

**Electoral structure review - Northern Grampians Shire Council - Preliminary Submission
Anne Hughes - Carapooee West - 15 February 2023, 2:20 pm**

Electoral Structure Review- Northern Grampians Shire

14th February 2023

I wish to make a submission to this review regarding electoral structure within Northern Grampians Shire.

Since our area(St Arnaud, Kara Kara) was amalgamated with Stawell back in the 1990s, St Arnaud and the east of the Shire has been treated as a second rate consideration, given scant assistance in development and little in the way of support services.

Our desires for this end of the Shire have not been realised- Council has put in what it wants to put in, and not what the community has been asking for. We the ratepayers and residents have been consistently ignored.

We get the shells of the peanuts that are consumed in Stawell.

Rarely are St Arnaud businesses and contractors given a look in for Council jobs, tenders or other requirements. This goes from picture framing, plumbing services, our small, independent newspaper to rabbit control works- all this goes to the west end of the Shire and local St Arnaud businesses are left out; no support for the town or its businesses.

Having the bulk of the councillors in the Stawell ward means that our requests and objections are routinely voted down by the **majority** in Stawell.

Councillors who do not have to face you at the coffeeshop, in the Post Office or at the supermarket can more easily ignore you and your problems.

Is it any wonder that Council meetings held in St Arnaud get rowdy and people become first, frustrated and then incensed at the lack of concern, action and support from our council.

Stawell council meetings are, from the councillors themselves, rarely contentious and often have no one in the gallery at all.

Problems here in the east of the Shire are often shelved almost indefinitely- years sometimes before Council is finally forced to take action.

Having the main Shire office in Stawell results in St Arnaud being left out- it is only a year or so since Council's proposal to reduce our Shire Office hours here; the outcry was so great that the plan was rapidly shelved.

With the current 3 ward structure -4 councillors in Stawell, 1 councillor for the northern ward serving several hamlets and 2 councillors serving the east and St Arnaud -has caused in the bulk of the "goods" going to Stawell and the western end.

An unsubdivided Shire would mean even more vehicles (paid for by the ratepayers) and travel (also paid for by the ratepayers) as councillors try to cover what is a very large and diverse area.


An unsubdivided Shire would also see less representation away from the main action- Stawell.

The current subdivision of South-west ward(1 councillor) ; Central (1 councillor) and Stawell ward (3 councillors), in other words, 5 against 2, is heavily weighted against the Kara Kara Ward with only 2 councillors.

This results in a undemocratic situation where the west of the Shire controls what happens in the east; the residents of the east part of the Shire are disenfranchised.

I suggest that we need a subdivided shire but with at least 2 wards- 4 councillors for Stawell/South west and Central and 3 for St Arnaud and the east-or better still, 4 for Stawell and the west and 4 for St Arnaud and the east.

Yours faithfully,
Anne Hughes (Mrs)


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