

**Electoral structure review - Campaspe Shire Council - Preliminary Submission
Leo O'Connor - Tongala - 04 February 2023, 10:17 am**

SUBMISSION FOR ELECTORAL STRUCTURE REVIEW - CAMPASPE SHIRE COUNCIL

I believe the current number of councillors at a total of 9 is about right for our council, and because of the diversity of our demographic, I believe we need to retain a ward structure. To achieve compliance with the Local Government Act, we would need to merge 3 of the current wards to achieve a 3-ward council, each with 3 councillors to retain the total of 9 councillors. This outcome would maintain the principle of having an uneven number of councillors so that there is less likelihood of "drawn" votes on issues.

In comparison to other councils of similar voter size across the state, the above proposal for the number of councillors is consistent.

The current Campaspe Shire Council structure is based on voter numbers of 31,046. To comply with the Act, the voter numbers in each of the three proposed wards would need to be within +/-10% deviation of 10,349 voters for each of 3 wards.

The proposal for the 3-ward structure is based on the following considerations:-

1. Echuca Ward: retain the current status quo with 3 councillors and boundaries. The current voter numbers of 11,186 gives a deviation of +8.09%.
2. Kyabram-Deakin Ward: retain the current status quo with 3 councillors and boundaries. The current voter numbers of 9,957 gives a deviation of -3.79%.
3. Rochester, Waranga & Western Wards: merge these 3 wards, each with their single councillor, to make one ward with 3 councillors. This would make the total number of voters for this new ward 9,903, giving a deviation of -4.31%.

The voter number deviation numbers outlined above are all within the permitted parameters. Even allowing for a forecast population growth of 0.5%, the deviations would still comply.

Additionally, in support of the above proposal, I believe the demographic is reasonably consistent within each ward. For example, both Echuca and Kyabram-Deakin wards generally have a higher density of "towns people", whereas the proposed new ward combining Rochester, Waranga & Western wards have a larger portion of rural/property dwellers. The diversity of these demographics present different needs in the various communities & should be addressed with a more localised consideration of their requirements. Thus, a multi-councillor ward structure would present the most ideal arrangement for all the communities within this council. This way, we can hope for a more focused representation, rather than having all our interests pooled into one large "pond" which can lend itself to a "one size fits all" approach. While the new proposed merged ward obviously dramatically increases the geographical area, the plan that it would be represented by three councillors, should alleviate some of the travel burden for that additional area.

The name of the new merged ward should be open for public discussion & suggestions, especially from residents, organisations and community groups within that particular area.