

Electoral structure review - Wodonga City Council - Response Submission
Tracey Farrant - Wodonga - 19 July 2023, 05:03 pm

I wish to submit my feedback on the proposed local council electoral structure for the City of Wodonga.

I would like to state my support for a ward approach to the electoral structure for Wodonga. At present, the rural communities within the Wodonga council area are rarely represented by elected officials. The density of population supports the urban vote, often leaving the rural population with little to no voice.

I believe that the ward structure may create difficulties in finding community members to stand in each ward, which could result in unsuitable candidates being elected through lack of a need to vote i.e. candidates that run for their own personal or political issues rather than to represent the community. The ward system could also mask the strategic approach of some political interest groups or property developers to create a power bloc within the local council, as candidates will first be seen by many community as representing a Ward rather than representing a political party.

I believe that proposed Model 1 would place an unfair disadvantage on the councillor who would represent the Baranduda Range ward as this covers a vast geographical area. A councillor committed to community consultation and visitation would find it very time and resource consuming to cover such a large area whereas a councillor representing one of the other wards would find it much easier to gather people together or to visit localities within the ward. For that reason, I do not support the option of Model 1.

In my view, Model 2 is a much fairer allocation of geography to represent. In this model, four wards are a fair mix of urban and rural areas. This would give rural constituents a reasonable chance to get to know their councillor, and provide the councillor reasonable opportunity to spend time visiting sites within their area of responsibility. Although the population of the proposed wards in this model are not currently balanced, there is a reasonable assumption that continued city growth would balance this over time.

Yours sincerely
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