



Comment on objections 33

Josh Burns MP

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FEDERAL MEMBER FOR MACNAMARA

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Augmented Electoral Commission
Australian Electoral Commission

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Comment on objections to the proposed Victorian federal redistribution

Dear Commission Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission regarding the proposed redistribution of Victorian electorates. This submission will discuss the proposed boundaries of the divisions of Macnamara and Higgins.

As the Federal Member for Macnamara, I submit this comment focused on a number of the objections to the proposed redistribution of the electorate. Wherever the boundaries ultimately lie, I would proudly represent the electorate of Macnamara. And no matter how the boundaries of Macnamara are designed, it remains a difficult seat to win and that will only be achieved through hard work for the constituents of Macnamara.

I have noted the passion of many members of the community who have made these objections and I feel that it is my duty as the sitting Member to represent them and express that I concur with their objections.

I agree with the objection of Victorian Labor (OB63) and the submissions in OB5, OB38, OB49, OB42, OB53, OB54 and OB58.

While the objectors bring to bear their own experiences, their objections have a common thread. I think it can be summarised in the following way:

1. The Redistribution Committee's proposal does not comport with the factors that the Committee must consider.

Means of communication and travel

- a. There is no evidence that the means of travel in these areas are north-south. There is no evidence that Hotham St is a strong or natural boundary.
- b. The real means of communication and travel in the area are on an east-west orientation, with Dandenong Road dividing the community of Stonnington from those of Port Phillip and Glen Eira.

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- c. The road traffic data, as well as the Victorian Government's *Movement and Place Framework*, makes abundantly clear that Punt Road and Dandenong Road are the most significant means of travel in the areas. Hotham St pales in comparison. As a result, Punt Road and Dandenong Road present themselves as strong natural boundaries to the electorate.

Community of interest including economic, social and regional interests

- a. I am passionate about public housing. I have been very focused to engage with our public housing tenants and residents including through weekly morning teas and visits as well as building up relationships with key local stakeholders. And one thing is clear – while there are communities within public housing towers, there are few links in between the towers. And certainly, there are certainly no links between the towers of different electorates, including Higgins and Macnamara. Each tenancy has its own interests and exists as an independent community.
- b. There is no evidence that the communities in Caulfield, Caulfield East, Caulfield North, Elsternwick and St Kilda East are 'more suburban' nor 'share' common characteristics with areas in Stonnington City Council north of the Princes Highway' in this suburban respect (cf para 259 of the Redistribution Committee's report).

Firstly these areas are no more suburban than Port Melbourne, Albert Park, many parts of South Melbourne, Albert Park, Middle Park, St Kilda West, Elwood, Ripponlea, Balaclava nor the parts of St Kilda East that are currently in Macnamara and would remain in Macnamara. No evidence has been offered that supports a real distinction on this basis.

Secondly, and by contrast, these areas south of Dandenong Road share much more in common with the areas in Port Phillip than those in Stonnington. Dandenong Road / Princes Highway as the most significant local highway is a real boundary between these communities. Dandenong Road leaves local residents on either side forming communities primarily on an east-west orientation, rather than a north-south orientation. As a result, the communities of Caulfield, St Kilda East, Elsternwick have much in common with those in Balaclava, Ripponlea, St Kilda and St Kilda East and Elwood. For example, they primarily gather in the primary shopping strips of Balaclava Rd/Carlisle St, Glenhuntly Rd, Acland St and Fitzroy St. By contrast the communities north of Dandenong Road, who also form communities on an east-west orientation, gather in different local areas, and have less in common with those south of Dandenong Road.

The characterisation of either Higgins or Macnamara as being differentially 'suburban' or 'inner-city' as compared against the other is without sufficient evidence.

- c. There is strong evidence of a community of interest in the Jewish community. This community is a strong example of how the residents south of Dandenong Road orient east-west, rather than north-south. The physical boundary of the community *eruv* is strong evidence to this point, with it bounding the community east-west and it not crossing Dandenong Road, as well as the fact that many Jewish organisations and businesses that service the community are located in St Kilda, Balaclava, St Kilda East and Ripponlea. Moreover, this community provides strong evidence to the point that Hotham St and Williams Road present a particularly weak eastern boundary to the proposed electorate. This is because the Jewish community, as with many other communities of interest, are gathered on both sides of Hotham St. This community will be unnecessarily divided by this proposal.

- d. There is strong evidence of a community of interest surrounding the LGAs of Stonnington, Glen Eira and Port Phillip. All of these communities will be unnecessarily divided by this proposal.


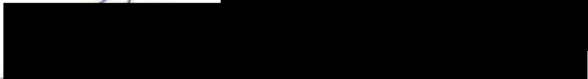

The physical features and area

- a. The physical features of the area do not support the Committee's proposal. The most dominant physical features of the area are the Port Phillip Bay, the Yarra River, and the tremendously busy highways of Punt Rd/Hoddle Highway and Dandenong Rd/Princes Highway, both having M2 classifications. These physical features present strong and natural boundaries.
2. The proposal cannot be based on any consideration that the boundaries under the proposed Division are more aesthetic than those under the current Division, by reason of producing a more square-like shape, unless that is connected to one of the criteria that the Committee may consider. It unlikely can be so connected and is therefore not a relevant consideration.
3. The Redistribution Committee's proposal is a disproportionate and unnecessary response to the problem at hand. Macnamara is over quota only by some 248 electors. The proposal affects 46,964 electors.
4. The Augmented Electoral Commission can achieve the necessary transfer of electors from Macnamara with a far less disruptive response that also better reflects the communities of interests, means of communication and travel and physical features of the area. Despite personally being very fond of the wonderful suburb of Windsor, this response would involve transferring the electors of Windsor back into Higgins. In adopting Punt Road/Hoddle Highway and Dandenong Road/Princes Highway as the boundaries between Higgins and Macnamara, this redistribution would acknowledge the dominant role that these highways play as means of communication and travel, as boundaries, and as delineating communities of interest. This alternative transfer would not require any flow-on tinkering with or changes to any other electorates.

The aforementioned objections are entirely consistent with my experience working in and representing the area as its local Member of Parliament and as a resident for my whole life. The proposed changes by the AEC moves tens of thousands of electors out of my electorate, however I submit that the objections cited above ought to be acknowledged and adopted. The alternative redistribution – returning Windsor to Higgins – would result in Higgins and Macnamara having boundaries that accurately reflect the areas' local communities, how they travel and socialise, and the natural and physical areas. The same cannot be said for the proposed redistribution.

I would sincerely appreciate an opportunity to appear at a public hearing of the Commission to talk to my comments, if one is held. Please feel free to contact me by email at josh.burns.mp@aph.gov.au or by phone at (03) 9534 8126.

Yours sincerely




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