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Re Electoral Representation Review For City of Stonnington Preliminary Submission

I have lived through periods of single councillor wards and multi-councillor wards, have attended Council Meetings on a regular basis during the past 12 years and am familiar with Council processes.

I have worked with a residents' group in the western part of Stonnington and during the last 5 years with a residents' group in Malvern East which covers a large part of East Ward and have a working knowledge of the municipality.

My experience has taught me that the large wards under which Stonnington has been forced to operate are not as efficient in catering for the needs of "communities of interest" as were the single councillor wards.

Advantages of Single Councillor Wards

- ** Councillors must demonstrate accountability and accessibility towards a manageable number of residents
- ** All councillors must be familiar with issues across the municipality but "day to day" contact between residents and councillor is concerned with what is happening in their own wards
- ** Residents have a sense of "ownership" and a "sense of place" with one councillor
- ** Most significant factor in contributing to this "ownership" and "sense of place" is the "community of interest" which is more easily identified in smaller wards
- ** In smaller wards there is a strong expectation that one's local councillor is familiar with specific local issues.
- ** Canvassing for election is simpler and less expensive in smaller wards and this allows more people to consider standing for Council and tends to exclude the 'dummy' candidates.
- ** Smaller wards promote a better of community and sense of "belonging"
- ** In single councillor wards preferential voting is used and provides fair and equitable representation for voters.

Disadvantages of Multi-Councillor Wards

- ** A councillor can 'get away with' being lazy when there is someone else to carry the load.
- ** Large wards deter worthy candidates from standing for election largely because of the expense of a campaign.
- ** The sheer size of the wards have the potential to promote the party politicisation of councils to the detriment of the municipality.
- ** The system of proportional voting used in multi-councillor wards is suitable for Upper Houses of Parliament which assume a 'watch dog' role. Local Councils have no such role.
- ** Acrimony between councillors in the large wards is an ever-present danger.
- ** Large wards artificially split the municipality. An example of this is the split between East Ward and North and South Wards. Glendearg, Thanet, Spring and Elizabeth Streets are not major roads. They do not provide 'natural' boundaries between wards either geographically, economically or with regard to particular needs. For example, people living in Malvern have no sense of relationship to those living in Windsor and it is simply ludicrous to have Malvern split in two when there is a relationship within Malvern.

The VEC stated in its Preliminary Report in 2004 that **'the city of Stonnington has functioned satisfactorily under the current single-councillor wards.'** It is my preference that we revert to that system consisting of 9 councillors and 9 wards and that the decision for single-councillor wards made by the VEC for Boroondarra is replicated for Stonnington.