

Nillumbik Electoral Representation Review Preliminary Submission

Number of Councillors

Council's view is that a seven single councillor ward structure should be retained because:

- The Shire has seen six changes since amalgamations and another change would be detrimental to the Council.
- There has always been substantial interest in becoming a Councillor at Nillumbik and the retention of a seven member structure maximises the opportunity for participation. Nillumbik had 44 candidates at the 2012 elections and 69 at the 2016 elections.
- Nillumbik is well represented by having seven Councillors, when you compare the councillor/voter ratio and councillor/population ratio to the state average.
- The data shows that Nillumbik has substantially fewer voters, has a smaller number of voters per Councillor, and future growth is predicted to be considerably lower than municipalities in the urban-rural fringe. This suggests that the current number of Councillors is appropriate for the Shire into the future and is sufficient to provide fair and equitable representation for the community.
- Reviewing the deviation figures provided by the VEC in the VEC Submission Guide, although the projected growth is likely to result in a shift in the councillor/voter ratio, the shift will remain within the allowable +/-10 per cent variance.

A subdivided or unsubdivided municipality?

Council believes Nillumbik should be a subdivided municipality because:

- All of the councils in the VEC's metropolitan and interface (except for Melbourne City Council) are subdivided therefore Councillors represent a discrete area.
- With a ward structure, residents, ratepayers and voters have a clearer understanding of who represents them.
- A subdivided municipality best serves the number of diverse communities and wards can be aligned with communities of interest.
- An unsubdivided structure could potentially lead to the urban areas of Nillumbik leading the Council direction.

Ward Structure

Council's preference is to retain single member wards, the reasons being:

- The current grouping of townships is consistent with seven distinct geographic communities of interest (including three distinct areas around Eltham) and the diversity of those communities means that each area is best served by a local representative who is familiar with local issues.

- All areas are more equitably represented in the sense that all wards have a specific Councillor as their representative. In multi member wards, it is possible that all Councillors would be from the one suburb/township, to the exclusion of outlying areas.
- Residents, ratepayers and voters are clear as to the identity of the Councillor and the problem of residents making representations to multiple Councillors does not occur. Representation is shared equitably with each Councillor responsible for a ward.
- The ward Councillor can develop a comprehensive understanding of the ward across a range of issues including service provision, traffic management and planning and development.
- Responsibility for an issue is less likely to be passed from one Councillor to another.