

**Hepburn Shire Council Electoral Structure Review**  
**Dr Jennifer Beacham**

The only model that will change the direction of ratepayer and resident levels of satisfaction is

**Model 1- One Undivided ward with seven councillors.**

As a resident and a business owner in the Shire for more than 30 years I have viewed with dismay for some time the direction and management of council. The recent debacle with the purchase and sale of the Rex building in the centre of Daylesford has cost ratepayers at least \$12-15 million without any discernible benefit and no evidence of the promised amenities of a library and cinema even on the horizon. That project is still the subject of a Local Government Inspectorate Report, not yet released to the public.

Cost-

Original Purchase of Rex-\$6.3mil

Work carried out on the Rex- an accurate account of what has been spent has never been provided and does it include the shed full of unusable light fittings. Estimates of \$9 million have been bandied around.

Loss of valuable council land 1 Bleackley St overlooking Lake Daylesford and now probably subject to litigation because of subsidence of land on mine site.

, former council depot in the centre of Hepburn Springs while originally a large open space asset now lost to the community

Income

\$3.75 mil Sale of Rex

Sale of Bleackley St-while originally an asset now lost to the community- \$889,000 and now subject to court proceedings.

Sale of 59 Main Road Hepburn Springs \$790,000

We need strong and committed councillors who will set about turning around the direction of the council and take responsibility for its overall guidance. All seven would be accountable to the electorate at large, not bound by parochial interests. Currently the competitive consequences of 3 similar small towns- Daylesford/Hepburn Creswick and Trentham means a tit-for-tat kind of decision-making (I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine).

As Council senior officers mainly do not live in the Shire, they are not usually familiar enough with particular projects to make an overall assessment of where they meet residents priorities as seven people living and usually working in the Shire are, and that overall benefit is rarely weighed up. If satisfaction continues to decrease because of the current division of wards, the only option would be to look at an amalgamation as outlined in several other submissions. We have already trialled the other examples of subdivision which have had serious weaknesses

I draw your attention to the 2022 Customer Service Satisfaction ratings.

<https://www.hepburn.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/council/documents/other/2022-community-satisfaction-survey.pdf>



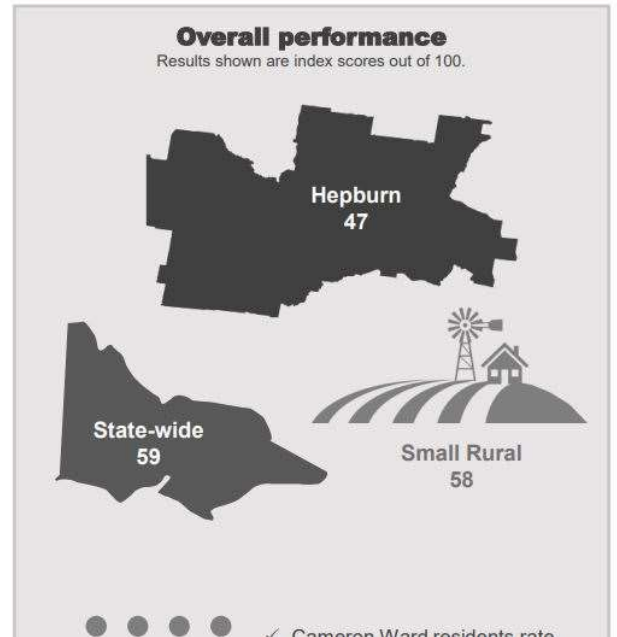
## Overall performance

The overall performance index score of 47 for Hepburn Shire Council represents a significant four-point decline on the 2021 result.

- Perceptions of Council's overall performance have been rather volatile since 2017, fluctuating significantly in either a positive or negative direction each year.

Council's overall performance rating remains statistically significantly lower (at the 95% confidence interval) than both the average rating for councils in the Small Rural group and the State-wide average for councils (index scores of 58 and 59 respectively).

- Ratings among residents of Birch Ward are significantly lower than average (39 index points). Conversely, among residents of Cameron Ward, ratings are significantly higher than average (59 index points).
- The decline in perception of Council's overall performance is driven by significant decreases in ratings among women, residents of Creswick Ward and those aged 18 to 34 years.



Service areas where importance exceeds performance by 10 points or more, suggesting further investigation is necessary.

	Importance (index scores)	Performance (index scores)	Net Differential
Slashing & weed control	81	42	-40
Consultation & engagement	79	44	-35
Planning & building permits	73	40	-33
Waste management	61	61	-20
Environmental sustainability	72	54	-18
Business & community dev.	67	51	-16
Recreational facilities	72	69	-13
Appearance of public areas	74	62	-12

## Council direction

Perceptions of Council's overall direction have decreased significantly by eight points on 2021 (index score of 39). This decline wipes away almost of Council's gains last year.

- Ratings deteriorated significantly among both men and women, those living in Birch Ward and residents aged 35 to 49 years.

Perceptions of overall direction remain significantly lower than the Small Rural group average and the State-wide average for councils (index scores of 51 and 50 respectively).

Over the last 12 months, 52% of residents believe the direction of Council's overall performance, has stayed the same, down three points on 2021.

- 12% believe the direction has improved, down six points.
- Almost three times as many believe it has deteriorated (33%, up 10 points).
- The **most** satisfied with Council direction are residents of Cameron Ward and those aged 18 to 34 years.
- The **least** satisfied with Council direction are those aged 35 to 49 years and residents of Birch Ward.

