



17 April 2023

Dear Electoral Representation Advisory Panel,

Re: Local Council Electoral Structure Review: Hepburn Shire Council

The Victorian Pride Lobby writes to make a submission to the electoral representation advisory panel, addressing the models proposed by the panel in its preliminary report.

Model 1: Unsubdivided multi-member

In our view, multi-member wards are preferable to single-member wards as they increase the diversity of candidates nominating and councillors elected. As noted by Cr Tim Dryllie in his submission:

An unsubdivided structure promotes diversity in our local government. When councillors are elected based on their policies and platforms rather than their location, we are more likely to see a range of voices represented on the council. This may encompass individuals from various socioeconomic backgrounds, cultural and linguistic minorities, the LGBTQIA+ community, women, and other groups.¹

Model 3: Single-member wards

As noted in the Preliminary Report, single-member wards will lead to “larger towns, such as Creswick and Daylesford being divided into smaller wards, which superficially capture communities of interest.”² The Report goes on to acknowledge that this is “a potential drawback to the model.”³

We are concerned with the boundaries of the proposed Daylesford Ward and Hepburn Springs Ward that bisect the locality of Daylesford along the Midland Highway, with the north in Hepburn Springs Ward and the south in Daylesford Ward.

In our view, there is a community of interest in the locality of Daylesford that is not divided along the Midland Highway. There is a strong population of same-sex cohabiting couples in Daylesford. According to the 2021 Census, the locality of Daylesford includes 11% of opposite-sex couples in the Shire, but 23% of male same-sex couples and 29% of female same-sex couples in the Shire, which shows that there is a comparatively high population of same-sex cohabiting couples in the Daylesford locality. Imposing a ward boundary

¹ Tim Dyllie, Preliminary Submission, 1 March 2023.

² Electoral Representation Advisory Panel, *Local Council Electoral Structure Review Preliminary Report: Hepburn Shire Council*, March 2023, 14.

³ Electoral Representation Advisory Panel, *Local Council Electoral Structure Review Preliminary Report: Hepburn Shire Council*, March 2023, 18.

along the Midland Highway would dilute this significant community of interest across two wards instead of containing the community in one.

It is important that the LGBTIQ+ community (including same-sex cohabiting couples) is recognised as a community of interest. External socio-political forces, including stigma and discrimination, have often compelled LGBTIQ+ people to live or be near each other so as to offer social support to one another. Over time, geographically-aligned communities have formed or been recognised as a community of interest. One such community of interest has arisen in the Daylesford locality. In our view, to protect this community of interest, the Daylesford Ward should include the entirety of the Daylesford locality.

Further information on Daylesford as an LGBTIQ+ community of interest is appended to this submission, and incorporates an excerpt from *A History of LGBTIQ+ Victoria in 100 Places and Objects*.

A similar issue arises with the localities of Creswick and Glenlyon, both of which are split over two wards. This is particularly so for Creswick, which is currently contained in one ward but would now be split across two wards - Creswick Ward and Newlyn Ward - along the Creswick Creek. In our view, the Creswick Ward should instead include the entirety of the Creswick locality.

Model 2: Ward-based multi-member

In our view, this model largely retains communities of interest based on localities across four wards: Daylesford Ward (incorporating Daylesford, Hepburn and Hepburn Springs), Birch Creek Ward (incorporating Clunes and Eganstown), Creswick Ward, and Loddon River Ward (incorporating Glenlyon and Trentham).

This model does not split major localities - including Daylesford, Creswick and Glenlyon - across different wards, fracturing communities of interest. However, a ward structure with only two councillors per ward may decrease the diversity of candidates nominating and councillors elected.

Conclusion

We thank you for the opportunity to make this submission and would welcome the opportunity to speak at the public hearing.

Yours sincerely,

Austin Fabry-Jenkins and Liam Elphick
Co-Convenors, Victorian Pride Lobby

Daylesford Precinct

DAYLESFORD, VICTORIA

Daylesford is a picturesque town nestled at the foot of Victoria's Great Dividing Range. It is green and lush, and its soils are rich with minerals and mineral springs. For tens of thousands of years, it has been home to and remains the traditional lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung people. There are many places of historical significance in the Daylesford area that are historically significant, including sites and buildings that relate to Daylesford's gold mining history and Swiss-Italian heritage. The historic streetscape immediately announces the town's goldrush and nineteenth-century heritage, but it is the prominence of rainbow flags on buildings and in windows that signals another significant connection: to Victoria's LGBTIQ+ community.

As a result of its fertile, mineral-rich soil and the cascading waters of its mineral springs, Daylesford has long been a popular tourist destination and is often seen as a place of calm and healing. It has also been a place that has a strong association with alternative lifestyles: off-grid living, yoga ashrams and, for the past four decades, one of the most queer-friendly places in Australia.

The arrival of the railway in the 1880s brought visitors from Melbourne and saw the establishment of Daylesford's first guesthouses. Reminiscent of European landscapes, the Daylesford and Hepburn area was favoured by many pre- and post-World War II European migrants. By the 1920s, the arrival of the motor car had boosted the tourism trade. After mining activity ended and the economic depression of the 1930s struck, tourism declined and the town slipped back into a quiet, farming community for the next few decades.

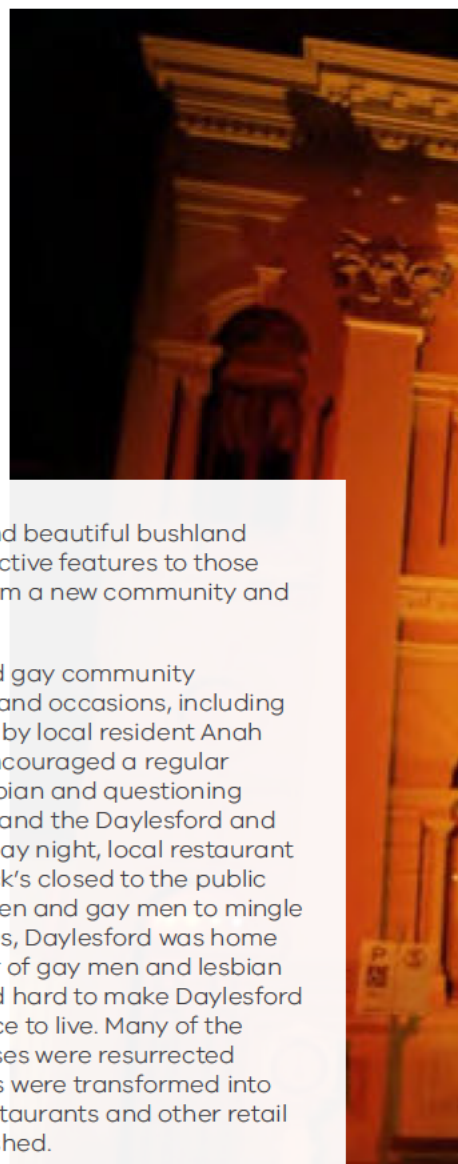
In the late 1970s a renewed interest began to grow in the natural beauty and mineral springs that Daylesford offered. It was around this time, too, that the area became popular with lesbian women and gay men. Housing affordability, the promise

of relative anonymity, and beautiful bushland surroundings were attractive features to those looking for a place to form a new community and home.

This growing lesbian and gay community organised social events and occasions, including Women's Balls – started by local resident Anah Holland Moore – that encouraged a regular connection between lesbian and questioning women from Melbourne and the Daylesford and Hepburn area. Each Friday night, local restaurant Absolutely Fabulous Jack's closed to the public and invited lesbian women and gay men to mingle socially. By the mid-1990s, Daylesford was home to an increasing number of gay men and lesbian women, and they worked hard to make Daylesford a vibrant and viable place to live. Many of the town's former guesthouses were resurrected and old miners' cottages were transformed into bed and breakfasts. Restaurants and other retail businesses were established.

It wasn't long before a small group decided that Daylesford would benefit from a business network that marketed the town as a lesbian and gay-friendly destination and promoted the many gay and lesbian commercial activities in the area. From this initial idea, a group named Springs Connections soon formed and became an active advocate for gay and lesbian enterprise in the Daylesford and Hepburn area. Springs Connection was also a great promotional tool for local business owners to encourage more gay and lesbian visitors to the area.

The success of this early business network in attracting the 'pink dollar' as well as the LGBTIQ+ community to Daylesford, was the inspiration for the idea behind the ChillOut Festival. In 1997, the first ChillOut Festival took place with around 100 attendees. In 2020, ChillOut Festival is the biggest and longest-running queer pride event in regional Australia. The success of this annual event has helped boost Daylesford's reputation as a gay and lesbian-friendly town and LGBTIQ+ hub.





HERITAGE LISTINGS

A number of historic buildings and gardens in Daylesford are included in the Victorian Heritage Register or in the Heritage Overlay of the Hepburn Planning Scheme.

SOURCES

'A short history of Daylesford', Daylesford Regional Visitor Information Centre, [https://visitheburnshire.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Short History of Daylesford Updated Dec 2019.pdf](https://visitheburnshire.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Short-History-of-Daylesford-Updated-Dec-2019.pdf), accessed 10 September 2020.

'ChillOut History', ChillOut Festival, <https://www.chilloutfestival.com.au/history>, accessed 10 September 2020.

'Daylesford Stories', Culture Victoria, <https://cv.vic.gov.au/stories/a-diverse-state/daylesford-stories>, accessed 10 September 2020.

Richard White, 'From the majestic to the mundane: democracy, sophistication and history among the mineral spas of Australia', *Journal of Tourism History*, Vol. 4, Issue 1, 2012, pp. 85-108.

Victorian Heritage Database, <https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au>, accessed 10 September 2020.