

Submission the Electoral Structure Review Surf Coast Shire 22 February 2023

Friends of Lorne is a planning and environment conservation organisation. It was founded in 1966. We are dedicated to conserving the natural fauna and flora of Lorne whilst ensuring that there are services and activities suited to the needs of permanent residents, holidaying residents, campers and tourists.

We support a nine councillor, nine wards, (one ward per councillor) structure for the Surf Coast Shire Council.

Why? The surf coast is diverse in geography, topography, and population. Smaller boundaries that seek to put like-with-like will ensure that minority voices are seen and heard. Without these boundaries to protect communities of interest, minority voices (e.g. small, rural, coastal) can be drowned out by majority voices (e.g., the urban parts of Torquay). Servicing the 4th, 5th or 6th need of the majority can occur before the 1st need of the minority is recognised.

Common issues and interests within small ward boundaries can allow greater interrogation and problem solving. They harness communities of identity and levels of caring/civic engagement that don't happen if we were being asked to simply participate as ratepayers of the (whole of) surf coast. That said, we are aware of and encourage councillors to collaborate across ward boundaries to solve whole-of-surf coast issues (erosion, affordable housing, etc)

Lorne has had its own Lorne ward councillor since 2012 and the experience has been so positive that we seek others in the Surf Coast Shire to have the same benefit. The ratio of councillor-to-population works well here. Relationships and local ties (with a local councillor one sees at the supermarket or at a café) encourages people to express their views and hear about the views of others. It also encourages understanding when needs are not met (resources always being limited). We do not wish to slip backwards by losing the Lorne ward councillor. Lorne currently contributes 15% of the rate revenue for the SCSC and comprises 11% of the representation.

We defer to others on how the nine boundaries might be drawn. We note that a second phase of consultation may allow helpful proposals put forward (e.g. John Agar's submission) to be discussed with the communities concerned.

Penny Hawe on behalf of Friends of Lorne

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