

Response by Cr. Gary Allen

Surf Coast Council Ward Structure Review

Initially I did not publically comment on the review, as at the time I felt that I had a conflict of interest. I have now publically stated that I will not be standing for re-election, I therefore believe that this conflict no longer exists.

I stand by the content of my first submission, as nine wards with single councillor representation is, I believe, the most democratic of all the models. I do not believe that the panel should make recommendations concerning population variations based upon future assumptions. For example:

- the DAL decision, ratified by the Council, prohibits residential development west of Duffields Road to Bellbrae along the Spring Creek corridor. As a result of that decision the planning scheme in Torquay will need revisiting.
- the Great Ocean Road Framework Strategy will not be released before 2026, significantly impacting upon future township structure plans.
- the accommodation and housing crisis for key workers declared by the Surf Coast Shire in 2022, will impact decisions relating to the economic imperative to provide essential worker accommodation and housing.

These facts I contend will profoundly influence future discussions and decisions about densification and height limits in Torquay and along the coast. Therefore, decisions concerning population variations should not be made now. The Committee for Lorne submission suggested ward boundaries that both account for **communities of interest** and **equal representation**.

Our shire consists of hinterland settlements, coastal townships and peri-urban and urban communities with differing characteristics and needs. From my experience as a councillor, you need a deep understanding of your community and the necessary pressure from residents to do your very best to advocate on their behalf. A list of the projects secured for the Lorne Ward community since the Shire was structured with wards is revealing. The councillor is also able to act in the best interest of the Shire and all of its residents.

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In my submission I gave several practical examples of the potential for poor decision-making and the disadvantages suffered by remoter communities that do not have staff living in the area, nor a councillor to act on their behalf. I am opposed to an un-warded structure (Model One).

Model Two, is I believe a very poor alternative. The mayor having a casting vote gives, in this situation, an unfair representation for the residents of the ward that she/he is representing. Again hardly democratic. It is very hard to see the community of interest being demonstrated in this model.

In Model Three, with the boundaries suggested, again fails to achieve a community of interest. How does the Airey's Inlet community's passion for unsealed roads and footpaths square with the necessity for Lorne given its topography, to have sealed roads? This is a small example of how the three councillors elected may come from one community with different aspirations and advocacy motivation.

Lorne ward residents contribute fifteen percent of the rate income of the Shire, they live in an area of the municipality with a common heritage and needs dictated by factors such as topography, distance and township size. They should be guaranteed eleven percent of the councillor representation.

I would like to appear before the panel on Wednesday 19 April. However, due to prior commitments I will be only able to, between 9.00 am and 11.00 am if that is possible to schedule.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit.

Gary Allen

