



THE FEDERAL
REDISTRIBUTION
SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Comment on suggestion 26

Australian Labor Party (South Australian Branch)

5 pages

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Attachments: vic-Reggie Martin-.pdf

South Australian Redistribution comment on suggestion uploaded from the AEC website.

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Additional information: Please find attached the ALP's comments on suggestions.

COMMENTS ON SUBMISSIONS TO THE REDISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIA

BY THE

AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY (SOUTH AUSTRALIAN BRANCH)

15 December 2017

In making comments on submissions received by the Redistribution Committee for South Australia, the Australian Labor Party again acknowledges the criteria for conducting the redistribution in the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*, particularly subsections (2), (3) and (4) of section 66.

The starting point in making these comments is whether submissions have suitably addressed the requirement for movement of boundaries in order to achieve the population targets that the Committee must address, followed by the other criteria established by legislation, specifically communities of interest, means of communication and travel, physical features and, where possible, adherence to the boundaries of existing divisions.

The Australian Labor Party continues to take the view that the Committee can achieve the legislative requirements whilst minimising elector shift, as well as being guided by previous boundaries.

Population

The Committee is required to propose boundaries that meet two population criteria. The boundaries must ensure the number of electors does not depart from the quota to a greater extent than one-tenth more or one tenth less. In addition, the Committee shall, as far as practicable, endeavour to ensure that the number of electors enrolled in each division would not be three and a half per cent more or less than the average divisional enrolment in South Australia at the projection date of 20 January 2022.

The Australian Labor Party regrets that some submissions have chosen to pay only simple regard to the Committee's task in meeting the population criteria. Meeting the population criteria is not simple, yet it is the primary task for the Committee in proposing the boundaries. The Committee should be aiming to propose boundaries that meet the legislative requirements, which means appropriately taking into account the best arrangement of boundaries for the future.

To ensure the proposed boundaries for divisions with high projected growth rates, usually those in outer metropolitan areas, do not reach the three and a half per cent threshold at the projection date of 20 January 2022, it would be reasonable to target the lower side of the quota to allow for such growth. By contrast, proposed boundaries for divisions with low projected growth rates, usually those in rural areas, are drawn on the higher side of the quota to compensate for slower growth. This has been the approach taken in the past.

Proposing changes in division boundaries without taking into account the immediate and future population trends significantly increases the risk of triggering a redistribution on account of malapportionment under section 59(2)(b) of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*. By way of example, the submission of the Liberal Party of Australia (South Australian Division) would see some rural seats retain a number of electors lower than the quota, but some metropolitan seats retain a number of electors higher than the quota. In each case, there is a considerable, and avoidable, chance that one or more rural or metropolitan seat reaches the three and a half per cent threshold.

Movement of electors

As stated in the submission made by the Australian Labor Party, given the need to conduct the redistribution in a way that results in a reduction in the number of divisions by one, there will naturally be the need for a greater number of boundary movements than was the case in the last redistribution of South Australia, when there was no change in the number of divisions. However, the Australian Labor Party believes the necessary changes can be made whilst maintaining the integrity of most existing divisions to a large degree.

There is general agreement in a number of submissions that it is desirable for the southern boundary of the division of Grey to move further south to capture significant portions of the rural areas that are currently located in the division of Wakefield. Whilst there are differences of opinion around the extent of this movement and the precise location of the boundary, the Australian Labor Party welcomes general agreement that moving the boundary of Grey south into Wakefield would be a sensible course of action.

This action is also consistent with the Australian Labor Party's submission that the Committee start by correcting the boundaries of Grey, which comprises the lowest number of electors, before addressing Barker and Mayo and then the metropolitan divisions. The Australian Labor Party comments that there is also broad consensus around number of rural and metropolitan divisions, with agreement that with Wakefield ceding its rural areas to Grey the appropriate mix is three rural divisions and seven metropolitan.

The Australian Labor Party submitted that the key convergence of divisions is located in the metropolitan area in an arc fanning out from the central business district of Adelaide, taking in the northern and eastern suburbs. This remains the best methodological approach for the Committee to take. The Australian Labor Party comments that some submissions have proposed certain boundary changes without regard to the overall approach to be taken by the Committee.

The Australian Labor Party maintains that the division of Adelaide is a keystone that can have its projected population deficit easily corrected by adding electors at different points on its eastern and western edges, consistent with the approach examined in the past when the Committee could not take such action on account of population limitations. By taking this approach now, the Committee can then work in a clockwise direction through the remaining metropolitan seats, starting with Kingston and moving up through Boothby, Hindmarsh, Port Adelaide, Wakefield, Makin and Sturt, by which time the latter has been effectively absorbed by divisions to its north, west and south.

The approach that retains Adelaide as a keystone seat on a north-south axis with the absorption of the current division of Sturt by divisions to its north, west and south is also historically consistent. Adelaide has always had other divisions on its western and eastern sides, and at different times in the past there has been an eastern and north-eastern division, and an eastern and inner southern division. Additionally, if the Committee is to credibly assess proposals that combine the Adelaide local government area with local government areas to its west, then it must also undertake a similar approach and test boundary movements that would see the Adelaide local government area combine with local government areas to its east to form a new division of Adelaide.

It is the opinion of the Australian Labor Party that the legislative requirements for the redistribution can be met whilst limiting the movement of electors to between one in four and one in five and that this is a reasonable objective for the Committee.

Communities of interest

The Australian Labor Party submits that the Committee must have regard to genuine communities of interest that would unite large portions of proposed divisions, rather than falling back on small pockets of community interest that may unite particular suburbs but are not common across a proposed division as a whole.

For example, the submission of the Liberal Party of Australia (South Australian Division) makes some arguments about the strength of religious ties in a small collection of suburbs in the Burnside local government area within the current division of Sturt, but provides no statements in support of a connection on this basis with any other area within the boundaries of the division. These suburbs could just as easily be united with Boothby or Adelaide, where there are also people of the same faith, on the same basis. Indeed, the submission implicitly identifies connections that already exist across existing division boundaries, such as the Adelaide Cathedral Parish in the Roman Catholic denomination, which incorporates churches in both Sturt and Adelaide.

In choosing the location of new boundaries for electoral divisions and following the criteria, the Australian Labor Party again submits that the Committee pay particular attention to boundaries of local government areas, the location of division boundaries in the past, and major roads. In doing so, the Australian Labor Party believes the Committee will be able to fulfil its legislative requirements whilst minimising unnecessary elector movement.

Submissions related to the division of Mayo

The Australian Labor Party notes the large volume of vastly similar submissions related to the division of Mayo. Whilst it is understandable that members of the local community have an interest in maintaining the status quo, it is clear that it is not practical for the Committee to do so in this instance. On its current boundaries, the projected enrolment for Mayo on 20 January 2022 would be 110,072. This would be more than ten per cent under the current enrolment quota and more than three and a half per cent under the projected enrolment quota. The boundaries of Mayo will have to change in some way.

It is also of concern to the Australian Labor Party that a number of submitters appear to have the mistaken impression that the division of Mayo is proposed for abolition. No submissions make this suggestion. Even in one alternative suggested by the Australian Labor Party, it is still proposed that Mayo remain a division anchored in the Mount Lofty Ranges on the Adelaide Hills and Mount Barker local government areas.

The Australian Labor Party believes the Committee should consider the form submissions relating to the division of Mayo in the context of an organised campaign and notes the Committee is required to make a proposed redistribution for the whole of South Australia on the basis of the legislative criteria set down in the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*. Submissions should be assessed against these criteria on their merits, not on the basis of volume of submissions received proposing a particular course of action or preference.

Naming of divisions

The Australian Labor Party stands by its submission on the suitability of names of divisions, in particular the desirability of maintaining the six original names currently in use that are effectively federation names. The Australian Labor Party notes that some submissions proposed the merger of two divisions without taking into account the impact of making one name redundant. It is the

Australian Labor Party's position that in failing to address this, these submissions do not adequately inform the task of the Committee.

There have been three names of electoral divisions in South Australia that have been used but not retained at various points since federation: Angas, Bonython and Hawker. Of these, only Angas can be regarded as a federation name, as a seat first established in 1903 and abolished in 1934. It was then re-established in 1949 and remained until 1977. On each occasion the division covered different regions. Subject to the submissions on names made in the Australian Labor Party's submission, if the Committee regards it as appropriate, Angas could be revived again.