the panel that Councillors nine is the appropriate number of Stonnington. While Stonnington covers a relatively small geographic area, it is comprised of neighbourhoods with unique characteristics, broad social diversity and a number of high-density and significant growth areas. Stonnington provides over 130 services to the community. Nine Councillors enables Councillors to represent and appeal to a specific population, with a focus and knowledge of the community needs. A reduction in the number of Councillors would have an impact on diversity, as well as governance matters such as managing conflicts of interest, achieving quorum etc. An increase would be an unnecessary increase in costs.

Electoral Structural Models:

Model 2 – Preferred Model

The current electoral structure was designed to represent communities of interest and the boundaries are well considered to achieve this. While this does have the least amount of change, this is not the basis of my submission. The main benefits of Model 2 are:

- Major commercial strips are spread across multiple wards which is beneficial given the importance of these commercial and cultural precincts in terms of employment and the local economy. Stonnington has a 6 major precincts and is about to commence a process to introduce a new special rate levy for these precincts. Having multiple Councillors represent commercial and cultural precincts ensures that the needs of the precincts and businesses are well understood, balanced by the needs of residents.
- The large housing complexes are captured in 2 wards, which also ensures that this community is well represented with 2 Councillors instead of one.

Model 1 – There is some benefit to this model, however if this is the selected model, Kooyong Ward should be remodelled as it currently captures Kooyong, as well as half of Malvern and Armadale. These are very different communities. Kooyong Ward also captures 2 major shopping strips which is not ideal and should be shared with other Wards as mentioned above. If Model 1 is adopted, both Orrong Ward and Wattletree Wards should expand and take in the southern section of Kooyong Ward (up to Malvern Rd and/or High St if Malvern Rd is not possible). Main roads should not be used as the limiting factor.

Model 3 – Least preferred Model: This model does not represent communities of interest. Commercial precincts should not be contained in one ward, and the localities do not make sense.