



Tuesday 11 April, 2023

Ms Julie Eisenbiser
Chairperson
Electoral Representation Advisory Panel

Dear Ms Eisenbiser

Re: Corangamite Shire Council Response Submission

On behalf of Corangamite Shire Council I would like to thank the panel for the opportunity to be a part of the Corangamite Shire Council Electoral Structure Review process.

Council has carefully considered the preliminary report and the submissions made by interested community members. We remain committed to our position that our community will be best served by a subdivided structure consisting of seven Councillors elected from seven single member wards. Corangamite Shire Council is a successful and high-functioning organisation and as the status-quo can no longer be maintained Council is in favor of the least disruptive changes possible to ensure the continuation of a very well-functioning and broadly supported electoral structure.

Consequently, we indicate to the panel that option 3 contained in the preliminary report is the Corangamite Shire Council's preferred model but would offer some suggestions for amendments to better serve our community.

Community Support for a Ward Based System

We would note the overwhelming support for the continuation of a ward structure contained in the preliminary submissions. These submitters largely expressed satisfaction with Council's current system and a desire to maintain local representatives of individual communities of interest through a ward Councillor. They also expressed a fear of smaller communities being looked over in an unsubdivided structure.

This satisfaction with the current system is something that is not only reflected anecdotally in conversations between Councillors and its residents, but also in Council's performance against key Community Satisfaction Survey measures regarding community engagement, representation, consultation and decision making. While there are many factors that contribute to these strong results, the accessibility of ward Councillors cannot be underestimated as a factor and a dramatic shift away from the status-quo needlessly risks undermining the strong sense of connection that the community currently has with its Council.

A table of our most recent relevant Community Satisfaction results compared against the Large Rural Shires and State-wide averages is found below:

Service Performance Measures	Corangamite Shire 2022	Large Rural Shires 2022	State-wide 2022
Community consultation and engagement	62	51	54
Decisions made in the interest of the community	63	54	51
Informing the community	69	56	59
Community Decisions	63	51	54

Corangamite Shire's northern communities of Lismore, Derrinallum, and Skipton are communities that are placed at particular risk by an unsubdivided structure as they are both geographically isolated and comparably small when compared to the larger population in the southern half of the Shire. The preliminary report suggests that an unsubdivided structure can still represent these communities, but a dedicated ward Councillor guarantees representation.

Healthy Turnover Despite Uncontested Elections

Council notes the concern shown by the panel in its preliminary report at the number of uncontested elections that currently occur in the Corangamite Shire and acknowledges that the lack of choice being presented to voters in some wards is a concern. However, in response we would like to highlight that this has not prevented turnover and the addition of new voices at the Council table each election. At the 2020 election there were five new Councilors elected and at the 2016 election there were four new Councillors. This has contributed to a diversity of views and a healthy level of attrition despite the prevalence of uncontested elections.

Suggested Changes to Model 3

While Council does support model 3 as the best option presented in the preliminary report, we have also included a map with some suggested changes to the boundaries to better reflect communities of interest. Primarily these are changes to include Terang and Noorat in a single ward, move Glenormiston into the Gnotuk Ward, and to include key Cobden infrastructure in the same ward as the town of Cobden.

Noorat and Terang function as a single community and having them split between two wards would not be an acceptable outcome for that community. Glenormiston is also arguably a part of that same community, but its presence in Gnotuk ward would be far more desirable than a Northern ward owing to its dairy farming nature.

Likewise, the racecourse reserve precinct and Cobden aerodrome which contain the key infrastructure of Cobden Airport, Cobden Minigolf, Cobden Miniature Railway, and Cobden Historical Society being in a separate ward to Cobden is an anomaly of the current electoral system and we were disappointed to see it continue with the proposed model 3. These assets are run and operated by the Cobden community and are a part of its identity. This oversight is something that has always confused residents and can be easily corrected by moving the boundary from Cross Forest Road to Forest Park Road, or alternatively, the Cobden-Terang Road.

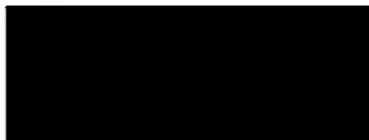
Ward Names

Council would also like to suggest amendments to the proposed ward names contained in the preliminary report.

The existence of two ward names that are generic geographic descriptors in 'North Ward' and 'Coastal Ward' sitting alongside ward names drawn from local history and Corangamite-specific markers is inconsistent. We would suggest renaming the North Ward 'Mount Elephant Ward' as this a central landmark for the ward and has significant local history and recognisability. Likewise, 'Coastal Ward' could be renamed 'Cooriejong' which is an indigenous name for the area and was also the name of a local parish in the County of Heytesbury. Finally, 'Ecklin Ward' is not an appropriate name for the old South-West Ward as Ecklin is a unique community with its own identity distinct from other communities in the ward. A better name would be 'Elingamite Ward' after the large lake contained in the ward.

Council would also like to register to speak at the public hearing to be held at 2pm on Tuesday 18 April.

Sincerely



Michael Tudball
Chief Executive Officer
Corangamite Shire Council