

ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION REVIEW FOR THE SOUTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE COUNCIL – PRELIMINARY REPORT

The Southern Grampians Shire Council has considered the Electoral Review Preliminary Report for the Southern Grampians Shire Council, published 20 March 2019 and supports the Victorian Electoral Commission's (VEC) preferred option, being:

“Southern Grampians Shire Council consist of seven councillors elected from an unsubdivided electoral structure.”

The unsubdivided seven Councillor model will continue to provide the electors of the municipality with the most effective and equitable representation for the following reasons:

- The unsubdivided electoral structure has been in place in Southern Grampians Shire for over 20 years and was supported during the last VEC review in 2007.
- The unsubdivided structure ensures consistency with other municipalities of similar size in Victoria.
- There is a strong sense of community under the current unsubdivided structure which benefits the entire municipality.
- There is a significant degree of interdependence between the urban and rural areas on a range of key issues such as education, employment, development of industry and recreation needs.
- An unsubdivided municipality encourages a whole of Council approach to decision making.
- Councillors take an active interest in matters across the Shire and focus on the best outcome for the municipality overall.
- An unsubdivided municipality is more suited to focus on major policy issues and developments.
- The current number of seven councillors is the best option to provide fair and equitable representation and allows for appropriate accessibility to the community and efficient decision making.

Council opposes the VEC's preliminary alternative option, being:

“Southern Grampians Shire Council consist of seven councillors elected from one four-councillor ward and three single-councillor wards.”

This alternative structure may:

- Lead to Councillors being elected on minor issues rather than a broader perspective of what policies benefit the municipality as a whole.
- Contribute to rural urban divisions.

- Divide community interest.
- Restrict the number of candidates in elections.
- Result in a narrow view of councillor responsibilities.
- Encourage sectional interest to develop in Council and fail to focus on major policy issues and developments.

The Council believes that a return to a ward structure would not be in the best interests of the Southern Grampians Shire community and would adversely impact on effective and equitable representation for electors and the development and prosperity of communities throughout the Shire.

This submission has been formally endorsed by Southern Grampians Shire Council at its Ordinary Meeting held on Wednesday 10 April 2019.

I wish to advise that I would like the opportunity to speak in support of Council's submission at the public hearing to be held on Tuesday 23 April 2019 at 6:00pm.

Yours faithfully,

MARY-ANN BROWN
MAYOR