



# Comment on objections 52

Liberal Party of Australia (Victorian Division)  
McEwen Federal Electorate Conference

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# Comments on objections – Victorian federal redistribution

## INTRODUCTION

The Liberal Party of Australia (Victorian Division) McEwen Federal Electorate Conference (McEwen FEC) welcomes the opportunity to comment on objections to the Proposed Boundaries for Victoria, which details new boundaries for the McEwen electorate.

McEwen FEC fundamentally believes that individuals and communities in a democracy should be empowered in shaping the future of our regions and our nation. We therefore strongly oppose any moves that would further entrench the stranglehold of any political group over any community. Free, fair and competitive elections are an essential feature of Australian democracy and must be safeguarded. We recognise the important role of the AEC in protecting our democracy.

We recognise the responsibility the Redistribution Committee has in preparing the Proposed Boundaries and the difficult task this involves. To that end we wish to commend the Committee on its proposed boundaries for the McEwen electorate and we wholeheartedly support the Committee's proposal.

We accept that because of its geographic situation straddling the north of Melbourne, McEwen has traditionally been a seat that bundles many disparate communities of interest.

The Committee's proposed boundaries have done a satisfactory job in reducing the amount of detached communities into what we suggest to be an eastern community (Mitchell Shire, City of Whittlesea and Nillumbik Shire) and a western community (Sunbury and the Macedon Ranges). We believe this compromise adequately reflects the characteristics of the communities involved, whilst also fulfilling quota and projected enrolment requirements.

The purpose of this submission is to refute claims made in other submissions, in particular that of the Australian Labor Party, which seek to alter the Committee's proposed boundary and to ensure communities in the McEwen electorate are not disadvantaged with regard to their federal parliamentary representation.

The main contention of the ALP's submission is that Sunbury should be transferred into the electorate of Calwell and that all of Craigieburn should be transferred into the electorate of McEwen. The effect of the ALP's new boundary proposal would see an additional 2,930 electors transferred into the proposed electorate. In a region that is experiencing substantial and unprecedented growth, such a proposal is irresponsible.

We will respond to this claim by first recognising Sunbury's importance to the McEwen electorate and then explain how Craigieburn would be better represented as part of the Calwell electorate. We will also provide comments regarding the suitability of submissions that would see the inclusion of the entirety of Mernda within the proposed boundaries.

## SUNBURY

McEwen FEC supports the continuance of Sunbury as part of the McEwen Electorate and recognises its importance to the broader region.

The identity of Sunbury is firmly separate to the Western Suburbs of Melbourne and the rest of Hume Council. As a satellite city of Melbourne, Sunbury's community is distinctive from those surrounding it, whilst retaining strong links to the adjacent Macedon Ranges Shire.

Both regions share major transport routes including the Calder Freeway, the Bendigo train line and the Melbourne-Lancefield Road. Consequently, Macedon Ranges residents rely on Sunbury for access to shopping, health services including Sunbury Day Hospital, government services through the Centrelink and VicRoads offices, and of course access to employment.

Local media is also shared between local newspapers the *Sunbury and Macedon Ranges Leader* and the *Sunbury and Macedon Ranges Star Weekly*. Families access local independent and specialist schools located in both regions whilst local sporting clubs compete against one another in leagues such as the Riddell District Football/Netball League including Sunbury, Rupertswood, Macedon, Romsey, Riddells Creek, Lancefield, with Wallan and Broadford in the Mitchell Shire. The ALP's claim that 'sporting clubs and leagues tend to work west or into Hume away from the rest of McEwen' is inaccurate and unsubstantiated.

Similarly it's important to note that in the eastern community aforementioned, Kilmore, Whittlesea, Hurstbridge, Laurimar, Mernda and Panton Hill all compete in the Northern Football Netball League whilst Craigieburn competes in the Essendon District Football League, aligned with existing communities in the Calwell Electorate.

The link between Sunbury and the Macedon Ranges is very strong and the removal of Sunbury from the electorate would lead to the effective isolation of Macedon Ranges communities, which have little relationship with Mitchell Shire and no relationship with communities in Whittlesea, Nillumbik and the ALP's preferred Craigieburn.

In arguing that Sunbury would be disadvantaged by its dislocation from the broader Hume Council, the ALP fails to outline how the Craigieburn community would be advantaged by being similarly dislocated from Hume. We submit that the Sunbury community has no issue being dislocated from the Hume region with regard to its federal parliamentary representation given Sunbury's strong desire to form its own local government area and having a mandate to do so.

## CRAIGIEBURN

The McEwen FEC supports the transfer of the northern section of Craigieburn from McEwen into the electorate of Calwell to better align that community with similar communities in the Hume City Council. We submit that the effect of splitting the Craigieburn community between McEwen and Calwell has led to less effective representation for this community.

The claims made by the ALP and other objectors of the connection between the communities of Craigieburn and Mitchell Shire and Craigieburn's detachment with communities to its south are overstated.

In focussing on the economic differences between Craigieburn and communities to its south, the ALP has failed to describe any similarities between Craigieburn and communities to its north.

The following table has been adapted from the ALP's submission to highlight the logical error in its argument that Craigieburn should be in the same electorate as Mitchell Shire. We have included the towns of Kilmore, Wallan and Beveridge to better represent the actual situation.

<b>Town</b>	<b>Median Weekly Household Income</b>	<b>In Full Time Employment</b>	<b>Homes Owned Outright</b>	<b>Homes Rented</b>
Craigieburn	\$1,504.00	58.40%	14.60%	27.40%
Roxborough Park	\$1,358.00	53.20%	18.20%	20.60%
Kilmore	\$1,343.00	57.10%	31.60%	24.00%
Wallan	\$1,592.00	60.60%	19.20%	19.90%
Beveridge	\$1,940.00	65.60%	20.00%	13.70%

The ALP claims that because the rate of home ownership in Craigieburn is lower than in Roxborough Park, it should be orientated with communities to its north. However, as the table above shows, the rate of home ownership in the Mitchell Shire is substantially higher than both Craigieburn and Roxborough Park. Similarly, there is little resemblance in the median income between all communities. According to the data above and the logic applied by the ALP in its submission, Kilmore and Roxborough Park should be in the same electorate, whilst Craigieburn and Wallan should be in another, and Beveridge in an entirely different electorate altogether. Of course, such a suggestion is ludicrous and the logic it is based upon should be rejected.

Furthermore, it is disappointing that in its submission the ALP has resorted to focussing on divisions between race and religion in describing differences between Craigieburn and Roxborough Park, rather than focussing on the multiculturalism that defines and unites the broader Hume community. In arguing that Craigieburn is less multicultural than communities to its south, the ALP has failed to outline how Craigieburn is any similar to communities to its north, which based on even a cursory look at census data, is substantially less multicultural in character. We submit that the strength of multiculturalism in the Hume city is a defining feature of that community which strengthens the case for all of Craigieburn to be transferred into Calwell.

## **MERNDA**

Cr Joseph's proposal would see the entire townships of Mernda and Craigieburn located in the McEwen Electorate with no further suggestions to offset the growth being experienced in these communities. The addition of the entirety of Mernda and Craigieburn would lead to more than 35,000 additional electors, taking McEwen well above the existing quota and providing no buffer for projected enrolments. There is no community of interest shared between the City of Whittlesea and the Hume City Council.

Of course, it would be impossible for the entire Whittlesea City Council to be represented in one federal electorate alone. Whilst it is less desirable for towns to be divided in a redistribution, the separation at Mernda is appropriate given large proportions of Whittlesea City are shared between both McEwen and Scullin. If it were the view of the Committee to place the entirety of Mernda into a single division (as argued by the Mernda & District Residents Association in its submission) we suggest that it be located in the electorate of Scullin. With the completion of the South Morang train line to Mernda expected soon, the Mernda community will become increasingly connected with communities to its south.

## **CONCLUSION**

The McEwen FEC congratulates the Committee with respect to its proposed boundaries for the McEwen electorate. The removal of Craigieburn and South Morang ensures that the seat remains a predominantly rural / peri urban electorate, rather than being a metropolitan one. This will enhance the representation of the special communities that make up our region. We believe that retaining Sunbury in the electorate maintains its strong connection with the Macedon Ranges and ensure that neither community is isolated in an inappropriate electorate. As a diverse and growing community, Craigieburn is best placed in the Calwell electorate to maintain its community connection with the Hume City Council through transport links and other services. Sunbury clearly does not share the same links with Hume. Should minor transfers need to be made to the proposed boundaries we submit those transfers occur as proposed by the Nationals and Charles Richardson in their submissions calling for Broadford and the immediately surrounding areas to remain in the McEwen electorate. Whilst Seymour holds much in common with the broader Goulburn Valley Region and the proposed electorate of Nicholls, Broadford does not. The Committee may also contemplate the removal of Hurstbridge from its proposed boundaries and leaving it in Scullin to maintain the community of interest that is based radially along the Hurstbridge train line.