

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 3 April 2023 9:36 AM
To: Northern Grampians ERAP Submissions 2023
Subject: FW: Submission and wish to speak

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, 1 April 2023 9:12 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Submission and wish to speak

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Council has specifically asked the Victorian Electoral Commission to implement the option of a single electorate for the whole shire during the latest VEC review.

As I clearly stated in my original submission, this is a very bad idea for the town of St. Arnaud and those living in the current Kara Kara Ward.

That is because, under this option, if every councillor has to represent the whole shire, there would be no one there specifically to represent us.

Stawell's population is more than double ours so we are a minority.

Back in 1996, when councils across the whole state were ordered to amalgamate, we were forcibly coupled up with Stawell whether we liked it or not, and like many other small towns, we lost our municipal independence. It meant that our local council offices are now almost empty, jobs were lost, fewer council contracts were allocated to local tradesmen, and priorities for works in our area were pushed towards the back of the queue.

Absolutely no consideration was given to the fact that we have almost no contact with Stawell. It is an hour's drive away, and very few of us ever go shopping there, there is little traffic between the two towns, we don't play sport with them, there is little or no commercial interaction, we have different local newspapers, we live in different federal and state electorates, and we are separated by the Great Dividing Range.

If a winery closes down in Great Western, it has no impact on us, and if a flood occurs on the main street of St. Arnaud, it has no effect on them.

Northern Grampians Shire is not a single community with shared common interests, so it makes absolutely no sense to set it up as a single electorate. On a daily basis, we do not interact with councillors from Stawell because they do not live here and rarely visit us unless they are specifically engaged in council business.

It is similarly difficult for Stawell residents to get to know our councillors and any candidates seeking election from our part of the Shire.

And in an electoral free-for-all where their population is double ours, preference allocations would be slanted in their favour, and it would be much more difficult for a St. Arnaud candidate to achieve the required quota of votes and get themselves elected. In fact, there is no guarantee that anyone at all from our side of the Shire would be elected.

Council surveys in this part of the shire have consistently revealed a high level of dissatisfaction with the Council's performance, and their request for a single ward and one electorate is only going to disadvantage us further.

So this option is utterly unacceptable to us.

Although we do not like the reduction in the number of councillors offered by Model 2, which is six councillors in three separate wards, this is the only other option that is available to us.

We want our own separate ward with two councillors to continue to represent us.

Peter Rose