THE FEDERAL REDISTRIBUTION VICTORIA

Objection 372

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9 pages

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To the Augmented Electoral Commission,

Following my involvement in the drafting of an earlier comment on suggestion I have taken a great interest in the progress of the Victorian redistribution. That previous submission strongly objected to the proposal contained with in a number of public suggestions that the boundary of the Commonwealth Electoral Division of Casey would shift westward into Nillumbik Shire. I was glad to see that the Redistribution Committee completely rejected this nonsensical proposal when preparing the draft boundaries for Casey.

Broadly, I think that the divisional boundaries that the Committee has proposed successfully recognise communities of interest, means of transport and communication and physical boundaries. However, I have some strong objections to parts of the proposed boundaries which I will outline. They impact the boundaries of the divisions of Casey, Aston, Deakin and Kooyong.

Executive Summary

This objection submits that the proposed divisions of Casey, Aston and Deakin do not meet the relevant community of interest criteria contained within the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (**the Act**).

Specifically, I am concerned with the splitting of the western part of Yarra Ranges Council between the proposed divisions of Casey and Deakin and the inclusion of Upper Ferntree Gully from the Knox Council. Doing so results in suboptimal outcomes on community of interest grounds and is, in my view, totally unnecessary when various alternatives are considered.

This objection primarily seeks to:

- **One**, align the western boundary of the proposed Division of Casey with the boundary of Yarra Ranges Council. This creates clear administrative boundaries between the proposed Division of Casey and the proposed Division of Deakin and strengthens communities of interest within those two divisions.

- **Two**, to transfer electors in Upper Ferntree Gully from the proposed Division of Casey to the proposed Division of Aston. Again, this creates clear administrative boundaries between the proposed Division of Casey with the proposed Division of Aston and strengthens communities of interest within those two divisions.

I understand that many objections to proposed redistributions list many grievances without identifying acceptable solutions that comply with the Act. To assist the augmented Commission, I have taken the liberty of identifying a solution to the problems presented by the draft boundaries.

The fundamental changes proposed by this objection require minor consequential changes to the divisions of Deakin, Chisholm and Kooyong.

In totality, this objection has the added benefits of:

1. Uniting the entire Yarra Ranges Council within the proposed Division of Casey – in fact, Yarra Ranges Council boundaries would be identical to those of the proposed Division of Casey;
2. Including every elector within the Knox City Council within the proposed Division of Aston;
3. Retaining the communities of Vermont and Vermont South within the proposed Division of Deakin;
4. Ensuring more than 13,000 electors are spared the change of an electoral division as a result of the redistribution process; and
5. Meeting the numerical requirements for the projected enrolment quota for each Division.

Addressing community of interest concerns: Kilsyth and Montrose

Aligning the western boundary of the proposed Division of Casey with the boundary of Yarra Ranges Council would result in approximately 7,000 voters – 6,979 in Kilsyth and a further 20 in Montrose – being transferred from the proposed Division of Deakin into the proposed Division of Casey. Importantly, these voters are currently within the existing Division of Casey and as far as I am aware, have been part of the existing Division of Casey for decades.

I submit that these electors remaining in the division of Casey rather than being transferred to the proposed division of Deakin is strongly justified. Splitting the communities of Kilsyth, Montrose and Mooroolbark in the manner proposed by the redistribution committee would be an undesirable and inferior outcome to the boundaries I propose.

Our reasons are outlined below.

1. The ward boundaries of Yarra Ranges Council clearly show that there is a community of interest between Kilsyth (which is transferred to the proposed Division of Deakin) and Montrose (which largely remains within the proposed Division of Casey).

    - The Walling Ward, sitting north of Canterbury Road, covers the suburbs of Kilsyth and Montrose. It extends to the western boundary of Yarra Ranges Council.

2. The travel patterns of residents within the proposed division appear not to have been fully considered by the Redistribution Committee.[1] The thoroughfares of Swansea Road/Mount Dandenong Road and Cambridge Road/Durham Road are commonly used by residents of Mooroolbark, Kilsyth and Montrose and are the primary means of travel between those suburbs. Under the proposed Division of Casey, these roads are inappropriately used as boundaries, dividing communities of interest.

[1] Means of communication and travel are required to be considered by the Redistribution Committee pursuant to section 66(3)(ii) of the Act.

3. There are a number of local sporting and community organisations that will traverse boundaries as a result of the proposed redistribution. They include:

    - The Kilsyth Cobras Basketball Club, which has venues in Liverpool Road, Kilsyth (within the proposed Division of Deakin) and also Hutchinson Street, Lilydale (within the proposed Division of Casey). Both venues are well within the boundaries of the existing Division of Casey.

4. There is also a strong connection between the communities within the south eastern part of Mooroolbark and the northern part of Kilsyth, the area broadly considered the "Cambridge Road corridor".

    - Pembroke Primary School is located on Pembroke Road, Mooroolbark, very close to the corner of Cambridge Road. Pupils of the school are heavily drawn from both Kilsyth and Mooroolbark.

Proposed Division of Casey

	Projected enrolment at 25/08/2019	**Percentage variation from the projected enrolment quota**
Redistribution Committee proposal	108,245	-1.93%
***Plus* – Kilsyth (Yarra Ranges Council) SA1:** • 127701 • 127702 • 127703 • 127704 • 127705 • 127706 • 127707 • 127708 • 127709 • 127710 • 127711 • 127712 • 127713 • 127714 • 127715 • 127717 • 127718 • 127720	6,999	

***Less* – Upper Ferntree Gully (Knox City Council)** • 25305 • 25308 • 25309 • 25310 • 25311 • 25357	1,810	
TOTAL	113,434	+2.77%

Division of Aston and Knox City Council

The changes suggested to the proposed Division of Casey result in it being over the permitted quota of electors.

This can be very simply addressed by removing 1,810 electors in the locality of Upper Ferntree Gully from the proposed Division of Casey to the proposed Division of Aston, ensuring that every elector within Knox City Council is united within the proposed Division of Aston.[2] This concept was supported by numerous submissions including, from Knox City Council,[3] as well as being positively viewed by the redistribution committee but for the numerical impact it would have on the proposed Division of Casey:

> *The Redistribution Committee considered placing all of Knox City Council within the proposed Division of Aston, however found this to negatively impact on the number of electors in the proposed Division of Casey.*[4]

By unifying the western boundary of the proposed Division of Casey with Yarra Ranges Council as outlined earlier in this objection, this allows the augmented Redistribution Commission to unite every elector within Knox City Council within the proposed Division of Aston.

It also better unites communities of interest, with electors in Upper Ferntree Gully tied with electors in Ferntree Gully within the same federal division.[5]

Assuming no other changes are made to the proposed Division of Aston, this brings the projected number of electors in that Division to 111,014, within the tolerance range.

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[2] There will remain a small part of the Knox City Council within the proposed Division of Bruce following the proposal of the Redistribution committee to use a continuous border of Police Road. This small section of the Knox City Council contains only parkland and has no residents within it.

[3] See for example, Public Suggestions: s 25 – Mark Mulcair; s 61 Australian Greens; s 63 Liberal Party of Australia (Victorian Division); s 65 Australian Labor Party; s 66 Charles Richardson; s 67 Dean Ashley. See also Comments on Suggestions: cs 18 – Mark Mulcair; cs 37 Knox City Council.

[4] Redistribution Committee report, page 43.

[5] I note that there will be a statistically insignificant number of electors from the suburb of Upper Ferntree Gully within the proposed Division of Casey. This is due to a small section of Upper Ferntree Gully being located within Yarra Ranges Council.

Proposed Division of Aston

	Projected enrolment at 25/08/2019	**Percentage variation from the projected enrolment quota**
Redistribution Committee proposal	109,204	-1.06%
***Plus* – Upper Ferntree Gully (Knox City Council)** • 25305 • 25308 • 25309 • 25310 • 25311 • 25357	1,810	
TOTAL	111,014	+0.01%

Division of Deakin

Removing 6,999 voters from Kilsyth and Montrose from the proposed Division of Deakin to the proposed Division of Casey has the resulting impact of the proposed Division of Deakin being 3.8 per cent below the projected enrolment quota.

This can be easily resolved by transferring the balance of the area of Vermont South within the proposed Division of Chisholm to the proposed Division of Deakin. This area is bordered by Burwood Highway in the north, Highbury Road in the south, Dandenong Creek in the east Springvale Road. Doing so would unite the entire suburb of Vermont South – together with the suburb of Vermont – within the proposed Division of Deakin. These suburbs are already wholly contained within the existing Division of Deakin.

This change would simply extend the strong proposed boundary of Springvale Road between the proposed divisions of Deakin and Chisholm. It would also result in 3,179 projected electors being transferred from the proposed Division of Chisholm to the proposed Division of Deakin.

This brings the proposed Division of Deakin to a projected population of 109,339, 0.9 per cent below the projected enrolment quota and Ill within the permitted range.

Proposed Division of Deakin

	Projected enrolment at 25/08/2019	**Percentage variation from the projected enrolment quota**
Redistribution Committee proposal	113,159	+2.53%
***Plus* – Vermont South (Whitehorse City Council)** • 127303 • 127304 • 127305 • 127313 • 127314 • 127320 • 127321 • 127323 • 127329 • 127330	3,179	
***Less* – Kilsyth (Yarra Ranges Council)** • 127701 • 127702 • 127703 • 127704 • 127705 • 127706 • 127707 • 127708 • 127709 • 127710 • 127711 • 127712 • 127713 • 127714 • 127715 • 127717 • 127718 • 127720	6,979	
TOTAL	109,339	-0.94%

Division of Chisholm

The transfer of 3,179 electors in Vermont South from the proposed Division of Chisholm to the proposed Division of Deakin brings Chisholm below the permitted projected enrolment.

This is easily resolved by the transfer of 3,184 electors from the proposed Division of Kooyong to the proposed Division of Chisholm. Importantly, the proposed area to be transferred is within the existing Division of Chisholm.

The relevant area is the small block in the suburb of Surrey Hills bordered by four major roads: Canterbury Road in the north, Riversdale Road in the south, Elgar Road in the east and Warrigal Road in the west. There is no readily identifiable justification for Riversdale Road being used to connect the western borderlines of Elgar Road and Warrigal Road. Furthermore, under the existing boundaries, Surrey Hills is split between Chisholm and Kooyong, and continues to be split under the proposal of the Redistribution Committee. I consider that the strong boundaries offered by major roads, as well as the necessary numerical requirements, provide justification for this to continue.

Proposed Division of Chisholm

	Projected enrolment at 25/08/2019	**Percentage variation from the projected enrolment quota**
Redistribution Committee proposal	109,131	-1.12%
***Less* – Vermont South (Whitehorse City Council)** • 127303 • 127304 • 127305 • 127313 • 127314 • 127320 • 127321 • 127323 • 127329 • 127330	3,179	
***Plus* – Surrey Hills (Whitehorse City Council)** • 116712A • 116712B • 116713 • 116714 • 116715 • 116716	3,184	

• 116717 • 116718 • 116719 • 116721 • 116722		
TOTAL	109,136	-1.12%

Division of Kooyong

As outlined above, I propose that 3,184 electors from the proposed Division of Kooyong be transferred to the proposed Division of Chisholm. This brings Kooyong from moderately above the projected enrolment quota to 1 per cent below. Accordingly, no further changes are necessary.

Proposed Division of Kooyong

	Projected enrolment at 25/08/2019	**Percentage variation from the projected enrolment quota**
Redistribution Committee proposal	112,477	+1.91%
***Less* – Surrey Hills (Whitehorse City Council)** • 116712A • 116712B • 116713 • 116714 • 116715 • 116716 • 116717 • 116718 • 116719 • 116721 • 116722	3,184	
TOTAL	109,293	-0.98%

Conclusion

I commend the sound job done by the Redistribution Committee thus far. I note that the report of the Redistribution committee states that the boundaries have been redrawn such that:

- *in a number of cases localities or local government areas are united within one, or are shared between fewer, electoral divisions, and*
- *where possible, the opportunity has been taken to provide more clearly defined electoral boundaries, which in some cases involved no or minimal elector movements.*[6]

By implementing the proposals put forth by this objection, the Redistribution Committee's proposals would be strengthened, not undermined.

Critically, they ensure continuity of community of interest by uniting Yarra Ranges Council and Knox City Council within one federal division – and avoids splitting the neighbouring communities of Kilsyth and Montrose as well as the communities of Upper Ferntree Gully and Ferntree Gully.

The opportunity to unite Local Government Areas and Commonwealth Electoral Divisions is not always available. However, in this instance there is the opportunity to make two Local Government Areas entirely coextensive with their respective Commonwealth Divisions with relatively minor consequential exchanges. There is no reason for the Augmented Commission to not make the most of this opportunity to simplify the State's administrative boundaries.

Finally, the Act specifies that consideration must be given to existing boundaries of electoral divisions, albeit in a manner that subordinates this factor to others specified in the Act.[7] This objection enables the Redistribution Committee to avoid the unnecessary transfer of 13,000 electors within the existing Divisions of Casey, Deakin, Chisholm and Kooyong into new divisions.

Yours sincerely,

Brett Whelan

[6] Redistribution Committee Report, page 6.
[7] Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 (Cth) s 66(3)(iv).