



# **ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION REVIEW**

## **WHITEHORSE CITY COUNCIL RESPONSE SUBMISSION**

**September 2019**

## **Executive Summary**

Whitehorse City Council has considered the Victorian Electoral Commission's (VEC) Preliminary Report and notes that the VEC has supported Council's preferred option, of eleven Councillors elected from five wards (four x 2 Councillor wards and one x 3 Councillor ward).

The VEC's alternative option, is for the retention of the current structure of five wards with 2 Councillors (10) subject to adjustments being made to the current boundaries. However, the VEC does state in its preliminary report that – "According to the VEC's projected enrolment figures, Option B, while sustainable until the next scheduled review, will not accommodate population change as effectively as Option A."

## **Introduction**

The VEC is to be commended for ensuring that the views of Council and the Whitehorse community, have been thoroughly considered in its determination of its preliminary report options.

Council notes that the VEC has endorsed Council's preferred option for 11 Councillors, with five wards and comprising 4 wards represented by 2 Councillors and 1 ward represented by 3 Councillors.

## **Discussion**

### ***Council's preferred option***

Council selected the option of 11 Councillors and 5 Wards, as it is the long term sustainable option to others and is characterised by five favourable features:

1. Easy to identify boundaries, as all boundaries are main roads;
2. Easy for residents to identify their Councillor;
3. Closely replicates the current ward structure and saves confusion amongst residents;
4. Caters well for communities of interest - eg incorporates the Box Hill Activity Centre in one ward; and
5. Most robust of all options with regards to the % variations of voters between the wards and projected increase in voters for ensuing years.

The alternate option also submitted by Council, provided for 11 Councillors, but with four wards and comprising 3 wards represented by 3 Councillors and 1 ward represented by 2 Councillors.

### ***In terms of the first critical question, how many councillors?***

Council determined 11 Councillors, after having regard to its standing with other Councils of a similar size and category; the VEC's recommendation for Boroondara of 11 Councillors and Whitehorse's future population and voter growth.

It is worth noting that of the 23 community preliminary submissions, 21 of these submissions made specific reference to the number of Councillors. The two main answers were:

- 9 out of 21 (43%) supported retention of 10 Councillors;
- 7 out of 21 (33%) supported increasing to 11 Councillors.

Based on the submissions received and its assessment undertaken, the VEC has also supported 11 Councillors, in its preferred option and included 10 Councillors as its alternate option respectively. To date, there has been no substantiated reasons, why the number of Councillors should not be increased to 11.

### ***In terms of the second critical question, how many wards should there be?***

In its preliminary submission, Council clearly stated that its preferred option of 11 Councillors with 5 wards provides boundaries that are easy to identify - all being main roads and thus making it easier for identification by residents.

Additionally, Council also stated that "Whitehorse contends that the boundaries for any proposed options do on the main reflect communities and this is particularly so for the 11 Councillor multi-ward options."

It is not surprising therefore, that this view was shared by the majority of community submissions. Of the 23 community submissions, 19 of these submissions made specific reference to the number of wards. The two main answers were:

- 12 out of 19 (63%) supported 5 wards;
- 4 out of 19 (21%) supported 3 wards.

Further, this position had been previously acknowledged by the VEC during its 2007 Electoral Representation Review, wherein it indicated that given the nature of the Whitehorse community, the 5 ward structure captured the communities of interest better than any other option.

Thus, the retention of 5 wards is well supported and continues to remain responsive to the needs of the Whitehorse community.

### ***Assessment of VEC's Options A (4 x 2 + 1 x 3) and B (5 x 2)***

#### **a) Required Changes to Current Structure**

Option B has the least number of actual changes to boundaries and direct impact to actual voters (5% of voters), when compared to Option A with (17% of voters).

#### **b) Box Hill – Expected Growth**

Option A which allows for an additional Councillor for Elgar, will more effectively absorb population growth and projected voter growth than Option B.

Option A also captures all of Box Hill, whilst Option B does not completely.

#### **c) Other Distinguishing Factors**

Option A makes uniform use of main roads, whilst Option B retains the minor roads boundary between Central and Springfield Wards.

Option B use of Dorking Road to separate Elgar and Central Wards, will split the suburb of Box Hill North and a small portion of Box Hill.

#### **d) Assessment of Projected Population Growth**

The VEC has clearly stated in its Preliminary Report that Option A is more responsive and better structured to meet the projected population growth, until the next electoral representation review.

In this regard, Council has taken the opportunity to also undertake its own assessment, to determine the capacity of each option, to cope with projected population growth. **Appendix A** reflects calculations submitted by Council in its preliminary submission, to support its preferred option, as now endorsed by the VEC. **Appendix B** provides calculations for Option B, the alternative option presented by the VEC.

A review of the two appendices, clearly confirms that in terms of the range of variance movements between wards during each identified year and between the two options, that Option A is without doubt the far superior option. Specifically, Option A's highest +/- variance for 2019 is +5.62%, in 2026 is +6.23% and in 2031 +5.62%. In comparison, Option B's highest +/- variance for 2019 is -7.25%, in 2026 is +7.37% and in 2031 is +9.67%.

### **CONCLUSION**

Whitehorse City Council therefore fully supports the VEC's view that its preferred Option A, is indeed a more sustainable and better long-term option for Whitehorse and its residents, than its alternative option.

The VEC is to be commended for ensuring that the views of Council and the Whitehorse community, have been considered and duly reflected in its determination of its preliminary report options.

Council will exercise its right to speak to its response submission, at the public hearing to be held on Monday 30 September 2019.

## PROJECTED POPULATION AND VOTERS FOR OPTION A

## OPTION A - FIVE WARDS WITH (4 x 2 and 1 x 3)

Ward	Crs	Voters 2019	Variance	Projected + voters to 2026	Total Voters @ 30/6/26	Variance	Projected + voters to 2031	Total Voters @ 30/6/31	Variance
Elgar	3	30,437	- 5.18%	9,076	39,513	+ 4.49%	2,754	42,267	+ 5.62%
Central	2	20,960	- 2.06%	3,418	24,378	- 3.31%	1,401	25,779	- 3.38%
Springfield	2	22,015	+ 2.87%	2,054	24,069	- 4.54%	1,322	25,391	- 4.83%
Riversdale	2	22,604	+ 5.62%	4,179	26,783	+ 6.23%	1,152	27,935	+ 4.71%
Morack	2	21,689	+ 1.35%	2,230	23,919	- 5.12%	1,446	25,365	- 4.92%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>117,705</b>		<b>20,957</b>	<b>138,662</b>		<b>8,075</b>	<b>146,737</b>	
Average		10,700			12,606			13,340	

## Notes

- Elgar Ward comprises 3 Councillors, whilst all other wards comprise 2 Councillors.
- No ward exceeds +/- 6.23% variation from 2019 to 2031.

## APPENDIX B

### PROJECTED POPULATION AND VOTERS FOR OPTION B OPTION B - FIVE WARDS WITH 2 COUNCILLORS (5 X 2)

Ward	Crs	Voters 2019	Variance	With Changes Option B	Revised Totals	Variance	Projected + voters to 2026	Total Voters @ 30/6/26	Variance	Projected + voters to 2031	Total Voters @ 30/6/31	Variance
Elgar	2	25,187	+ 7.0%	-3,352	21,835	- 7.25%	7,942	29,777	+ 7.37%	2,410	32,187	+ 9.67%
Central	2	23,433	- 0.45%	+3,352 -2,555	24,230	+ 2.93%	3,745	27,975	+ 0.87%	1,337	29,312	- 0.12%
Springfield	2	24,610	+ 4.55%		24,610	+ 4.54%	2,625	27,235	- 1.81%	1,646	28,881	- 1.60%
Riversdale	2	22,917	- 2.67%		22,917	- 2.65%	4,288	27,205	- 1.91%	1,137	28,342	- 3.43%
Morack	2	21,558	- 8.42%	+2,555	24,113	+ 2.43%	2,357	26,470	- 4.55%	1,545	28,015	- 4.55%
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>117,705</b>			<b>117,705</b>			<b>138,662</b>			<b>146,737</b>	
Average		11,770			11,770			13,866			14,674	