

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 21 February 2023 5:07 PM  
**To:** Campaspe ERAP Submissions 2023  
**Subject:** Local Council Electoral Review - CAMPASPE SHIRE  
**Attachments:** Electoral Review 1 Comm Satisfaction.pdf; Electoral Review 2 Response.pdf; Electoral Review 3 Presentation.pdf

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Attached is documentation pertaining to the Review for your consideration;

1. LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMUNITY SATISFACTION SURVEY 2022.  
Pages 1, 5, 12 & 20 which illustrate the urgent need for some serious changes to be made as what we have is obviously not working. Virtually the only improvement of note over the many years is the area of "Waste Management".
2. Copy of my 2019 Response to the Local Council Representation Review;  
The information contained in this submission is mostly applicable today and relevant to your current review.
3. Copy of my presentation to the Review Panel 2019 which highlights the need and reason for change to an un-subdivided municipality which is still applicable today – possibly more so.

My recommendation is for Campaspe Shire to become an Un-subdivided Municipality represented by 5 Councillors who would hopefully operate in the manner that would be beneficial to the 'whole of shire' and not where the most votes are as is the custom now. " An unsubdivided municipality increases the sense of responsibility and accountability among councillors and affords the opportunity for voters to elect the best candidates regardless of their address in the municipality in the knowledge they will represent them – not just a ward".

Don McKenzie

[REDACTED]  
KYABRAM  
[REDACTED]

# 2022 Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey

## Campaspe Shire Council

Coordinated by the Department of Jobs,  
Precincts and Regions on behalf of  
Victorian councils

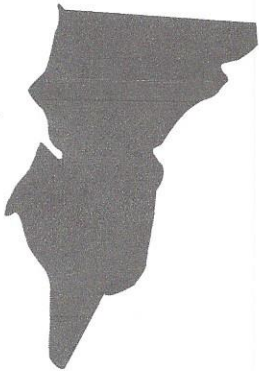
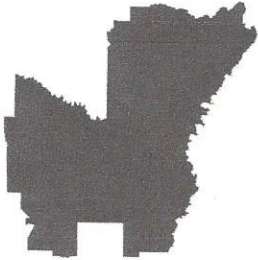


# Campaspe Shire Council – at a glance



## Overall council performance

Results shown are index scores out of 100.



## Council performance compared to State-wide and group averages

Compared to group average	Compared to State-wide average
None	None
	<p><b>Areas where Council performance is significantly higher</b></p>
	<p><b>Areas where Council performance is significantly lower by the widest margin</b></p>
	<p>Consultation &amp; engagement</p> <p>Sealed local roads</p>
	<p>Community decisions</p> <p>Sealed local roads</p>
	<p>Consultation &amp; engagement</p> <p>Community decisions</p>
	<p>Sealed local roads</p>



## Overall performance

The overall performance index score of 49 for Campaspe Shire Council represents a significant six-point decline on the 2021 result. This is the lowest score seen since 2012 (and the same score seen in 2020).

Campaspe Shire Council's overall performance is rated statistically significantly lower (at the 95% confidence interval) than the average rating for councils in the Large Rural group and the State-wide average for councils (index scores of 55 and 59 respectively).

- Almost all demographic and geographic cohorts reported a decline in their perceptions of overall performance in the past year – in many instances, this decline was significant.
- Residents aged 35 to 49 years (index score of 39) rate Council's overall performance significantly lower than average.

Around one in five residents (21%) rate the value for money they receive from Council in infrastructure and services provided to their community as 'very good' or 'good'. Nearly twice as many rate value for money in infrastructure and services as 'very poor' or 'poor' (41%). A further 36% rate Council as 'average' in terms of providing value for money.

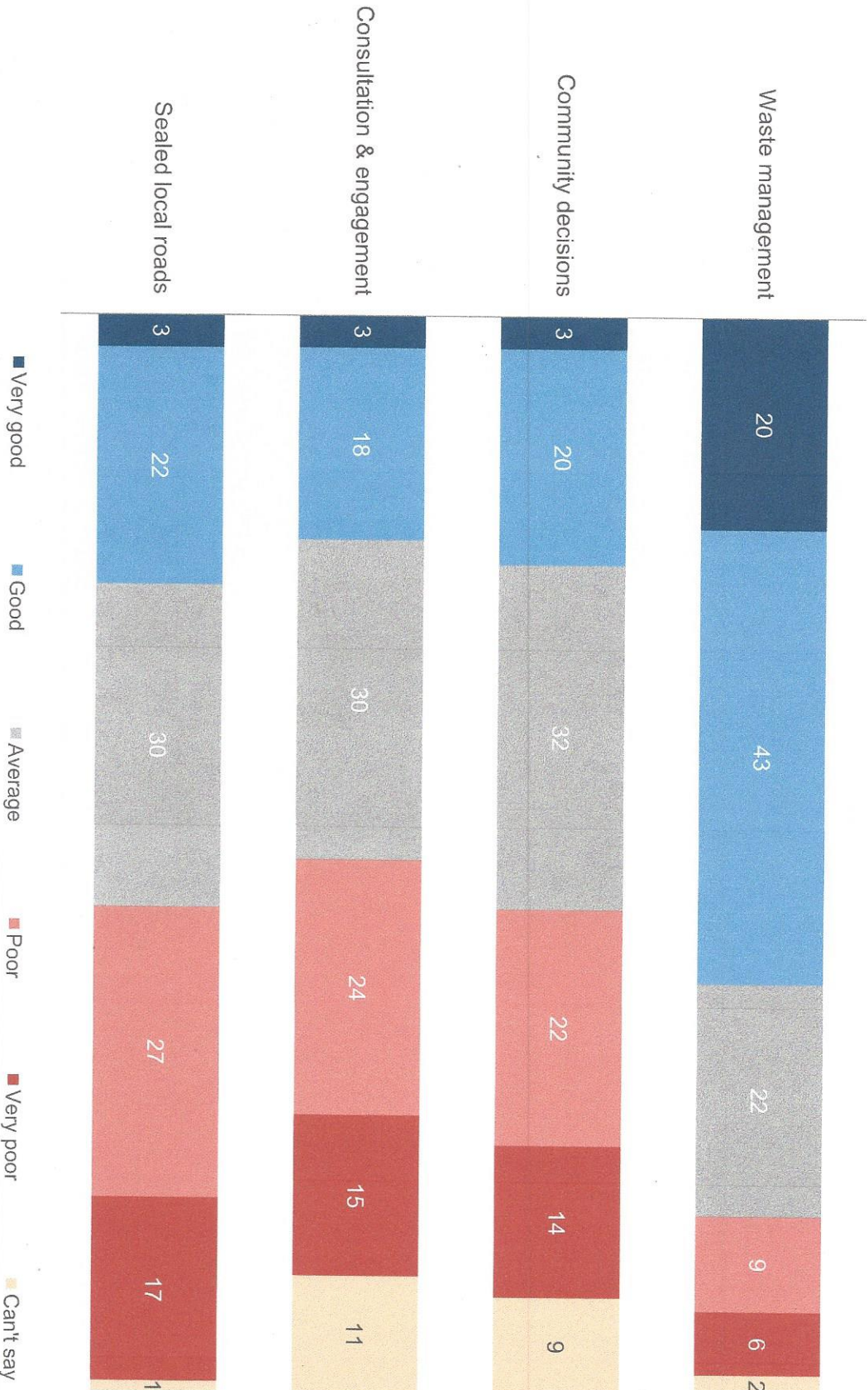






# Individual service area performance

2022 individual service area performance (%)



Q2. How has Council performed on [RESPONSIBILITY AREA] over the last 12 months?  
 Base: All respondents. Councils asked State-wide: 67 Councils asked group: 19

## Response submissions

Local Council Representation Review – Preliminary Report  
Campaspe Shire Council 2019

At the outset I congratulate the Victorian Electoral Commission on the presentation of the Preliminary Report on the Campaspe Council Representation Review with the final options presented and the detailed analysis.

I also express my disappointment at the apathy shown by residents of the Shire (myself included) in as much as only three submissions were lodged for consideration in the review process.

I write this submission in respect to the preliminary report as a person who has had an extensive local government career (almost 40 years), and a long term resident of Kyabram. I have held the positions of CEO of St Arnaud and Kyabram Town Councils (17 years), CEO Shepparton, Kyabram, Rodney Development Corporation (3 Years), interim CEO Strathbogie Shire, Director of Economic and on occasions relieving CEO City of Greater Shepparton (9 Years) and been involved in many community organisations over this period.

I would implore that the VEC explore Option B – an unsubdivided electoral structure for further consideration for the following reasons:

- The overall apathy by Campaspe residents to the function of Council is of extreme concern and has been brought about by the operations of what is perceived as a dysfunctional Council with Councillor infighting, bullying and total lack of good Corporate Governance.
- Rarely have I experienced (both at a local and regional level) a feeling of disdain and lack of respect for the function of Campaspe Shire. I believe this feeling of disdain and apathy has increased since the introduction of 9 councillor representation.
- With the subdivided representation model, many areas of the municipality are totally disadvantaged as riding councillors tend to concentrate solely on their own ridings and it is virtually impossible for proper consideration to be obtained for the ridings with only one councillor.
- The only hope one councillor ridings have is to do deals with other Councillors, which we constantly are aware of, to get due consideration to important issues.
- The process is totally flawed and in instances with a single vote or the ability of an individual Councillor to adequately be heard is virtually impossible.
- The three ward represented Councillors tend to totally dominate Council and many show little interest to the overall welfare and good governance of the entire municipality.
- The business of the Council requires Councillors to be aware, interested and responsible for the proper function of the whole Shire – not just their ward. No successful business can survive successfully unless all key personnel are totally committed to the entire organisation.



- Corporate governance in Campaspe Shire is at a very low level and is declining at a rapid rate as evidenced by the numerous newspaper reports on Council meeting conflicts. The only hope I see in resurrecting the situation is for a major change in the culture of the organisation by ensuring Councillors are elected to represent the whole municipality and not just individual wards. A check with the Local Government Department will provide ample evidence of the serious issues of Campaspe Councillors misbehaviour etc, most of which, I believe, have been brought about because of the ward representation format with the divide and rule principle very evident.

The opening paragraph of the VEC "Option B An unsubdivided model" really sets out what is needed:- "Considering the Shires uneven population growth and its increasing problem of uncontested wards, the VEC considered an unsubdivided electoral structure as an alternative option. The VEC believes that there are significant benefits and some draw backs to an unsubdivided structure for Campaspe Shire."

There is no doubt in my mind and that of any reasonable person reading the report, that the "significant benefits" as stated far outweigh "some drawbacks" and as such should be acted upon. The status quo even with some minor changes has totally failed the residents of Campaspe Shire even more so since the introduction of the 9 Councillor representation.

The attached Kyabram Free Press article of the 21<sup>st</sup> August 2019 highlights some of the background of my concerns. I agree with the concerns expressed by the Mayor in this article and would hope that such concerns can only be properly addressed by the introduction of an unsubdivided municipality with a new direction with all Councillors being responsible for the whole municipality and answerable to all residents. I anticipate that this would bring about much better team approach to governance, responsibility and without doubt a better model than the one currently in place and I respectfully request the further exploration of Option B as the best way forward for Campaspe Shire.

Donald G McKenzie

[REDACTED]  
KYABRAM.  
[REDACTED]  
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Encl



"Fruit flies are beginning to hatch out of the ground after winter hibernation and we need to have our traps out ready for them," Sue said.

The talk comes just as new funding has been announced that will see the fight against fruit fly continue in the Goulburn and

has the potential to cause significant economic harm to the region's horticulture industry," he said.

"The Goulburn Murray Valley is regarded as the 'fruit bowl of Australia' and is the largest producer of pears in the southern hemisphere, so protecting this

Victorian Government's \$1.5 million Managing Fruit Fly in Victoria regional grants program, which supports a co-ordinated and collaborative approach to fruit fly management across the state.

The work of the Goulburn Murray Valley Fruit Fly Project has also been recognised at state

level, with the program finalist in the Prime Minister's Cultural Innovation Awards forms part of the 2019 Regional Achievement Community Awards.

The awards encourage knowledge and rewardable contributions that

# Auto club celebrates \$5000

THE Goulburn Valley Auto Club were treated to a pleasant surprise last week when one of their members won Triple M's Clubhouse Rescue competition.

The competition was open to all sporting clubs across Triple M's listening area and asked people to explain why their club should receive a \$5000 cheque to be put towards the upgrade and refurbishment of their clubhouse.

Five GVAC members submitted responses and one of these was judged the best out of a pool of hundreds.

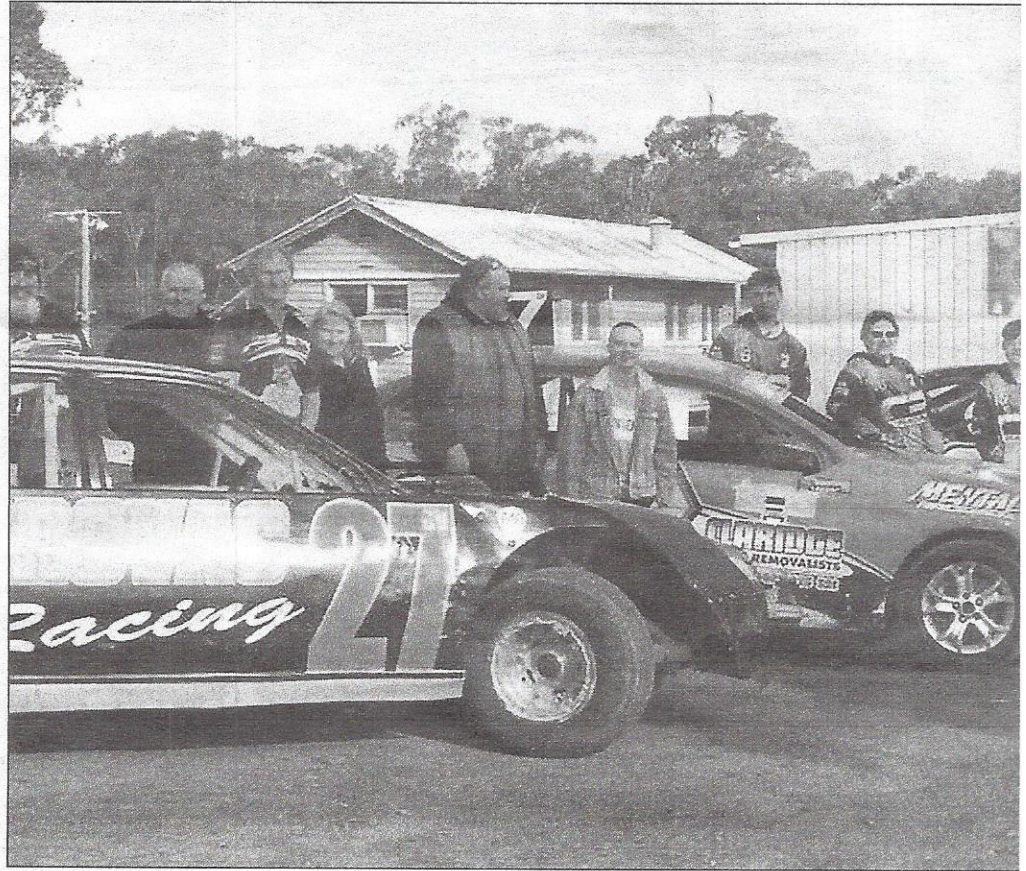
The unsuspecting club member received an early morning phone call from breakfast announcer Shauny, and then passed the good news on to GVAC club president Pat Bourke.

Mr Bourke had a quick chat with Shauny on air about the club's plans for the cash.

The club has recently announced the top point-scoring drivers from local classes for the 2018-19 season.

These were Gary Gapes (GV Opens), Leigh Jeffries (GV Production), Chloe Lamb (GV Ladies) and Daniel Smith (GV Juniors).

Youngster Danny also took out the club champion perpetual award with the highest number of points over the season, beating both the men's and the ladies' competitors.



GVAC club members pose with their cars in front of the Rushworth Speedway clubhouse left of the \$5000 cheque.

# Weston says council is determined to improve

MAYOR Adrian Weston said Campaspe Shire is committed to improving community perceptions of council performance in the wake of "disappointing" community survey results.

The 2019 Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey found community perceptions of Campaspe Shire Council are tracking steadily and on par with last year, bar some criteria.

An independent telephone survey of more than 400 residents measured the community's perception of council's performance, with Cr Weston describing some results as concerning.

While most areas of council performance reflected improvement and stability, the overall trend is declining.

The report suggested in the

performance in decisions made in the interest of the community, lobbying on behalf of the community and tourism development.

"In comparison to last year's survey results, council's performance has remained stable and slightly improved in most of the core performance measures of the survey, including customer service, community consultation and making community decisions," Cr Weston said.

"However, it's concerning to see downward trends in the core measures of advocating on behalf of the community and overall council direction.

"In comparison to other large rural shires, Campaspe is falling behind in most areas of council performance and this is of concern to us.

Cr Weston said the results provide valuable insight into where the community perceives council needs to focus more of their efforts.

In council's favour, traffic management and parking facilities in the shire are providing a more positive outlook, with Campaspe Shire scoring above average.

Cr Weston said council will now examine the results carefully and engage with the community to better understand the factors behind the results.

"In examining results and consulting with the community, we will feed this information into our planning and continuous improvement processes so we can further improve service delivery into the future," he said.

The full report of the research

# Schools to get

By Alex Gre

VICTORIAN secondary students will have to learn from industry creatives as applicants for the Victorian Creative Learning Program.

Schools in northern Victoria can apply to partnering Victorian artists, performers, design and creative organisations for grants of up to \$10,000 to fund a project with an innovative professional or a longer residency with an active organisation.

The program encourages schools to explore new ways to strengthen education from foundation including VET and

KYABRAM FREE PRESS 21 August 2019



## Local Council Representation Review – Preliminary Report Campaspe Shire Council 2019

PRESENTATION: Campaspe Regional Library 5.30pm September 10<sup>th</sup> September

Thank you Panel, for the opportunity to speak in support of my submission for an unsubdivided municipality for Campaspe Shire – Option B. I have, in my long local government career, never witnessed or experienced such disenchantment by the wider community in the function of Council – and it is time for change.

The 2019 Community Satisfaction Survey Results released in July, highlight this fact. In almost every aspect of core measures of performance: Campaspe is under performing in its Overall Performance rating 51 points compared to Large Rural Shires average of 56 points and the Overall Council Direction rating some 45 points compared to Large Rural Shires average of 51 points.

In fact, in the seven key areas, Campaspe is some 23 points lower than its group average (large rural shires). This is hardly evidence that the Council is tracking satisfactorily.

Campaspe Mayor, Cr Weston has stated:-

- “this year’s surveys were disappointing”
- “the overall trend is declining”
- “in comparison to other large rural shires, Campaspe is falling behind in most areas of council performance and this is of concern to us. I want to assure the community, Council is committed to improve” and he also said
- “However, it’s concerning to see downward trends in the core measures of advocating on behalf of the community and overall council direction”.

I would point out that the 2019 results mirror the 2017 and 2018 Community Satisfaction Survey Results. These facts cannot be argued with and really highlight the need for change.

Since the establishment of Campaspe Shire, when Commissioners oversaw the governance process and took a whole of municipality approach, we have been on a steady decline in regard to Council performance. Campaspe is a very diverse Council as you have noted. It has differing communities of interest and identities with much of the population being drawn to other adjoining areas – Shepparton and Bendigo in particular. We have different telephone codes, multiple external sporting regions and different local papers. These diversities have made it extremely difficult to bring together the community of Campaspe – particularly with its ward system, which leads to a “divide and rule” syndrome.

2.

Prior to 2007, Campaspe had 7 councillors elected from 6 wards which I believe did operate much better than today's system. Following the 2007 Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) review, we have 9 councillors from 5 wards – 2 x 3 councillors and 3 x 1 councillor. We now have a suggested change to the system being your Option A – virtually the same as we have now with some minor boundary changes – extend Waranga Ward and reduce the Echuca Ward.

This is a soft and easy option which is certainly not going to deliver the change that Campaspe urgently requires. We presently have voter confusion as to who their councillors are and what area they represent. Voters have very little idea of the location of the Campaspe Ward boundaries.

It has been suggested that a voter turnout of 74.28% at the last Campaspe Shire elections indicates a healthy democracy. I strongly refute that and claim and suggest it is generally the fear of the financial penalty for not voting that is the main driver for this turnout.

We do need a change to address some of the serious issues Campaspe faces – particularly the ongoing effects of the serious decline of the dairy industry and major issues of water which will have major repercussions for the Council to address.

There is no doubt Option B would offer the change that would hopefully bring about the best opportunity to take Council forward. In this regard I believe the submission lodged by The Proportional Representative Society of Australia (Victoria and Tasmania) Inc (PRSA) should be supported as a matter of urgency i.e. **AN UNSUBDIVIDED MUNICIPALITY** as the very best option.

The PRSA is the most highly regarded electoral reform organisation in Australia. It focuses on multi member proportional representative voting systems, raising issues in relation to public elections. It has made submissions to Governments which have influenced the development and formation of Australia's electoral systems. Their record and knowledge of electoral issues is without peer. The PRSA reasoned that 7 representatives from an unsubdivided electoral structure would be the fairest and best arrangement for Campaspe as it ensures all successful candidates need to reach the same quota (12.5%) to be elected. However, they do concede the next best option would be 9 representatives.



Unsubdivided councils have existed for most of Victoria's Local Government history with some 21 councils presently using this system. They include adjoining councils Moira and Greater Shepparton, as well as Benalla, Wodonga, Mildura and Wangaratta – all areas facing similar issues as Campaspe. In fact some 27% of Victorian Councils are unsubdivided with a further 20% being made up of single ward representation, 35% with multi ward representation, and a low 18% of single and multi ward structures including Campaspe Shire. The unsubdivided advantages are that such a system provides the concept of a municipal-wide focus. It would give all residents a wider choice of Councillors to vote for and subsequently more councillors to approach with issues that may need to be addressed. Each voter would have the opportunity to express preference for every candidate in the council election. It removes the need to define internal boundaries and results in a simple less expensive voters roll for elections. An unsubdivided structure ensures a broader approach by Councillors in contrast to Councillors tending to govern in the best interests of their ward.

Sometimes it is felt that some communities may not be adequately represented in an unsubdivided system but research has shown that in practice this is not an issue. There is also a risk some communities may feel unrepresented but given the councillors would be elected for the whole municipality the risk should be mitigated.

An unsubdivided municipality increases the sense the responsibility and accountability among councillors and affords the opportunity for voters to elect the best candidates regardless of their address in the municipality in the knowledge they will represent them – not just a ward.

In your preliminary report you have noted the need for some necessary adjustments to the current Campaspe structure to be viable – I totally agree and your Option B would seem to be the very best way to make such adjustments.

The ward system, particularly single representation wards, sees many councillors never facing an election i.e. returned unopposed – in part because with just one council seat up for election in some wards potential candidates are less likely to stand seeing little chance of success against a long standing councillor and knowing the difficulties they would face representing their ward when some other wards have 3 council representatives. The ward system also encourages deals being done on council decisions.

4.

It is interesting to note that the Kennett Government Minister for Local Government, who oversaw the amalgamation process of councils, reflected on what he would have done differently stated – “I am also sorry that I did not push harder on the question of ridings or wards. I have been a fervent advocate for the concept of an unsubdivided municipality on the grounds that this brings a corporate level to the Council table and this addresses the issue of parochialism and small p politics which has bedevilled Local Government” , [Local Government Electoral Review 2013 3.46]. The minister had come from a rural background and had served as a councillor in his community. In my almost 40 years experience in local government and as a resident of Campaspe this statement is as true today as it was when made years ago.

Our councils are now big business and must have a corporate approach to be successful. Councillors must be responsible for and answerable to the whole population of the municipality and not just their ward.

How is it best to achieve this for Campaspe Shire is the question?

The fear of change to an unsubdivided electorate is real and totally understandable in as much as some areas may be unrepresented. This fear has been explored over the years to see if larger towns or rural areas are over or under represented. What has been found is that there is a reasonably close relationship between the population distribution of Councillors in most municipalities. This indicates that unsubdivided structures do not lead to a dominance by particular areas within municipalities but allow for a geographic spread of councillors. An unsubdivided municipality will include a stronger opportunity for the best candidates to be elected even if in some instances they may come from the same area.

I commend a change to an unsubdivided structure as per your Option B to allow Campaspe to refocus and address the total disenchantment and confusion with the existing system. Let the voters decide who all the Councillors are. Any fear of an Echuca dominated council would not be an issue when the eligible voters for the existing ward structure is analysed – Echuca ward has approximately 11,000 voters, Kyabram/Deakin 9,500, Rochester 3,500, Waranga 3,000, and West ward 3,000. This shows that Echuca has 11,000 voters compared to the 18,500 voters in the rest of the shire. Such a distribution of voters should ensure that Echuca does not become overrepresented.



5.

However, should you not see merit in such a change, I would urge that due consideration be given to the other PRSA option of a 3 ward system with 3 councillors for each ward. [The Local Government Electoral Review Panel of 2013 (3.68)] states “ The panel found that multi-member wards with equal numbers of councillors provide a viable structure for council governance that can meet the conditions for good representation under a wide range of challenging geographic and growth conditions”. The Panel also concluded a simpler range of Council structures, 5 down to 3 [The Local Government Electoral Review Panel of 2013 (3.72)].

“The Panel’s conclusion is that to reinforce the fairness and consistency of representation, the practice of allowing two electoral structures within one municipality should be discontinued, including municipalities that consist of

- both single – and multi member wards” [The Local Government Electoral Review Panel of 2013 (3.29)]

The fact that the current Campaspe structure has been recommended by the Panel to be discontinued must be taken into account in your deliberations.

Thank You

Don McKenzie  
