

Electoral structure review - Wodonga City Council - Response Submission Dean Rossiter - West Wodonga - 13 July 2023, 10:59 am

Wodonga Council should remain a single electorate with multiple representatives. Breaking Wodonga Council into wards is a bad decision because:

- Changing to a ward structure makes representation less representative. Take the Victorian Parliament as an example. The Upper House has multi-member regions and features a strong diversity of representatives that mirror the diversity of views in the community. The Lower House has many single-member districts and has almost no representation from independents or minor parties. It is dominated and controlled by an unrepresentative sample of politicians. In a multi-member ward a representative needs only 10-20% of the vote to win a seat on council, which allows them to represent those 10-20% of people. In a single member ward system you get no representation even if you win 49% of the vote, meaning minority voices are not represented at all and majority voices are over-represented.
- There's no benefit to smaller wards. Councilors are NOT required to live in the ward they represent. This means that breaking the electorate into wards will not create a council of representatives sticking up for a neighborhood they are invested in - it will mean that a small group of influential people can stack the entire council by making it more difficult for dissenting voices to be elected. That is the purpose of shifting to a multi-ward structure.
- Wodonga Council NEEDS dissenting voices. Our council is rotten and needs representatives that will promote transparent and honest local government. These electoral changes will cement a culture of furtiveness and undemocratic decision making.

For anyone reading this who isn't sure why this is happening, the decision to change to a ward structure was made by the Victorian State government through the Local Government Act. This is being administered by the VEC but it is not a VEC initiative. The entire purpose of this change is to rig the council in a way that makes it more likely for major-party affiliated councilors to have more control over local government. The government wants councils to be like the Lower-House where major parties have ultimate control. This is happening across every council in the state and is turning local government into a lie. Community consultations like this are a sham that have NEVER resulted in a genuine shift in policy.

I OPPOSE both proposals and so should you.