

**Electoral structure review - Buloke Shire Council - Preliminary Submission
Buloke Shire Council - Wycheproof - 15 February 2023, 03:31 pm**

To whom it may concern,

Please find attached a Preliminary Submission to the 2023-24 Local Council Electoral Structure Review of Buloke Shire Council from Mayor Cr Alan Getley on behalf of Buloke Shire Council.

The submission attached states that Buloke Shire Council would like to recommend the Electoral Representation Advisory Panel consider a change to Buloke Shire Council's electoral representation to an unsubdivided electoral structure represented by seven councillors.

Should further information be sought regarding this preliminary submission please contact Buloke Shire Council on [REDACTED] or email [REDACTED]

Regards,
Michelle Stedman
Director Corporate & Organisational Performance
Buloke Shire Council

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10 February 2023

Electoral Representation Advisory Panel
C/- Victorian Electoral Commission
Level 11, 530 Collins St
Melbourne VIC 3000

Via Online submission Portal – www.vec.vic.gov.au

To whom it may concern,

Buloke Shire Council – 2023-24 Local Council Electoral Structure Reviews; Preliminary Submission

As Mayor of Buloke Shire Council, I would like to thank the Victorian Electoral Commission for the opportunity to provide a preliminary submission to the Electoral Representation Advisory Panel (ERAP) regarding the upcoming review of Buloke Shire Council's electoral structure. Our Council has considered our submission to this process at its recent Council Meeting on 8 February 2023 and based on this consideration, I provide the following advice.

Buloke Shire Council is a modestly populated rural shire in the Mallee region of Victoria and is home to 6178 residents. Although considered a small rural council, Buloke Shire Council covers nearly 8000km² making it the fifth largest council by land area in Victoria.

Geographical coverage presents a unique challenge regarding local government representation which we hope the ERAP can recognise. Buloke's current (non-compliant) structure constitutes seven councillors across three wards: two wards with two councillors each, one ward with three councillors. The total number of councillors representing Buloke Shire Council is an important factor given the geographic area, and subsequent infrastructure and service coverage they must oversee.

If Buloke Shire Council was to move to a compliant subdivided structure it would require an even number of councillors in each ward. This would mean a drop in total councillor representation (three wards with two councillors in each ward = 6 councillors) in order to remain consistent with state-wide voter/councillor ratios. Sustainable councillor representation across such a large area would be difficult to achieve with this reduced representation level.

In addition to geographic factors and appropriate representation levels, it is also a concern for Buloke Shire Council that a council governed by an even number of councillors (6) would provide an ineffective decision-making environment where in the event of a tie, an even number of councillors would see the mayoral role hold a deciding vote more often when compared to an odd number of councillors making decisions by majority vote. In the interest of providing a consistent and equitable

decision-making environment, Buloke Shire Council would prefer representation of the Shire by an odd number of councillors so a majority vote can be achieved in most instances.

It is for these reasons that Buloke Shire Council would like to recommend the ERAP consider a change to Buloke Shire Council's electoral representation in accordance with an unsubdivided electoral structure represented by seven councillors (the recommended option).

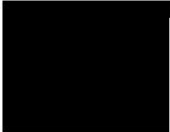
When compared with other options available for the ERAP to consider, the recommended option will allow for appropriate and equitable representation of the Buloke community while being mindful of a sustainable workload for councillors over a large geographical area.

Another benefit of moving to the recommended option is the impact it may have on the local government election process. Buloke Shire Council has seen ward elections over the last 14 years pass with either low contention or unopposed representation. Opportunities for voters to participate in local government elections may increase in an unsubdivided structure, with prospective councillors being considered by voters across the whole municipality rather than only within respective wards. This is as opposed to being unable to cast their vote due to uncontested elections.

The recommended option is viewed by Buloke Shire Council to be the most appropriate compromise of effective representation, voter interests and compliance with the *Local Government Act 2020*. We hope the ERAP considers the recommended option favourably in its deliberations.

Should further information be sought regarding this preliminary submission please contact Buloke Shire Council on [REDACTED] or email [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,



Mayor Cr Alan Getley
Buloke Shire Council