

Electoral structure review - Hepburn Shire Council - Response Submission
Toby Permezel - Springmount - 29 March 2023, 02:58 pm

Dear members of the electoral advisory panel ("EAP"),

Thank you for your invitation to submit a written submission.

Having considered each of the three models proposed by the EAP, it is my view that only Model 3 guarantees locals have a distinct voice. Model 2 tries this, but unfortunately includes areas from adjacent towns. I assert that ratepayers from Clunes and Creswick have no desire to: a) consider issues from another distinct geographical area when dealing with their own councillor; or b) wish to lobby a councillor who does not live near them or understand their particular issues. It is for these two reasons also that Model 1 is particularly horrible, as it would turn council elections into popularity contests across the entire Shire, rather than a contest within the Wards between locals. 7 is also an excellent number for the purposes of voting, as a majority is always needed (rather than the tie-break of the Chairperson), and this is again a reason why Model 2 is not suitable.

Now when considering whether or not there needs to be a change, I submit that the EAP needs to look at this holistically and from the viewpoint of the ratepayers. Accessible and equitable representation can only be established if there are the same number of councillors (which is why this is now enshrined at s15 of the LGA 2020). The EAP has recognised this as being necessary from a legal point of view, but with the growth in the Shire there are valid concerns that bigger towns dominate smaller ones under Models 1 and 2. Having 7 separate and distinct Wards, each with one councillor, assists in promoting diversity of thought and effective local representation. As for the map itself, Cameron Ward seems a bit big for just one councillor on an area basis but I understand that is due to population density.

I look forward to seeing how this plays out.

Kind regards

Toby