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**VICTORIAN ELECTORAL COMMISSION
PRELIMINARY REPORT
CITY OF STONNINGTON**

It concerns me greatly that in its Preliminary Report the VEC does not address the following matters.....

-the identification of 'communities of interest' and the basis for defining these.
-the identification of Malvern as one 'community of interest' thus ignoring the
-diverse characteristics of this large area.
-the 'artificial' nature' of the existing ward boundaries.
-the splitting of a significant portion of Malvern from the rest of Malvern and Malvern East.
-the lack of clarification regarding the statement that existing 'communities if interest' have been split by 'artificial' ward boundaries.

Serious omissions in the report include.....

-the lack of criteria used to conclude that **Stonnington has functioned satisfactorily under current system**
-the lack of criteria used to conclude that this satisfactory system should be changed.
-the lack of information regarding areas of anticipated population growth .

I am aware that the areas of population growth are to be the Principal and Major Activity Centres identified in Melbourne 2030. The areas targeted in that document for high density housing are Prahran/South Yarra, Toorak Village, Malvern /Armadale, Malvern East around the Chadstone Shopping Centre and Caulfield North around the transport node of Caulfield Station which includes a portion of Stonnington. Council's MSS identifies arterial roads as areas for medium density housing. The anticipated population growth in all of these areas is not specified so it is difficult to know just where the existing ward boundaries would have to be changed if Option 2 were to succeed. The fact that no ward is outside the 10% tolerance indicates that current ward boundaries should be retained.

As there is a lack of clarification on a number of significant issues I can state my own position only on the basis of anecdotal evidence and my observations of the how the municipality functions.

I attend Council Meetings on a regular basis and have done so since Stonnington's inception, initially as a resident of Prahran East and more recently as a resident of Malvern East. In my past capacity as President of the Toorak Sth Yarra Group (the oldest and largest resident group in Stonnington) and in my present capacity as SOS Municipal Representative for Stonnington I am in constant contact with residents across the municipality.

The matter of electoral review has been discussed in the past when ward boundaries were an issue and recently the VEC's Stonnington Review has been a subject of discussion.

It is my opinion that the 3ward multi-councillor option is not appropriate for Stonnington. The wards are too large both geographically and numerically. The system would deter many independent candidates from standing for Council because of the expense of running a campaign in such large areas with such large populations. Political parties and other interest groups with financial backing would dominate Council elections to the detriment of residents. This promotes faction fighting along political lines.

The system of proportional voting in the large wards is not appropriate for local government. It is suitable for upper houses of State and Federal governments where upper houses take on the role of 'watchdog.' There is no place for 'watchdogs' in Local Government. With this option there is a danger of local issues being lost and councillors not being as accessible to residents as they should be. Local Government is the only form of government which is truly accessible to residents and truly responsive to the needs of residents. We must not run the risk of this accessibility and responsiveness being lost.

The 9 single-councillor wards system which operates in Stonnington is the most suitable for us in terms of accommodating the needs of residents. The divergent 'communities of interest' are represented. There is a definable link between the electorate and the elected councillor. Individual councillors are directly accountable to their constituents. Local issues are addressed in the forum situation. The present wards allow for a variety of candidates to stand for Council and the preferential voting system ensures fair and equitable representation. Smaller wards promote a better sense of community and a sense of 'belonging.' These are not features of large wards.

Having explored the issues thoroughly I have come to the conclusion that the 9 single-councillor ward system must be retained in Stonnington. I request that you make this recommendation to the Minister.

As you say in your report **the City of Stonnington has functioned satisfactorily under the current single-councillor ward system.** I agree with this statement and I maintain that there is no need for change.

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