

**Electoral structure review - Moorabool Shire Council - Response Submission
Daniel Toohey and Gerald, Kate, Maddie, Loretta, Meggin Toohey - Springbank - 19 April
2023, 03:38 pm**

Dear Review Panel,

As member's of the Moorabool shire, we would like to express our support for the proposed model number 2 in preference to the proposed model number 1.

As farmers, locals and active members of the rural community within the shire, the unsubdivided model concerns us as we will lose the local representatives in the local ward areas that are currently in place to ensure the major centres in our council area do not solely benefit or control the rates the entire municipality pays annually, nor solely dictate how the regional areas should be developed or serviced into the future.

The proposed 3 ward system will at least ensure the services provided are fairer, with an equal cross section of voter's represented and that the smaller towns and areas across the entire shire get people who live in those areas who can speak for their needs and work to ensure the same services and value is being provided to those who live in the country areas, in the same way people do in the major centres.

With our late father Patrick Toohey having been a counsellor and Mayor for the Moorabool shire for many years prior to his passing, he experienced the struggle in certain periods of time that local members of his ward had in securing funding, investments, and community outcomes from the council for projects in the smaller regional communities with the councillor disparity that existed with 4 members being within the east Moorabool ward centred around Bacchus Marsh. He was, as are we, strong believer's that the representation of a council needs to be from a diverse cross section of the entire shire area and thus having an unsubdivided council area means you may end up with all the councillors residing in the large town centres only, who even with the best intensions will never be able to fully represent the smaller more regional areas within the shire in the same way those who live in those regional areas can.

The un-subdivided council option would also expose the council to party politics making its way, being on the urban fringe of Melbourne, into the council and risk's people being elected to council with a party driven view, rather than being a localised candidate, whose sole purpose would be to represent the local people of both the shire and their specific ward and where necessary be willing to hold members of parliament to account, no matter what party those candidates belonged to when the shire is not getting its fair share.

Another concern of the unsubdivided option is also the risk of candidates being elected based upon preferences or vote spillage by a candidate rather than being truly elected by the people they are supposed to represent. If the 3 separate wards were to exist, it would ensure at least that to some degree a cross section of the local community would always become councillors and ensure a diverse range of views and perspectives were being brought forward to the council chambers. Bringing the councillor numbers up to 9 and having 3 representatives from the 3 separate wards will also bring with it a more equal representation of voices across the entire shire and as a result, should bring a very well-balanced perspective to the council chambers when deliberating decisions as a collective.

Although the multiple ward system may need to be reviewed again in the future, this should be standard practice for a growing municipality to ensure the council chambers dynamic evolves in line with the local community. Given this and given the Moorabool shire is a collective of multiple communities, a cross section of the shire needs to be maintained to keep the decision making equitable across all the shires people to ensure the best interests of the entire shire, not just pockets of it are always upheld.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide our view which we feel is a view shared by many within our local area.

Kind Regards,
Dan Tohey, Gerald Tohey, Kate Tohey, Maddie Tohey, Loretta Tohey and Meggin Tohey
Springbank, Victoria