

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, 11 February 2023 4:37 PM
To: Buloke ERAP Submissions 2023
Subject: Submission for Preliminary Public Submission of VEC Review of Buloke Shire Council Electoral Structure Review as part of Round 1

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Dear Folks,

I forward this email as I have found the logging in to the VEC website to make a written submission has failed 5 times, hence back to an email.

This is a submission for Preliminary Public Submission of VEC Review of Buloke Shire Council Electoral Structure Review as part of Round 1.

As an aside - my failure to submit via the website may be an indication of the level of skills needed, and is perhaps why you have no recorded submissions to date?

I submit that there should be greater than 5 Councillors in any Council, as an old colleague of mine who was then a second or third time Mayor of a rural Council in Victoria observed to me one time. His lived experience was that if you only have 5 Councillors, and at a meeting you may have one away on leave, with one other left who does not speak in the Council chamber, which leaves it to only three debating, comparing attitudes and making a decision that may be vital for the community. And this is not a good reflection of the community.

Besides I philosophically believe you should have 12 Councillors, to get a good representation of the community you live in. You will thus represent the higher intelligent, the just-do types and a broader cross section of that community.

Failing that, and as this state has moved to lesser numbers across the board, and in that context, I recommend that there be at least three wards in Buloke Shire.

From observation, the distances the Councillors have to travel and be in contact with the various groups and communities is great. And the various communities have various forums and meetings representing the town or district. And Councillors need to be able to attend these for the good flow of information to and from the Council.

And to thus be able to reflect the heard attitudes of the community in the Chamber, and also to be able to keep the communities informed of the Councils actions and activities, they need to be in a more confined geographic area than the whole shire.

This also allows the community members to know who their Councillor is, and the Councillor will have better appreciation of the community they live in and the context of that community and the local nuances, in which the resident is speaking. And gives a better chance for the community members to know and (feel comfortable with) who to approach if they have an issue or opinion they need to canvas.

I have worked and lived in a regional municipality which had single ward Councillors, and that was a much smaller geographic area, and does not match to the Buloke situation.

I have also lived and worked in a rural municipality with a single dominant town, and it had no wards. The representation would change from one Council (four year term) to the next term Council. With marked change in the representation and living experience for the Councillors, of only townies on one Council, to only rural folk in the next. This showed that the the communities realised and voting showing that either the town was being focussed too much on, or too much rural perspective.

Thus single ward Councillors and no wards set up does not seem appropriate for Buloke Shire.

Again from observations I also see that the Councillors need to have a back up for when they are away or sick, etc.

Thus we get to at least 2 Councillors for each ward. If not three.

Thus there should be at least 6 Councillors in Buloke Shire Council, under the present criteria. I would prefer to have 9 though.

I know that 6 is an even number, and may cause problems if a split in Council occurs. But the Mayor has a casting vote anyway.

And the six would allow for my other belief (which has changed in the last 4 years or so) that Victoria should have a directly elected Mayor from across the Council geographic area, in the whole of the state. This would match to the other states of NSW, Queensland and I believe SA. And would allow for a greater balance to the unitary management philosophy of a single person to head the staff (the CEO).

The Buloke Shire Council is like a lot of the more remote Councils, and is quite distinct from the metropolitan counter parts. Our municipality does not have or attract senior staff who live in the municipality the whole time. And thus the Councillors are the best conveyors of the nuances and opinions of the various communities. Buloke Shire recognises 10 distinct communities in its area.

Thus there is the need to continue to have separate wards, so the Councillors are not overloaded in their role.

Lastly, I wish the Advisory Panel all the best of luck in trying to comprehend the various attitudes and differences they will be exposed to in this review process in the rural municipalities in this first Round. It is often that country folk can see the attitudes and opinions and context of Metro folk, as they are exposed to it in the state media, etc, whereas a country perspective is not the lived experience of most city folk.

I look forward to the next stages of the process.

Regards,
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