

**Electoral structure review - Surf Coast Shire Council - Preliminary Submission
Rodney Smith - Lorne - 21 February 2023, 07:05 pm**

Broadly I support the submission of Prof John Agar and the reasoning behind a 9 ward structure. He, like me is opposed to a one ward model, as I believe that proportional regional (district) representation is fundamental to our Australian understanding of democracy.

I believe that that an effective council needs to protect the interests of its diverse population centres and that is best served by a 9 ward structure. I note that in his submission, Prof Agar suggests that Anglesea is split into a North and South Ward. While that may seem perverse, its seems such division may have already existed in a first nations boundary understanding. Moreover, I understand that Anglesea already has 2 councillors and this submission continues to provide 2 councillors for Anglesea.

Lorne has many challenges, that is best understood by local representation. It has been well served by its current Councillor and his predecessor.

Any ward changes need to preserve that direct and relatable connection.

Sincerely
Rod Smith

Submission
Surf Coast Shire Victorian Electoral Commission Review

As a private permanent resident of Lorne, I submit the following viewpoint.

While I would prefer to see a review/realignment of the *external* boundaries of the Surf Coast Shire — recognising that Torquay and Jan Juc are now peri-urban towns that should more appropriately co-exist with Armstrong Creek and the southern reaches of the City of Greater Geelong rather than the true coastal stretch of the Great Ocean Road between Anglesea and Apollo Bay — I am aware that this review does not permit this debate.

Acknowledging that this review is restricted to the internal ward structure of the current Surf Coast Shire, and while several possible structural entities might form a Shire ward mosaic, the most equitable version appears to be:

- A nine-ward structure.
- Each ward should comprise the following:
 - 4000 +/- 10% permanent residents [based on the VEC Voter numbers attached to the map in the Submission tool].
 - A single elected councillor.
- The ward divisions should uphold the key core differences of interest/activity that characterise them.

Much has changed in the thirty years since the Surf Coast Shire first evolved in 1994. Then, Torquay to the north was a coastal town with its *raison d'etre*, and its community 'eye' clearly turned to the coast, the surfing industry, and holiday/vacation services. Lorne, to the south, was a relatively quiet seaside town only just emerging from its fishing and timber past.

Torquay, including peri-urban Jan Juc [and their environs], is now rapidly closing in on a population of 25,000 – sufficient to be classified as a city in its own right. It has now become a vibrant southern dormitory suburb of Greater Geelong. With a sizeable daily commuter population, its community interests are now urban/suburban and increasingly commercial. It no longer fits well with the original ethos of its surf-culture origins. These factors have made it increasingly difficult to manage its coexistence with the divergent interests of the rest of the Shire. These considerations should rate highly when determining a fair and equitable ward voting structure.

The changing circumstance of Torquay within the Shire is not represented elsewhere in its other regions – perhaps with the exception of Winchelsea. Once a rural agricultural township, Winchelsea is also now expanding rapidly with a potential to morph into a semi-urban dormitory town for Greater Geelong within the next 2-3 decades — much as have Drysdale and Bannockburn. Nevertheless, at least for the time being, Winchelsea remains a rural township with only tenuous urban links to Greater Geelong. As such, its community of interest is likely to remain focused on rural and agricultural activities.

Conversely, Lorne, at the far southern end of the Shire, has community interests that are laser-focused on the natural beauty of the Otway Forest and the tourism industry – a far cry from Torquay's new urban outlook. But in addition to community of interest considerations, the Lorne Ward has some practical differences in its funding streams. For example, the funding streams for the Lorne hospital and school are classified by the state government as 'rural' - a funding mechanism not echoed elsewhere in the Shire. These and other examples already stand Lorne apart.

In the geographical centre of the Shire, Bellbrae and its Paraparap and Freshwater Creek hinterlands are clearly best classified as small rural and agricultural. At the same time, Aireys and Anglesea are both clearly coastal in their outlook. Further, Anglesea has a natural division at its heart – the Anglesea River – which, if used as a population boundary, would allow a neat and equitable separation into two wards of equal population size: [1] South Anglesea + Aireys, and [2] North Anglesea + Bellbrae.

As these factors demonstrate, the Shire contains several clearly different communities of interest: one of the key VECB considerations in this review of its internal structure.

These data are shown in Table 1 [based on the VEC Voter numbers attached to the map in the Submission tool]. Table 1 and the accompanying diagram [Map 1] encompass a potential nine-ward model based on the following:

- [1] communities of interest
- [2] equal or near-equal population size
- [3] a one councillor per ward in a nine-ward structure.

If and when the VECB is considering the potential boundaries of a Lorne Ward, deeply-rooted and ancient aboriginal language and country divisions add a

powerful further argument to support the 21stC concepts of population mathematics and communities of interest.

The unique Gadubanud landscape, the remnants of its tribal language, and the boundaries of Gadubanud country that stood this aboriginal clan apart from the Wadawurrung to their north, are widely recognised to lie along the Painkalac Creek that divides Aireys Inlet from Fairhaven. The deep history of this physical and cultural boundary inextricably links the Gadubanud to the southern Lorne region, while the tribal Wadawurrung from the Geelong region lie to its north.

Thus, creating a Shire ward division at Painkalac Creek would recognise this ancient boundary. It would recognise the rightful Gadubanud tribal lands and be a symbolic reconciliation of their clan. Even the Lorne ward might be accorded the honour of their name.

In my view, the model outlined in the following table and map — nine equal wards with one elected councillor/ward — seems to most fairly represent this disparate Shire by population, communities of interest, natural boundaries, and aboriginal heritage.

I submit these private resident suggestions to the Board.

John Agar

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Table 1

Ward	Sub-division	Population	Interest	Council
Aireys/Sth Anglesea	Aireys	1444	Coastal	1
	South Anglesea	2419		
	Gherang	351		
	Wensleydale	79		
		4293		
Bellbrae	North Anglesea	2000	Small Rural	1
	Bellbrae	1049		
	Bells Beach	140		
	Freshwater Creek	365		
	Mt Duneed	350		
	Paraparap	156		
		4060		
Jan Juc	Breamlea	8	Peri-urban	1
	Connewarre	184		
	Jan Juc	3618		
		3811		
Lorne	Bambra	121	Otway Tourism	1
	Benwerrin	16		
	Big Hill	40		
	East Birregurra	27		
	Boonah	20		
	Deans Marsh	316		
	Eastern View	66		
	Fairhaven	687		
	Lorne	2300		
	Moggs Creek	237		
	Penny Royal	89		
		3919		
Torquay 1		3809	Urban	1
Torquay 2		3809	Urban	1
Torquay 3		3809	Urban	1
Torquay 4		3809	Urban	1
Winchelsea	Barrabool	195	Peri-urban/rural	1

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	Buckley	198		
	Gnarwarre	232		
	Inverleigh	65		
	Modewarre	239		
	Moriac	647		
	Mt Moriac	211		
	Ombersley	11		
	Winchelsea	1952		
	Winchelsea South	137		
	Wurdiboluc	124		
		3919		
TOTAL		35330		9

Map 1: Suggested Ward Divisions

