



Comment on suggestion 18

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10 pages

COMMENTS ON SUGGESTIONS FOR 2017 VICTORIAN REDISTRIBUTION

(Mark Mulcair)

General Comments:

Despite the significant change that is required at this redistribution, it is interesting to see that most of the Suggestions follow the same general principles. Growth patterns overwhelmingly favour the creation of a seat in the north-western suburbs, and for an eastern suburban seat to be pushed into the south-east. Once these broad principles have been adopted, the patterns of other seats seem to fall into place quite naturally.

There are too many state-wide suggestions and too little time (due to the ACT and SA redistributions) to comment on each suggestion in any detail. My comments will be fairly general and broad, but I think they address most of the significant differences between individual suggestions.

As an aside, it is particularly pleasing to see so many comments from interested individuals, who are presumably non-partisan and are not interested in engineering a political outcome.

Naming:

There is almost universal agreement to have a Division somewhere named 'Fraser'. Some suggestions propose this name for the new Division, others propose re-naming an existing seat such as Wannon or Murray. My own proposal suggests renaming Wannon as 'Fraser', as it is the seat that Malcolm Fraser represented for three decades, making it particularly suitable to being renamed in his honour.

I also note that several other suggestions proposed the name 'Burke' for the new Division, especially if the new seat covers territory from the former Division of Burke.

It is interesting to see that about half of the Suggestions relate solely to the renaming of Melbourne Ports, Batman, and/or McMillan. There has clearly been some sort of organised campaign to get these three seats renamed, for various reasons.

I support the renaming of Melbourne Ports, as the character of the seat has changed dramatically in recent decades. Port Melbourne has been almost entirely gentrified, with very little of its old waterfront/dockside nature remaining. With the exception of Webb Dock, virtually none of the main "port" area of Melbourne lies within this seat anymore. 'Monash' would be a very suitable and worthy new name for this Division.

The potential renaming of Batman and McMillan is probably going to be more controversial. I don't have a particularly strong opinion either way about the naming of these two seats, although I do think Batman as the founder of modern Melbourne should continue to be commemorated in some way. Perhaps the Committee could visit these two seats to discuss the issue with locals, to determine whether or not there is widespread opposition to the names.

Other comments:

- 1) As at the Queensland redistribution, the Committee has seen fit to highlight those suggestions that come from out-of-state residents.

I am honestly not sure what the Committee is trying to achieve with this. Is the implication that these Suggestions are somehow less valid or worthy because they come from someone outside the state? If so, this is frankly very poor form by the Committee, and is counter-productive to the redistribution process.

The only thing that this sort of thing will do is discourage interested individuals from making Suggestions. If they believe that their submissions will not be taken seriously, and will be singled out for negative attention, why bother taking the time and effort at all? This will only end up giving greater power to political parties and other organisations, who draw boundaries first and foremost to manufacture a partisan outcome favourable to them. This is not a good outcome.

- 2) I understand the time constraints caused by needing to complete so many redistributions in a single election cycle. However, I would respectfully suggest that the Committees try to space out the redistributions a little more. As an individual contributor, without access to the extensive resources available to political parties and organisations, it has been quite difficult to prepare submissions for all of the VIC, SA, and ACT redistributions in such a short time.

REGIONAL VICTORIA

Combined, the seats in Regional Victoria are relatively close to quota, and most of the proposals reflect this. While there are some differences, there is no real suggestion for radical change in this part of Victoria (with the possible exception of the Liberals).

There seems general broad agreement to:

- Place Portarlington and surrounds in Corangamite.
- Transfer Colac-Otway Shire to Wannon.
- Place Ballarat's share, and part or all of Corangamite's share, of Golden Plains in Wannon.
- Remove Maryborough from Wannon.
- Remove part or all of Macedon Ranges Shire from Bendigo.
- Transfer the Seymour area from McEwen to Murray.
- Leave Indi relatively unchanged.

The main differences between the suggestions seem to be:

- Whether Maryborough should be placed in Bendigo or Mallee, and
- Whether to draw McEwen as a primarily rural Division, or leave it as an urban/rural hybrid seat.

Where should Maryborough go?

Central Goldfields Shire would seem to fit quite well in either Mallee or Bendigo. There are good links from Maryborough to both the north and west (in Mallee) and east (in Bendigo). So the question of where this area should go is less about community of interest, and more about the flow-on effects to neighbouring Divisions.

I personally believe that Maryborough should be placed in Mallee, as it allows the other boundaries to fall into place very naturally. Mallee would be brought within quota, and there would be no need for any other changes to its boundaries with Murray or Bendigo. This then flows on to Murray, which would only need to gain Seymour and shed some areas closer to Bendigo.

In contrast, if Maryborough is placed in Bendigo, then Mallee needs to find somewhere else to make up its numbers. This leads to Campaspe Shire being split, which in turn forces Murray to push southwards into the City of Greater Bendigo. It makes enormous sense to me to leave all of 'Bendigo' in the Division of that name.

My proposal also transferred Avoca to Mallee; this helps round out the boundary and open up greater access between Maryborough and the rest of Mallee.

Should McEwen be a predominantly rural seat?

In short, yes it should.

As I said in my suggestions, the two big problems with McEwen are (a) its ‘bits and pieces’ nature, and (b) that all of the northern growth belt is locked up in this one seat, blowing out the enrolment way over quota.

Removing the most suburban parts of McEwen, around Craigieburn and South Morang, to metropolitan Divisions helps address both these issues. McEwen would become more established as a clearly semi-rural/urban fringe Division, and the growth areas in the outer north would be split between three different Divisions; McEwen, Calwell, and Scullin.

Some suggestions, such as the ALP’s, propose placing even more of Craigieburn in McEwen. This would only exacerbate the current problems with McEwen, as well as causing severe dislocation further south to Divisions such as Calwell and Wills.

Macedon Ranges (all or part) is a logical addition to McEwen, given that Gisborne is already part of the Division. A number of suggestions, such as from the National Party, suggest that Daylesford also be transferred, but I don’t think this is necessary. Daylesford fits better with either Ballarat or Bendigo; the links along the Midland Highway are stronger than those to the east.

Other Comments

- The Liberal Party’s proposal to transfer Golden Plains Shire to Ballarat has some merit in isolation. It would allow Corangamite to be drawn as a completely coastal Western Districts seat, and more importantly would allow Bacchus Marsh to be placed in an urban seat. However, this seems to cause too many drastic flow-on effects to the other rural seat. The Liberals are forced to make some quite radical changes to Mallee, Indi, McEwen and Murray to make the numbers fit, and I don’t think this is worth the trouble.

If the Committee wanted to leave Colac in Corangamite, and remove Golden Plains, then Martin Gordon’s suggestion to place Golden Plains in Wannon would be a better idea. This neatly tops up Wannon without causing too many flow-on effects elsewhere.

- A couple of suggestions, again notably the Liberals’, propose making changes to Indi. I don’t think these are necessary. Any significant change to the Indi/Murray boundary would cause flow-on effects to Murray’s boundaries with Bendigo and McEwen.

WESTERN MELBOURNE

There is universal agreement that the new seat should be located somewhere in this area. This is the most clearly over-quota part of the state, and growth is expected to remain very strong.

While there are differences in some of the names, there seems general agreement to draw:

- One seat based on Melton and the surrounding growth areas, extending eastwards into more stable areas around Sydenham.
- One seat based clearly on Sunshine, taking in all of the Sunshine, St Albans, and Albion-Ardeer areas from Gorton, Maribyrnong and Gellibrand.
- One seat located primarily east of the Maribyrnong River, from the Keilor area through Niddrie and Essendon to Ascot Vale.

There also seems a general agreement to transfer Altona Meadows, Laverton, and Seabrook from Lalor to Gellibrand. Some suggestions propose that Truganina also be transferred to Gellibrand, while others propose part of all of Point Cook. Both of these are growth areas, and their removal would help bring Lalor's quota problem under control, so I have no strong preference either way.

A number of suggestions choose to push Gorton southwards into Tarneit or Truganina, but there is limited north-south connection in this area. There is still a 'gap' between Rockbank/Caroline Springs and the Tarneit area, and the north-south connections are not as strong as those running east-west.

NORTHERN MELBOURNE

As a local, I am quite surprised by the radical proposals some suggestions have made for these seats.

I live in Pascoe Vale. I can say quite categorically that neither Pascoe Vale Road nor the railway would be suitable western boundaries for Wills. Suburbs such as Glenroy are grouped around the road and railway, not split by them. Either of these two boundaries would run right through the middle of the Glenroy shopping centre, and would leave the western parts of Glenroy and Oak Park completely cut off from a Division to the west or north.

There is a very simple and logical way for Wills to be brought within quota, by adopting the Moonee Ponds and Merri Creeks for the entire western and eastern boundaries. These are strong boundaries on the ground, surrounded by parklands for much of their length, and have very limited communication across them north of Bell Street. There is no need for any other changes to Wills.

Similarly, there is no need to make a radical alteration to the Division of Calwell. By gaining the remainder of Craigieburn, and shedding everything south of the Maribyrnong River, Calwell would become clearly established as a City of Hume seat, with a very clear and logical community of interest. Any proposals to drag Calwell south of the Ring Road, or eastwards into Epping, fail the community of interest test.

Assuming these boundaries for Calwell and Wills, the remainder of the northern seats fall into place very logically. Melbourne can simply shed its share of Moonee Valley and gain Clifton Hill, Maribyrnong (or 'Fraser') can consolidate mostly east of the Maribyrnong River, and Batman requires minimal change.

- A number of suggestions recommend that parts of Fitzroy North and East Brunswick be transferred to Melbourne. This would help reduce the enrolment in Wills, and I would have no problem with it if it doesn't cause too many flow on effects.
- I would recommend that the southern part of Alphington remain within Batman instead of being transferred to Melbourne. While a part of Yarra LGA, this area is largely cut off from areas to the west by Merri Creek.
- Labor's proposal to place the Kensington/Flemington area in Gellibrand will probably have merit in 20 years' time, when the eastern side of the Maribyrnong River is fully developed. For now, though, Kensington is still mostly cut off from areas to the west by unpopulated industrial areas and parklands.

THE JAGAJAGA/MENZIES/SCULLIN/MCEWEN/CASEY INTERFACE

This deserves a separate discussion, as it is clear that some changes will be needed here, and there are significant differences between the suggestions. Most proposals agree that the semi-rural eastern parts of Scullin should be removed from the Division, but there is disagreement about where this area should go, and how the surrounding seats should be drawn.

My proposal

I recommend that the eastern part of Scullin should go into Jagajaga, with the exception of Hurstbridge. All of the major communication lines from Diamond Creek and surrounds lead back towards Greensborough and Eltham, which are significant centres within Jagajaga. There are very limited connections to the west across Plenty Gorge (in Scullin) or south-east across the Yarra River (in Casey).

This would take Jagajaga over quota, so I am proposing that Ivanhoe and Eaglemont should be placed in Menzies. While this is certainly not ideal, at least there is a strong communication link along Banksia Street and Manningham Road, back into Menzies.

If this change is made, then the neighbouring boundaries all fall into place very naturally:

- Scullin can gain the balance of South Morang and Mernda, consolidating clearly as an urban Whittlesea Council seat.
- Menzies can make greater use of the Eastern Freeway and LGA boundary as its new boundary with Deakin.
- Casey can be left relatively unchanged.
- No other significant change is needed between Batman, Scullin, and Jagajaga. The Ring Road can be adopted as a clear southern boundary for Scullin.

Placing Diamond Creek and surrounds in Casey

The main alternative proposal is to place Diamond Creek in Casey. This has the benefit of allowing Jagajaga to remain relatively unchanged, and leaves Ivanhoe united with Heidelberg. It is also an attractive option for people who want to unite more of the Croydon area in Deakin.

The problem I have with this arrangement is that there is no direct connection between Casey and Diamond Creek. There is almost no communication across the Yarra between Warrandyte and Yarra Glen, and there are extensive parklands and unpopulated areas along the river at this point. Travel between the two halves of Casey would require either going through Menzies, or making a long diversion along Eltham-Yarra Glen Road.

DANDENONG RANGES AND WESTERNPORT

Should Pakenham be united in Latrobe?

The big difference in this part of Victoria is whether Pakenham should be united in Latrobe. This decision influences the way that all of the Westernport/Peninsula seats (McMillan, Flinders, Dunkley) are drawn, so there are some major differences in approach here.

In principle, I agree that Pakenham would be better off if it was united in Latrobe. This change would allow McMillan to be a completely rural seat with no suburban component, and there is definitely a strong community of interest in placing Pakenham with Officer and Beaconsfield.

However, in practise, I think there are two potential problems:

- 1) It would bottle up the entire Pakenham-Officer growth belt in a single seat. We have seen with McEwen and Lalor that this often leads to the enrolment blowing out way over quota. This in turn would probably require major changes at the next redistribution.

The existing arrangement of McMillan and Latrobe splits the growth area between two seats, which I think is better to maintain stable enrolments in the long term.

- 2) It seems to cause significant flow-on effects further north. Many of the suggestions are forced to drag Casey south across the mountains, or place significant parts of Yarra Ranges into Aston. This in turn requires them to split Knox City and breach the strong boundary of Dandenong Creek. These proposals fail the community of interest test, especially with regards to Aston.

I grew up in Knox. The council is a fairly self-contained area, backed up against the mountains, and with unpopulated areas surrounding it to the west and south. Dandenong Creek is a very strong boundary; it serves as the municipal boundary and has extensive parklands along most of its length. These factors make it ideal to form the basis of a single electoral Division.

Since Knox council has exactly the right enrolment for Aston to be within quota, it makes far more sense me for Aston to consist of Knox in its entirety than to split the council between several different seats.

Similarly, the existing Casey/Latrobe boundary largely follows the ridgeline. Towns in the north tend to look back towards Montrose and Lilydale (in Casey), whereas south of the ridgeline, towns tend to look towards Monbulk and Belgrave (in Latrobe). Adjusting this boundary would separate towns in the southern Dandenongs from their community of interest in Latrobe.

In all, placing Pakenham in Latrobe seems to cause too many unfortunate flow on effects. Perhaps at the next redistribution, if Aston needs to expand beyond Knox, it will become more feasible. For now, I recommend leaving Pakenham split.

SOUTH-EASTERN SUBURBS

Again, while there are some differences in the names and boundaries, there seems almost universal agreement to re-arrange the existing Divisions into:

- One seat based clearly on Dandenong and surrounding suburbs, including areas such as Endeavour Hills, Doveton, and Noble Park.
- One seat based on the coastal areas of Kingston Council, taking in the suburbs north of Frankston from Isaacs, and the Mentone/Dingley/Cheltenham area from Hotham.
- One seat taking in the 'inland' parts of Hotham, plus the balance of Oakleigh and Clayton from Chisholm.

I support this arrangement. It clearly makes enormous sense for major centres like Dandenong and Oakleigh to be united in a single seat, instead of split multiple ways as they are currently.

Similarly, areas such as Dingley, Cheltenham and Mentone fit better with a coastal Division, with good links southwards along major roads and railways to suburbs such as Chelsea and Carrum. The Nepean Highway, Springvale Road, Wells Road, and the railway line would serve as strong backbones for this proposed Division.

Some of the suggestions go further than I do, making greater use of the Dingley Arterial as a northern boundary, to include more of Cheltenham and Moorabbin in the coastal seat. This seems perfectly sensible to me, provided the numbers work.

I personally think that as much of Keysborough and Noble Park as possible should be placed in the Dandenong-based Division. This allows Isaacs (or 'Hotham') to be purely coastal, with no need to extend across unpopulated areas into Greater Dandenong. This arrangement also means that the Dandenong-based seat does not need to push so far east into Narre Warren or Berwick.

EASTERN SUBURBS

Nearly all Suggestions agree that the best way to top up the under-quota Divisions here is to transfer Glen Waverley and Wheelers Hill to Chisholm. This not only provides the right number of electors, but also re-aligns Chisholm as a more east-west Division that better fits the natural communities of interest and communication lines in this part of Melbourne.

My suggestions take this process one step further, by transferring Box Hill to Deakin, and placing more of the Vermont area in Chisholm. This straightens the boundary between these two Divisions to run along Canterbury and Boronia Roads, and leaves both seats as completely east-west aligned seats. If Box Hill remains in Chisholm, then the seat would take on an awkward “L” shape.

There also seems general agreement, with the notable exception of the Greens, for Kooyong to make up its numbers by gaining Mont Albert and part of Surrey Hills. I think this is very logical, as Elgar Road is a far stronger boundary than the arbitrary side streets used currently.

Should Higgins and Melbourne Ports be re-aligned?

I am a little surprised that more Suggestions didn't propose changes between Melbourne Ports and Higgins. A similar change was rejected last time, but I still think it makes enormous sense to include South Yarra and Prahran in Melbourne Ports, and Caulfield in Higgins. The Chapel Street precinct is a major entertainment, retail, and commercial area, which seems to fit much better with areas like St Kilda in Melbourne Ports, than in the mostly suburban Higgins.

The main objections to this change last time seemed to be based on: (a) placing Docklands in Melbourne Ports, and (b) splitting the Jewish community between two seats.

I think my proposal does a reasonable job at addressing these concerns. My proposed new boundary with Higgins follows Hotham Street, which means that large parts of St Kilda East and Elsternwick are united with Caulfield in the same seat. This seems to do a better job of uniting the Jewish community than the previous proposal to use Orrong Road.