

Millbrook 3352
18 April 2023

Chairperson
Moorabool Shire Council
Electoral Structure Review

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Submission.

My name is Tom Sullivan and I have been a Councillor at Moorabool Shire since 1996 for the West Moorabool Ward.

I believe to understand Moorabool Shire, you have to go back to the beginning. Moorabool Shire came into being as part of the Kennett Government local government restructure of the 1990's.

Firstly, there was the review of Councils surrounding Ballarat in 1994 which saw the amalgamation of the Shire of Ballan and parts of the former Shires of Bungaree and Buninyong. Some time afterwards, as part of the local government review of outer Melbourne councils, the Shire of Bacchus Marsh and part of the former City of Werribee were merged into Moorabool Shire.

The last amalgamation by the inclusion of the former Shire of Bacchus still is a sore point in parts of the Shire. We have two administrative centres in the Shire one in Ballan and the other in Bacchus Marsh.

Some years ago, there was a motion passed at Council to move all the administration of the Shire to Bacchus Marsh this caused such a furore that when the rescission motion was debated at the next Council Meeting, the meeting had to be held in the Bacchus Marsh Hall with busloads of people coming down from Ballan. Having two administrative centres is the price to be paid to maintain harmony and social cohesion.

In all, Moorabool Shire is comprised of five former council in whole or in part. The work carried out by Mr Trevor Budge, Town Planning Consultant, and his team as part of the development of a single Planning Scheme for Moorabool Shire in the late 1990's identified that there were approximately 20 discrete communities in Moorabool Shire.

In recognition of the dispersed communities that comprise Moorabool, we commonly use the plural rather than the singular when referring to our community. We are not one community we are many communities.

Recognition that we are not one community by Council has allowed us to provide good outcomes for all the varied and dispersed communities across the Shire in a fair and equitable manner. As the first CEO of the Shire, Mr Jim Elvey, once said "equity doesn't mean everyone gets the same benefits but they all get their fair share". I think this approach has stood us in good stead.

In your recent release, you put forward two models, Model 1 is for an unsubdivided Shire with 9 Councillors and Model 2, three (3) Wards of three (3) Councillors. I believe that both models as

presented are not a good for Moorabool Shire. To best represent the diverse communities of Moorabool, a single ward option would be the best outcome.

I know with the growth of the Shire there would be ongoing electoral boundary redistributions to ensure equity in representation but surely the focus should be about fair representation rather than expediency. If it is not too late this model should be revisited.

With respect to the two models presented, I believe that Model 2 (3 Wards with 3 Councillors) would be preferable than Model 1 (Unsubdivided with 9 Councillors).

My observation of unsubdivided Councils are as follows: -

- They generally do not give geographic representation.
- Can lead to party politics creeping into local government with political parties using block tickets to elect people. If someone is elected in this manner, where does their allegiances lie? Is it for the people of the municipality or the party?
- There can be a concentration of councillors from the one area or town who have similar backgrounds.
- The cost of an individual becoming a councillor in an unsubdivided Council would be far greater than with having single wards. For example, I represent a single ward yet at the last Council election in 2020, I spent over \$5,000 in advertising. In a unsubdivided Council, the cost would be far greater. This cost may deter people from standing.

In conclusion, I believe that the case for single wards should be revisited. If the intent of the review is to great fairer representation, then this is the best system.

Of the two Models presented in the current release, Model 2 (3 Wards with 3 Councillors) is the lesser of two evils.

Moorabool Shire has grown significantly over the years since 1996 and the good work of the many Councillors over this time has put us in the good position that we are now in. The understanding that we are not one community has allowed us to manage the expectations of the diverse communities that form Moorabool. I personally would hate for it all to unravel because of the proposed changes to the electoral boundaries of the Shire.

Yours faithfully

Cr Tom Sullivan