Comment on objections 6

Darren McSweeney

7 pages

From: [redacted]
To: FedRedistribution - VIC
Subject: [VIC REDISTRIBUTION COMMENT ON OBJECTIONS] Darren McSweeney *WWW* [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]
Date: Thursday, 10 May 2018 12:41:59 AM
Attachments: vic-Darren McSweeney-.docx

Victorian Redistribution comments on objections uploaded from the AEC website.
Name: Darren McSweeney
Organisation:
Address: [redacted]
Phone number: [redacted]
Additional information: Please find attached my comments on objections for the proposed redistribution of Victoria in .docx format.
Please acknowledge receipt by email.
Thanks.

Comments on objections to proposed redistribution of electoral boundaries in Victoria

Introduction

Given the somewhat radical proposal put forward, it is not surprising to see there were a significant number of objections, however I did not envisage that more than 400 objections would be lodged.

Personal time constraints prevent me from analysing each of the 413 objections, however it is clear there are some general themes that I will discuss.

I had hoped to lodge my own objection, but time got the better of me, so I have attached my original thoughts as an appendix to these comments. Those remarks should be considered to form part of these comments on objections, although written prior to reviewing the lodged objections.

Renamed divisions

Perhaps the largest general group of objections relates to the names of divisions, and in particular the divisions that have been renamed – Cox, Monash, Macnamara, Nicolls – and the unaltered Batman.

While I did not have any issue with the suggested named, my opinion was not shared by others.

The division of Cox is the subject of many objections, with various reasons for objecting, ranging from apparent tenuous links of May Cox to the area, to the obvious double-entendre the name may present. Perhaps the Committee may need to reconsider this change.

The abolition of the name McMillan has received widespread approval. However, the replacement, Monash has not been as well received. While many original suggestions proposed Bunjileene-Purrine, this does not conform to guidelines for divisions and therefore should not be adopted. I would suggest that those unhappy with this decision should familiarise themselves with the redistribution process.

While the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation, Bunurong Land Council and Bass Coast South Gippsland Reconciliation Groups may be well meaning in their suggestions, there is no special treatment, or negotiation of division names outside the public submissions.

In this regard, with no viable alternative, I feel that Monash should be adopted for the division.

Macnamara and Nicholls seem to be less controversial, however still attracted some attention. I feel that the objections to these are not justified, and with the name Monash being adopted in West Gippsland, the names Macnamara and Nicholls should remain.

Batman on the other hand is still clearly contentious. Obviously, the character of the nominee should be considered, and in this case, it appears that John Batman was a man of somewhat dubious moral character.

However, applying these standards could mean that almost any division named for a European or British explorer or pioneer should be changed. I would not be entirely opposed to this approach; however, I feel this may be a case for more extensive dialogue that is out of scope in this process.

At this time I would suggest that the division not be renamed.

New division

There is some opposition to the name, and less so the exact boundaries of the new division. There is no reason that the division should not be named Fraser. The political leanings of the constituents are certainly not something that should be considered.

In fact, there are numerous divisions named after politicians of one political persuasion, returning members of the other "side". The neighbouring division of Gorton is but one example, along with McEwan, Holt and sometimes Bruce in Victoria. Curtin in Western Australia, Lyons in Tasmania, Reid and Barton at times in New South Wales, and Forde in Queensland all fall into this situation. There is nothing exceptional about naming a division Fraser that is likely to return a member from the Labor Party.

Divisions that particular localities are placed in

Colac

General sentiment seems to be that the town of Colac, or the Colac-Otway Shire should not be placed in Wannon. Doing so, unfortunately, creates countless problems that ricochet throughout the state. I would urge the Committee to avoid the temptation to reverse this, and leave Colac in Wannon.

Central Goldfields

I was not surprised to see Central Goldfields Shire placed in Mallee. While my original suggestion placed the Shire in Bendigo, the composition of the state clearly benefits from Central Goldfields being part of Mallee. As with Colac above, reversing this decision would affect divisions right across the state and I would not support any move to reverse this.

Flemington

The other major area of contention is moving Flemington (and Travencore) from Melbourne, and into Maribyrnong. This area was clearly identified by most original suggestions as the primary candidate to return Melbourne to tolerance. I would think that reversing this decision will cause flow on effects and require numerous adjustments elsewhere, therefore I cannot support this campaign.

Gowanbrae

While I originally suggested that Gowanbrae be placed in Maribyrnong, the Committee opted for Calwell. Following the objection from the Gowanbrae Residents Group, I would suggest that the community here considers themselves to be part of Moreland, and therefore Wills. I suggest that Gowanbrae be returned to Wills.

Western Port & Peninsula

There seems to be a large number of objections relating to various components in Flinders, Holt and Dunkley. For the most part, there is little justification for any of these objections to be considered, any local benefits for changing divisions would flow on elsewhere.

Dingley Village

There were a number of objections to Dingley Village being placed in Isaacs. As Dingley is a relatively self-contained area, surrounded by green wedge and non-urban areas, it could fit in any division adequately. For every objector that believes Dingley belongs with Hotham, another would argue for Isaacs, and yet another for Bruce.

Summary

While some minor amendments could be made, I still believe that this is one of the better redistributions in Victoria. While it will be impossible to satisfy everyone, consideration must be given to the composition of the entire state. I hope the Committee will resist the urge to react to loud, orchestrated, but still minority, positions, often with backing of political interests. In this case, the Committee got the decision correct and should hold firm in their decision.

I look forward to seeing the final determination from the Augmented Committee in near future.

Objection to proposed redistribution of electoral boundaries in Victoria

Summary

I will start by stating that I am pleasantly surprised by the results of the proposed redistribution. Overall, there is very little that is unsatisfactory, and I commend the Committee on their efforts.

I am please to see a new division named in honour of the former prime minister Malcolm Fraser, and its siting is the same general area that I had proposed.

I am pleased to see that the Committee is willing to change Federation division names where the existing name is no longer relevant, or appropriate. This appears to continue the trend where Federation or near-Federation divisions have been changed or abolished in several states (Gwydir, Kalgoorlie, Denison and now Corangamite, Melbourne Ports and Wakefield).

Certainly within Victoria, the names of Corangamite and Melbourne Ports have outlived their usefulness, and only Federation status was keeping them from being abolished or renamed sooner. While the notion of preserving Federation division names is noble, the reality is that we will continue to need to find divisions to name prime ministers for, and, combined with the current agenda to redress to gender and racial imbalance, there are just not enough divisions to also keep all existing Federation names.

Ideally, it would have been preferable to not cross the Yarra, however, I can accept that it helps maintain the numbers, and the Committee has chosen to do so in a place that is logical. The communities on each side of the Yarra, while separate, are not so dissimilar as to fracture Menzies.

Specifically, I approve of the new Fraser, renaming Corangamite, Melbourne Ports, McMillan and Murray. I support retaining the name of the divisions Batman, and for the time being Gellibrand.

I support (to the extent possible) moving urban areas in the north around Craigieburn out of McEwan, and while it would have been ideal to also excise more of Mernda and Doreen, I cannot see how this would work without causing significant issues elsewhere.

Likewise, I am not terribly pleased by Isaacs or Hotham moving so far north, but without disrupting their neighbours I do not feel that major changes can be achieved.

I would like to commend the Committee on the explanation of the report, especially given the vast renaming of divisions. Providing clear and thorough details of how these names were decided displays transparency and clarity to the process.

I would suggest that the Committee return to the previous style of report, where divisions are discussed according to their location within the state. It makes it easier to dissect the information if divisions are outlined in relation to each other, rather than alphabetical. It can also aid with providing reasons for the Committee making certain decisions about elector transfers. This is another area that I feel the Committee's report is currently lacking. In some cases, the merits for transferring one area over others are discussed, however I feel this should be more the focus of the report, rather than the basic numerical exercise, which is related in tables and maps anyway.

Objections

I do not have many specific objections, however there are a number of small adjustments that I suggest may be made.

Due to personal time restraints, I have not performed actual elector movements for these suggestions, so I am not certain that all these objections are numerically sounds. I present them nevertheless.

Bruce-Hotham & Aston-Bruce

The adjustments to Hotham and Bruce mean that a small area of Mulgrave bound by Eastlink, Dandenong Creek and Police Road in Hotham is detached from the surrounding community. While this area is technically part of Mulgrave, it shares closer links with the neighbouring suburbs to the south. The link across to the rest of Mulgrave is much weaker.

I propose that the Bruce-Hotham boundary follow Eastlink and Dandenong Creek. In doing so, the straight-line boundary of Police Road is broken, undoing any need for the adjustment between Aston and Bruce in Rowville, therefore *I propose that the Aston-Bruce boundary be returned to the Knox LGA boundary.* No electors are transferred with this proposal.

Callwell-Maribyrnong

The decision to move Gowanbrae out of Wills is certainly one that should be commended, for while the suburb is part of Moreland LGA, it is physically and socially detached from the remainder of the local area. The only road in or out of Gowanbrae is via Malvern Ave, which directs traffic into Airport West.

The decision to align the Callwell-Maribyrnong boundary along the rail line instead of the M80 Ring Road means that Gowanbrae and a small part of Airport West is detached from the rest of their local community. *I propose that the boundary be restored to the M80 Ring Road between the Calder Freeway and Moonee Ponds Creek.* This will reunite these electors with their local community.

Callwell-McEwen

While Callwell incorporates the urban areas on Craigieburn, the proposed Callwell also takes in some more rural areas that would be better placed in McEwen. I feel that Deep Creek is more a barrier in this area than Emu Creek and the areas of Clarkefield and Wildwood fit better with Sunbury. *I propose that the Callwell boundary follow Emu Creek downstream, the Deep Creek to the proposed Hume LGA boundary.*

La Trobe-Monash

The numerical constraints do not seem to justify why Tynong North, Bunyip North, Garfield North and Tonimbuk are retained in La Trobe. These small communities are closely aligned with their larger namesakes to the south of the Princes Freeway and share very little with the urban areas in La Trobe. *I propose that the boundary for La Trobe follow the Nar Nar Goon locality boundary to Pooley Road, Tynong North Road and then returns to the former La Trobe-McMillan boundary.*

Maribyrnong-Melbourne

A very minor adjustment here, with Flemington Racecourse moving into Maribyrnong, and Racecourse and Smithfield Roads used as a strong, identifiable boundary, the deviation capturing the Bowls Club between Epsom, Racecourse and Smithfield Roads seems unnecessary. *I propose the boundary continue in a straight line along Smithfield Road until Racecourse Road.* No electors are transferred in this proposal.

Summary

As I said at the top, overall the Committee is to be commended for a logical, sensible and cohesive proposal. There are no glaring holes, no own goals, no unexpected (and unexplained) decisions.

I will leave the political projections to others to determine, but I think in this case the Committee got the decision right.

I am slightly concerned by the seemingly increased reliance on locality boundaries. This is a trend that seems to be carried in the last few redistributions in various states, and while it's true that most people know in which suburb they live, relying on these somewhat weak boundaries to unite entire suburbs can leave divisions compromised. At times, there are strong physical barriers that better serve the boundary, rather than what name people use refer to their suburb.

I look forward to the speedy resolution of this redistribution and eagerly away the Augmented Committee's decision in the coming months.

If I may end on a rather cheeky suggestion. With outcomes as attractive as this, and with similarly pleasing results in South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory, maybe redistribution Committees for all states should in future restrict themselves to such a tight timeframe!