



Comment on suggestion 46

Louis Davis

2 pages

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thanks you for giving me this opportunity to comment on the suggestions. Having read most of the suggestions I would state that I will not be commenting on the *minutia* of where the boundaries of specific electorates should be. Too many suggestions seem geared at giving one party an advantage (Isaacs and Hotham notably) whilst we seem to be losing sight of the bigger picture, that Covid has challenged two of the cosy assumptions underlying projected population growth and community of interest.

Firstly, it has been reported that an impact of Covid has been an exodus out of the cities, most recently News .com ¹ citing recent property data from Corelogic and simultaneously questioning the assumption people will continue to gravitate towards living near the CBD.

The AEC's own enrolment figures for September 2020 are not inconsistent with this thesis. Enrolment figures between July and September, the harshest months of the lockdown, show an abrupt reversal to long established term inner city growth trends, and this in turn undermines some of the projected population growth assumed in the submissions.

For example, in the last two months the largest enrolment falls have been concentrated in the following inner electorates: Melbourne (-1472 voters); Mcnamara (-995 voters); Higgins (-700 voters), Cooper (-594 voters) and Wills (-327 voters).

For example over the last two years McNamara has growth by 0.98% annually based on Sept 2020, the ALP used July 2020 and projects annualised growth at 1.2%. Accordingly I would suggest that the AEC be conservative in its growth assumptions for inner city electorates. If anything there is a strong case for leaving these electorates untouched until longer term trends become apparent and all the pointers are to a structural rather than cyclical change in growth trends.

Secondly, the 5km limit has a role to play in definition of community of interest. We can't assume away Covid for the next election sadly, and maybe we need to use this redistribution as a tool to best manage it if the worst arises by eliminating the plainly untenable.

The 5 km limit encourages us to simultaneously consider denseness and access. My recent work in assisting those in acute financial strife has underscored the need, especially those who are marginalised to be able to access your member of parliament and the resources it brings.

Accordingly, I would ask the AEC to reflect on the specific needs of the voters in determine what a community for some specific examples are:

- East Bentleigh has some of the highest number of Jewish voters who utilise postal voting. Most suggestions contained herein propose a "squeeze of Hotham", but East Bentleigh is beyond the 5km limit in most of the proposal making it difficult for people to vote.
- Some proposals involve splitting communities on the periphery of Melbourne (notably Melton, Doreen and Craigieburn most effected) into a semi-rural and urban electorates.

¹ <https://www.news.com.au/finance/exodus-from-australian-cities-as-coronavirus-pushes-people-to-the-regions/news-story/09ef690c2847484f7e9777fd1ca5ce43><https://www.news.com.au/finance/exodus-from-australian-cities-as-coronavirus-pushes-people-to-the-regions/news-story/09ef690c2847484f7e9777fd1ca5ce43>

Again the 5km limit and hard lockdown boundaries of Melbourne should be considered here as these are some of the most vulnerable communities in Victoria; they need access to a nearby voice and representation.

Thanks for this opportunity to contribute.

Yours sincerely

Louis Davis