Electoral structure review - Hepburn Shire Council - Preliminary Submission
Mark Rak - Daylesford - 01 March 2023, 12:31 pm

Hepburn Shire has a diverse population with 2 significant population centres – Creswick and Daylesford -Hepburn Springs. These centres are surrounded by a large less densely populated rural area which includes the smaller population concentrations of Trentham, Glenlyon and Clunes.

Other than interactions through council there is little meaningful interaction between the Creswick and Daylesford centres in terms of commerce, cultural events, community engagement etc

I believe the council structure should reflect and support this reality.

I recommend a 3 multi-councilor ward to address the community needs. The map submitted indicate possible borders for these wards (the names nominated are indicative only)
• Creswick-Clunes
• Daylesford-Hepburn Springs
• Trentham - Rural

The map indicates even population distribution – range of less than +/- 1%

I believe the best council representation would be afforded by 3 councilors per ward – 9 in total. However, the same wards could be used for a 2 councilors per ward configuration – 6 in total. The later may be easier to implement re comparison to other councils and would achieve many of the advantages of 3 x 3 option.

The reasons for 3 ward representation include
• Community awareness : Creswick and Clunes have been combined as they form a comparably sized population ward and they have a reasonable connection re services. Daylesford-Hepburn Springs is clearly consistent as a combined/common interest community and the Trentham-Glenlyon and associated rural areas need to have direct representation – outside of the 2 main centres.
• The selection of councilors requires voters to be informed about candidates and understand the potential value to the local community and the shire as a whole. This requires a segmentation in line with the identified communities.
• There is a considerable expense for a candidate to run from council. An undivided council would increase the cost for potential candidates to reach the entire shire voter base. This would strongly favor/entrench incumbency. Segmenting into 3 wards reduces this impediment.
• A multi-ward configuration encourages independent candidates. An undivided council structure will encourage political parties to dominate the council.
• The ballot paper will be manageable for voters. An undivided council structure is likely to result in "senate styled" ballots where groups of candidates (more likely to be political parties) will gain prominence
• The quota needed to gain election will be consistent and the allocation of preferences clearer to voters. An undivided structure will encourage preference deals that are not transparent (as per the Senate or State upper house)

I recommend 9 councilors (3 per ward) – even though this is larger than most comparable shires. (This could be reduced to 6 (2 per ward) but this increases issues re tied votes (mayor – using casting vote), adequate councilor representation/availability etc)

• Hepburn Shire has an older demographic. The median age is 52 years – compared to the Victorian age of 38 years. This presents challenges in terms of representation needs. The older profile leads to higher levels of requests for direct representation from Councilors to advocate on

their behalf – including accessing Council based support services, advocating with, or for community groups, planning assistance etc

• Having 3 councilors in a ward provides residents with options in terms of seeking representation in the knowledge that all 3 candidates will/should be aware of their local needs.

• An increase in councilors to 9 from 7, will reduce the "it's my turn" to be Mayor (or deputy) approach of many councilors. These leadership positions are critical and should be filled by the best candidates not by rotation.

• A larger number of Councilors improves the potential for decisive votes on council matters

NB The map of possible ward has been completed in the application and should be attached.