

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 4 April 2023 12:35 PM
To: Northern Grampians ERAP Submissions 2023
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: N. Grampians Shire electoral submission.

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I am writing as the representative of the Community Association of Halls Gap, which is unanimous in the opinions I shall express. Formerly the Halls Gap Progress Association, this body has been active for 90 years or so in working for the welfare and advancement of the residents of our township.

First, we think the Victorian Parliament has made a mistake in specifying that all Local Government Areas must have the same number of councillors in each of their wards. Whatever their reasons for this, which are probably centred on the needs of city LGAs, they are not necessarily suited to a large country LGA with diverse population centres and economic interests. However, we now have to work with this.

Second, we strongly believe that the best model, among those mentioned in the VEC brief, would be to divide the Shire into 7 wards with one councillor representing each ward. The brief has discounted this option as being not worthy of consideration, which appears to us to be another piece of bureaucratic nonsense as no substantive reasons are given for it. It does concede that this solution would have the advantage of representing communities of interest and then dismisses it summarily, whereas we believe that the representation of such communities of interest is the ESSENCE of what local government is about.

Thirdly, the Northern Grampians Shire is quite a different beast from the average city LGA which has a much more concentrated population in a few square kilometres of land. The Shire has an area of 5,730 sq.km., it takes over 90 minutes to drive from one end to the other, it has two major population centres, 7 or so minor ones and a scattering of tiny communities. It also has a variety of industries, from mining and engineering to various agricultural pursuits and meat production. Tourism, focussed primarily but by no means solely, on the Grampians National Park, is another major contributor to the economy of the Shire and one with which Halls Gap is intimately involved.

Surely this diversity deserves the representation that 7 councillors, each with responsibility for one ward, would provide. This same principle is enshrined in the lower houses of both State and Federal governments for very good reasons. Under the present system of wards in the Shire, Halls Gap and Great Western have had good representation for some time through a single councillor. Under both options offered by the VEC, there is a strong risk that our multiple representatives could come from Stawell and be less invested in the particular interests of our communities. However, if we are forced to choose between them,

option 2 with 2 councillors in each of 3 wards is the better of a very bad choice. We vehemently advocate that 7 wards be put back on the table.

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Halls Gap Inc.

President, Community Association of

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