

**Electoral structure review - Mount Alexander Shire Council - Response Submission
Lauren Williams - Maldon - 18 April 2023, 01:17 pm**

MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE ELECTORAL STRUCTURE REVIEW 2023

Re: Preliminary report, including an additional structural model suggestion

Firstly, may I draw your attention to an omission on Page 9 of the Report. The list of towns that make up the Mount Alexander Shire failed to include the towns of Chewton, Elphinstone, Taradale and Baringhup. That's an efficient way to disengage those communities.

Secondly, a little background. As a Maldon resident, I speak for many when I say that for years our town has been poorly treated by a Castlemaine-centric Shire Council. Maldon is a National Trust designated 'Notable Town' and a popular tourist destination. Its many specialty main street shops rely on that trade. Recent heritage-damaging actions resulting from the Victorian Government-funded, Council-implemented Maldon Streetscape Rejuvenation[sic] Project have raised community ire and revived talk of secession.

Maldon had its own Shire until forced to amalgamate in the mid-1990s. Since then there has been an ongoing erosion of established heritage values, neglect of important tourist features-- resulting in the closure of two historic sites-- and significant alteration of the town entrance vista.

Some years ago Mount Alexander Shire Council handballed responsibility for Maldon's nature reserves and crown land to Parks Victoria, with appalling environmental, heritage, and community fallout, the latter being the forced removal of long-term residents of the free camping area known as The Butts. These people were part of the Maldon community-- attending local events, contributing to the local economy and, even more usefully, extinguishing day-tripper's abandoned campfires. In this time of housing crisis, their expulsion was a callous and indefensible act.

Problems with the proposed electoral structure models for Mt.Alexander Shire.

Model 1: Undivided, 7 councillors

Castlemaine will end up over-represented, with most councillors likely to be resident in that town. It is imperative that smaller towns have the means of uniting to be able to out-vote the Castlemaine bloc if necessary.

Model 2: 4 wards, 2 councillors per ward

Castlemaine/Campbells Creek will comprise 2 wards/4 councillors, and the two other 'rural' wards combined will have 4 councillors between them. This does not give the small towns a chance of out-voting the Castlemaine bloc, which will create stalemates. The enforced alliance between towns that are a considerable distance apart is an unattractive prospect for any potential councillor as it means having to familiarize oneself with other towns' issues on top of representing one's own town. With uncontested elections a problem in the Shire, this is to be avoided.

Model 3: 8 wards, 8 councillors

Same problem as the other two models -- Castlemaine ends up with 4 wards/4 councillors, and the other 4 wards with 4 councillors between them; stalemate.

Suggested Model: 5 Wards, 8 councillors

Castlemaine/Campbells Creek (3 councillors)

Maldon/Baringhup (2 councillors)

Chewton/Elphinstone/Taradale (1 councillor)

Newstead/Guildford (1 councillor)

Harcourt (1 councillor)

This would solve the stalemate issue, and keep town groupings in wards where they more naturally fall.

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